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# THE ADAPTABLE SUBJECT

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE  
HEALTH AND RIGHTS ADVOCACY ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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## Abstract

In the face of the climate crisis, there is an increasing engagement with climate adaptation and mitigation across traditional development sectors. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is one such area. From an intersectional feminist perspective engaging questions of gender, race, disability and sexuality, this research examines international SRHR advocacy materials. The aim is to uncover how climate adaptation is connected to SRHR issues, who is seen as adaptable to climate change, how they are represented, and what the implications of these findings are. Three main lines of argumentation connecting SRHR to climate change are identified. 1) The gender equality argument positions SRHR and family planning (FP) services as a means to increase the adaptive capacity of women. 2) The societal adaptation argument sees SRHR and FP as a way of slowing population growth, resulting in increased adaptive capacity and resilience of society. 3) The mitigation argument also positions SRHR and FP as a means to slow population growth, but in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Further, this research introduces the concept of *the adaptable subject* to signify how heterosexual, able-bodied, fertile, ciswomen are deemed adaptable to climate change by virtue of their common subordination to gender inequality, a colonial difference, and assumed reproductive capacities. This subject is discursively constructed as both vulnerable and adaptable as a result of her social status. Finally, this research concludes that the characterisation and representation of *the adaptable subject* implies a need for intersectional and interdisciplinary analyses, a broadening of the SRHR concept in a climate change context, and increased engagement with local contexts and the subjects themselves.

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## List of acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFPA	Danish Family Planning Association
FP	Family planning
GHG	Greenhouse gasses
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICPD	International Convention on Population and Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and more
PSN	Population and Sustainability Network
RHR	Reproductive health and rights
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization

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# 1 Introduction

In the search for climate adaptation strategies, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is not a self-evident candidate. Focus is often on technologies that protect communities from rising sea levels, droughts and floods. However, with the increased attention to questions of population dynamics<sup>1</sup> and the connections between human and planetary health<sup>2</sup>, SRHR is gaining traction in the climate change debates.

SRHR has traditionally been the focus of the development sector, comprising civil society organisations (CSO's), international aid agencies, governments and donors. Encompassing maternal health, abortion, refusal of genital mutilation, information on reproduction and sexuality, HIV/AIDS treatment, the right to privacy and much more, SRHR is essential for the wellbeing of all people. Being able to time, space and decide on the number of children you want affects your opportunities in society in terms of education, job and participation in public life, and thereby your social and economic situation. At the same time social, economic and cultural conditions affect your sexual and reproductive opportunities. Further, SRHR is decisive in terms of ensuring rights, freedoms, health and opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

SRHR remains controversial in many spaces, including international politics. The concept of SRHR itself is contested and many advocates use terms such as *contraception*, *family planning* (FP) or *reproductive health* instead, as the *sexual* in SRHR is disputed in some contexts.<sup>4</sup> The controversy of the SRHR concept and language is rooted in disagreement over rights language, women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, HIV/AIDS, abortion and more.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, contraceptives can be controversial due to religious and cultural norms. In other places, controversies over population policies affect the perception of SRHR. A history and present of coercive population policies and practices have left their mark, resulting some places in tension around population dynamics. From the Social Darwinist and eugenic fascinations of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, carried out in forced sterilisations and medical

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<sup>1</sup> Evident in: IPCC. 2019. "Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification,

<sup>2</sup> UN Environment. 2019. *Global Environmental Outlook – GEO-6: Healthy Planet, Healthy People*. UNEP.

<sup>3</sup> Temmerman, Marleen, Rajat Khosla, and Lale Say. 2014. "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: A Global Development, Health, and Human Rights Priority." *Lancet*. Vol. 384. pp. 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> Cottingham, Jane, Eszter Kismödi and Julia Hussein. 2019. "Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters – What's in a name?" *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*. p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; Standing, Hilary, Kate Hawkins, Elizabeth Mills, Sally Theobald and Chi-Chi Undie. 2011. "Introduction: contextualising 'Rights' in Sexual and Reproductive Health." *BMC International Health & Human Rights*. Vol. 11, Issue 3.

experimentation of the ‘unfit’<sup>6</sup> in Nazi Germany<sup>7</sup>, to China’s one-child policy<sup>8</sup>, and further to forced sterilisations of indigenous women in Canada in 2017<sup>9</sup>, attempts to restrict and control who gets to reproduce are widespread. These examples of human rights abuses, often targeting already marginalised groups, emphasise the importance and fulfilment of SRHR.

Although the SRHR actors have achieved significant gains over the past 25 years, including a shift away from demographic targets towards individual rights, threats persist. With the reinstating of the Mexico City Policy (the Global Gag Rule) by the Trump administration in 2017, organisations from around the world working with abortion in any way were cut off from US government funds.<sup>10</sup> Despite efforts from countries such as Canada and the Scandinavian countries to remedy the funding gap, the effects of the Global Gag Rule have been felt in the field of SRHR.<sup>11</sup>

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, public and political attention to environmental sustainability and climate change has increased, resulting in a rise in environmental considerations in the work of CSOs. These include SRHR organisations who have not previously engaged with environmental or climate issues. The field of climate adaptation has developed and funding has increased.<sup>12</sup> Climate change issues remain new to SRHR organisations, although parts of the women’s reproductive rights movement engaged with population and environment connections in the 1950 and 1960’s.<sup>13</sup> The Drawdown report from 2017 was an eye-opener across the sectors as it listed girls’ education and family planning as the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> best solutions to climate change.<sup>14</sup> The list was based on the potential emissions reductions and the report was since

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<sup>6</sup> These included people with mental and physical disabilities, Jews, black and Roma people. The ‘Euthanasia’ program or ‘mercy killings’ also killed newborns and children with hereditary diseases and was eventually expanded to adults in the concentration camps.

<sup>7</sup> Osborne, Conelie. 2011. “Social Body, Racial Body, Woman’s Body. Discourses, Policies, Practices from Wilhelmine to Nazi Germany, 1912-1945”. *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung*. Vol. 26. No. 2. p.144.

<sup>8</sup> Hartmann, Betsy. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs, The Global Politics of Population Control*. Boston: South End Press. Revised edition. p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Reuters. “Dozens of Indigenous women forcibly sterilized file a class-action lawsuit against the Canadian government”. *Public Radio International*. 23.11.2018.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2018. “Trump’s ‘Mexico City Policy’ or ‘Global Gag Rule’”.

<sup>11</sup> Ratcliffe, Rebecca. 2019. ” ‘People will end up dying’: Trump’s cuts devastate clinics in Zambia”. *The Guardian*. 21.01.2019.

<sup>12</sup> Cipler, David, J. Timmons Robert, and Mizan R Khan. 2015. *Power in a Warming World: the New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*. MIT Press. p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> Sasser, Jade S. 2018. *On Infertile Ground. Population Control and Women’s Rights in the Era of Climate Change*. NYU Press. p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Hawken, Paul, ed. 2017. *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed To reverse Global Warming*. Penguin Books.

critiqued for its research methodology.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it inspired actors within the SRHR and climate change sectors to explore connections. With the growing emphasis on and funding for climate change adaptation, SRHR organisations are focusing more seriously on the links between these two areas of work.

It is helpful to think about climate change and lack of SRHR as *wicked problems* as they exist in open-ended systems, and their solutions depend on how the problems are perceived. Unlike problems of natural sciences, wicked problems cannot be foreseen and solutions planned. Common to these wicked problems are that facts are uncertain, values are disputed, stakes are high and decisions are urgent.<sup>16</sup> Against this backdrop this research considers SRHR advocacy material on climate change in order to examine how climate adaptation is connected to SRHR issues, who is seen as adaptable to climate change, how they are represented, and what the implications of these findings are. Importantly, this can contribute to better understand how some non-climate actors engage with the current climate crisis and in turn what the human and societal consequences thereof might be.

## 1.1 Purpose and scope

Over the years research has looked at the ethics of population policies<sup>17</sup>, the rationales for family planning programmes<sup>18</sup>, women's bodies as political battlefields<sup>19</sup>, and these issues have in turn been examined in the context of climate change.<sup>20</sup> However, the connections between SRHR and climate adaptation specifically require further research because they are new and have consequences for vulnerable people in the Global South. To contribute to meeting this research gap, this thesis analyses the discourse of SRHR as a climate adaptation strategy in a contemporary international context of SRHR advocacy. Informed by crip, queer, de-colonial and feminist theory, this research examines connections between SRHR and climate adaptation in international SRHR advocacy, in order to uncover who are deemed adaptable, what subjects by what criteria, and how. The research departs from the notion that

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance: Casey, R. J. 2019. "Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming." *Chemistry in Australia*. p.37-38. And: Ducin, Faye. 2017. "Climate Optimism Gets a Road Map: An Ambitious Plan to Leverage Existing Solutions to Global Warming Is Short on Analytic Rigor". *Science* 356, no. 6340.

<sup>16</sup> Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber. 1973. "Dilemmas in General Theory of Planning." *Policy Sciences*. Vol. 4. Issue 2. p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> Cafaro, Philip. 2012. "Climate ethics and population policy". *WIREs Climate Change*. Vol. 3, Issue 1.

<sup>18</sup> Seltzer, Judith R. 2002. *Origins and Evolution of Family Planning Programs in Developing Countries*. The RAND Cooperation.

<sup>19</sup> Brownmiller, Susan. 1995. "Making Female Bodies the Battlefield". *Rape And Society. Readings On The Problem Of Sexual Assault*. Patricia Searles, Ed. New York: Routledge.

<sup>20</sup> Sasser. 2018. *On Infertile Ground*.

neither climate adaptation nor SRHR are neutral matters and can have political, social and economic consequences depending on the justifying narrative.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- How is SRHR and climate linked in SRHR advocacy materials?
- What subjects are deemed climate-adaptable and how?
- How are subjects of climate adaptation represented in SRHR advocacy materials?
- What are the implications of the ways climate adaptation and *the adaptable subject* are conceptualised in international SRHR advocacy?

The thesis offers insights into the fields of climate adaptation and SRHR. Further, it offers a critical perspective on the positioning of vulnerable subjects. A central motivation for conducting this research is to enhance social justice through disclosure of and contributions to reduce oppressive practices with a specific focus on those already marginalised and disenfranchised. Most often the intentions of development organisations including SRHR actors are to help and contribute positively to people's lives in the Global South, however sometimes we get caught up in unintentional language and practices that further marginalise.

The main focus of the research is contemporary advocacy, which limits the primary material to texts from 2009-2019. The geographical location cannot be pinned down, as the subject of this study is international advocacy. However, all studied materials are in English, due to limits in proficiency of international languages.

## 1.2 Positionality of the researcher

This research began with an internship at the Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA) on climate and environmental issues in relation to SRHR. I am currently employed at DFPA in a student position, where I contribute to the international advocacy, particularly on SRHR as a climate adaptation strategy.<sup>21</sup> This offers valuable insights into the SRHR and development fields through continuous discussions, and familiarity with networks and the sector. I use this 'insider' position to my advantage to broaden my knowledge of the field and to add nuance to the chosen topic. I position myself as an activist researcher, and consequently I have what Charles Hale has called 'dual loyalties', meaning academia and the political struggle. To Hale

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<sup>21</sup>Amongst other tasks I write news letters and social media for the Population and Sustainable Development Alliance (PSDA), of which DFPA is a member. The PSDA was also involved in creating one of the primary materials of this thesis, though before my time at the DFPA.

this means the research is compromised, but also enriched. As such, the scope of the research is broadened beyond the academic setting.<sup>22</sup> I employ academic methodology and maintain my critical and autonomous standpoint, while simultaneously aiming to contribute to the site of the study. Although my primary purpose is to critically examine how SRHR is linked to climate adaptation in international advocacy, I am conscious that this research has something to offer to the SRHR community<sup>23</sup> and the development sector.

My position in the research is a matter of continuous reflection. As a privileged white, rich, European citizen and student, I cannot fully comprehend the experiences of other people in situations different from my own. However, I have experience with patriarchal structures from my position of being perceived as a woman by society. Moreover, I am reproductively privileged in having always had access to sexual and reproductive health services and having been informed about my rights.

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. Following the introduction, chapter 2 offers context and background to the topic, including existing literature. Chapter 3 then outlines the theoretical framework, which guides the analysis. In Chapter 4 I present the research methodology and materials. Chapter 5 presents the findings, which are structured in four sections and answer the first three research questions. In Chapter 6 I discuss the final research question of the implications of the constructed adaptable subject. Finally, Chapter 7 is the conclusion.

## 2 Background

Due to the combination of different fields it is paramount to situate the thesis in relation to existing literature and overall context. SRHR and climate change are both large fields with many subfields. This chapter presents overarching concepts, tendencies and linkages between the fields, including demography. While this account is not exhaustive, it aims to inform the reader of relevant literature, perspectives and background, and to provide input to the findings.

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<sup>22</sup> Hale, Charles. 2006. "Activist Research v Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically engaged anthropology". *Cultural Anthropology*. Vol. 21, No. 1. p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> The concept of the SRHR community encompasses organisations and institutions working with SRHR, family planning, reproductive health etc. While not all engage with sexual rights, I use SRHR as a collective name for agents working in this field.

## 2.1 Climate change, resilience and vulnerability

The distinction between mitigation and adaptation underpins climate change politics today. Mitigation of climate change seeks to reduce global warming and climate change by reducing the amount of greenhouse gasses (GHG) in the atmosphere. This can be done in a number of ways, most commonly by reducing or preventing GHG emissions, but attempts to capture and store GHG are increasingly gaining traction through carbon capture and storage (CCS) plans. Mitigation can include so-called geo-engineering, which involves technical interventions into ecosystems in order to moderate global warming, such as carbon-dioxide removal.<sup>24</sup> However, some argue this is a third category that supplements mitigation and adaptation.<sup>25</sup> The mainstream understanding of mitigation is the reduction of GHG emissions – often just CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In international climate politics mitigation measures have been the main focus, with adaptation getting attention only at the turn of the millennium, despite adaptation language in the UNFCCC.<sup>26</sup>

Adaptation then is about the effects of climate change on societies, ecosystems and people. It involves adjustments in existing systems or behaviours to respond to the changing conditions as a result of the impacts of climate change, such as drought, floods etc.<sup>27</sup> Traditionally associated with Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, *adaptation* refers to a modification of a species in order to adjust to its environment. To Mann and Wainwright the adoption of this evolutionary language in climate politics depoliticises what it means to be ‘socially fit’ and ‘functional’ and presents it as natural that people should adapt.<sup>28</sup> In obscuring the politics of who should adapt, it becomes self-evident that the poor people in the Global South must adapt, as they are most affected and least able to cope with the impacts of climate change.

Surely if “adaptation” means “correction” or “adjustment”, then the most important adaptation that the world could make to address climate change would be to redistribute wealth and power to end

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<sup>24</sup>Möller, Ina. 2018. “Geoengineering, Governance and the Equity Agreement”. [Lecture 15.02.2018] Lund University, Department of Geography. Human Ecology: HEKN14.

<sup>25</sup>Boucher, Olivier, Piers M. Forster, Nicolas Gruber, Minh Ha Duong, Mark G Lawrence, Timothy M. Lenton, Achim Maas and Naomi E. Vaughan. 2014. “Rethinking Climate Engineering Categorization in the Context of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.” *WIREs: Climate Change*.5(1): 23.

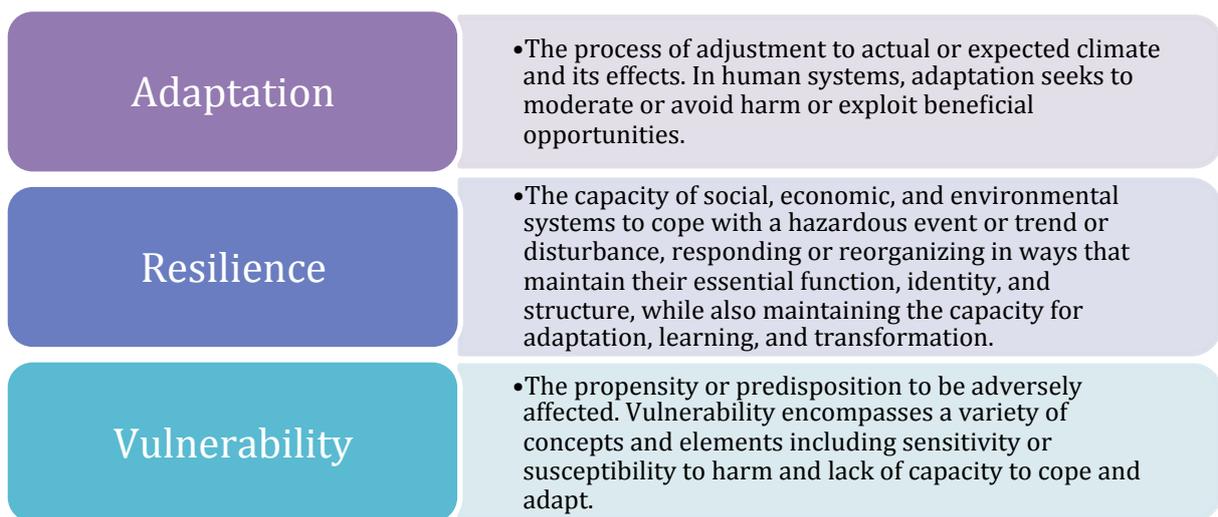
<sup>26</sup>Ciplet et al. 2015. *Power in a Warming World*. pp. 103-105.

