

RESEARCH REPORT · JULY 2025

Climate Change– Induced **Care** Burden

on Women in Kaduna & Taraba States, Nigeria

Transparency and Accountability in Totality
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Executive Summary

68.6%

stopped paid work
Kaduna

54.4%

cut meals Kaduna

84%+

don't attend meetings

47.5%

stopped paid work
Taraba

91%

no support received
Kaduna

85.6%

no support received
Taraba

Demographics and Livelihoods

- Women dominate the informal economy, with 67.4% in Kaduna and 58% in Taraba engaged in trading or farming.
- Low incomes (₦10,000 or less for 55.6% in Kaduna and ₦30,000 or less for 64.8% in Taraba) severely limit adaptive capacity.
- Most respondents are married women aged 25–45, juggling both income generation and unpaid caregiving.

Climate and Care Burden

- Care responsibilities are rising sharply: 68.6% of women in Kaduna and 47.5% in Taraba stopped paid work due to caregiving demands during climate shocks.
- Harmful coping measures like skipping meals (54.4% Kaduna, 29.1% Taraba) and rationing food/water weaken long-term resilience.
- Many women in Kaduna and more prominently in Taraba are heavily reliant on natural and forest resources for energy and means of livelihood.
- Floods (Kaduna) and droughts (Taraba) increase illnesses and unpaid care time for children, elders, and sick family members.

Support Systems

- 91% of Kaduna and 85.6% of Taraba respondents reported no institutional support.
- Religious support (e.g., Zakat) and NGOs such as Jetima provide occasional help but are inconsistent and insufficient.
- FGDs reveal concerns about elite capture and uneven distribution of religious aid.

Participation and Voice

-
- Over 84% of women in both states do not attend community meetings, reducing their influence in local adaptation planning.
 - Social norms and poverty further limit women's participation.

Policy Landscape

-
- Both states have climate and gender policies (e.g., Kaduna WEE Policy, Taraba WASH Policy 2019) but unpaid care work is not explicitly addressed.
 - KSIs highlight weak coordination and a lack of gender-disaggregated data, especially in Taraba's TEPA.

Cross-State Insights

-
- While hazards differ — flooding in Kaduna vs drought in Taraba — both states show a growing unpaid care burden on women, compounded by harmful coping strategies that undermine health and income security.
 - Religious systems and small NGOs fill some gaps, but they cannot replace structured, care-sensitive state interventions.

1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction

Climate change is increasingly acknowledged as a multidimensional crisis (Aliyu & Sherifdeen, 2022). It extends beyond its environmental origins to exert far-reaching social, economic, and political consequences. While the scientific community has paid considerable attention to the environmental manifestations of climate change, its social ramifications, particularly in relation to gender and the often-invisible labour of unpaid care work, remain underexplored (Narayan, 2017). In many parts of the Global South, especially within low-income and rural contexts, climate-induced disruptions intersect with pre-existing structural inequalities (Tripathi et al., 2022). In many rural communities across Nigeria, women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care work, including responsibilities such as water collection, food preparation, caregiving for children, the elderly, and the sick, as well as household maintenance (Musyoka et al., 2024). These tasks are essential to the well-being and functioning of households and communities but are often overlooked in policy design and national statistics. The effects of climate change, particularly in the form of droughts, flooding, erratic rainfall, and disease outbreaks, have added a significant layer of complexity to these roles (Grazini & Guarini, 2025). Women must now perform more labour-intensive care duties under increasingly difficult environmental and infrastructural conditions. These dynamics intensify the burdens placed on women and girls who bear primary responsibility for household care (Defina et al., 2024).

Unpaid care work, including water collection, food preparation, childcare, and support for the elderly and ill, remains indispensable to the reproduction of household and community life. Despite its foundational role, this labour continues to be marginalised in policy-making and excluded from conventional economic analysis (Oxfam, 2022). As climate change exacerbates environmental and infrastructural vulnerabilities, the demand for care work intensifies. This deepens existing gendered inequalities and constrains women's ability to engage in formal employment, education, or public life.

Despite these growing challenges, the intersection of climate change and unpaid care work remains under-researched in developing countries, including Nigeria. This gap in evidence weakens the effectiveness of current climate adaptation and gender equity strategies.

This study examines the intersection of unpaid care work, gender, and climate change in Nigeria, drawing on relevant literature and theoretical insights from feminist political ecology and social reproduction theory. It will articulate how climate impacts reshape care responsibilities and, by extension, the conditions under which women participate in, and benefit from, adaptation strategies. In doing so, the study will empirically argue the necessity of embedding care-sensitive approaches into climate policy and community resilience planning, especially in regions where care and climate crises are closely interlinked.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on understanding how climate change reshapes the landscape of unpaid care work in rural communities. By examining women's lived experiences in two climate-affected states, the research brings visibility to the care economy and its vulnerability to environmental stress. This is particularly important because unpaid care work supports not only household survival but also economic productivity and social cohesion. Without integrating this dimension into climate policy and programming, adaptation strategies risk reinforcing existing gender inequalities. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute empirical insights that inform the development of equitable, gender-sensitive, and care-responsive adaptation interventions at both the state and national levels.

The research is also justified by the need to address a critical gap in both academic literature and development policy in Nigeria. Although global and regional institutions have begun to acknowledge the links between gender, care, and climate change, localised evidence remains scarce. This study offers an opportunity to document context-specific dynamics in Kaduna and Taraba States, where women's care work is increasingly impacted by environmental degradation and the absence of robust social protection mechanisms. By generating data on how care burdens are changing, what coping strategies are emerging, and what forms of institutional support are available or lacking, the study will provide a valuable foundation for practical recommendations.

