**GBV and climate**

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THE Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1979 to pave the way for a world free of gender-based violence. This was followed by the Unite to End Violence against Women initiative launched in 2006 with the aim of raising awareness and increasing policymaking and resources dedicated to achieving the objective.

In1993, the UNGA adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women through a resolution and on Feb 7, 2000, of ficially designated Nov 25 as the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women. In 2017, the EU and UN launched the Spotlight initiative to raise awareness on this issue in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, violence against women continues in different forms.

To date, 49 countries currently have no laws protecting women f rom domestic violence.

The variation in the climatic regime has added another layer of complexity to the travails faced by women as climate change is now recognised as a serious aggravator of gender violence. Global warming and its consequent devastation of communities around the world will trigger climate change-induced crises that will worsen domestic violence and increase the risk of violence against women and girls.

Violence against women goes back to a structural functionalist view of gender that diminishes her status and embeds inequality in the social construct as part of the system.

According to the conflict theory, the struggle in society is based on dominance among social groups for control over scarce resources. In the context of gender, this can best be explained as an attempt by men to retain their dominant position at the expense of women by keeping them socially subordinate and economically dependent.

According to UNDP, nearly 50 per cent of South Asian countries have no laws against domestic violence. Patriarchy is deep-rooted in South Asian culture with women lacking legal and societal protection that expose them to dif ferent kinds of violence, and struggling for rights bring them into conflict with family, society and state. In countries where gender parity is poor, the risk factor is likely to be higher. Violence against women is not limited to developing countries only. Reports by CARE and IUCN highlight examples of increase in domestic violence linked to loss in income from the growing impact of climate change on the agricultural sector and sexual abuse of women displaced as a result of natural disasters.

According to a World Bank report, while there has been an overall reduction in poverty, the decline in shared prosperity anduptick in inequality in Pakistan indicates that economic progress is not being shared with the poorest segments. This will contribute to vulnerability of women being accelerated by social and economic losses associated with climate change.

In the Global Gender Gap index, Pakistan ranks third from the bottom. It is also ranked the sixth most dangerous country globally for women with cases of sexual crimes and domestic violence on the rise. According to White Ribbon Pakistan, an NGO working for women`s rights, between 2004 and 2006, 4,734 women faced sexual violence, with over 1,800 cases of domestic violence and kidnapping of 5,500 women.

As per media reports, over 51,241 cases of violence against women were reported between 2011 and 2017. In the Climate Risk Index, the country is among the top 10 countries with disasters likely to increase in frequency and intensity. A large number of women work in the agriculture sector in rural areas where female rate of literacy is low andcultural norms and barriers deprive women of social equity and equal access to resources.

These factors leave women unprotected and exposed to violence, making climate action an essential component in the ongoing fight to eliminate violence against women andgirls, and mainstreaming gender in policy planning an integral part of climate action.

While the UN continues to be a driving force in supporting gender equality through the Gender Action Plan and the Lima Work Programme on Gender, we need to analyse emerging trends to develop coping strategies for protection of women that highlight linkages between climate stressors and gender violence.

This will require working within sectors not typically addressing gender violence and strengthening capacities to understand the intersection of gender violence and engaging men and women in communities to dismantle harmful gender norms and construct an alternative narrative supporting gender equitable attitudes. For sustainable transformation and integration at all levels leaders must recognise that without freeing women from oppression, violence and discrimination and ensuring their full participation, efforts to achieve development goals will be hampered.m The writer is chief executive of the Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change.

aisha@csccc.org.pk