<sup>27</sup>Adger, Neil W, Nigel W. Arnell and Emma L. Tomkins. 2005. “Successful Adaptation to Climate Change across Scales.” *Global Environmental Change*. Vol . 15, Issue 2. p. 77.

<sup>28</sup>Mann, Geoff, Joel Wainwright. 2018. *Climate Leviathan. A Political Tebroy of Our Planetary Future*. London, UK: Verso. p. 71.

fossil fuel use and force those responsible for climate change to relocate the wealth its drivers have helped them accumulate at the cost of billions of people’s suffering.<sup>29</sup>

Distribution of resources is central to climate adaptation politics, but in a different sense. Since the Paris Agreement was adopted debates have been fixed on how to finance adaptation and ‘loss and damages’.<sup>30</sup> Instead of changing the world, adaptation and resilience as they are commonly understood is about managing it.



**Figure 1.** IPCC definitions of adaptation, resilience and vulnerability. Adopted from AR5, Part A.

Originating in natural sciences the concept of *resilience* describes the capacity of ecological systems to cope with shocks while retaining “the same populations and properties.”<sup>31</sup> Recently, *resilience* has also described socio-ecological systems, and in the context of climate change it is linked to questions of adaptive capacity and vulnerability. According to Andrea Nightingale *resilience* is often poorly defined in policy and elsewhere, resulting in a number of unanswered questions of maintaining resilience over time and identifying responsibility for building resilience. Nightingale is sceptical of its translation into social systems as it contributes to justifying an already concerning managerial approach to climate change adaptation, which is characterized by an anti-politics, technocratic, neoliberal and economic logic. As is evident in her research of adaptation policies in Nepal and Scotland, resilience is

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p. 73.

<sup>30</sup> Huq, Saleemul, Erin Roberts, and Adrian Fenton. 2013. "Loss and damage." *Nature Climate Change*. Vol. 3 Issue 11. p. 947.

<sup>31</sup> Nightingale, Andrea J. 2015. "Challenging the Romance with Resilience: Communities, Scale and Climate Change." In *Practicing Feminist Political Ecologies. Moving Beyond the Green Economy*. Ed. Wendy Harcourt. London: Zed Books. p.185.

often linked to biophysical change and sudden shocks, but this framing fails to consider the socio-political mechanisms, which mediate the biophysical changes.<sup>32</sup>

These discussions of adaptation and resilience relate to how people live their lives and are encouraged to live them in the future, and therefore have consequences for SRHR. Vulnerability is central to adaptation and resilience planning and relates to access to SRHR. In relation to climate change vulnerability encompasses the risk of an individual, community or society to be harmed. According to Ben Wisner et al., vulnerability is determined by existing *unsafe conditions* such as lack of healthcare, as a result of *dynamic pressures* such as inequality, which stem from *root causes* such as capitalism. Due to these existing conditions one person is more vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather than others. Social, economic and political factors increase vulnerability, and thus challenge the ‘natural’ in natural disaster.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.2 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Where adaptation and mitigation are the main responses to climate change, some SRHR agents have in recent years embraced population questions. In this section I unpack the concept of SRHR and the work of the community, and discuss the context, including the tensions around population. SRHR is a collective name for a number of concepts covering various aspect of human life pertaining to reproduction and sexuality; sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights. Sexual and reproductive health services include sexuality education, access to modern contraceptives, postnatal care, safe abortion, HIV prevention and treatment, services related to sexual and gender-based violence, reproductive cancers, and infertility, amongst others.<sup>34</sup>

Sexual and reproductive rights include a number of recognised human rights, such as the right to bodily integrity, privacy, and the right to determine the number, timing and spacing of children.<sup>35</sup> Some aspects of sexuality and reproduction overlap and can sometimes be described in terms of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) or reproductive health and rights (RHR).

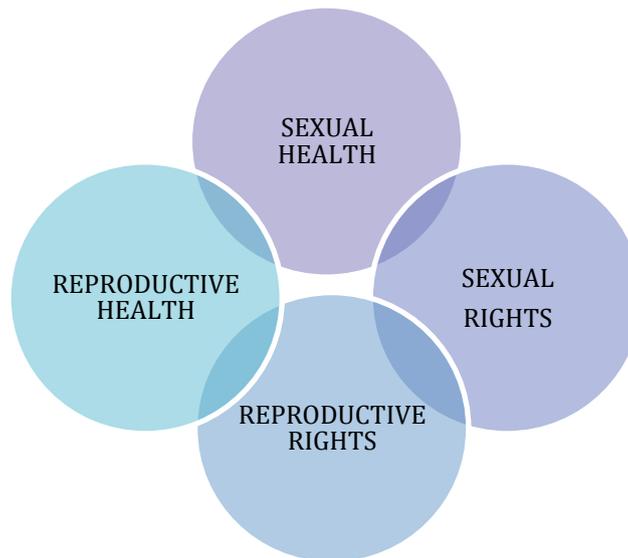
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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pp. 186, 203.

<sup>33</sup> Wisner, Benjamin, Piers Blaike, Terry Cannon, and Ian David. 2004. *At Risk. Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters*. Routledge. pp. 47-50.

<sup>34</sup> Including counselling and information in relation to the mentioned health services.

<sup>35</sup> Guttman-Lancet Commission. 2018. "Accelerate Progress. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All. Executive Summary". p. 4.



**Figure 2.** Components of SRHR. Rights and health of sexuality and reproduction sometimes overlap.

It is important to note that sexuality and reproduction do not always relate. For instance questions of discrimination in relation to sexual orientation are not a matter of reproduction, but of sexual rights and health in the form of legal protection from discrimination and wellbeing. However, if the discrimination happens in relation to fertility treatment or reproductive health services, they all come together in SRHR. The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission offered a new definition of SRHR in 2018, which has been broadly accepted in the community:

Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity [...] Achieving sexual and reproductive health relies on realizing sexual and reproductive rights, which are based on the human rights of all individuals.<sup>36</sup>

SRHR organisations implement a range of programmes including LGBTQIA+, youth, maternal care, sexual and gender-based violence, abortion, FP, comprehensive sexuality education and more. LGBTQIA+ rights and health and abortion are controversial and funding for these programmes is limited in some contexts.<sup>37</sup> Some organisations implement PHE

<sup>36</sup> Guttmacher-Lancet Commission. 2018. "Accelerate Progress". p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ng, Eve. 2018. "LGBT Advocacy and Transnational Funding in Singapore and Malaysia". *Development and Change*. Vol. 49, Issue 4. pp. 1093-1098. ; Human Rights Watch. 2018. "Trump's 'Mexico City Policy' or 'Global Gag Rule'".

programmes, integrating efforts on population, health and environment. However, population programmes remain controversial in the SRHR community as a whole.

To understand the tension and unease of the population concept within the SRHR community, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 is a good place to start. This was the third conference on population and development held by the UN, after the establishment of the UNFPA in 1969. It marked a shift in the approach of the international development sector to questions of population. Prior to the conference, demographic targets and FP programmes had dominated the field, with states seeking to curb population growth particularly in the Global South. Many of today's SRHR organisations played a central role in the 1960's population policies.<sup>38</sup>

The approach in these programmes was in no way informed by the understanding that family planning is just one piece of a complex picture in which sexuality and sexual health are intertwined with reproductive health and that they might also have something to do with pleasure, desires, and well-being.<sup>39</sup>

With the ICPD Programme of Action (ICPD), the development sector came instead to focus on reproductive health, rights and empowerment of girls and women. This new framework was a result of the international mobilisation of women's health advocates and groups. For the first time, the conference included women as participants and speakers.<sup>40</sup> The ICPD also recognised the relations between reproductive health and environmental sustainability, and was adopted by 179 countries.<sup>41</sup> Linking population issues and human rights was first done in 1968 in the Tehran Proclamation, which recognised the human rights of parents "to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of their children."<sup>42</sup> This reproductive right is included in the ICPD and central to linking population and climate change in a rights-based manner.

Following the ICPD, a downturn was evident with the reintroduction of the Mexico City Policy under the Bush administration in 2001 and again by Trump in 2017. The policy means

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<sup>38</sup> Sasser. 2018. *On Infertile Ground*. p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Cottingham et al. "Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters". 2019. p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Neidell, Shara G. 1998. "Women's empowerment as a public problem: A case study of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development" *Population Research and Policy Review*, 17: pp. 247-248.

<sup>41</sup> UN/United Nations Population Fund. 1994. Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development. ; United Nations Population Fund. 2014. "International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action".

<sup>42</sup> UN. 1968. "Proclamation of Teheran." Doc. A/CONF. 32/41. Art. 16.

US federal funding for FP programmes are available only to CSOs refraining from performing or promoting abortion. It was first introduced under Ronald Reagan at the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in 1984, and has been reintroduced by every Republican president in the US since.<sup>43</sup> A recent study of Sub-Saharan countries between 1995-2014 documents how the Mexico City Policy caused a 40% increase in abortions, a reduction in contraceptive use and increases in pregnancy rates.<sup>44</sup>

The adoption of the SDGs in 2015 included the target of ensuring “universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.”<sup>45</sup> This offered new opportunities for the SRHR community, especially in relation to the central partnership focus, which inspires cross-sector collaboration. After 25 years, the ICPD is still key to the SRHR community and holds almost constitutional status. FP programmes are still widespread within the community, but are often specified as ‘rights-based’ or ‘voluntary’. The concept of *unmet need for family planning* is often used as justification for these programmes, and refers to the 214 million girls and women of reproductive age, married or in union, in ‘developing countries’<sup>46</sup> who want to avoid pregnancy and are not using a modern contraceptive method.<sup>47</sup> These ‘modern’ methods of contraception include condoms, intrauterine devices, injections, etc.<sup>48</sup> Note that women using traditional methods of contraception such as withdrawal or calendar methods are included in this figure of unmet need for FP.

As SRHR involves moral, political, cultural and religious questions, it is a field characterised by battles and controversy. The community is not alone in engaging these issues, for instance the reproductive justice movement approaches these issues differently, which I return to below (3.2). Victories are not taken for granted by SRHR actors who fight to uphold gains as much as to make new ones. With the growing public realisation of the detrimental effects of climate change, the debate of balancing human systems with natural systems has returned – if it ever left – and urgency is central to bringing population

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<sup>43</sup> Brooks, Nina, Eran Bendavid and Grant Miller. 2019. “US aid policy and induced abortion in sub-Saharan Africa: an Analysis of the Mexico City Policy”. *The Lancet. Global Health*. p.1046.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 1047.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations. 2015. “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” A/RES/70/1. SDG 3, Target 3.7.

<sup>46</sup> Throughout this thesis I put developing and developed countries in quotes to signal that this division is problematic and perpetuates colonial power relations as elaborated in section 3.1. Further, it reflects the common word use in the development sector. I apply the concepts of Global South and North when it does not directly reference material or fixed concepts.

<sup>47</sup> WHO. 2018. “Family planning/Contraception”.

<sup>48</sup> For a full list see Ibid.

considerations to the fore in academic, political and public fora.

## 2.3 Population and Environment

Climate change and SRHR are linked in several ways: one common connection is population. This section presents positions and understandings of the interactions of population and the environment. Human reproduction has a long history in politics, where three discourses dominate: ‘people as power’, eugenic and Malthusian discourses. ‘People as power’ arguments use growth in workforce, voters, military force etc. to justify ‘encouraging’ human reproduction – whether through expectations, limited opportunities or coercion. This discourse often links to national interest or patriotism, reinforcing a notion of women as the biological reproducers of the nation. The eugenic discourse prioritises ‘quality’ over growth, in seeking to limit or ‘purify’ a certain ‘race’, eliminate disability and control the socially inconvenient, such as sexually liberated subjects. Finally, the Malthusian discourse advocates controlling reproduction in order to balance human numbers with the finite nature of the planet.<sup>49</sup>

In linking population and environment it is difficult or rather impossible to avoid the legacy of Thomas Robert Malthus. In his *Essay on the Principle of Population* from 1798, Malthus predicted an unappealing future, where human population would grow geometrically, while food production would grow arithmetically, and consequently poverty and famine would prevail. He proposed two solutions, both focussing on holding global population size in check: 1) *positive checks* such as hunger, disease and war, which increase the death rate, and 2) *preventive checks* such as birth control, postponed marriage and celibacy, which decrease the birth rate.<sup>50</sup> Malthus has since been challenged from several fronts, and within the SRHR community his name is tantamount to a swearword. His thoughts have nonetheless persisted in the population-environment debate, though in new forms. Neo-Malthusians expand Malthus’ theory of a disproportionate relation between population and food production to a broader analysis on technological and industrial expansion, consumption, and the *carrying capacity* of the planet. They define a crisis beyond food production and engage with consumption of mineral and fossil reserves and pollution in the atmosphere.<sup>51</sup> In *Limits to Growth*, Donella Meadows et al. suggest abandoning ‘business as usual’, including trusting

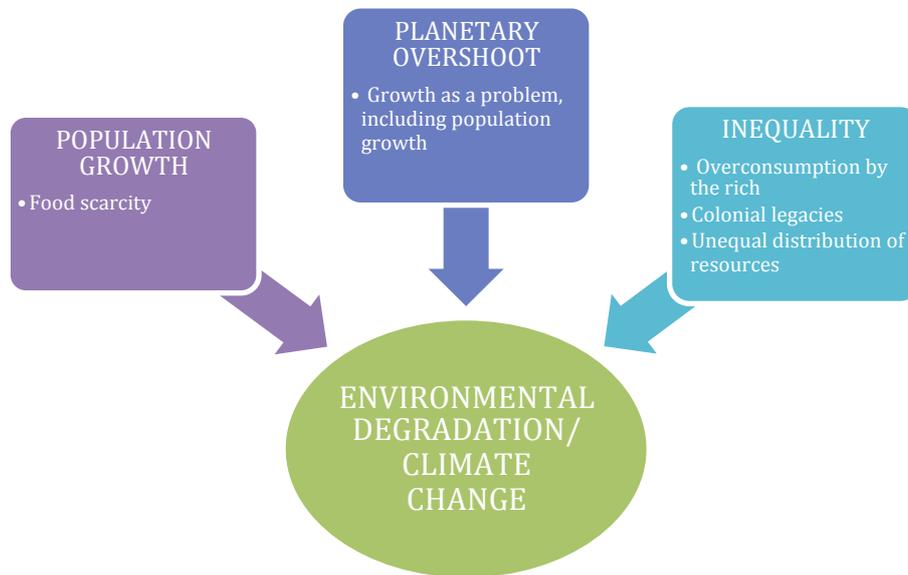
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<sup>49</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1996. “Women and the biological reproduction of ‘the nation!’” *Women’s Studies International Forum*. Vol. 19, issue 1/2. pp. 18-21.

<sup>50</sup> Malthus, Thomas Robert. 1798. *Essay on the Principle of Population*. London, UK: St. Paul’s Church-Yard. pp. 20, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Mellos, Koula. 1988. “Neo-Malthusian Theory.” In *Perspectives on Ecology*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 15.

growth to solve global problems. They discuss *overshoot*, attributing to it three characteristics: a) growth or rapid change; b) limits/barriers beyond which the moving system may not go safely; and c) delay or mistake in perception and response to maintain the system within its limits.<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 3.** Identifying root causes of environmental degradation and/or climate change. The figure illustrates the different positions in defining the main cause of unsustainable business as usual. The first box represents the Malthusian position, the second box represents the Neo-Malthusian position, and the third box represents the position of critics of the population narrative (amongst others). All three positions agree that environmental degradation and/or climate change is a problem, but they differ in their understandings of what caused it, and how it should be remedied.

The Neo-Malthusian author Paul R. Ehrlich caused a stir in 1968 with his popular book *The Population Bomb*. Ehrlich warns that food scarcity will only increase with global population growth. “After all, no matter how you slice it, population is a numbers game.”<sup>53</sup> In line with this, Ehrlich and others employ the *I=PAT equation*, which equals *I*, the impacts on the environment/Earth, with *P*, population multiplied by *A*, affluence and *T*, technology. The equation has been criticised for being too ambiguous in defining the factors, for failing to account for social, economic and political power and the dynamics of environmental degradation at different levels<sup>54</sup>, and for being agentless.<sup>55</sup> Ehrlich suggests penalties and rewards to be implemented in the US and abroad in order to discourage human reproduction,

<sup>52</sup> Meadows, Donella, Jorgen Randers and Denis Meadows. 2004. *Limits to Growth*. London, UK: Earthscan. p. 252.