1.2 Nigeria's Climate Change Context

Nigeria is increasingly vulnerable to the multifaceted impacts of climate change. Between 1981 and 2020, the country recorded an average temperature rise of 1.6°C, with projections suggesting a further 2.0–2.5°C increase by 2050 if emissions continue unabated. Rainfall patterns have become more erratic, leading to both prolonged droughts and frequent flooding events. The 2022 floods, for instance, affected over 4.4 million people, displaced more than 2.4 million, and destroyed hundreds of thousands of hectares of farmland across 34 states. These shifts severely disrupt rural livelihoods and intensify water and food insecurity.

The climate burden in Nigeria is disproportionately borne by women, particularly in rural communities where over 70% of women are engaged in subsistence agriculture and unpaid care work. A 2021 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) survey showed that rural women spend up to 5 hours daily on water collection, firewood gathering, childcare, and food preparation — tasks directly affected by environmental degradation. As climate-induced water scarcity and health risks escalate, women's unpaid care work also increases, limiting their participation in economic and civic activities.

While Nigeria has established national frameworks such as the 2021 Climate Change Act and the revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), gender-responsive and care-sensitive adaptation remains largely absent. Only 11% of climate-related projects in Nigeria explicitly integrate gender considerations, and fewer still address unpaid care burdens. Coordination across ministries remains weak, and data systems are inadequate for capturing sex-disaggregated impacts or time-use patterns.

1.3 Conceptualising Care Work in the Context of Climate Stress

Care work encompasses a wide spectrum of activities directed toward meeting the physical, emotional, and developmental needs of individuals and households (United Nations Women & Women, 2023). It includes both direct and indirect tasks such as caregiving, cleaning, cooking, and the collection of essential resources (Narayan, 2017). Much of this work is performed without remuneration and is predominantly carried out by women and girls. These activities are indispensable to societal well-being but remain largely unrecognised within economic metrics and policy frameworks.

Feminist scholarship has long drawn attention to the systematic undervaluation of unpaid care work and its centrality to economic and social reproduction (Razavi, 2007; Fraser, 2021). The global care crisis, as identified by UN Women and other institutions, reflects a structural mismatch between the growing need for care and the inadequate provision of formal support systems. This gap has been exacerbated in many low- and middle-income countries by fiscal austerity, privatisation of services, and underinvestment in public infrastructure (ILO, 2018; UN Women, 2020).

Climate change further complicates this landscape. The disruption of ecological and public systems — such as clean water access, reliable food supplies, and health services — translates into additional responsibilities for caregivers (Oxfam, 2022). The impact is not only quantitative, in terms of more hours of labour, but also qualitative, as tasks become more arduous and emotionally taxing under deteriorating conditions. Despite the centrality of care work to household and community resilience, it remains peripheral in most climate adaptation and disaster risk management strategies.

1.4 Climate Change as an Amplifier of Women's Care Responsibilities

Climate change does not create vulnerability in a vacuum. Rather, it intensifies existing social and economic disparities. In the context of care work, climate-related stressors aggravate conditions under which care is provided and increase the burden on those already responsible for the bulk of unpaid labour within households. This burden is disproportionately carried by women, especially in rural and resource-constrained settings.

In regions where water scarcity is becoming more acute due to prolonged drought or irregular rainfall, women are often required to travel longer distances to access water. This increases physical fatigue and reduces time for rest or income-generating activities. It also heightens risks of exposure to gender-based violence and health complications. Similarly, declines in agricultural productivity, often linked to changing climatic conditions, heighten food insecurity. Women must devote additional time and resources to securing and preparing meals, often at the expense of their own nutritional needs.

Health impacts associated with climate change, such as the spread of vector-borne diseases and heat-related illnesses, also increase care demands within the household. As public health systems become overstretched or inaccessible, particularly in the aftermath of extreme weather events, care responsibilities are informally transferred to women. The

emotional and physical demands of caring for ill family members in such contexts are substantial and rarely acknowledged in either social policy or climate planning.

Furthermore, when essential care infrastructure — such as schools, health clinics, and day-care centres — is damaged or rendered inoperable during climate disasters, the fallback burden invariably returns to the household. This reinforces the unpaid labour of women. The absence of institutional support not only increases the volume of care work but also limits women's ability to recover, adapt, or participate in public decision-making spaces. These cascading effects are particularly severe for women and girls who face intersecting disadvantages related to class, geography, age, and disability.

This dynamic is self-reinforcing. Increased care responsibilities erode women's time and energy for formal employment or education and entrench cycles of dependence and poverty. They also reduce opportunities for civic participation, thus excluding women from shaping the very policies that determine how climate adaptation is approached in their communities. Climate change therefore not only creates new care needs but simultaneously reduces the capacity of existing systems, both formal and informal, to meet them equitably.

1.5 Gendered Inequality and the Boundaries of Climate Adaptation

The intensification of unpaid care work under climate stress fundamentally shapes the parameters of adaptation. While much of the policy literature now acknowledges the importance of gender-responsive approaches to climate change, adaptation frameworks often overlook the relational and temporal constraints imposed by care responsibilities. This oversight results in the marginalisation of women from adaptation interventions, particularly those requiring sustained engagement or mobility — such as training programmes, cooperative enterprises, or agricultural extension services.

Moreover, policy narratives that depict women as inherently resilient or natural stewards of the environment risk romanticising unpaid labour and reinforcing gendered stereotypes. While women do play a vital role in sustaining community well-being under conditions of environmental stress, portraying them primarily as adaptive agents without addressing the structural barriers they face can lead to the instrumentalisation of their labour. This framing imposes additional responsibilities but does not alter the systems of support or recognition necessary to ensure equitable outcomes.

At a structural level, national adaptation plans and international climate finance mechanisms have yet to adequately invest in care systems as critical infrastructure. Investments in transport, water, and energy systems are rarely assessed for their potential to alleviate care burdens. Similarly, budgetary allocations for health and education often fail to incorporate the indirect impacts of climate change on unpaid care provision. As a result, the resilience of caregiving households, particularly female-headed ones, remains tenuous, and the broader goals of inclusive adaptation are undermined.

A more integrated approach to adaptation would require recognising care work not as an externality but as a foundational component of social resilience. This involves developing gender-sensitive indicators, supporting time-use research, and embedding care-related priorities within climate funding frameworks. Redistribution of care responsibilities across genders, institutions, and sectors must be central to both adaptation planning and implementation. Without such transformation, climate adaptation risks reproducing and deepening existing social inequalities rather than addressing them.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an intersectional feminist political ecology framework. This lens allows the analysis of the interrelationship between gender roles, socio-economic status, environmental stress, and institutional responses. It integrates social reproduction theory and the climate justice lens to foreground the experiences of women as caregivers in unequal climate-vulnerable systems.

Figure 1. Framework of climate change and care burden on women

1.7 Overall Aim

To investigate how climate change affects women's unpaid care work in rural communities in Kaduna and Taraba States, Nigeria, and identify pathways for gender-equitable adaptation strategies.

1.8 Research Questions

- How has climate change altered the nature and intensity of care work for women in rural communities?
- What adaptive strategies are women using to manage the increasing burden of care?
- What are the available community, governmental, and NGO supports, and how effective are they?

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Location

2.1.1 Kaduna State Profile

Kaduna State, situated in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Geographically, the area lies between latitudes 10°12'59" to 10°52'54" North and longitudes 6°53'56" to 8°00'56" East, encompassing approximately 5,119 square kilometres. As the former capital of the old Northern Nigeria and one of the most populous states in northern Nigeria, Kaduna plays a central role in national socio-economic development, housing major urban centres while also encompassing expansive rural communities where climate vulnerability is most acutely felt.

Observed climate change impacts in the region include declining rainfall totals, rising temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, and reduced soil moisture retention. These shifts have led to increased incidents of droughts, prolonged dry spells, floods, and water scarcity, especially in peri-urban and rural areas. The hydrological balance of the Kaduna River, an important tributary of the Niger River, has been disrupted by these climate anomalies, threatening water availability, agricultural productivity, and food systems in surrounding communities.

The vulnerability of Kaduna to climate change is multi-dimensional. The state's natural capital — comprising forests, farmlands, water bodies, and landscapes — forms the bedrock of livelihoods for a large proportion of the population, especially women who rely on rain-fed agriculture and forest products. This vulnerability is compounded by low levels of infrastructural resilience, inadequate water and sanitation systems, high levels of poverty, and weak access to formal education and healthcare services in many localities.

Additionally, infrastructure deficits such as poor road networks, fragile drainage systems, and limited health facilities further exacerbate the burden on caregivers during climate shocks like flooding or disease outbreaks. For instance, frequent floods not only damage homes and property but also disrupt children's access to schools and increase exposure to waterborne and vector-borne diseases — burdens that primarily fall on women.

Given these realities, Kaduna State offers a rich and complex context for examining how climate variability and environmental stress intersect with unpaid care burdens among women. The region's socio-economic dynamics, environmental vulnerabilities, and institutional policy environment present critical entry points for exploring gender-responsive and care-sensitive climate adaptation strategies.

2.1.2 Taraba State, Nigeria

Taraba State, located in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, serves as the geographical focus of this study. It derives its name from the Taraba River, which traverses its southern areas, and is fondly known as "Nature's Gift to the Nation." The state's capital is Jalingo. Taraba is bounded to the west by Nasarawa and Benue States (109 km), to the northwest by Plateau State (202 km), to the north by Bauchi (54 km) and Gombe States (58 km), to the northeast by Adamawa State (366 km), and to the south by the Northwest Region of Cameroon (525 km). The major rivers Benue, Donga, Taraba, and Ibi, originate from the Cameroonian mountains and drain the entire length of the state, flowing north to south before joining the River Niger.

Taraba's ecological landscape is notably diverse, encompassing river valleys, savannah lowlands, and highland zones such as the Mambilla Plateau. This diversity makes it especially sensitive to climate variability and environmental change. Climatically, the state is marked by high temperatures, averaging 33°C annually, with March and April often exceeding 40°C. January is typically the coldest month, while August sees the highest rainfall. Rainfall coverage stands at 40.35%, with relative humidity around 55% and average wind speeds of 8.84 km/h. The state experiences a combination of climatic extremes, including erratic rainfall, prolonged dry spells, seasonal flooding, and soil erosion.

Taraba's economy is primarily agrarian, relying heavily on subsistence farming and livestock rearing, which are particularly vulnerable to climate shocks. Low-lying regions face frequent flooding that displaces households, damages farmlands, and increases exposure to water-borne diseases. Upland zones, such as the Mambilla Plateau, face irregular rainfall

patterns that affect water availability and food production. These climate impacts have far-reaching consequences, particularly on rural livelihoods and household wellbeing.

The social fabric of Taraba State is characterised by widespread rural settlement and a high dependence on unpaid care work, mostly carried out by women. Women in the state bear the dual burden of economic contribution and unpaid caregiving responsibilities, including water collection, childcare, elder care, cooking, and farm work. Climate-related disruptions intensify these responsibilities, especially during periods of flood or drought when access to water, food, and healthcare becomes more challenging. Widows, divorced women, and women with disabilities often carry a disproportionate burden due to limited access to resources and support systems.

Given its ecological diversity, climate exposure, and social dynamics, Taraba State presents a compelling site for research on the intersection of climate change, care work, and gendered vulnerability. It provides an opportunity to examine locally grounded adaptation strategies, institutional gaps, and the types of interventions required to strengthen resilience and reduce care-related burdens under climate stress.