<sup>53</sup> Ehrlich, Paul R. 1968. *The Population Bomb*. New York, US: Ballantine Books. p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Hartmann. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*. pp. 23, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Hynes, H. Patricia. 1994. “Taking population out of the equation: Reformulating I=PAT”. *Women’s International Network News*. Vol. 20. Issue 4.

including higher taxes for ‘large families’ to pay for their “reproductive irresponsibility”.<sup>56</sup> This ‘carrot and stick’ approach was common in the 1960’s to 1980’s international development programmes, where attempts to reduce population growth focused on targets and incentives, as mentioned (2.2).<sup>57</sup>

Betsy Hartmann, who is affiliated with the PopDev Programme<sup>58</sup>, challenges Malthus’ thoughts and offers two main critiques. Firstly, he failed to see how population growth could stabilise and slow down due to improvement in lifestyle, and not just as a result of “‘natural’ forces of famine and pestilence”<sup>59</sup>. Secondly, Malthus misread or underestimated Earth’s capacity to feed and clothe the growing human population. She refers to historians, who have used population growth as an explanation for technological and productive improvements and developments. She positions Malthusianism in opposition to human rights and presents a continuum between those who advocate voluntary FP and those who openly advocate coercive methods.<sup>60</sup> Further, Hartmann critiques the way Malthusian logic is used in a contemporary context, and how it targets people in the Global South and marginalised, poor people in the Global North. She argues that Neo-Malthusians blame the poor for their misery and ignore the role of unequal distribution, colonial legacies and government forms and systems.<sup>61</sup>

Writing in the aftermath of the ICPD, Hartmann discusses what to do with *population*. For her, population should be abandoned altogether, and the “fixed images of dark babies as bombs, women as wombs, statistical manipulations as absolute truth”<sup>62</sup> should be replaced by concern for real people and environments. She does, however, argue for a *strategy of principled pragmatism* in relation to the population framework, enabling women’s health movements to maintain influence and access to decision makers, without accepting the population framework fully. As she notes, those who stay outside the population framework have often been accused of doing the Vatican a favour.<sup>63</sup> Hartmann argues that the myth of *overpopulation* as a root cause of poverty, environmental degradation and climate change prevails despite reductions in family sizes globally. *Overpopulation* functions to obscure the inequality, which has only increased since the 1990’s, and is therefore politically useful to

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<sup>56</sup> Ehrlich. 1968. *The Population Bomb*. p. 137.

<sup>57</sup> Hartmann. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*. p. 215.

<sup>58</sup> The PopDev Programme is a center for critical thinking, learning and advocacy on population, peace, and the environment located at Hampshire College, Massachusetts, US. Current policy analysts include Rajani Bhatia, Ellen E. Foley, Jade S. Sasser, and Susanne Schultz. (<https://sites.hampshire.edu/popdev/about-popdev/>).

<sup>59</sup> Hartmann. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs*. 1995. p. 14.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp. 15, 32.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 287.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 1995. pp. 290-291.

people in power.<sup>64</sup> In dismissing reductions in population growth as a way to mitigate climate change, she writes, “Overconsumption by the rich has far more to do with climate change than the population growth of the poor.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Jordan Dyett and Cassidy Thomas argue that discussions of population growth should critically engage with root causes of the ecological crisis including unequal power relations, consumption, and economic systems.<sup>66</sup>

### 3 Theoretical framework

Delving into the topic of SRHR in the context of climate change adaptation is primarily driven by my vision of social justice, my concern with how systemic oppression of people plays out, and my interest in how language and discourse can work to maintain or challenge systems of oppression. I see this research project as part of a larger project of social change and build my theoretical framework from different lenses, which pay attention to marginalisation and oppression in the hope for a more just world. I include elements from feminist theory, disability and crip studies, body, queer theory, critical race and anticolonial theory. These are all vast fields with much relevant work, but with a limited scope I select concepts to guide my exploration of SRHR as a climate change adaptation strategy. The chosen theoretical perspectives all operationalise the intersections of different identity categories, e.g. gender, race and sexuality in order to equip the reader and myself with the tools needed to recognise how these can overlap and interact.

#### 3.1 Intersectionality

While feminist theory has traditionally focused on the subordination of women based on a binary and cisheteronormative<sup>67</sup> understanding of gender, the field now encompasses broader perspectives on oppression and categories of identity, subjectivity and agency. The feminist analyses have changed from a primarily binary understanding of gender and sexuality (male/female, heterosexual/homosexual), into one that accounts for race, class, disability, age,

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<sup>64</sup> In the 2016 preface to the third edition. Ibid. pp. ix-xi.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. xi.

<sup>66</sup> Dyett, Jordan and Cassidy Thomas. 2019. “Overpopulation Discourse: Patriarchy, Racism, and the Specter of Ecofascism”. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 18. p. 206.

<sup>67</sup> Cisgender stands in opposition to transgender and refers to people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Cisheteronormativity refers to the acknowledgement of cis-centric and binary gender and heterosexuality as a prevalent norm in a society. Thus cisgendering and heterosexuality is the starting point to which everything else is measured, determining what is normative and othered respectively.

sexuality, nationality and many other markers of identity and marginalisation.<sup>68</sup> This is the branch of feminist theory I choose to draw from. Key to this development is the concept and methodology of *intersectionality* coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in relation to how sexism and racism interact in discrimination of black women in the US.<sup>69</sup> Intersectionality challenges single-issue analyses and looks at the interactions of different issues in order to account for the plurality of and contradictions in experiences of for instance black, homosexual, trans women with disabilities. In a recent interview Crenshaw explains that, “Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.”<sup>70</sup>

Feminist theories seek to uncover how structures and systems limit the rights, choices, power and agency of marginalised groups or individuals. But even within feminist literature some topics and groups are marginalised, for instance queer people, and people with disabilities. Some feminist literature has distinguished between sex and gender, the former referring to a ‘biologically’ determined sex<sup>71</sup> and the latter to a socially constructed gender. However, some have argued that biology is also socially constructed.<sup>72</sup> In relation to this, Judith Butler presents the idea of gender as performative: instead of being a gender, one *does* a gender, referring to the many gendered cultural practices enacted every day.<sup>73</sup> Once a homophobic abusive word, *queer* was reclaimed and came to embody “a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications”.<sup>74</sup> Both in theory and practice queer can be tricky to pinpoint, and this is to some degree the point. The concept includes a resistance to definitions and refusal of normativity. Judith Halberstam explains queer as failed normativity.<sup>75</sup> Queer theory exposes a hetero-norm and from this has developed the concept of *heteronormativity*, which denotes the assumption that heterosexuality is the original or natural sexuality and consequently deems everyone heterosexual by default.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> I do not intend to suggest that all feminist analyses account for these categories, but rather that the theoretical developments in feminist theories are opening up for this.

<sup>69</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. Vol. 1989: Iss. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Columbia Law School. 2017. “Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later”.

<sup>71</sup> I put biologically in quotes to signal that the gendering of certain physical traits is mainstream, yet problematic.

<sup>72</sup> Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. pp. 362-364.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. pp. 33-34.

<sup>74</sup> Jagose, Annamarie. 1996. *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York University Press. p.1.

<sup>75</sup> Halberstam, Judith. 2011. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, London: Duke University Press. pp. 87-91.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

Following a similar logic, Robert McRuer introduces the concept of *compulsory able-bodiedness* to denote how able-bodiedness is seen as the norm, and disability as deviant.<sup>77</sup> This abled/disabled binary is what crip theory and disability studies aim to examine and challenge. Crip, like queer, represents a reclaiming of the derogatory term ‘cripple’. In conversation with queer theory, McRuer shows the similarities between compulsory heterosexuality, or *heteronormativity*, and compulsory able-bodiedness. Both of these norms strategically use deviant bodies – whether queer or disabled – to reaffirm, normalise and privilege the heterosexual capable body. However, due to the dependency of these systems on the queer/disabled existences, their hegemony is always at risk.

A system of compulsory able-bodiedness repeatedly demands that people with disabilities embody for others an affirmative answer to the unspoken question, “Yes, but in the end, wouldn’t you rather be more like me?”<sup>78</sup>

To McRuer, crip represents a resistance to the norm. Building on McRuer’s work, Alison Kafer discusses disability and reproduction. Disability plays a role in reproductive discussions about abortion in particular, but Kafer seeks to bring disability into discussions of reproductive choice, in relation not just to the foetus, but also the parent(s). Inspired by the reproductive justice movement, Kafer engages with the topic of reproductive choice and how the language of choice in pro-life versus pro-choice debates obscures the varying conditions under which people make choices. She argues that, “questions of reproduction cannot be disentangled from those of race, class and sexuality, not to mention poverty, welfare, health care, social services, environmental justice and so on.”<sup>79</sup> Kafer further points to a lack of attention to the *ableist*<sup>80</sup> context in which reproductive choices take place.<sup>81</sup> Imagining a coalitional politics, Kafer argues for disability to be included “as a category of analysis alongside gender, race, class and sexuality.”<sup>82</sup>

Robyn Longhurst engages with the pregnant body and how “pregnant women’s rights to bodily autonomy are considered questionable”<sup>83</sup>, both through their subjection to dietary

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<sup>77</sup> McRuer, Robert. 2006. *Crip Theory. Cultural signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York University Press. p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Kafer, Alison. 2013. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Indiana University Press. p. 162

<sup>80</sup> Ableism refers to the discrimination of disabled bodies/minds, privileging the able-bodied and able-minded.

<sup>81</sup> Kafer. 2013. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. p. 162.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>83</sup> Longhurst, Robyn. 2001. *Bodies. Exploring Fluid Boundaries*. London, UK, and New York: Routledge. p. 6.

regimes and regulation<sup>84</sup> and in the invasion of their bodily space by public gaze and touch. She explains how the body is *othered* through the privileging of the mind. The Cartesian dualism, which separates mind and body stems from a long philosophical tradition<sup>85</sup>, and has amongst other things led to the positivist view of the researcher as objective and disembodied from the subject of study. To Longhurst the body/mind separation means that men are assigned capacity to overcome their corporeality, while women are bound by their bodily desires and needs. Further, she distinguishes between *discursive and material bodies*.<sup>86</sup>

In western culture, while white men may have presumed that they could transcend their embodiment (or at least have their bodily needs met by others) by seeing the body as little more than a container for the pure consciousness it held inside, this was not allowed for women, blacks, homosexuals, people with disabilities, the elderly and children.<sup>87</sup>

This dualism also played a central role in justifying colonisation, as Western people and knowledge were deemed more rational than those of the Global South. The development logic is the grandchild of *la mission civilisatrice*, the rationale behind colonisation, which warranted the role of colonisers to civilise the colonised, who were seen as inferior and ‘savages’.<sup>88</sup> The dichotomy of ‘developing/developed’ countries links the political and geographical entities of countries to a process of development, deeming ‘developing countries’ behind and in progress, while ‘developed countries’ appear progressed and without need of improvement. The two categories of countries come to seem detached and parallel, rather than deeply interrelated historically and presently. Postcolonial critiques of development explore and document the persistence of a colonial worldview in development frameworks where development is linear and with a specific end goal, expressing a capitalist,

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<sup>84</sup> This is the focus of literature on biopolitics, which is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>85</sup> Malm, Andreas. 2018. *The Progress of This Storm. Nature and Society in a Warming World*. London, UK: Verso. p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> Longhurst. 2001. *Bodies*. pp. 13-14.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Makki, Fouad. 2002. “The Genesis of the Development Framework: The End of Laissez-Faire, the Eclipse of Colonial Empires, and the Structure of U.S. Hegemony” in *The Modern/ Colonial/ Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century: Global Processes, Antisystemic Movements, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge*. Eds. Grosfoguel, Ramon and Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodriguez. Westport, Connecticut and London, UK: Greenwood Press. p. 220-223.; Frederickson, George M. 2002. *Racism. A Short Story*. Princeton University Press. pp. 107-108.

Western idea of progress.<sup>89</sup> Further, as Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodriguez argue, “Sexual, gender, and racial hierarchies are intertwined with capitalist accumulation hierarchies in the world-system.”<sup>90</sup> In addition to the concept of the postcolonial, Arturo Escobar and others use the concept of *coloniality* to denote the colonial worldview and reality, which exists before colonisation and continues despite formal decolonisation.<sup>91</sup> Coloniality is evident in *othering* of non-Western bodies, the continual dependency between former colonies and former metropolises, and the epistemological dominance of the West.

Applying a discursive definition of colonisation Chandra Mohanty challenges feminist scholarship produced in the West about ‘the third world.’<sup>92</sup> The *third world woman* is discursively constructed through the colonisation of the material and historical diversities of the lives of women in third world.<sup>93</sup> She critiques the assumption of a singular, universal patriarchy working across cultures and explains how this reductive notion of male dominance fosters a similarly reductive and singular notion of the *third world woman*. Mohanty uses the concept *third world difference* to denote the “stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries.”<sup>94</sup>

### 3.2 Women as a category of analysis

Mohanty identifies a pattern of *women as a category of analysis* in Western feminist discourse on women in the third world. This category encompasses the strategic situation of women as a constituted, coherent group of people, who despite ethnic, racial, and class differences, share the same interests and desires.<sup>95</sup> Grouping women this way has sometimes been critiqued as essentialist, arguing that there is a ‘woman essence’ shared by all women

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<sup>89</sup> Loomba, Ania. 1998. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London, UK and New York: Routledge. ; Makki, Fouad. 2002. “The Genesis of the Development Framework”. ; Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2008. *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. London, UK: Verso.

<sup>90</sup>Grosfoguel, Ramon and Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodriguez. 2002. *The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century*.” p. xx.

<sup>91</sup> Escobar, Arturo. 2007. “World and Knowledges Otherwise. The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program”. *Cultural Studies*. Vol. 21. Issue 2-3: Globalization and the Decolonial Option. ; Grosfoguel, Ramon and Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodriguez. 2002. *The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century: Global Processes, Antisystemic Movements, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge*. London: Greenwood Press.

<sup>92</sup> I apply the concept of ‘the third world’ in this section to be accurate in my representation of the work of Chandra Mohanty. In the rest of the thesis the concept of Global South is applied, or ‘developing countries’ when referencing the primary material.

<sup>93</sup> Mohanty, Chandra T. 1984. ”Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”. *boundary 2*, Duke University Press: Vol. 13, no. 1, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism. pp. 333-336.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 335.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. pp. 333-336.

based on a biological premise.<sup>96</sup> However, Mohanty's critique is of the assumed sociological shared universals, such as oppression, rather than biological similarities. She points to how the *third world woman* is defined by her *object status*, that is how she is affected or not by systems and institutions. Through the systematisation and homogenisation of oppression of these women, Western feminist scholarship obscures their heterogeneous lives, conditions, cultures, and experiences. They are grouped through a false commonality of subordination, interests, needs and struggles.<sup>97</sup>

The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as "powerless" in a particular context. It is rather on finding a variety of cases of "powerless" groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless.<sup>98</sup>

Mohanty agrees that universal groupings can be useful for descriptive purposes, but opposes their use, when they are based on common powerlessness, dependencies or strengths even. These groupings are problematic as they assume the subjects are constituted as sexual-political even before they enter into social relations.<sup>99</sup> Mohanty exemplifies this with mothering.

That women mother in a variety of societies is not as significant as the value attached to mothering in these societies. The distinction between the act of mothering and the status attached to it is a very important one – one that needs to be made and analyzed contextually.<sup>100</sup>

A similar line of thinking is found in the reproductive justice (RJ) movement, which was created after the ICPD conference in 1994 by a group of women of colour from the US wanting to develop a new language to understand and talk about reproductive issues. This approach focuses on the interactions between reproductive oppression and other forms of oppression, e.g. white supremacy and patriarchy. It pays attention to marginalised

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<sup>96</sup> Stone, Alison. 2004. "On the Genealogy of Women: A Defence of Anti-Essentialism". In *Third Wave Feminism*. Gillis S., Howie G., Munford R. (eds). London: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 86.

<sup>97</sup> Mohanty. 1984. "Under Western Eyes" p. 348.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 338.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 340.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 340.

communities, including transgender, racialised, poor and people with disabilities, and opposes population control of any sort. Reproductive justice is an intersectional human rights based approach to reproductive issues, which goes beyond questions of individual choice – which is seen as a classic white middle-class approach – in order to question what it means to have bodily autonomy, the right to a healthy pregnancy and the right to parent. Asking these questions means engaging with institutional barriers and lack of access to comprehensive healthcare.<sup>101</sup> Reproductive justice theory<sup>102</sup> critiques the pro-choice movement for its limited concept of choice, which fails to account for the social, economic and political conditions that surrounds the ‘choices’ people make. Choices are often conditioned on possession of resources and therefore not free for all.<sup>103</sup> “People’s life choices occur in a context of racialized and gendered notions of morality and normalcy.”<sup>104</sup> The reproductive justice movement is not as such opposed to the SRHR community, but engages more with structural problems and root causes for reproductive issues through its intersectional approach. In many ways the reproductive justice movement is fighting for the right and opportunity of women of colour to *have* children, as population control has been (and is being) exerted on indigenous and communities of colour in the US and elsewhere – although the goal of RJ is wider than this.

While population control advocates are increasingly more sophisticated in their rhetoric and often talk about ensuring social, political, and economic opportunity, the *population* focus of this model still results in its advocates working to reduce population rather than to provide social, political and economic opportunity.<sup>105</sup>

Building on Hartmann’s work, Jade Sasser examines the connections between population and climate change in a US advocacy context with attention to the rights and role of women.<sup>106</sup> She challenges the idea of “relationships between population growth and environmental

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<sup>101</sup> Ross, Loretta J. et al. 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice. Foundations. Theory. Practice. Critique.* New York City, US: Feminist Press. p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> RJ is theoretically based in black feminist, critical race, critical feminist, human rights and standpoint theory.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, Andrea. 2017. “Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice.” in *Radical Reproductive Justice. Foundations. Theory. Practice. Critique.* Ed. Ross, Loretta J. New York City, US: Feminist Press. p. 160.