2.2 Study Design

The study will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This design allows for triangulation and strengthens the validity of findings by drawing on multiple sources of evidence.

2.3 Study Locations

Two rural communities each in Kaduna and Taraba States will be selected using a robust index as seen on Table 1. This index supports evidence-based, non-arbitrary site selection aligned with the research objectives. This process will be guided by secondary data, consultations with local stakeholders, and state-level environmental data.

Table 1. Community Selection Indicator Index.

Indicator	Description	Justification
Climate Hazards	Frequency and intensity of climate-related events such as floods, droughts, erosion, and storms in the past 5 years.	Acts as a proxy for overall climate risk exposure. Communities repeatedly affected are more likely to experience disrupted care routines and heightened adaptation pressures.
Vulnerability	Combination of socio-economic indicators (poverty rate, income levels) and physical remoteness (distance from administrative centres or basic infrastructure).	Higher socio-economic and geographic vulnerability limits access to services and adaptive resources, exacerbating care burdens under climate stress.
Security Situation	Current state of communal conflict, banditry, or other safety-related risks.	Ensures safe research access and recognises that insecurity often increases household care burdens and disrupts local support systems.

Each community will be assigned a score (e.g., 1 to 5) for each indicator based on the latest available data. And selected communities will be those with consistently high combined scores for climate hazards, vulnerability, and security considerations (low-risk for field access).

2.4 Sampling Strategy

This study surveyed a total of 1,400 women and girls engaged in unpaid care work across four communities, two from each of the two selected states. The communities were purposefully chosen based on a set of indicators developed by the research team, including exposure to climate impacts, levels of poverty, and access to social services. Respondents were evenly distributed across the selected communities to ensure balanced representation. Stratified random sampling will ensure inclusion of diverse demographic groups across caregiving roles and household types.

2.5 Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Primary data will be collected using structured questionnaires programmed into KoboToolbox, enabling real-time digital data collection on tablets or smartphones. This will be supplemented with qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Time-use diaries will also be used to quantify care work hours. Secondary data will be collected from government reports, policy documents, and climate vulnerability assessments.

2.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through KoboToolbox will be exported to PowerBI for cleaning and analysis. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) and simple inferential tests such as chi-square and t-tests will be used to identify significant associations and differences between groups. Graphical representations such as bar charts, pie charts, and cross-tabulations will be generated to present trends clearly.

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs will be transcribed and coded thematically using NVivo or manual methods. Key themes will include water and food access, time poverty, social support structures, and adaptive coping strategies. Policy content will be analysed using a document analysis matrix and presented in tables.

3.0 Findings

Kaduna State

3.1 Demographics

The respondents in Kaduna are largely traders and small business owners, representing 67.4% of the sample, with a smaller proportion engaged in farming, artisan work, and wage employment. This occupational pattern reflects the urban and peri-urban economic character of the surveyed communities. The dominance of trading highlights a strong reliance on informal markets for income, which are highly vulnerable to climate disruptions such as flooding that damages goods and stalls, or restricts access to markets. FGDs confirm this vulnerability, with women explaining that they often pause trading activities during floods to focus on household care or repair tasks.

Income levels in Kaduna are very low, with 55.6% of respondents earning ₦10,000 or less per month. This income bracket is far below the cost of living, underscoring why 54.4% reported cutting meals as a coping mechanism. Low income also constrains the ability of households to invest in adaptive strategies such as flood-proofing homes, purchasing water during shortages, or acquiring labour-saving technologies to reduce care burdens.

Age and marital status data show that the majority of respondents are married women in their active reproductive and economic years (18–50 years). This age group carries the dual responsibility of economic provision and heavy caregiving, including childcare, eldercare, and health-related duties during climate shocks. Widowed and divorced women, though fewer, reported facing disproportionate hardships as they lack spousal support and often shoulder the entire household care and income burden alone.

The educational profile of respondents indicates limited formal education, with many women relying on informal learning or religious education (Islamiyya schools). This restricts access to formal job opportunities and limits women's capacity to participate in decision-making platforms, which often require literacy or technical knowledge.

Combined with cultural norms, this contributes to the 84.5% of respondents who do not attend community meetings, further weakening their collective voice in shaping adaptation strategies.

3.2 Coping Strategies

Climate shocks are pushing women out of paid work

Flooding and climate variability have forced women in Kaduna to shoulder heavy unpaid care responsibilities that directly displace economic activity. 68.6% reported increased care workloads, and 102.5% (multiple responses) said they had to stop working to cope with shocks. Women in Makera Rigasa described abandoning trading or farming despite their desire to work:

“We love the business but we have no other option... we stopped because of the capital.”

These disruptions are often caused by flooding of homes, illness among children, and constant cleanup due to poor drainage systems. This shift from paid work to unpaid care undermines women's financial independence, limits household income, and creates long-term economic vulnerabilities. When women's productive time is consumed by unpaid care labour, households and communities lose valuable economic potential, weakening prospects for sustainable development.

Harmful coping strategies are eroding resilience

The survey data reveal that 54.4% of women in Kaduna resorted to cutting meals, while others ration water and depend on unpredictable charity such as zakat distributions. FGDs highlighted that these coping practices are rarely sufficient and often controlled by intermediaries:

“They just share it among themselves and they know we need it the most.”

Such practices may help households survive in the short term, but they harm health and well-being. Cutting meals leads to nutritional deficiencies, particularly for children and women, while withdrawing from paid work erodes income resilience and savings. Over time, these strategies deepen poverty, increase dependence on irregular charity, and reduce the ability of households to recover from future shocks.