<sup>104</sup> Ross. 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice. Foundations. Theory. Practice. Critique.* p. 197.

<sup>105</sup> Smith. 2017. “Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life”. p. 165. Original emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> Sasser studies a specific network in the United States consisting of NGOs, donors, international development actors and youth activists. The research is based on participant observations at seminars, events and workshops on population advocacy; in-depth interviews with members of the network; and archival research.

problems as fixed, linear, and apolitical reflections of the material world.”<sup>107</sup> Population advocates do not address deep-rooted structural factors, but maintain a ‘business-as-usual’ development approach. Based on this “modernizing rationale”<sup>108</sup> they construct a dualist view on women from the Global South as victims/agents. On one side the women are perceived as victims of poverty, environmental catastrophe, and limited choice, but they are simultaneously ascribed agency to complete educations and use contraceptives consistently. Sasser finds this problematic as it isolates women and their circumstances from their cultural and political contexts, similar to Mohanty’s critique. With the concept of *sexual stewards* Sasser describes how women are instrumentalised in relation to managing ecosystems and in building sustainable societies. The sexual steward is heterosexual, fertile, rational, self-regulating, a victim and an agent.<sup>109</sup> This stewardship builds on an assumption of a special link between women and the environment.

In relation to the environment, some reproductive justice activists work with the interactions between environmental and reproductive justice, and suggest that sovereignty over body and land is a useful frame for conceptualising the issues together.<sup>110</sup> Laura Jiménez et al. write,

Placing the burden of reducing the earth’s carbon footprint on individual women or communities will not achieve the reduction of environmental contamination nor will it eradicate the oppressive and abusive circumstances which have created these crises if it is not within a context of ending oppression and state violence.<sup>111</sup>

Mohanty calls for feminist scholarship on the third world to be situated properly in order to account for the cultural, ideological and socio-economic conditions at play.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, she shows that *ethnocentric universalism* is produced, when the authors use themselves as the reference point by which the cultural Other is understood and interpreted.<sup>113</sup>

This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life

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<sup>107</sup> Sasser. 2018. *On Infertile Ground*. p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 18-19, 152.

<sup>110</sup> Jiménez, Laura, Kierra Johnson and Cara Page. 2017. “Beyond the Trees; Stories and Strategies of Environmental and Reproductive Justice”. in *Radical Reproductive Justice. Foundations. Theory. Practice. Critique*. Ed. Ross, Loretta J. New York City, US: Feminist Press. p.371.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 380.

<sup>112</sup> Mohanty. 1984. “Under Western Eyes”. p. 334-335.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 336.

based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions.<sup>114</sup>

Caroline McFadden argues that white feminism needs to pay attention to how racial, imperial and reproductive privileges are enforced by white supremacy. She suggests using the frame of *critical white feminism* (CWF) to ensure anti-racist practice and theory in the feminist movement and scholarship. Keeping race at the centre of white feminism will expose the ways privilege and whiteness operate and avoid the use of *hubristic universality* as a basic assumption or foundation for white feminism.<sup>115</sup> As reproductive justice activist Loretta Ross expresses, "In particular, white feminists must overcome their fear of challenging white supremacy by understanding that it is an ideology and not inherent in any race of people."<sup>116</sup> Embracing race in white feminism then is critical to the dismantling of white normativity and universalised womanhood. Butler pulls together the question of representation in the feminist movement:

The feminist "we" is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent.<sup>117</sup>

The theoretical framework incorporates a range of theories, concepts and ideas that challenge normalcy, whether it is white, cis-male, rich, able-bodied, heterosexual or all of the above. Bringing these perspectives together offers an intersectional lens<sup>118</sup> to guide the analysis.

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid. p. 337.

<sup>115</sup> McFadden, Caroline R. 2017. "Reproductively Privileged: Critical White Feminism and Reproductive Justice Theory" in *Radical Reproductive Justice*. Ed. Loretta J. Ross et al. p. 244.

<sup>116</sup> Ross. 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice*. p.223.

<sup>117</sup> Butler. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. p. 323.

<sup>118</sup> Many other positionalities, such as age or religion can be of focus in an intersectional analysis, but due to the limited scope of this thesis i focus on gender, race, ability, and sexuality.

## 4 Methods

### 4.1 Data construction methods

The methodology of the study is interdisciplinary as it draws on several branches of knowledge and methods to analyse discourse on SRHR and climate change adaptation. This is important in disclosing dominant ideas and narratives of adaptation and subjects of the Global South across the different fields of work. I use the term data construction as opposed to the more positivist terminology of ‘data collection’ to make explicit how the data set is socially constructed as evidence by me, the researcher. Different methods will foster different data sets.<sup>119</sup> I use two types of data: advocacy documents and participant observations.

#### 4.1.1 Primary material

The research examines advocacy materials from international SRHR organisations. The pool of potential SRHR organisations included The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA); FP2020 and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The material was selected by analysing the websites of these agents. Search words included: *climate*, *climate change*, *adaptation*, *resilience*, *vulnerability*, *environment* and *sustainability*.

The agents were screened and chosen based on a) a focus on SRHR, reproductive health and/or FP; b) their international reach/scope; c) engagement with climate change adaptation; and d) the availability of relevant material. The selected materials are 1) the advocacy toolkit ‘Time to Think Family Planning’ by IPPF and the Population and Sustainability Network from 2016<sup>120</sup> (hereafter IPPF/PSN2016), and 2) the resource kit ‘Climate Change Connections’ by UNFPA and WEDO from 2009<sup>121</sup> (hereafter UNFPA/WEDO2009). See appendix for information on authors.

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<sup>119</sup> Lisahunter, Elke Emerald and Gregory Martin. 2013. *Participatory Activist Research in the Globalised World. Explorations of Educational Purpose*. Vol. 26. Dordrecht: Springer. pp. 62-66.

<sup>120</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”

<sup>121</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. UNFPA.

**Table 1.** Primary material.

	<b>Length</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Main argument</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Time to Think Family Planning, IPPF/PSN, 2016	20 pages	An introduction, ten arguments, a list of advocacy actions, and four template letters to government officials.	Human rights-based family planning is a climate adaptation strategy, which can benefit population dynamics, environmental sustainability, development, and global health, while meeting human rights.	Advocacy strategies linking FP to climate change.
Climate Change Connections, UNFPA/WEDO, 2009	45 pages	An overview of women and climate change, a policy section, case stories from different countries, a section on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), a finance section, and a section on education and advocacy.	Because women are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts gender should be considered and incorporated into climate policy, finance, advocacy, mitigation and adaptation measures, for resilience in communities to increase and contributing to sustainable development.	Gender and climate change.

#### 4.1.2 Secondary material

Secondary sources from academia and beyond are used to contextualise and support this research. In addition to research, news articles, reports from CSOs, IPCC and others, and official material in the form of UN decisions etc. are included. Three documents deserve particular attention, as they are central to the field and the primary materials: the ICPD Programme of Action, the Paris Agreement and a recent report on SRHR and climate. The ICPD Programme has been explained above (2.2).

While 197 parties adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015, 185 parties have ratified it at the time of writing.<sup>122</sup> The agreement sets out a common goal of keeping global temperature rise below 2, and preferably 1,5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Further, it includes a global goal of enhancing adaptation, resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.<sup>123</sup> The Paris Agreement is the current framework for international

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<sup>122</sup> UNFCCC. 2019. 'Paris Agreement - Status of Ratification.'

<sup>123</sup> UNFCCC. 2015. Paris Agreement. Article 4 and 7.

cooperation on climate change and also includes mechanisms for NAPS and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Every year at COP parties negotiate ambitions and implementations measures.<sup>124</sup>

The report ‘State of the Conversation: Climate Change, Population Dynamics and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights’ produced by consultant Heather McMullen for the DFPA and WWF Denmark gives an overview of perspectives and tensions of the field. McMullen outlines the problems in and opportunities for linking SRHR and climate change.<sup>125</sup> I have contributed to the report in transcribing eight of the interviews during my internship and later by offering feedback. In addition to the relevant discussions during the course of this work included in the participant observations, I use this report in the analysis to document some of the tendencies in the meeting between SRHR, demographic and climate change spaces.

#### 4.1.3 Participatory observation

My position at the DFPA offers insights into the SRHR field and specifically the links – thematic and organisational – to the climate adaptation field.<sup>126</sup> As intern and employee I have obtained deeper understandings and knowledge of the subject of this research. Through this job, I am myself implicated in the part of the social world that I am studying. Therefore, continual reflection and awareness about the role I play in influencing the setting and informants is crucial, but similarly important is how the setting and the informants influence me. To make this reflexivity explicit to the reader I include elements in the analysis that allow me to convey personal experience, while also maintaining the academic writing form. This is filtered through my perspective, but the knowledge creation is collective, as colleagues and other actors have created and facilitated this learning. The inclusion of participant observation is an attempt to make explicit the knowledge, experience and insight from my work at DFPA.

Participant observation is inherently a qualitative and interactive experience and relatively unstructured. [...] The data generated are often free flowing and the analysis much more interpretive than in direct

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<sup>124</sup> McMullen, Heather. 2019. ‘State of the Conversation: Climate Change, Population Dynamics and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights’. The Danish Family Planning Association.

<sup>125</sup> The report is based on 34 interviews and two workshops.

<sup>126</sup> I am employed in the Policy Unit, where I work 15 hours a week on international advocacy, including the work on environment, climate change and the SDGs. I was an intern in the fall of 2018 and was afterwards employed from January 2019 in a student position.

observation.<sup>127</sup>

The data consists of field texts and unstructured thoughts. At times the evidence relies on notes and questions scribbled down at meetings, but often it is based on reflections that have come up continuously or after certain events. Bringing this evidence from practice into an academic context involves theoretically founded analysis.<sup>128</sup> To fulfil the purpose of this research I seek to be constructive, although the research is critical. The DFPA head of policy has therefore approved the conducting of observations, and I have informed my colleagues about the inclusion of experiences from DFPA in the research. Finally, the combination of two different methods and thereby of the two different kinds of empirical data adds weight to my argument and validity to this research.

## 4.2 Mode of analysis

Discourse analysis is the main method for analysing the material, and will help me answer my research questions. The findings from the participatory observation are included in the form of reflections in relation to the findings and the discussion.

### 4.2.1 Discourse analysis

To uncover how climate adaptation and related issues are linked to SRHR in the chosen material, I analyse the discourses present in the advocacy documents. The discursive method contributes to uncovering underlying ideology or rationality in the SRHR advocacy materials by way of exposing how issues are connected sequentially and thematically. The concept of discourse is widely disputed<sup>129</sup>, and several understandings are accepted within academia. I apply the conceptualisation of discourse from critical discourse analysis (CDA) shaped by Norman Fairclough because of its focus on power, ideology and hegemony. Discourse is “a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.”<sup>130</sup> Fairclough argues discourse is both the site and at

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<sup>127</sup> Guest, Greg, Emily E. Namey and Marilyn L. Mitchell. 2017. “Participant Observation” in *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. p. 5.

<sup>128</sup> Lisahunter et al. 2013. *Participatory Activist Research in the Globalised World*. p. 99-100.

<sup>129</sup> Taylor, Stephanie. 2013. *What is Discourse Analysis?* London: Bloomsbury Academic. 77-79.

<sup>130</sup> Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 64.

stake in the power struggle.<sup>131</sup> He offers three dimensions of discourse: *text*, *the discursive practice* and *the social practice*.<sup>132</sup>

Bridging the method with my theoretical lens I include elements of feminist CDA outlined by Michelle Lazar and others.<sup>133</sup> The choice of feminist CDA is motivated by its attention to questions of power and identity, as important elements to this research. Feminist CDA is committed to achieving a just social order and concerned with “all forms of social inequality and injustice”.<sup>134</sup> Including insights from feminist CDA offers a focus on marginalised groups and the ways in which subjects are characterised. In the following, I present the three dimensions of discourse and describe the concepts relevant to my analysis: *audience*, *intertextuality*, *interdiscursivity*, *ideology*, *hegemony* and *power*.

*Text* is understood in broad terms and can be both written and spoken, but it is “the actual instance of language use”.<sup>135</sup> The focus is on vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure.<sup>136</sup> Both the content and form of a *text* is considered. Analysis of text combines elements from rhetorical, conceptual, image and linguistic methods.

*The discursive practice* is the conditions of the text: its production, distribution and consumption, including the author(s) and audience. Audience can be grouped in three; *addressees*, who are directly addressed, *hearers*, who are not addressed directly, but are assumed to be part of the audience, *and overhearers*, who are not part of the official audience, but nevertheless consume the text.<sup>137</sup> Another tool for the discursive practice is *intertextuality*, which refers to a sort of ‘conversation of texts’. It is used to denote relations between texts and can reveal ties between authors, traditions and genres. Intertextuality is expressed directly in quotations or implicitly through formulations, which refer, repeat, modify, adapt, oppose or comment on other statements.<sup>138</sup> Following a similar logic, *interdiscursivity* refers to the conversations of different discourses. Both *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity* add elements of historicity to a discourse.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

<sup>132</sup> Fairclough, Norman. 1989 [2013]. *Language and Power*. London, UK and New York: Routledge. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> Lazar, Michelle. 2005. *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.

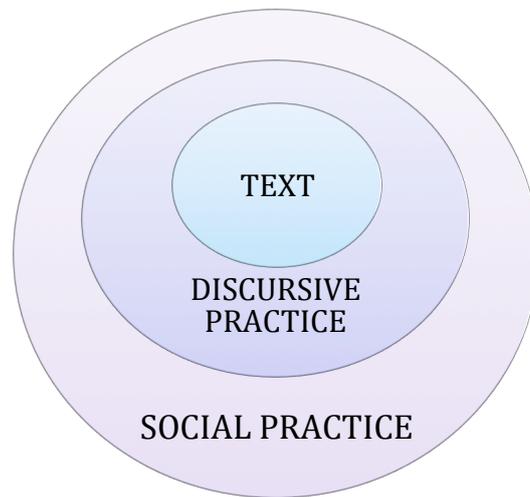
<sup>134</sup> Ibid. pp. 2, 5.

<sup>135</sup> Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London, UK and New York: Routledge. p.3.

<sup>136</sup> Fairclough. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. p. 75.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

<sup>138</sup> Talbot, Mary. 2005. “Choosing to Refuse to be a Victim: ‘Power Feminism’ and the Intertextuality of Victimhood and Choice”. in *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. ed. Michelle Lazar. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. p.168.



**Figure 4.** Fairclough's model of discourse. Adapted from *Discourse and Social Change*.

*The social practice* refers to the order of discourses, which is the social organisation and control of linguistic variation.<sup>139</sup> The social practice of discourse reproduces the world while changing it at the same time.

Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them.<sup>140</sup>

Here *ideology* and *hegemony* are central concepts. Building on Louis Althusser, Fairclough defines *ideology* as constructions of reality integral to different dimensions of discursive practice and thus “contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.”<sup>141</sup> Ideology is a property of both social events and social structure. Embedded in discourses, ideology is most effective when it becomes naturalised and ‘common sense’. Fairclough stresses the importance of balancing the reproductive and transformative dimensions of discourse so as to not give too much weight to either. This speaks to the fact that discourses are not stable, but in continuous development. However, this development is neither free from social structure, nor entirely bound by it. To Fairclough a discourse is ideological as long as it contributes to reproducing or transforming power relations.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Fairclough. 2003. *Analysing Discourse*. pp. 24-25. Original emphasis.

<sup>140</sup> Fairclough. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. p. 64.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. pp. 87-91.

Central to power is the concept of hegemony, coined by Antonio Gramsci, which for Fairclough signifies the domination and leadership of an economically defined social class over ideological, political and cultural domains of society. It is a power that is a constant site of struggle, and which works to produce, maintain or break relations of domination/subordination. The struggle over hegemony is present at all levels, from state institutions to media and in family life. The concept of hegemony can be used to analyse the power relations of the social practice of a discourse, including how those relations work to reproduce or challenge hegemonic power, as well as to analyse discourse as being itself a site of hegemonic struggle, where existing orders of discourse are reproduced, transformed or challenged.<sup>143</sup> In addition to hegemonic power, Fairclough discusses how markers of power move from being overt to covert, exemplified in how women have gained access to spaces such as education, juridical systems etc., but that access is still limited due to markers of power becoming covert. In other words, the barriers do not (necessarily) disappear, but are obscured.<sup>144</sup> In line with this, Lazar argues,

Gender ideology is hegemonic in that it often does not appear as domination at all; instead it seems largely consensual and acceptable to most in a community. [...] The taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of such knowledge is what mystifies or obscures the power differential and inequality at work.<sup>145</sup>

Lazar emphasises that despite the subordination of women to a patriarchal gender order, gender oppression is not materially and discursively experienced and enacted in the same way everywhere.<sup>146</sup> As elaborated in the theoretical framework, overlaps between gender structure and relations of sexuality, disability, race, class, culture and geography play vital roles in the expressions and experiences of oppression.