Coping Strategies Are Fueling Environmental Degradation

FGDs revealed that a notable proportion of women, especially widowed, divorced, or extremely low-income earners in the study communities in Kaduna are involved in selling firewood or charcoal to supplement household income. The activity is often informal and seasonal, but nonetheless contributes to deforestation and environmental degradation, particularly in peri-urban areas like Makera Rigasa. Though less widespread than in Taraba, this coping strategy reflects the absence of clean, affordable alternatives. Enforcement of deforestation laws is sporadic, and LPG, solar, or improved cookstoves remain financially out of reach for most low-income households (with over 55.6% earning ₦10,000 or less).

Kaduna's State Development Plan and WEE Policy mention climate resilience and women's economic inclusion, but neither addresses the energy–environment–care work connection. Without integrated approaches, women remain stuck in extractive activities to survive.

Support systems are largely absent

Kaduna has progressive policy instruments such as the State Development Plan (2021–2025), Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy, and the Community Engagement Framework on Climate Shocks. However, 91% of women reported receiving no external support. FGDs confirm this gap, with participants saying they have been left to fend for themselves:

“We are just living at home, only God is looking after us.”

Key stakeholder interviews show that ministries like Environment, Women Affairs, and Health have climate and social protection mandates, but they lack gender-responsive budgets and rarely address unpaid care work. The absence of formal, reliable support forces women to absorb the costs of adaptation through their own unpaid labour, which increases vulnerability.

Poverty and care demands form a self-reinforcing trap

Poverty intensifies the effects of unpaid care work. 55.6% of Kaduna respondents earn only ₦10,000 per month, an amount insufficient to meet basic needs or invest in labour-saving tools. FGDs described women rationing food, postponing healthcare, and skipping community activities due to the time and money required for care responsibilities.

As women's time is increasingly consumed by unpaid tasks such as caring for sick relatives during floods or repairing damaged homes, their ability to generate income diminishes. This cycle of poverty and time scarcity reinforces inequality and reduces women's choices.

Flooding and health crises multiply care responsibilities

Flooding in Kaduna not only destroys property but also triggers health crises. FGDs reported increases in fever, vomiting, and waterborne diseases during floods. One participant explained:

“Anytime this flood come, this place change completely due to climate change which cause the sickness.”

Women bear the primary responsibility for caring for sick family members, often without access to proper healthcare or clean water. This adds hours of extra labour each day, increasing both physical strain and emotional stress.

Exclusion from decision-making weakens adaptation

84.5% of Kaduna respondents said they do not attend meetings, and women stressed that even when they speak up, their concerns rarely lead to action:

“Talking out our problem to be heard is just not an option... we talk and ask for help but still no response.”

This exclusion means that community-level adaptation planning often overlooks the specific challenges of unpaid care work. While the GESI Policy calls for inclusion, meaningful participation requires quotas, financial support for childcare, and transportation. Without women's voices, adaptation strategies risk being misaligned with real needs.

3.3 Institutional & Policy Framework — Kaduna State

A. Institutional Landscape

Institution/Ministry	Mandate	Climate-Care Context
Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources	Climate resilience, waste, forestry, environmental education, climate policy	Coordinates climate change policy and disaster risk reduction. Overlaps with gender policy in resilience.
Ministry of Health, Human Services & Social Development	Health systems, social protection, maternal health, welfare	Responsible for health burdens linked to climate change (e.g., malaria), and caregiving systems.
Ministry of Agriculture	Food security, irrigation, climate-smart farming	Intersects with women farmers and water access burden, especially as climate impacts reduce crop yields.
Ministry of Planning & Budget Commission	Strategic planning, budgeting, policy coordination	Central in integrating gender and climate goals across state development plans.
Ministry of Justice	Legal and rights-based frameworks	Can institutionalise recognition of unpaid care work and women's rights in disaster response.

B. Key Policy Documents

Policy Document	Relevant Themes & Content	Climate-Care-Gender Context
Kaduna State Development Plan (SDP) 2021–2025	The plan highlights climate change as a cross-cutting threat to agriculture, water, and livelihoods. It commits to integrating climate	The SDP acknowledges climate impacts on vulnerable groups, including women, and sets broad targets for climate

	resilience into sectoral plans and enhancing rural women's access to economic assets. Gender and inclusion are treated under the human capital pillar.	adaptation and gender inclusion. However, it lacks specificity on unpaid care work and care infrastructure.
Kaduna State Women's Economic Empowerment Policy (WEE)	This policy explicitly seeks to expand access to finance, training, and markets for women. It calls for building women's resilience to climate change and reducing gender inequalities. Sectoral strategies include agriculture, health, and governance.	Strong emphasis on climate resilience for women and economic empowerment. However, unpaid care work is only implied through support for labour-saving technologies and time-saving devices.
Kaduna State Community Engagement Framework on Climate Shocks	The framework provides detailed strategies for engaging communities in preparedness and response to climate-related disasters. Women, PWDs, and youth are prioritized as vulnerable groups. It recommends gender-sensitive early warning systems and participation in resilience planning.	This document directly integrates gender and climate change. It identifies women as key actors in community resilience, though it does not address care burden or redistribution of unpaid labour explicitly.
Kaduna State Social Protection Policy	Though the full document is not provided, references suggest commitments to cash transfers, health insurance, and social assistance for poor and vulnerable women.	Social protection is a key pathway for reducing time poverty and supporting caregivers. The linkage to unpaid care work could be strengthened in actual implementation.
GESI (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion) Policy	Calls for mainstreaming gender equality and inclusiveness across all Kaduna State MDAs and development programmes.	Offers a strong institutional foundation for care-sensitive and gender-aware climate policies, though practical translation into care services or budgeting is unclear.
Climate Change Policy for Kaduna State (2024–2028)	Presents a comprehensive framework aimed at enhancing the state's climate resilience and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy. The policy outlines key thematic areas, including mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk management, climate financing, institutional coordination, and stakeholder engagement.	The policy acknowledges women as a vulnerable group affected by climate change, particularly in rural communities. However, this recognition is limited to vulnerability status and does not extensively explore the specific impacts of climate change on unpaid care work or caregiving roles commonly performed by women.