Therefore, when (white) scholars from the north (or west) make authoritative knowledge claims about communities in the south (or east), there is a danger of re-enacting historical imperialism in

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>145</sup> Lazar. 2005. *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. p.7.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

academic neo-imperialist terms.<sup>147</sup>

### 4.3 Limitations and ethics

It is impossible to fully ‘capture’ a discourse and the representation of the discourse on SRHR and climate change is therefore limited. Further it is limited by the analysis of print material, although the participant observations add nuance to the findings. The representation of the SRHR community is restricted as the primary materials reflect the positions of four SRHR organisations. Evidently, the SRHR community is bigger and in continuous motion. Tendencies can be identified from the two examples, though not generalised. The development over time in the SRHR community is beyond the scope of this thesis, which is restricted to two snapshots of the SRHR work on climate from 2009 and 2016. Again the participatory observation adds a contextualising element. However, the participatory method is also limited, as it is based on my own observations and thoughts, which are not verified by others in this field of work. Future research could look into the development over time and the context of production and consumption of the materials, which is dealt with here to a limited extent. The study is a desktop study supported by participant observation conducted at a Danish CSO over 11 months. Thus, as a researcher and in my methods I lack experience with these issues from a Global South context, and my knowledge of this is taught rather than lived. These limitations enable the research to analyse key discourses employed by major players in the SRHR community and to engage with the important topics of climate adaptation, SRHR, population, and social justice.

## 5 SRHR, climate change and the adaptable subject

This chapter presents the analysis, which is structured into four sections. The first section presents the context of the materials respectively. Answering the first research question, the second section examines how climate change and SRHR issues are linked. The third section responds to the second and third research questions of how subjects of climate adaptation are characterised and represented. The final section answers the question of what bodies are deemed adaptable and how.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

## 5.1 Production and context

To start of the analysis, I present the contexts of the materials in order for the reader to know central developments and events related to the materials. UNFPA/WEDO2009 was produced and distributed in 2009, when the international focus on climate change was starting to increase, partly because a landmark agreement was expected as the outcome of the COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark.<sup>148</sup> At this time, the SRHR community began to engage more in environmental and climate change issues, as evidenced in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2008, which identified “Gender perspectives on Climate Change”<sup>149</sup> as an emerging issue, and in the “State of the World Population 2009” report, which focused on climate change.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, a Lancet editorial on SRH and climate change suggested, “perhaps it is time for the sexual and reproductive health community to use the climate change agenda to gain the traction women’s health deserves.”<sup>151</sup> UNFPA/WEDO2009 was authored and funded by UNFPA – a UN body, and WEDO, an NGO. WEDO is present and active in the various government and UN contexts that relate to gender and environment more broadly.<sup>152</sup> The Women and Gender Constituency<sup>153</sup> coordinates gender and SRHR participation in UNFCCC meetings and processes, where WEDO and some SRHR organisations partake.

A UN focus is evident in the quoting, explaining and referencing of UN summits and treaties, including human rights and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). UNFPA/WEDO2009 outlines the history of international politics on gender/SRHR and environment/climate change, and the intertextual references offer legitimacy to UNFPA/WEDO2009 itself and the arguments made therein. Direct references prepare SRHR advocates for entering this ‘new’ arena of COP15 and beyond. In addition to the direct referencing of UN agreements, concepts and language use are in line with general UN language.<sup>154</sup> This is also the case in practice, where UN language offers legitimacy. The use of language on gender includes predefined concepts and hold semantic weight in the UN and

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<sup>148</sup> The COP15 did not result in any landmark decisions or agreements.

<sup>149</sup> UN Women. 2008. “Commission on the Status of Women”.

<sup>150</sup> UNFPA. 2009. “State of the World Population 2009. Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate.” UNFPA.

<sup>151</sup> Lancet. 2009. “Sexual and reproductive Health and Climate Change”. [Editorial]. *The Lancet*. Vol 374. September 19, 2009.

<sup>152</sup> WEDO. 2018. “Vision and Mission”.

<sup>153</sup> The Women and Gender Constituency coordinate and support CSOs working for women’s rights, gender justice, and environmental protection in order to help influence the annual conferences (COP) and develop the UNFCCC. (womengenderclimate.org.)

<sup>154</sup> In a sense the UN has its own language, which is continuously negotiated and transformed through new documents and at summits, although the ‘remembering’, ‘reaffirming’, ‘noting’ etc. in preambles secure a continuation of and respect for older agreements and principles.

international community, e.g. ‘gender perspective’, ‘gender-sensitive’, and ‘gender-specific’. Additionally, UNFPA/WEDO2009 uses central concepts in climate change discourse such as ‘disproportionate vulnerability’ and ‘common, but differentiated responsibility’.<sup>155</sup> These agreed-upon, legitimate concepts from both the climate change and gender spaces further connect the topics and make possible that SRHR concerns can figure in UNFCCC discussions and negotiations.

IPPF/PSN2016 was produced by CSOs only in 2016 and focuses on how such organisations can influence national and international policy. The positions of the authors within the SRHR community differ from the UNFPA, and they build their legitimacy on the IPPF’s 164 member associations<sup>156</sup> from across the globe and the members of the PSN. IPPF/PSN2016 was written to and published before COP22 in Marrakech, Morocco. It includes four template letters to state parties encouraging national delegations to promote the links between climate change and FP at COP22. The year before had seen two international milestones: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the adoption of the Paris Agreement. The SDGs increased focus on working across sectors to achieve global goals of development – even in the Global North. The SDGs bring focus to integrated and cross-issue policymaking, and are widely known and operationalised in the SRHR community, but knowledge of climate frameworks and the Paris Agreement is limited to experts within organisations. The increased focus on sustainability, including the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability was also evident in CSW 2016, where the priority theme was “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development”.<sup>157</sup> As the IPPF had advocated for the inclusion of SRHR into the SDGs, the federation was acquainted with this new development framework. This is evident in IPPF/PSN2016, which presents the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, and the SDGs. The timing of these international advances played a central role in the production of IPPF/PSN2016 and the engagement with both FP and climate change.

An important difference between the materials is their scope. UNFPA/PSN2009 takes on a broader gender lens and FP/reproductive health is just one aspect of the analysis and argumentation, but the part this research focuses on. In contrast, IPPF/PSN2016 focuses on

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<sup>155</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 38.

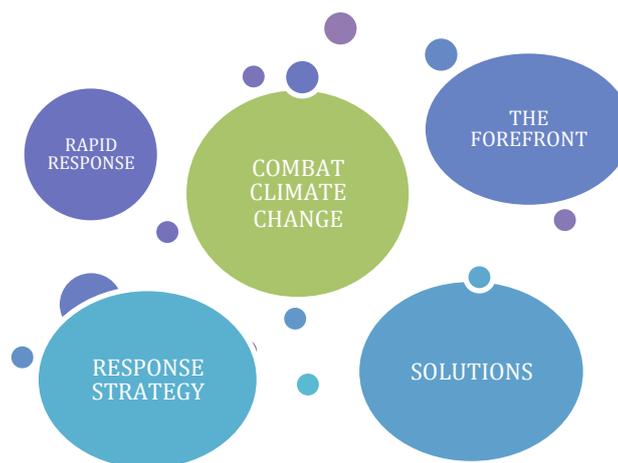
<sup>156</sup> IPPF. 2017. “Annual Performance Report 2016.”

<sup>157</sup> UN Women. 2016. “CSW60.”

the links between climate change and FP, offering ten arguments for making the link.<sup>158</sup> Both materials connect climate change, population and FP/reproductive health.

## 5.2 Linking climate change and SRHR issues

The overarching topic for both materials, climate change, is ascribed importance and urgency and the global nature of the phenomenon is emphasised. War metaphors and language such as “combat climate change”<sup>159</sup> and “the forefront”<sup>160</sup> are used to stress the urgency and provide justification for suggesting “solutions”, “response strategy”<sup>161</sup>, “rapid response”<sup>162</sup>, and policy asks.



**Figure 5.** Use of war metaphors to describe climate change.

Climate change is defined in IPPF/PSN2016 using a UNFCCC quote, and in UNFPA/WEDO2009 referencing the US Environmental Protection Agency. They both reference the IPCC’s Assessment Reports (AR4 and AR5) to show that GHG and human activity are linked to climate change. This intertextuality offers legitimacy and gives weight to the arguments presented.

Simultaneously with stressing the global nature of climate change, attention is brought to the difference in the distribution of climate change impacts. In UNFPA/WEDO2009 this

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<sup>158</sup> These arguments include: adaptation strategy with greatest human rights benefits; a cost-effective climate adaptation and response strategy; climate change and population displacement; an economic argument for FP as an adaptation strategy; overlap of countries with ‘unmet need’ for FP and those most threatened by climate change; the Paris Agreement: promoting health and gender; funding opportunities, programmatic and partnerships opportunities; a global health threat, and FP’s key to environmental sustainability.

<sup>159</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 6.

<sup>160</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 4.

<sup>162</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p.25.

difference is characterised by gender, with women being “disproportionately affected by climate change impacts”.<sup>163</sup> The disproportionality is explained by pre-existing gender inequalities, which are exacerbated by climate change. IPPF/PSN2016 on the other hand focuses on the differences in geographic distribution of climate change impacts and links the question of impacts to that of responsibility for climate change.

On the one hand, it is developed nations which have been the most significant emitters, and bear the greatest responsibility for climate change. On the other hand, it is often low income nations that are impacted most, as they are least able to adapt to climate change.<sup>164</sup>

The coupling of ‘developed countries’ with emissions or mitigation measures and ‘developing countries’ with adaptation measures respectively, reproduces the ‘developed/developing’ divide of the development field and the similar North/South distinction in climate politics.<sup>165</sup> This contributes to uphold colonial stereotypes of the divide between core and periphery.<sup>166</sup> While both materials refer to climate space infrastructure and terminology, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), it is evident that the countries are understood in the more traditional development sense. The geographic aspect is used strategically in IPPF/PSN2016 to bring together the two fields. The concept of *unmet need for family planning*<sup>167</sup> is used to justify FP as a strategy to development and further to climate adaptation. Paired with the geographically differing impacts of climate change it is used to show how ‘developing countries’ comprise a “focal region”<sup>168</sup> for both issues.

Family planning advocates can therefore use these unfortunate realities, and the significant overlap between countries with “unmet need” and those most at threat from climate change, when seeking

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>164</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ciple et al. 2015. “*Power in a Warming World*.” p. 55.

<sup>166</sup> Grosfoguel, Ramon and Ana Margarita Cervantes-Rodriguez. 2002. *The Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-System in the Twentieth Century*.” p. xx.

<sup>167</sup> As mentioned it refers to the estimated 225 million women and girls in the ‘developing countries’ who lack access to FP. The latest figure in 2019 of the estimated unmet need for family planning in ‘developing countries’ is 214 million girls and women. Guttmacher Institute. 2017. “Unmet need for modern contraception, 2017.” June 29, 2017. (Guttmacher.org.) (Accessed 26.06.2019).

<sup>168</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 7.

“climate change” funding for adaptation measures.<sup>169</sup>

The terminologies of the materials differ, revealing diverse goals and positions.<sup>170</sup> The use of *family planning* as the dominant term in IPPF/PSN2016 corresponds to the argumentation, which centres fertility rates and contraception. This exposes a single-issue focus and is more restricted than the reproductive justice approach. UNFPA/WEDO2009 uses *family planning* only together with *reproductive health* or *health services*, and includes a variety of terms, such as *maternal health*, *family health* and more. This corresponds to the broader gender approach to gender in UNFPA/WEDO2009. McMullen points out that conflation of these terms is frequent in the SRHR community, as some organisations are comfortable using only *family planning*, while others emphasise the importance of applying the broader *SRHR* concept.<sup>171</sup> This speaks to whether or not the organisation focuses on fertility rates (and population) only or a broader SRHR intervention. Some organisations use the *SRHR* concept despite meaning fertility rates and this is where confusion and conflation peak. In my own experience this is a deliberate choice, as the *SRHR* concept is seen as something not to be compromised because it holds weight internationally and in the long run SRHR language can open up for tackling more issues in the context of climate change. This is not the case in the materials, where SRHR is almost absent. Another confusing aspect is that *family planning*, *SRHR* and *reproductive health* vary in meaning regionally and in context, as some advocates include abortion rights in the FP concept, while others mean contraception only. It is noteworthy that the question of abortion is absent in both materials. In the case of UNFPA/WEDO2009 this is to be expected as the UNFPA mandate from UN countries does not include abortion.<sup>172</sup> In IPPF/PSN2016 it is unclear whether the concept of *family planning* includes abortion, which illustrates the strong presence of politics in the discourse, as abortion is absent not on account of irrelevance, but due to political and normative reasons.

Rights and justice concepts further link the two fields. Both materials state that ‘developed countries’ bear the greatest responsibility for climate change.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>170</sup> Despite identifying all authors as SRHR organisations or networks, IPPF/PSN2016 uses the term SRHR only once. UNFPA/PSN2009 makes no mention of SRHR at all.

<sup>171</sup> McMullen, Heather. 2019. ‘State of the Conversation: Climate Change, population dynamics and sexual and reproductive health and rights.’ Danish Family Planning Association. p. 15.

<sup>172</sup> As noted on the UNFPA website: “UNFPA does not promote abortion. Rather, it accords the highest priority to voluntary family planning to prevent unintended pregnancies in order to eliminate recourse to abortion. UNFPA helps governments strengthen their national health systems to deal effectively with complications of unsafe abortions, thereby saving women’s lives. UNFPA does not promote changes to the legal status of abortion, which are decision-making processes that are the sovereign preserve of countries. But UNFPA opposes any coercive abortion and the discriminatory practice of prenatal sex selection.”

UNFPA/WEDO2009 engages more directly with the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ and state that, “industrialized countries must urgently reduce emissions and pay their corresponding historical carbon debt.”<sup>173</sup> Climate justice is mentioned once in UNFPA/WEDO2009<sup>174</sup>: “no climate justice without gender justice.”<sup>175</sup> The concept of climate justice invokes an understanding of climate change as a political and ethical issue in addition to an environmental one.<sup>176</sup> The potentially radical meaning of *climate justice* is however not further explored. The RJ movement is closer to this radical meaning of climate justice, as intersections between injustices are in focus. Similarly, *gender justice* is not explored, and it is clear that gender is understood in binary terms, almost synonymous with *women*. Across the SRHR community gender differs in meaning. Traditional women’s organisations tend to use a binary gender concept, while others have adopted a more fluid concept in order to include more people in their programmes and challenge norms of gender and sexuality.

A rights-based solution to twenty first century challenges should always be followed, and it is a basic human right to be able to choose whether, when, and how many children to have.<sup>177</sup>

Rights language in the materials, include the right to development<sup>178</sup>, the right to health<sup>179</sup>, the human rights based approach<sup>180</sup>, and women’s rights.<sup>181</sup> These concepts refer to and draw legitimacy from both human rights and sexual and reproductive rights frameworks. It is not always clear what it means to be rights-based and how organisations practice this approach.<sup>182</sup> SRHR organisations, which I am familiar with, often express this approach with reference to human rights, ICPD and concepts of choice and voluntariness. In many ways the rights-based approach is constructed in opposition to population control and coercive programmes. The

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<sup>173</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 38.

<sup>174</sup> In a recommendation for UNFCCC parties on including gender and climate justice in global climate finance agreements.

<sup>175</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 35. This slogan is attributed to the Gender CC network.

<sup>176</sup> Chatterton, Paul, David Featherstone and Paul Routledge. 2013. “Articulating Climate Justice in Copenhagen: Antagonism, the Commons, and Solidarity.” *Antipode*. Vol. 45, Issue 3.p.603.

<sup>177</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”p. 4.

<sup>178</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p.11.

<sup>179</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”p. 7.

<sup>180</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 9; IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”p. 2.

<sup>181</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p.13.

<sup>182</sup> McMullen. 2019. ”State of the Conversation”. pp. 17-18.

use of ‘solution’ in this context can inspire associations of population control and eugenic programmes, and so ‘strategy’ is a better term.<sup>183</sup>

Both materials touch upon violence against women, but do not mention *sexual rights*, including the right to bodily integrity and security of person.<sup>184</sup> This is presumably due to controversy over sexual rights and their association with LGBTQIA+ rights. In some contexts advocates prefer *family planning* or *reproductive health*, as conversations simply shut down when rights are mentioned. Furthermore, advocates vary in being comfortable with rights language, and some see it as less effective in their contexts.<sup>185</sup> In practice sexual rights is often what divides parties in international discussions and negotiations such as at CPD and CSW. It is evident that LGBTQIA+ rights and health are seen as separate from FP measures in the materials. This points to a heteronormative approach to SRHR in ‘developing countries’, also seen in the materials, which fail to account for and even mention LGBTQIA+ people. This again speaks to a narrow focus in SRHR as relevant to climate change. In my experience FP has a heterosexual focus, not necessarily in the term itself, but in the way SRHR agents use it. Similarly to the question of rights, population can be less controversial in some settings and more effective for advocates than gender equality or other arguments.<sup>186</sup>

### 5.2.1 Three arguments

Three arguments linking SRHR/FP and climate change are evident in the materials: *the gender equality argument*, *the societal adaptation argument*, and *the mitigation argument*. The first two centre adaptation, while the latter two engage questions of population dynamics. The arguments interact in the materials. Whereas the *societal adaptation argument* is the main argument of IPPF/PSN2016, UNFPA/WEDO2009 argues more broadly for inclusion of gender considerations in climate policies.