Taraba State

3.4 Demographics

In Taraba, the economic profile of respondents shows a greater mix of traders (58%) and farmers, reflecting the more rural and agrarian character of the surveyed communities. Farming households are particularly exposed to drought and rainfall variability, which directly reduces yields and food availability. FGDs from Kpantinapu/Lakanviri and Kona communities revealed that poor harvests increase women's unpaid workload, as they must ration food, seek alternative sources of water and firewood, and spend longer hours managing household survival tasks.

Income levels in Taraba are slightly higher than Kaduna but still low, with 64.8% earning ₦30,000 or less per month. This income insecurity, combined with high care responsibilities, forces women to adopt harmful coping strategies like cutting meals (29.1%) and stopping paid work (47.5%) during climate shocks. Women explained that time spent fetching water or caring for sick relatives during heatwaves often means abandoning trading or farming activities temporarily.

Most respondents in Taraba are also married women aged 25–45, juggling care duties with income-generating activities. Widowed and divorced women reported particularly heavy burdens, with minimal support from extended family or community structures. This was echoed in FGDs, where participants stated that community or NGO support is irregular and insufficient, leaving women to rely on their own labour and social networks.

Education levels in Taraba are similarly low, with many women having limited or no formal education. This reduces their access to information on climate adaptation strategies or early warning systems, and, as in Kaduna, it constrains their participation in decision-making forums. Cultural norms further restrict women's public voice, as reflected in their minimal involvement in community meetings and planning sessions.

3.5 Coping Strategies

Drought and water scarcity are stretching women's care work

Taraba faces a different climate profile, with less rainfall, drought, and poor crop yields being the most common stressors. 47.5% of respondents reported stopping work, while 29.1% cut meals due to shortages of food and water. FGDs in Kpantinapu/Lakanviri and Kona highlighted how water scarcity has become a major time drain.

Women spend hours each day cooking and fetching water, often at the expense of trading, farming, or resting. As one woman put it:

“We just give them what we have on the ground as usual... only God is looking after us.”

This reallocation of time and energy toward water and food management intensifies women's physical and emotional burden.

Harmful coping practices are undermining long-term well-being

Meal rationing, temporary withdrawal from paid work, and managing scarce resources are common strategies among women in Taraba. These practices, while necessary in the short term, harm household health and resilience in the long run.

FGDs revealed that some women skip meals or eat less so their children can eat, which puts them at risk of malnutrition and fatigue. These sacrifices also reduce income generation opportunities and push households deeper into poverty with each climate shock.

Unsustainable Reliance on Natural Resources Drives Maladaptation

Taraba is one of Nigeria's most forest-rich states, and one of just eight states responsible for 50% of Nigeria's forest reserves. However, it is also one of the states with the highest rates of deforestation mainly driven by economic activities. This has been identified in our study, as shown in FGDs in Kpantinapu/Lakanviri and Kona, charcoal and firewood trade has become a dominant income stream for women, especially those in economically distressed or female-headed households. This growing trade is occurring despite strict anti-deforestation laws, including the creation of the Taraba State Special Taskforce on Illegal Mining and Environmental Protection. However, respondents and stakeholders pointed to a major enforcement gap: the taskforce lacks the capacity and grassroots reach to monitor rural deforestation. Local women often described how enforcement was either arbitrary or nonexistent, and when fines are imposed, they are sometimes informal or extractive, rather than rehabilitative.

Women's involvement in the charcoal trade is not by choice, but necessity. Droughts, failed harvests, and low access to financial or productive assets push them into forest-based coping strategies. The absence of clean, affordable energy alternatives, coupled with unemployment and poor support systems, makes charcoal a survival economy, despite its environmental costs.

Support is minimal despite expanding policy architecture

Although Taraba has recently developed a Climate Change Policy & Action Plan (2025) and a WASH Policy (2019) with a progressive women's participation quota, 85.6% of respondents reported receiving no support. FGDs confirm that government and NGO interventions are irregular and insufficient.

Key stakeholders highlighted that the Taraba Environmental Protection Agency (TEPA) lacks gender-disaggregated data, which makes it difficult to identify and address the care burdens women face. Without targeted, consistent support, women are left to carry the full burden of adaptation.

Low income and food insecurity narrow adaptive capacity

Like Kaduna, Taraba households operate under severe financial constraints. Low earnings limit the ability to purchase water, invest in climate-smart farming tools, or hire help for care tasks. FGDs revealed that when food becomes scarce, women ration meals and sometimes skip their own meals to ensure their children can eat. These trade-offs reduce nutrition and weaken overall household resilience.

Women's voices remain marginal in adaptation planning

Despite policy documents emphasising inclusion, women in Taraba reported minimal involvement in decision-making. FGDs revealed that they are rarely invited to community meetings and often lack the time or resources to attend. Even when present, their concerns about water access, food security, and health remain secondary.

This means that adaptation planning frequently fails to address the unpaid care work that is central to women's lives.