The *gender equality argument* centres individual women or households, rather than society as a whole. It follows the logic of how being able to choose timing, spacing and frequency of having children – if any – will increase the opportunities of women to participate in public life more, including education, work and decision-making. This argument is primarily apparent in UNFPA/WEDO2009 and accounts for inequality as a factor of vulnerability. The line of argumentation is based on the victim/agent trope explored below

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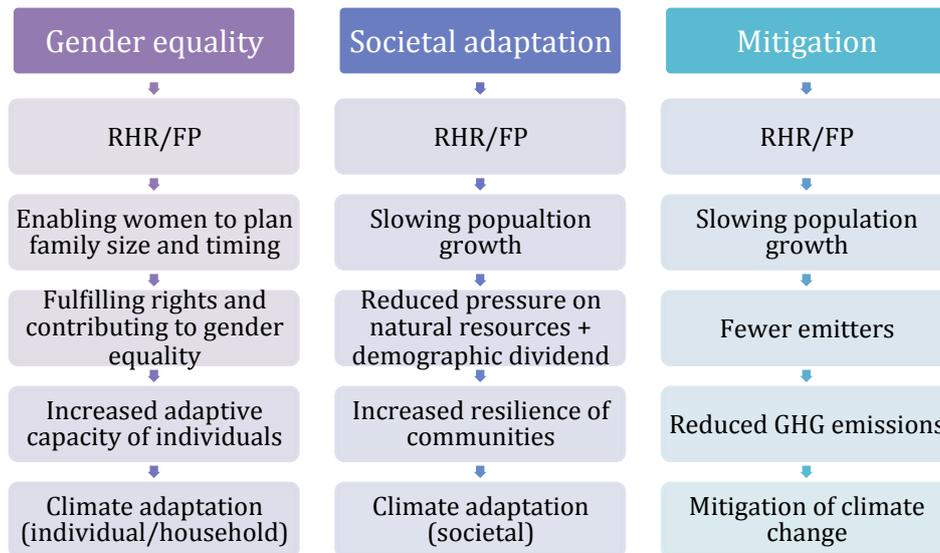
<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>184</sup> World Association for Sexual Health. 2014. “Declaration of Sexual Rights.”

<sup>185</sup> McMullen. 2019. “State of the Conversation”. pp. 13-14.

<sup>186</sup> It should be noted here that there is a difference between what advocates voice in their own context and what international organisations argue at the global level.

(5.3.1). A general fact of gender inequality partly explains vulnerabilities and the possibility of increased gender equality portrays the adaptive capacity of women, households and communities.



**Figure 6.** Three arguments linking climate change and SRHR. The three lines of argumentation are gender equality, societal adaptation, and finally mitigation.

The *societal adaptation argument* deals with population growth and “population pressure”<sup>187</sup> as a general fact of many ‘developing countries’, especially Sub-Saharan countries. The logic is simple: the more people the greater pressure on land and resources. Resilience of communities will improve through the provision of FP/reproductive health services, which causes a reduction in fertility rates and thus impacts population growth by slowing it, thereby limiting competition for scarce resources. Consequently, societies can adapt to climate change. Based on this logic IPPF/PSN2016 projects how the increased use of FP can lead to a *demographic dividend*.<sup>188</sup> IPPF/PSN2016 further argues that economic productivity increases if adolescent girls wait to have children until they are more than twenty years old. This argument is economic (and demographic) and does not account for the desires of the girls and women. In a way it is the ‘people as power’ discourse turned upside down: fewer people means more power (to adapt). However, it also includes elements of Malthusian thinking in linking population and scarcity of resources.

The *mitigation argument* declares that FP/RHR services cause reductions in GHG

<sup>187</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> The demographic dividend refers to growth in an economy as a result of changes in the age structure of a population. This change would typically be caused by a decline in mortality and fertility rates, where a relative increase in the number of ‘working-age adults’ contributes to economic growth of a given nation.

emissions: fewer emitters yield fewer emissions. FP, or a broader set of ‘empowering’ measures<sup>189</sup>, is said to cause a decrease in population growth, resulting in emissions reductions and thereby mitigation of climate change. The mitigation argument is controversial and problematic as it draws a direct line between number of people and amount of GHG emissions. It does not account for historical injustices and the responsibility for climate change nor consumption patterns. Both materials recognise the differences in emissions of individuals of the Global South and North.<sup>190</sup> Despite rendering mitigation actions “most appropriate for developed countries”<sup>191</sup>, mitigation comes up on several occasions. IPPF/PSN2016 briefly includes the US as a possible site for implementing FP as a mitigation strategy<sup>192</sup>, but overall the focus remains on the Global South.

[...] research shows that eliminating the unmet need for family planning could contribute between 16-29% of the needed carbon emission reductions to avoid the most disastrous effects of climate change. Secondly, emissions averted through investments in family planning would cost about \$4.50 per ton of carbon dioxide [...].<sup>193</sup>

This quote illustrates the problematics of the mitigation argument. People become numbers, both in terms of amount of emissions and money. If we start (or continue) to calculate and value human lives in these terms, then when is a human being worth (or cheap) enough to be granted a life? Furthermore, the research used as evidence is modelled on possible scenarios, not accounting for *how* population growth is slowed.<sup>194</sup> These projections play a central role in supporting SRHR mitigation arguments.<sup>195</sup> In December 2009 Population Matters launched

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<sup>189</sup> Here the UNFPA/WEDO2009 includes girls’ education, greater economic opportunities for women in addition to reproductive health services and family planning.

<sup>190</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 4.; IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> “[...] remove barriers to family planning [...] in the world’s wealthiest country, where barriers to family planning remain and where high levels of consumption lead to particularly high levels of greenhouse gas emissions.” IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 4.

<sup>193</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” pp. 4-5.

<sup>194</sup> O’Neill, Brian C., Michael Dalton, Regina Fuchs, Leiwen Jiang, Shonali Pachauri, and Katarina Zigova. 2010. “Global demographic trends and future carbon emissions”. In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 107(41).

<sup>195</sup> For instance a paper from 2017 claimed that having one fewer child was the most effective ‘action’ in terms of reducing emissions which an individual could do, based on calculations that attributed half of the child’s emissions to each parent as well as a quarter of the grandchildren’s offspring. The problem, in addition to assuming that all children have two parents and will eventually reproduce, is that the child is seen as an emissions activity of the parent, rather than a person itself. Such research has implications for how we think about human worth in the context of climate change. See Wynes, Seth and Kimberly A. Nicholas. 2017. “The climate mitigation gap: education

the PopOffset project, where one could offset carbon emissions from flying or other activity by funding FP. In other words, continuing one's harmful behaviour in exchange for someone somewhere else not having children.<sup>196</sup> The materials do not go so far, but position mitigation as a valid argument for FP/reproductive health in the context of climate change in the 'developing countries'. Importantly, the *mitigation argument* represents a small part of the argumentation in both materials.<sup>197</sup> Some SRHR organisations refrain from mitigation arguments altogether, while others argue that rights-based SRHR/FP agents should take lead of this approach, because advocates of population control and coercion might otherwise employ it. Still others think population should be abandoned, as it distracts the conversation and instrumentalises women and their bodies.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, FP programmes have been accused of being racist, or hiding a eugenic agenda due to their focus on countries in the Global South.<sup>199</sup>

The arguments on population growth do not take into account population density, distribution of resources and questions of scale. It assumes more people equals more pressure on the environment and social systems, without evaluating or discussing how this looks in different contexts.

### 5.3 Representation and subject positions

The primary subjects of the texts are women (and girls), although this category is both broad and ambiguous. The women are not the recipients or part of the audience, but rather the beneficiaries of the actions, advocated for in the materials. Women are the point of departure in UNFPA/WEDO2009, whereas IPPF/PSN2016 barely mentions them, despite their central role in using FP. The audience or *addressees* of UNFPA/WEDO2009 are gender and women's rights advocates, including SRHR/FP advocates. Further, UNFPA/WEDO2009 sets out recommendations addressed to policy makers, the parties to the UNFCCC, the UNFCCC itself, 'developed' and 'developing countries'. Although these actors are addressed directly, they can also be characterised as hearers or even overhearers. In IPPF/PSN2016 the

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and government recommendations miss the most effective individual actions". In *Environmental Research Letters*. Vol. 12.

<sup>196</sup>Vidal, John. 2009. "Rich nations to offset emissions with birth control". *The Guardian*. 03.12.2009.

<sup>197</sup> I choose to analyse this not only because it was a surprising finding, but also because it helps situate the controversial aspects of these issues, and it is not uncommon in this debate.

<sup>198</sup> McMullen. 2019. "State of the Conversation". pp.16, 20, 22.

<sup>199</sup> Ross, Loretta J. et al. 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice. Foundations. Theory. Practice. Critique*. New York City, US: Feminist Press. pp. 77-78.

addressees are described as “national family planning advocates”<sup>200</sup> and the audience is therefore narrower. The *hearers* of the materials are CSOs more broadly and in the case of IPPF/PSN2016 particularly gender or women’s rights organisations. The *overhearers* are policy makers and even environmental organisations. There seems to be no intention for the beneficiaries of the advocacy – the women – to consume the material. Rather they are represented, although as a homogenous group, and are discursively central in building the argumentation for connecting SRHR/FP with climate change. The aim then is that the outcomes of the advocacy should benefit the (material) women. This is evident in the way DFPA and other organisations work through advocacy to increase demand for SRHR services, rather than working directly with women.<sup>201</sup> The lack of involvement of women poses questions about the legitimacy of representation. The legitimacy of who speaks is a vital consideration in the climate and development spaces where the North-South divide and colonial histories are ever present.

Evidently, some of the authors and the audience are women, but it is a different category of women. This is expressed in the dichotomy of *us* and *them*, which appears implicitly several times in the materials. A contrast between ‘emitters’ and ‘adapters’ is evident throughout, in outlining causes and consequences of climate change and in the measures suggested to remedy the impacts. Generally, the emitters are the ‘developed countries’ and their populations – and thus the authors – and the adapters are the ‘developing countries’ or ‘low income nations’<sup>202</sup> and their populations. “Climate change is a threat to all of us, but to those populations and countries most at risk, it is a matter of survival—and not in the distant future, but today.”<sup>203</sup> Here the *us* refers to all people, and the *they* refers to people in ‘developing countries’ experiencing impacts of climate change. While UNFPA/WEDO2009 seeks to represent the interests of the people in ‘developing countries’, these people are not part of the writing *we/us* – at least not all the time. This distinction between women is drawn across lines of space and time, positioning climate change as occurring in ‘developing countries’ today, while the ‘developed countries’ are geographically and temporally removed from it. In addition to geographic location, questions of class and race are apparent markers of distinction between the two *wes*, portraying the colonial nature of this distinction. The dichotomy of *us/them* is ambiguous, because the adapting subject also

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<sup>200</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> However, from a postcolonial perspective it is positive that local organisations provide service delivery rather than foreign organisations from the global north.

<sup>202</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” p. 2.

<sup>203</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 38.

emits GHG, as evident in the mitigation argument. Furthermore, some women in ‘developed countries’ – the *we* – also face barriers to influencing decision-making processes, accessing education and so on. At times the category of women refers to ‘poor and disadvantaged women’ in both ‘developing’ and ‘developed countries’.<sup>204</sup>



Figure 7. Descriptions of women.

The term *women* is used to describe an enormous group of people in different situations and geographies with varying challenges. The women are described as village women<sup>205</sup>, leaders, educators, caregivers, innovators<sup>206</sup>, agents of change<sup>207</sup>, indigenous women<sup>208</sup>, women and girls of reproductive age<sup>209</sup>, and community organisers<sup>210</sup> - a range of different roles, identities, capacities and contexts. Despite this pluralism in conditions and subjects, *women as a category of analysis* dominates. This large grouping of *women* and their potentials in relation to climate change play out simultaneously at different levels: their disproportionate vulnerability to climate change impacts, their lack of participation in programs and policy-making, poor health, social norms and gender roles, and generally their subjection to gender inequality. While these are all realities, this broad category of women can be counterproductive, because it suggests that they share characteristics and capacities *because* they are women, and as Mohanty points out this obscures the specificities of the social, economic, cultural and political contexts in which these struggles exist. The stating of broadly generalised ‘facts’ removed from their temporal and special contexts adds to this.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. p.3.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p.40.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p.28.

<sup>209</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”p. 5.

<sup>210</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p.34.

### 5.3.1 Othering

Gender advocates also need to emphasize that climate change affects people. Reminding policymakers that climate change has a human face—a woman’s face—may help make the issue more personal.<sup>211</sup>

As illustrated here, the *material bodies* of women are used to unite them, claiming a difference between a human’s and a woman’s face. At the same time the corporeality of the woman is enacted, and while this is a way of obscuring the endless variations in the material bodies of the subjects, it can also be seen as a way of constructing a discursive body of a woman. This body is fertile and reproductively capable, it is of ‘reproductive age’ and able-bodied by default. To talk of girls and women of ‘reproductive age’ assumes that reproductive capacity relates to age rather than body. This concept most often encompasses girls and women at the age of 15-49 years.<sup>212</sup> Removing reproductive capacity from its corporeality obscures the different reproductive challenges women (and others) may face. Disability is absent except in UNFPA/WEDO2009, which mentions people with disabilities as a vulnerable group in addition to women, children and the elderly. In other words, the category of women does not include people with disabilities, or the elderly. Additionally, the category of women refers to ‘non-white’<sup>213</sup> women, this is not stated explicitly, but all pictures speak to it.



**Image 1.** Pictures from the materials. The first is from IPPF/PSN2016, the other two from UNFPA/WEDO2009.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. p. 40. Emphasis added.

<sup>212</sup> WHO. 2006. “Reproductive Health Indicators Reproductive Health and Research Guidelines for their generation, interpretation and analysis for global monitoring”, p. 9. Sometimes it refers to the age group of 12-51 year olds depending on the statistics institution and method.

<sup>213</sup> I used his concept as opposed to ‘women of colour’ or similar terms in order to underline how the adaptable subject is constructed discursively through its/her antagonism to the white, Western author, the limited *we* of the texts.

In the texts the girl/woman is assumed to be fertile, able-bodied, cisgender and heterosexual. In some sense it is contradictory that the materials advocate gender equality, while at the same time exerting this normative power through language use over who gets to be included in this cause of empowerment. It is my impression that disability in relation to SRHR is seen as separate from the general SRHR discussion. On several occasions, I came to understand how disability is seen as particularly complex and sometimes avoided in relation to questions of reproduction. A common phrase of ‘gender, body and sexuality’ used daily, in practice primarily refers to capable bodies.

While *patriarchy*, *oppression* and *subordination* are absent concepts in the materials, UNFPA/WEDO2009 talk of gender inequality. “Gender inequality still exists—rights, responsibilities and opportunities vary based largely on sex and social constructs—and climate change exacerbates existing discrimination.”<sup>214</sup> Due to the broad generalisations about women these oppressive structures come to appear singular and universal. This corresponds to the reductive notion of *the third world woman* and *one* patriarchy. Remember Lazar’s argument that shared structural subordination to men does not mean that gender oppression is expressed similarly everywhere, but rather varies on account of intersections with race, age, culture and sexual orientation.<sup>215</sup> This critique is to some degree met in UNFPA/WEDO2009:

Climate change affects women in different ways across the globe, but common themes bridge their experiences. Examining the impact of climate change through a gender lens in five developing countries— Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal, Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago—reveals a pattern.<sup>216</sup>

But what does it mean to tease out a pattern from a group as big as women, even when ‘limited’ to five countries? Despite acknowledging that climate change affects women differently UNFPA/WEDO2009 does not engage these differences beyond case stories. The supposed commonality between women and the assumption that their experiences and conditions can be generalised is further what McFadden problematises with *hubristic universality*. In recalling her appeal to put race at the centre of white feminism, it is clear that race is loudly absent in the materials. However, a racial difference between author and subject

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<sup>214</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 39.

<sup>215</sup> Lazar. 2005. *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. p. 10.

<sup>216</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 18.

(object) is evident in the use of pictures of poor, nameless, barefoot, women of colour working or carrying their children. The assumptions about the women and ultimately the proposed actions are based on an ethnocentric analysis, which continuously mirrors the lives of the women in ‘developing countries’, the Other or *subaltern*<sup>217</sup>, in the self-image of women in the ‘developed countries’. The women of ‘developed countries’ are correspondingly constructed as white, sexually liberated, in control, rich, etc. These discursive positions further undermine the legitimacy of the authors to represent the women of the Global South.

In many parts of the world, women *still* face unequal access to decision-making, formal financial systems, land ownership, reproductive health care, and education and information, undermining their wellbeing in addition to that of their families and communities.<sup>218</sup>

Describing the challenges and inequalities of women in ‘many parts of the world’ (read: not the Global North) as temporally delayed or developmentally ‘behind’ is a sign of *othering*. It reveals the ethnocentric self-representation of the authors and how they subscribe to a theory of linear development, which is universally applicable. The discursive removal of context and individual experiences creates *the third world woman* trope, and as Mohanty predicts, she is victimised, uneducated, poor etc. Moreover, she has object status in that the materials write *about* her, attempting to write *for* her, but not *to* or *with* her.<sup>219</sup> IPPF/PSN2016 does not quote the women, and UNFPA/WEDO2009 includes quotes – all from earlier WEDO publications – from three women; Atibzel Abaande from Ghana, Satou Diouf from Senegal, and Marium (no last name) from Bangladesh.<sup>220</sup> The most direct representation of the women’s desires in IPPF/PSN2016 is through the estimated 225 million girls and women who have an unmet need for FP.

In producing advocacy and communications material somewhat similar to these materials, I have been struggling with the question of how – if at all – (white) women in the Global North can present fair and accurate narratives, and whether we can in fact relate to the women of colour whose case we are trying to represent. With oppression varying greatly,

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<sup>217</sup> The subaltern stands in opposition to the elite and refers to subjects that are not recognized in history and are on the margins of politics. On the topic of representation Gayatri Spivak asks the question of whether the subaltern can speak? Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. ”Can the Subaltern Speak?”. *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education. pp. 90-104.

<sup>218</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 3. Emphasis added.

<sup>219</sup> Spivak. 1988. ”Can the Subaltern Speak?” p.70.

<sup>220</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. pp. 18,19, 21.

nuance and context is necessary to understand how it plays out in a given setting, but in making the case for SRHR in climate change policy, we often lose this nuance, leaving the women everywhere and nowhere to be found.

## 5.4 Adaptation and vulnerability

The materials differ in their understanding of adaptation, with scale as the main difference between the two. The adaptation definition of UNFPA/WEDO2009<sup>221</sup> includes actions of individuals or systems to resist, exploit or avoid impacts of climate change in the present and future. Adaptation is seen as actions that decrease vulnerability and increase resilience.<sup>222</sup> IPPF/PSN2016 does not engage with adaptation of individuals, which corresponds to the aforementioned absence of subjects. Instead communities and ecosystems are in focus. This is evident in the use of *adaptation* in the material, for instance “nations’ ability to adapt to climate change.”<sup>223</sup> *Resilience* is also employed as a matter of societies, regions or health systems.<sup>224</sup> The scale of resilience is similar in UNFPA/WEDO2009, but here adaptive capacity is linked to individuals in addition to communities. Resilience is presented as the counterpart to vulnerability: enhancing resilience means reducing vulnerability and vice versa. Both resilience and adaptive capacity are seen as properties to be built. What resilience means exactly is not developed in the materials, and it remains a somewhat insubstantial concept.

The materials engage with several aspects of adaptation in noting how climate adaptation is often understood as physical adaptation such as early warning systems and other infrastructure solutions, rather than “ensuring people’s access to basic needs.”<sup>225</sup> The materials also recognise social adaptation.

But adaptation can also be social, such as meeting demands for reproductive health services and ensuring education for girls, which empowers women to better negotiate the spacing and number of their pregnancies and increases gender equality.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> The definition is a quote from the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, C2ES.

<sup>222</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 8.

<sup>223</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.”p. 14.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>225</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 34.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p.27.

Rather than strengthening health care infrastructure, the strategy of promoting FP suggests women's health issues can be solved with simple interventions from international development organisations. FP does not address the conditions impacting the lives of these women, nor does it engage the contexts of gender inequality or the root causes thereof. It is important to note that neither of the materials presents FP/RHR as the only strategy to climate adaptation. IPPF/PSN2016 argues that, "Investing in family planning must be one of the elements of a package of actions to enhance resilience in the region [The Sahel]"<sup>227</sup>, to address the combination of climate change, unmet need for FP, population growth, political instability and food insecurity. IPPF/PSN2016 further argues that the gender aspect of programmes of reproductive health is attractive to donors.<sup>228</sup>

Although women worldwide have made strides toward social equality and gaining rights, their socioeconomic status remains lower than men's. This makes them disproportionately vulnerable to environmental changes.<sup>229</sup>

The construction of the vulnerability of women rests on generalised assumptions about the conditions of women in 'developing countries'. The main premise, as explored above, is gender: "Women and men have different experiences, expertise and knowledge."<sup>230</sup> IPPF/PSN2016 states that, "girls and women are often more greatly affected in both sudden and slow-onset emergencies, and often face diverse sexual and reproductive health challenges."<sup>231</sup> The vulnerability of women is often described as 'disproportionate'. This term is used in UNFPA/WEDO2009 with reference to gender inequality. Furthermore, vulnerability is spatialised, as it is coupled with the (vague) geographies of 'developing countries'. In IPPF/PSN2016 vulnerability describes regions or societies more often than individuals.

Developing countries are most at risk from climate change for a variety of reasons. Residents are often more likely to rely directly on natural resources for food security and livelihoods, have limited

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<sup>227</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. "Time to Think Family Planning," p. 9.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>229</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. "Climate Change Connections". p. 3.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>231</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. "Time to Think Family Planning," p. 5.

alternative employment opportunities, and be less likely to have savings.<sup>232</sup>

This is an example of how descriptive statistics become almost prescriptive, leaving little room for the actions of people on the ground. Calculated likelihoods play a greater role than lived experiences in building the case of vulnerability in IPPF/PSN2016, where vulnerability is linked to unmet need for FP. Attempting to contextualise vulnerability, human rights abuses, weak health infrastructure, food insecurity, political instability, and population growth explain the vulnerability of the region. Sahel is described as “the high fertility Sahel”<sup>233</sup>, and as one of “the most chronically vulnerable regions in the world”.<sup>234</sup>

UNFPA/WEDO2009 offers five case stories, where the lived experiences of women are represented and thus add nuance to the conditions of women and their vulnerabilities.<sup>235</sup> The table below shows factors from these cases, which are said to contribute to the vulnerability of the women.

**Table 2.** Vulnerabilities of women in UNFPA/WEDO2009.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>Ghana</b>	<b>Nepal</b>	<b>Senegal</b>	<b>Trinidad and Tobago</b>
Lack of economic opportunities	X	X	X	X	X
Increased workload (domestic/unpaid labour)	X		X	X	
Underrepresentation in economic and political sphere	X	X	X		
Violence and/or harassment	X	X			
Lack of education and access to information			X		X
Responsibility for collection of (scarce) natural resource		X	X	X	
Lack of health care	X		X		

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. p. 8. In a quote from the Population Reference Bureau.

<sup>235</sup> The cases are from Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago. UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. p. 17-22.

Other country-specific factors	Social norms	Gendered segregation of labour  Lack of - land rights - voice in risk-reduction planning	Caste and ethnic status  Lack of - employment - access to technical infrastructure and development efforts	Agriculture and fishing production  Women running rural villages, as men move to urban settings for employment reasons	HIV and AIDS (increasingly feminised)  Poverty  Gender inequality
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This construction of vulnerability partly corresponds to *the pressure and release model* in that it gives weight to gender inequality and other factors of everyday life in making women *disproportionately* vulnerable to climate change. *Dynamic pressures* identified as food insecurity, population growth etc. are shown to cause *unsafe conditions*, which are exacerbated by climate change. In a quote from the Global Fund for Women, UNFPA/WEDO2009 present a similar logic, “The gender inequalities that define [women’s] lives prior to a disaster are really what put them at such greatly increased risk after a disaster.”<sup>236</sup> However, the *root causes* are not dealt with and while economic and political systems are mentioned they are done so in apolitical ways. For instance, issues of capitalism and consumption are absent when population growth<sup>237</sup> is said to hinder the economic growth of ‘developing countries’.<sup>238</sup>

#### 5.4.1 The adaptable subject: victim or agent

The women in the materials are deemed disproportionately vulnerable, but they are also attributed adaptive capacity. Similarly to gender as a marker of vulnerability<sup>239</sup>, it is a marker of adaptive capacity. This serves as the premise for arguing that adaptation measures should be gender-sensitive.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> Here population growth is seen as a result of unmet need for family planning.

<sup>238</sup> IPPF and PSN. 2016. “Time to Think Family Planning.” pp. 5-6.

<sup>239</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. “Climate Change Connections”. p. 28.

[...] if gender equality is not considered in climate change policy-making and programme implementation, then half the world's population may not be adequately equipped to cope.<sup>240</sup>

The case stories of UNFPA/WEDO2009 include aspects of agency in examples of how the women are already coping and adapting to climate change. These adaptive actions include planting long-term crops, collective financial schemes, migrating (for work), adjusting diets, preserving limited supply of resources, building elevated platforms for emergencies, organising in women's groups, reforestation, and new agricultural techniques to ensure land and resource quality. In line with Sasser's writings, the women are both victims and agents. This duality is declared in UNFPA/WEDO2009:

At the same time, women's vulnerability can obscure the fact that they are *an untapped resource* in efforts to cope with climate change and reduce the emissions that cause it.<sup>241</sup>

The quote illustrates how women are seen as instrumental to adaptation and mitigation efforts, and simultaneously subjected to cost-effective, market logics, rendering them a *resource* to be exploited. This language points to a connection between women and nature – similar to an ecofeminist reading<sup>242</sup> – in that the behaviour of 'man' towards nature is mirrored in 'his' behaviour towards women. It follows Sasser's line of thinking of the *sexual steward*. This is firstly because women are deemed closer to the environment/nature due to their (assumed) roles in natural resource management and domestic work, and their stewardship is thereby enacted. This is evident in the section title, "Women as Managers of the Environment"<sup>243</sup>, and in the discursive positioning of women, "on the frontlines dealing with increased natural disasters and changes in their environment"<sup>244</sup>, which is supported by their assumed poverty and caretaking roles. The stewardship indicates both vulnerability and adaptive capacity. Secondly, the potentiality of "women's ability to control their fertility"<sup>245</sup> is linked to adaptive capacity, reduced vulnerability and mitigation of climate change. This sexual stewardship further cements the homogeneity of the group as it attributes common

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p. 3. Emphasis added.

<sup>242</sup> Salleh, Ariel. 2017. "Ecofeminism" in *Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics: Nature and Society*. Routledge.

<sup>243</sup> UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. "Climate Change Connections". p. 4.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

challenges, conditions and capacities to the women. According to UNFPA/WEDO2009 women are “agents of change and have unique knowledge and capabilities.”<sup>246</sup> The language use switches back and forth between passive and active forms, when engaging the victim and agent respectively.

The impacts of climate change demonstrate that women are still among the most vulnerable and *must urgently be included* as stakeholders, rights-holders and agents of change, alongside men.<sup>247</sup>

Surely, the women cannot urgently include themselves as stakeholders. Another example of passivity is in how women will be empowered as a result of (investing in) FP and reproductive health access.<sup>248</sup> This language use inspires questions of what agency means in this context? Do women become agents, when international organisations intervene in their contexts to ‘help’ them by offering contraception? In UNFPA/WEDO2009 empowerment and agency seems to be given to women from an outside party. At the same time, active language is used when women are seen as innovators and leaders.

They have been adapting to climate change long before scientists gave it a name or policy makers began to draft a response: women feed their families, raise and educate children and care for their communities against all odds, and their innovations often improve the wider population’s well-being.<sup>249</sup>

The women’s agency, choices and desires are framed as directed towards and motivated by a family, household and community. As such, the women are not represented as individuals, but rather part of collectives in which their role is predefined and they are presented as domestic. “Investing in women means investing in families.”<sup>250</sup>

Bringing a crip and disability lens to this field inspires further thinking about the discursive markers of ability and capacity. In a sense the argumentations of the materials centre ability: *vulnerability*, *adaptability* and *sustainability*. The women have the capacities to

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 39. Emphasis added.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

be at risk and to adapt, which contributes to the ability of the surrounding community and environment to maintain itself. Reproductive capacity play an important role in constructing the *adaptable subject*, especially in IPPF/PSN2016, where the adaptive capacity of women rests on their reproductive capacity – assumed to be an inherent property of all women. Removing barriers to FP represents the stepping-stone for accessing this adaptive potential. The victim and agent respectively are remarkably absent in IPPF/PSN2016, where a generalising language that links FP to population growth and climate change obscures the subject. Whereas UNFPA/WEDO2009 continually jumps between scales, IPPF/PSN2016 operates primarily on a generalised, global level. The ten arguments in IPPF/PSN2016 are removed from any locality and sometimes appear to deal with speculations of how things *could* be linked, rather than from observations of interaction of the issues. The exception is the examples from the Sahel region (5.4). In IPPF/PSN2016 funding for FP can remove barriers to FP. This suggests that the barriers are primarily financial and that access to FP will automatically reduce population growth, and thus erases the essential link of people reproducing – or rather choosing not to. In line with the absence of a subject, the women are not attributed agency, but predictable social behaviour.

## 6 Engaging SRHR and climate change: thoughts on ways forward

The urgency and global nature of the climate crisis is potentially dangerous as it can be exploited to justify human rights abuses. Threats to livelihoods, ecosystems and societies are evident in the extreme weather seen in the past years<sup>251</sup>, and it is clear that transformative action is required, especially in the Global North, where excessive consumption based on the hegemonic ideology of capitalism perpetuates this crisis.<sup>252</sup> Everyone wants a piece of ‘the sustainability cake’, but what are the implications of advocating SRHR as an adaptation strategy to climate change? In this section I argue that the discourses on SRHR and climate change a) affect programmes, b) require interdisciplinary work, and c) demand awareness of the influences of hegemonic power. Finally, I offer my thoughts on possible ways forward,

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<sup>251</sup> Examples from 2018 include wildfires in Sweden, California and Ireland, temperatures records in Oman and Algeria, and heatwave in Japan. Levin, Kelly and Dennis Tirpak. 2018. "2018: A Year of Climate Extremes". *World Resource Institute*. 27.12.2018.

<sup>252</sup> Malm, Andreas. 2016. "Who Lit This Fire? Approaching the History of the Fossil Economy." in *Critical Historical Studies*. Vol. 3, Issue 2. p.222.

recognising the complexities of the challenges faced by the SRHR and the climate change communities.

## 6.1 From discourse to programme

The examined discourses have implications for the way programmes and interventions are designed and implemented. The construction of the category of women on the basis of shared unmet need for FP and subordination to men result in a simplistic analysis, which ultimately assigns them the same desires and actions. It does not considering how the broader contexts and conditions of these women's lives affect their choices and opportunities. Despite emphasising FP as a human rights-based strategy to climate adaptation, IPPF/PSN2016 leaves the reader with the sense that reducing population growth are the real goals. In other words, fulfilment of women's rights is a means to the goal of limiting population growth, which is coupled with climate change pressures. Departing from a generalised and simplistic problem analysis could mean that beneficiaries are met as heterosexual, fertile, able-bodied/minded cisgender women. Excluding the reproductively challenged, disabled, male, LGBTQIA+ and non-binary subjects<sup>253</sup> from the problem analysis could result in their exclusion and marginalisation in programmes, treating them in a way that responds to imagined needs rather than actual needs. Further, absence of questions of race, culture and religion has implications for programme designs. Women as a category are prioritised on the basis of these broad generalisations, and, despite thorough preparatory analysis of the site of programme implementation, they may continue to be the main priority and be seen as the most vulnerable/adaptable, regardless of other marginalised groups. Programmes should consider women, but the gender concept need not be synonymous with women.<sup>254</sup> Rather it can potentially challenge both local and international norms and hegemonic ideologies that maintain the patriarchal, capitalist structures that dominate people and planet. This makes the case for intersectionality as a method and a commitment to challenging power dynamics.

Furthermore, SRHR is about far more than fertility. The narrow focus on fertility rates<sup>255</sup> and contraception can be counterproductive to the SRHR agenda. Understanding that SRHR is about thriving physically, mentally and socially in relation to all aspects of sexuality

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<sup>253</sup> These groupings are not mutually excluding.

<sup>254</sup> Mishra, Prafulla. 2009. "Let's Share the Stage: Involving Men in Gender Equality and Disaster Risk Reduction." in *Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives*. Eds. Elaine Enarson and P. G. Dhar Chakrabarti. Sage Publications. p. 29.

<sup>255</sup> Seen in IPPF/PSN2016.

and reproduction<sup>256</sup>, requires a broader engagement with these issues in the context of climate change. How does heat stress affect pregnant bodies? How can natural disasters cause further marginalisation of sexual minorities and non-binary people? In my experience, SRHR and FP organisations run a range of programs on issues such as abortion care, LGBTQIA+<sup>257</sup>, youth, gender-based violence etc., but, due in part to funding infrastructure, these programs are run separately.<sup>258</sup> Bringing this expertise together would contribute to removing barriers to health care services and fulfilling rights of beneficiaries in the context of climate crisis. Dissolving these siloes is needed within the SRHR community and in relation to other sectors.

## 6.2 Interdisciplinarity

Coming into the SRHR world from an academic context of culture, power and sustainability studies, I quickly understood that the broad topics of climate change and environment often are put into a category of ‘all things green’, and that the defining limits between issues such as conservation and climate adaptation are not always explicit. This speaks to a limited understanding of the complex effects of climate change on the lives of people and conflation of terms.<sup>259</sup> However, it is understandable as the priority remains SRHR issues, and the knowledge relates to this. Examples of climate impacts on SRHR are often the same: threats to clean water and sanitation in relation to menstrual hygiene management, and increased risk of sexual assault due to longer distances for fetching water as wells dry up.<sup>260</sup> It should be noted that these arguments were made even before climate change was a concern and have simply been repackaged to reflect the worsening situation.