3.6 Institutional & Policy Framework — Taraba State

A. Institutional Landscape

Institution	Mandate / Key Functions	Climate-Care Context
Ministry of Environment & Climate Change	Leads climate policy, environmental management, and adaptation initiatives. Hosts the Climate Change Policy validation workshop.	Coordinates climate action across sectors; mandates include health, water, and disaster resilience areas affecting women's care workload.
Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security	Oversees climate-smart agriculture, irrigation, rural livelihoods.	Central to food security; reduced yields increase women's caregiving demand amid food shortages.
Ministry of Justice	Provides legal support for environmental regulation, regulation enforcement.	Key for embedding gender and care protections into environmental and social policies.
Ministry of Women Affairs & Child Development	Promotes gender equity, women's welfare, and family services.	Crucial for linking climate impacts to women's unpaid care burdens.
Ministry of Health	Manages public health, WASH, and climate-linked disease response.	Supports maternal and child health services against climate-induced outbreaks.
Ministry of Water Resources & Aquatic Affairs	Manages water infrastructure and flood control.	Infrastructure gaps force women to travel for water, increasing care responsibilities.
Taraba State House of Assembly	Passed bill establishing University of Tropical Agriculture & Climate Action.	Institutional capacity building for resilience and adaptation.
Taraba Environmental Protection Agency (TEPA)	Regulates environmental standards; data collection for climate actions.	Limited capacity noted; lacks gender-disaggregated environmental data.

B. Key Policy Documents

Policy Document	Relevant Themes & Content	Climate–Care–Gender Context
Taraba Climate Change Policy & Action Plan (2025)	Not published yet.	
Taraba State Water Supply, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Policy, 2019	Developed via multi-sectoral participatory workshops, the WASH Policy focuses on sustainable water supply, effective sanitation, hygiene promotion, and institutional reform. It	By ensuring access to safe water and sanitation, it directly addresses key drivers of women's unpaid care work such as time spent fetching water and

	mandates community-inclusive governance, women's participation quotas (35% in WASH bodies), and Environmental & Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for major projects.	vulnerability to waterborne diseases. It is one of the few policies to establish gender-responsive targets.
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4.0 Discussion

This study reveals a persistent disconnect between women's lived realities under climate stress and the existing support systems in Northern Nigeria. Across Kaduna and Taraba, women are bearing the brunt of climate change through intensifying unpaid care work, reduced income-generating opportunities, and harmful coping strategies such as skipping meals or withdrawing from work. In Kaduna, 68.6% of women reported stopping paid work due to caregiving demands; in Taraba, 47.5% did the same.

Despite their critical role in household and community survival, women remain underrepresented in decision-making, largely unsupported by formal systems, and often invisible in policy. Over 85% of respondents across both states received no support from government or NGOs. Religious structures like Zakat and NGOs and community groups offer sporadic help, but FGD participants described them as grossly inadequate, uneven and often inaccessible to the most vulnerable.

The situation is particularly severe for widows, disabled women, and the extremely poor. These groups face compounded challenges due to low income, weak infrastructure, and social exclusion. Across both states, more than 84% of women reported not attending any community meetings, highlighting limited influence in shaping adaptation efforts.

Environmental degradation adds urgency to the crisis. In Taraba, many women have turned to the charcoal and firewood trade to survive. This is particularly concerning given Taraba's status as one of eight states holding 50% of Nigeria's tree cover. Despite existing anti-deforestation laws and the establishment of a Special Taskforce, enforcement remains weak due to underfunding and lack of alternatives like clean energy.

Meanwhile, policy frameworks in both states (e.g., Kaduna's WEE Policy, Taraba's WASH and Climate Action Plans) often acknowledge gender but rarely address unpaid care work directly. Ministries responsible for climate, gender, and health tend to work in silos, with few mechanisms for collaboration or care-focused budgeting. Without a coordinated approach that centers care as a pillar of adaptation, current strategies will continue to fall short.

A care-responsive adaptation agenda is urgently needed, one that values women's caregiving roles, funds infrastructure that eases unpaid work, and creates viable, sustainable livelihood alternatives such as green skills training, solar energy, and public care services. Inclusion, not just recognition, is key. Women must be involved not only as caregivers but as central actors in climate planning, budgeting, and implementation.

4.1 Policy Recommendations

To promote care-responsive climate adaptation, the following recommendations are organized in a consolidated table:

Problem	Evidence	Policy Lever	Responsible MDA(s)	Metric	Scope
Women's unpaid care workload is displacing paid work	Kaduna: 68.6% ↑ care workload; 102.5% stopped work. Taraba: 47.5% stopped work.	Care-sensitive social protection: cash transfers, community childcare, labour/time-saving tech	Women Affairs, Social Protection, Planning & Budget	% reduction in daily care hours (time-use); # childcare centres	Cross-cutting
Harmful coping (skipping meals, stopping work) undermines resilience	Kaduna: 54.4% cut meals; Taraba: 29.1% cut meals	Nutrition-linked cash/food support triggered by climate events; care-aware public works	Health, Agriculture, Social Protection	% households reporting meal cuts; child & maternal nutrition indicators	Cross-cutting