With a history of FP as a central part of coercive population policies, the SRHR community was born out of a movement moving away from instrumentalising women, towards a human rights and empowerment frame. Some SRHR actors are now embracing the population frame and joining forces with environmental and climate organisations.<sup>261</sup> The question is what that means in terms of instrumentalising women. Is SRHR/FP a goal in itself or a means to slow population growth? If it is the latter, then can it be rights-based and centre

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<sup>256</sup> Guttmacher-Lancet. 2018. "Accelerate Progress". p. 4.

<sup>257</sup> Abortion and LGBTQIA+ programs are limited to contexts, where this is socially, legally or culturally accepted.

<sup>258</sup> Burn, Nalini. 2017. "Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Africa: Chequered Trajectories, Enduring Pathways." in *Financing for Gender Equality: Realising Women's Rights through Gender Responsive Budgeting*. Eds. Zohra Khan and Nalini Burn. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. p.65.

<sup>259</sup> McMullen. 2019. "State of the Conversation" .p. 15-16.

<sup>260</sup> These examples are also featured in the materials.

<sup>261</sup> For instance: Margaret Pyke Trust. 2019. "Thriving Together: Environmental Conservation and Family Planning".

subjects and their needs, or will it ultimately see effects on population dynamics as the real outcomes to be measured? Environmental and climate change actors do not have the expertise, nor the goal of ensuring SRHR, but they might have a goal of conserving areas with high biodiversity, reducing GHG emissions, or protecting forests. Cross-sector work necessitates finding common ground, while not compromising the standards and principles of one's field, especially when these are continuously challenged from all sides. Bringing these issues together in a way that goes beyond funding opportunities and buzzwords necessitates intersectoral literacy<sup>262</sup> and a commitment to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. This is not an easy task and the complexities of working across sectors and issues are manifold.

As we have seen, IPPF/PSN2016 aims for FP to be featured in climate policies such as UNFCCC decisions, agreements and adaptation policies. The implications of putting FP in the hands of another sector with climate experts – who are not trained in SRHR, nor necessarily familiar with the atrocious examples of coercion – are unknown. At best, it inspires national and local planners to incorporate reproductive health or SRHR into climate plans in their contexts with assistance from local SRHR associations. At worst, it offers legitimacy to anti-rights actors worried about 'overpopulation' and migration – ultimately directing the conversation away from unsustainable consumption, production and the responsibilities of the Global North. It is evident that *population* derails and takes over conversations.<sup>263</sup>

Considering the topic of this thesis in terms of *wicked problems* demonstrates the need for interdisciplinarity. Solutions to wicked problems are never true or false, but rather good or bad.<sup>264</sup> In exploring the role of SRHR in climate change, we engage a range of wicked problems: poverty, unequal resource distribution, human rights, social norms, racial power structures, climate induced pressures on natural and human systems, lack of health care, and so on. The interactions between these problems are impossible to predict and implementation of any programme will necessarily have consequences.<sup>265</sup> Approaching all this complexity by integrating several disciplines brings us closer to an overall picture than had we kept to one, as exemplified in this thesis.

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<sup>262</sup> McMullen. 2019. "State of the Conversation". pp. 21-22.

<sup>263</sup> As is the case in this thesis, where population has taken up much space due to its controversial nature and potentially problematic implications.

<sup>264</sup> Horst et al. 1973. "Dilemmas in General Theory of Planning." pp.160-161.

<sup>265</sup> Thorén, Henrik. 2017. "Is science disciplinary? Or is it interdisciplinary?" [Lecture] *Lund University*. Master programme in Human Ecology. HEKM20. 09.11.2017.

### 6.3 Transformative potential

In many ways the framing of women at the crux of climate change/environment and population dynamics is not new. In their work against gender based violence, rape, unsafe abortion etc. SRHR actors are painfully aware of the many ways in which women's bodies are politicised and instrumentalised. A recurring question throughout this research is whether we need yet another way of placing women's bodies at the centre of (global) politics? These are also racialised bodies. White privilege has a long history of demarcating racialised bodies from others and positioning women of colour, especially black women, as particularly promiscuous.<sup>266</sup> This sexualisation of women of colour by the white gaze relates to reproduction as well. The authoring organisations are themselves established within a capitalist and exploitative international system, which privileges white people and power. The room for transformative action is thus limited, especially when action is top-down, rather than coming from the affected women themselves. Importantly, a historical colonial legacy has shaped the work in the development field and traces of this are evident today. More often than not this is expressed in unconscious and biased ways, suggesting a need for increased reflexivity of privilege and power.

As this research shows, the narratives engage with aspects such as inequality, poverty and consumption, but in apolitical ways. The colonial roots of the global inequalities and climate change are not addressed and the development rationality is not challenged or transformed. This is easily explained by limitations from donors and institutions. The question is to what degree organisations are *able* to radically challenge and change practices and undo common senses, when the very thing that keeps them running is the development sector. This points to the recurring dilemma in activist research of working within or outside the system.<sup>267</sup> Working inside the system is limiting, but it includes opportunities to affect the agenda of a large and powerful audience. The outside position here could be the RJ movement, which is able to forge radical connections between these issues through its intersectional approach to oppressions, but its power and audience is limited as it challenges the status quo.

Despite these limitations, it seems things are starting to move on the integration of SRHR and climate change and environment. Recently, reports and statements on these links

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<sup>266</sup> Davis, Angela. 1981. *Women, Race and Class*. The Women's Press. p. 175.

<sup>267</sup> Lisahunter et al. 2013. *Participatory Activist Research in the Globalised World*. pp. 5-8.

have been published<sup>268</sup>, SRHR actors partner up with environmental organisations, and in August this year the UNFPA hosts ‘ICPD25 Symposium, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender and Climate Change Resilience’. This points to a rise in commitment to, knowledge of, and debate about integrating SRHR and climate change actions.

We know that the climate crisis requires radical and transformative action, so where does that leave the SRHR community in relation to climate change? This research shows that intersectionality as a method and frame for working with marginalised people could be a way forward. It entails expanding the analysis to thoroughly consider different aspects of the interactions of these issues, including a more nuanced understanding and representation of the subject, who is situated in their temporal, spatial, political, social, racialised, gendered, economic, ableist, environmental, and cultural location. In addition, it would involve the participation of and listening to the beneficiaries and their needs. All SRHR and related programs cannot account for all aspects at the same time, but if the problem analysis does not unpack sufficiently the issue at hand then programmes on the ground risk being single-issue.

The recurring element of *population* is also central to engaging subjects and to the understandings of climate change. As suggested by Hartmann, *population* could be engaged in strategic ways to promote SRHR. However, I find that narratives of global (or unspecified) population growth are counterproductive and distract conversations. Locally, population dynamics could be relevant in SRHR and climate adaptation programs, although it would open up questions of housing, access to natural resources, urbanisation, etc.

In order to make a contribution to transformative politics<sup>269</sup>, SRHR actors need not abandon their infrastructure – although development is based on a faulty premise – but could be more ambitious. They could approach these wicked problems in interdisciplinary, intersectional ways that understand holistically their interrelations and situates action in contexts in cooperation with beneficiaries, including LGBTQIA+, ethnic minorities and subjects with disabilities, among others. Although SRHR actors do not commonly know RJ, the movement offers inspiration on how to think about these issues together and in ways useful to the SRHR community.

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<sup>268</sup> Including Margaret Pyke Trust. 2019. “Thriving Together: Environmental Conservation and Family Planning”; McMullen. 2019. “State of the Conversation”. ; Marie Stopes International. 2019. “A global call to action: Empower women and girls for more effective action on climate change”. [statement].

<sup>269</sup> Dobrowolsky, Alexandra. 2001. “Intersecting Identities and Inclusive Institutions: Women and a Future Transformative Politics”. *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, Volume 35, No. 4. pp. 252-253.

## 7 Conclusion

This research investigates SRHR advocacy material in order to examine how climate adaptation is connected to SRHR issues, who is seen as adaptable to climate change, how they are represented, and what the implications of these findings are. In the face of the climate crisis, there is an increasing engagement across traditional development sectors with climate adaptation and mitigation, and SRHR is one such area.

I find that three main lines of argumentation connect SRHR to climate change in the analysed materials. The first argument connects individual and community level climate adaptation to gender equality, arguing that access to FP/RHR, education and improved economic opportunities will improve the adaptive capacity of women, as it improves gender equality. The second argument centres societal climate adaptation and positions FP/RHR as a strategy for slowing population growth, which it claims will make society more adaptable due in part to reduced pressure on natural resources. Although the focus is on adaptation, a striking finding is the third argument, in which FP is a strategy for climate *mitigation*, as it can potentially slow population growth. Fewer people or ‘emitters’ is seen as a way to reduce GHG emissions. The assumption of a limit to human numbers on Earth underlies these two last arguments, although this limit is not further qualified. Despite Malthus being the personified enemy of the SRHR community, the notion of a planetary limit to human population is accepted and the real difference between the two positions comes to lie in the rights-based and voluntary versus coercive elements.

Further, this research finds that *the adaptable subject* is discursively constructed as a heterosexual, fertile, able-bodied, poor, and ‘non-white’, cis woman. She is both vulnerable and adaptable, a victim and an agent, as a result of her social status primarily defined by an assumption of subordination to gender inequality and a colonial difference. This is emphasised by the development frame and the continuous ethnocentric mirroring of white, liberated women of the Global North. Gender subordination appears as a universal and singular oppressive structure and obscures the contradictions and specificities of the lives of each woman. How oppression plays out in different contexts is not considered, and the roles of white supremacy, capitalism and other oppressive systems remain unexplored. Moreover, the absence of LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, male, minority, reproductively challenged and other bodies reveals a focus on fertility rates and population growth. The adaptable subject is instrumental in reducing or slowing population growth in two of the main arguments. This sparks critical questions of the motivations of donors, policymakers and

SRHR organisations to implement FP programmes, as the instrumentalisation of the bodies of women of colour in order to solve global problems is problematic and unjust from feminist, RJ and climate justice perspectives. Poor women in the Global South are not responsible for climate change and remedying the crisis should not be put on their shoulders.

Overall the representation of *the adaptable subject* is inadequate, which questions the legitimacy of the authoring organisations to speak on her behalf. The case for including gender considerations and FP in climate policies is based on assumptions about women of the Global South, assigning millions of women the same conditions, challenges, needs and desires. The unmet need for FP, an estimate, plays a central role in the argumentation and is the most direct representation of subjects and their needs in the IPPF/PSN2016 material. Case stories from five countries add some context and nuance in the UNFPA/WEDO2009 material, where three quotes from actual women and a number of pictures of unnamed women are the most direct means of representation. The characterisation and representation of *the adaptable subject* implies a need for intersectional analyses, a broadening of the SRHR concept in a climate change context, and increased engagement with local contexts and the subjects themselves.

Despite potential pitfalls and problems with the framing of SRHR/FP as a strategy of climate adaptation, it should not necessarily be abandoned. These programmes make a difference in the lives of people and future work should focus on improving them in intersectional, cross-sector and reproductively just ways. Critical work of understanding contexts and subjects, beyond ‘woman of the Global South’, is needed and must include other marginalised groups such as LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities. Failure to include them is de facto ignoring their existence. This work has centered interdisciplinarity and showed how working across fields can foster new understandings and ways forward. In a broader sense this research contributes to the conversation on the risks of powerful actors taking advantage of the climate crisis and its urgent nature to justify human rights abuses. Equally, it speaks to the need for a more inclusive and conscious way forward in addressing culture and power in sustainability. The analysis is restricted to print material and participant observations, and as such it is possible that people working in the field may think differently about these issues.

Finally, SRHR organisations could benefit from engaging with their own privilege and put race at the centre of their analyses and feminism (if they subscribe to any). The gender lens should be joined by class, race, crip, queer, sexuality and other lenses for SRHR actors and others to be able to contribute to improving the conditions of the lives of people in the

complex context of climate crisis and to forge solidarity across political struggles. In the words of Mohanty, “Beyond sisterhood there is still racism, colonialism and imperialism!”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Mohanty. 1984. “Under Western Eyes”. p.348.

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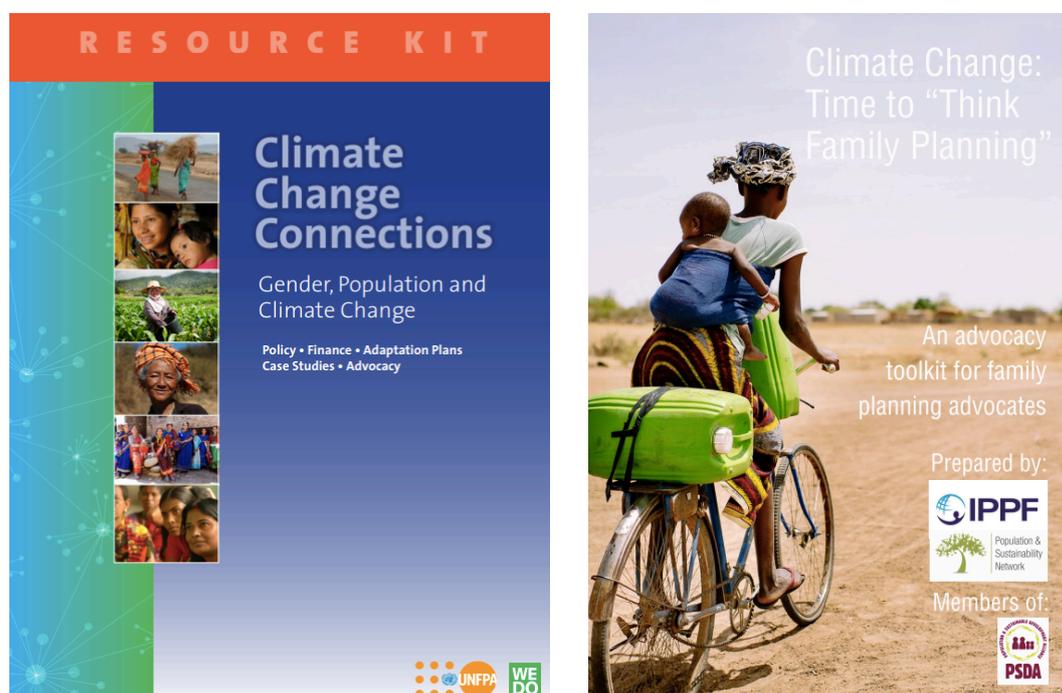
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## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix a: covers of primary material



### 9.2 Appendix b: About the authoring organisations

Organisation	From	Mission	Structure	Geography	Funding
Danish Family Planning Association	1956	“As the strongest Danish organization in our field, we will fight for sexual and reproductive health	Non-governmental organisation. Member of IPPF.	Based in Copenhagen, Denmark, working at	Total budget of 2018: \$7.962.238,8. <sup>272</sup>

<sup>272</sup> Danish Family Planning Association/Sex & Samfund. 2019.” Annual Report 2018”.

(DFPA)		and rights for all. We pursue this mission through partnerships, strategic alliances and strong networks in Denmark, Europe and the world.” <sup>271</sup>		municipal, national and international levels.	
International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)	1952	“Building on a proud history of 65 years of achievement, we commit to lead a locally owned, globally connected civil society movement that provides and enables services and champions sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, especially the under-served.” <sup>273</sup>	Federation of 134 member associations working in 145 countries	Central office in London, UK, and six regional offices (Nairobi, Tunis, Bangkok, Brussels, Delhi and New York).	Budget of 2017: \$111.900.000. 81 % of the budget comes from government grants. The remaining 19 % are from multilateral donors and other sources. <sup>274</sup>
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	1969	“Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.” <sup>275</sup>	A subsidiary organ to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).	Working in 150 countries and territories.	Budget of 2018: \$ 1.290.300.000. Funded not by the regular UN budget, but by voluntary government grants and contributions from private and other sources. <sup>276</sup>
Population and Sustainability Network (PSN)	2004		Global alliance on advocacy and project activities. The network is coordinated by	London, Margaret Pyke Trust office. Global reach.	

<sup>271</sup>Danish Family Planning Association/Sex & Samfund. 2019. “Vision, Mission and Goals”.

<sup>273</sup> IPPF. 2019. “About IPPF”.

<sup>274</sup> IPPF. 2019. “Financial Statements 2018”.

<sup>275</sup>UNFPA. 2019. “About Us”.

<sup>276</sup> UNFPA. 2019. “Annual Report 2018: One Vision, Three Zeros.”

			Margaret Pyke Trust. 22 members including UNFPA and IPPF.		
Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)	1991	“WEDO’s mission is to ensure that women’s rights; social, economic and environmental justice; and sustainable development principles-as well as the linkages between them-are at the heart of global and national policies, programs and practices.” <sup>277</sup>	Non-profit organisation	Headquarters in New York, US. Accredited NGO in UN system.	Budget of 2017: \$ 1.076.936. Funding from government and UN donor agencies and partners, individual donors, and foundations. <sup>278</sup>

<sup>277</sup> WEDO. 2018. “Vision and Mission”.

<sup>278</sup> WEDO. 2018. ”Legal/Financial”.