Depletion of Natural and Forest Resources as Coping Strategies	High prevalence of charcoal and firewood trade and use in both Kaduna, but more prominent in Taraba	Pair environmental enforcement with state-subsidized clean energy access and green skills and income schemes (e.g., briquette, clean cooking stoves, agroforestry, tree nurseries, clean energy supply chains) targeted at rural women.	Environment	% reduction in women engaged in charcoal/firewood trade; % increase in women trained in green skills.	Cross-cutting, urgent for Taraba.
Minimal external support, weak coordination	No support: 91% (Kaduna), 85.6% (Taraba); KSIs: gender-insensitive programming	Embed care indicators & budgets in SDPs, climate plans, WEE	Planning & Budget, Environment, Women Affairs	# programmes with care KPIs; ₦ allocated to care infrastructure	Cross-cutting
State-specific hazards: flooding (Kaduna) vs. drought/water stress (Taraba)	FGDs: flooded homes & disease clusters (Kaduna); water scarcity & long fetching times (Taraba)	Climate-resilient infrastructure: drainage & flood control (Kaduna); WASH + climate-smart ag (Taraba)	Environment, Water Resources, Works, Agriculture	# functional drainage/water points; time fetching water	State-specific
Low participation and voice	>84% did not attend meetings (both states); FGDs: exclusion	Mandate 35–50% women's representation; pay stipends, offer childcare	LGAs, Women Affairs, Local Govt & Chieftaincy	% women in climate/DRR committees; # women-led initiatives	Cross-cutting
Care not recognised as infrastructure	Policies (SDP, WEE, Climate Action Plans) omit explicit care targets	"Care as infrastructure": budget for childcare, clean water, health in climate finance	Cabinets, Planning & Budget, Women Affairs, Health	# care assets funded via climate budgets; time-use reductions	Cross-cutting
Data blindness on gendered climate impacts (Taraba TEPA noted)	Lack of gender-disaggregated, care-sensitive indicators	Build a climate-care M&E framework (time-use, income loss, decision-making)	TEPA, Statistics Bureaus, Planning & Budget	# of climate programmes reporting care-time shifts; published gendered dashboards	Cross-cutting; urgent for Taraba

5.0 Conclusion

This research highlights the growing intersection between climate change and unpaid care work in Kaduna and Taraba States. As climate impacts increase through flooding, drought, illness, and food insecurity, women are absorbing these pressures by expanding their unpaid labour. They walk longer distances for water, care for sick relatives, ration food, and often withdraw from paid work to meet household needs. These responsibilities weigh most heavily on married women aged 30 to 49, caregivers with disabilities, and families with young children or elderly dependents.

Although women are actively adapting, their coping strategies — such as skipping meals, leaving jobs, or engaging in charcoal and firewood trade — are neither sustainable nor safe. These responses come with serious consequences, including health risks, loss of income, and missed educational opportunities for girls. Despite playing a central role in household survival, women continue to be overlooked in climate policy and excluded from local decision-making.

Institutional responses remain fragmented and largely gender-blind. Existing state policies mention vulnerability and gender inclusion but rarely address unpaid care work or the infrastructure needed to support caregivers. Promising government and civil society programs are often too limited in scope, poorly coordinated, or lack sustainable funding.

A more effective path forward requires a shift to care-responsive climate adaptation. This includes providing immediate relief to overburdened caregivers, investing in essential infrastructure such as clean water, energy, health services, and childcare, and ensuring that care responsibilities are integrated into planning, budgeting, and implementation frameworks. Demographic findings point to specific priorities, including targeted support for married and widowed caregivers, disability-inclusive services, and the active participation of educated women in adaptation planning.

Climate resilience in Nigeria depends not only on technical solutions but also on the visibility and value placed on care work. Recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care must be central to any serious adaptation strategy. Until the invisible labour of women is acknowledged and supported through public policy, the foundation of community resilience will remain fragile.

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Annexes

Survey Instrument

1. Structured Questionnaire (KoboToolbox)

A. Demographics and Socioeconomic Characteristics

- Age: Below 18 B. 18–29 C. 30–49 D. 50 and above
- Marital Status: ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Never Married
- Do you live with any physical or mental disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please specify:
- Highest level of education completed: ☐ No schooling ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary
- Main occupation: A. Trader B. Farm/Natural resource-based C. Formal job D. Full housewife
- Household size: A. Less than 5 B. 5–9 C. 10–15 D. Above 15
- Category of dependents you care for: Children under 5 / Elderly (60+) / Ill or disabled persons / Orphans
- Who provides most of the basic needs i.e. food, water, medicine, fuel etc. for the family? A. You B. Husband C. I share equally in the responsibility D. Other sources
- Monthly household income range: ☐ Less than ₦10,000 ☐ ₦10,001–₦30,000 ☐ ₦30,001–₦50,000 ☐ Above ₦50,000

B. Climate Change Experience

- Have you noticed any changes in weather or climate in the last 5–10 years? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, what types of changes have you noticed? (Select all that apply): ☐ Less rainfall ☐ Flooding ☐ Drought ☐ Increased heat ☐ Poor crop yield ☐ Others: _____
- How have these changes affected your daily life? (tick all that apply): ☐ Increased illness in family ☐ Damage to house/livelihood ☐ Water shortage ☐ Food scarcity ☐ School closures ☐ More care responsibilities ☐ Increased stress or anxiety

C. Care Work Load and Time Use

On an average day, how many hours do you spend on the following activities?

Task	Hours Per Day
Cooking	
Cleaning	
Fetching water	
Caring for children	
Caring for elderly or disabled	
Attending community meetings	
Paid economic activity	

- Compared to five years ago, how has your care workload changed? ☐ Increased ☐ Remained the same ☐ Decreased ☐ Not sure
- What factors increased your care workload? ☐ Climate events (flood/drought) ☐ School closure ☐ Poor health ☐ Death in family ☐ Lack of help ☐ Others: _____

D. Coping and Adaptation Strategies

- When climate-related problems make care work harder, what do you usually do? ☐ Stop paid work ☐ Rely on neighbours ☐ Cut meals ☐ Withdraw children from school ☐ Seek NGO/government help ☐ Others: _____
- Have you ever received any form of support (food, water, cash, childcare) during drought or flood periods? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, who provided the support? ☐ Government ☐ NGO ☐ Community leaders ☐ Family ☐ Religious bodies ☐ Others: _____

E. Participation, Voice, and Decision-Making

- Are women in your community involved in decisions about water access, farming, or disaster response? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you ever attended a community or village meeting where climate or livelihood issues were discussed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, did you speak or share your opinion? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If not, why? ☐ Not confident ☐ Not allowed to speak ☐ Meetings are male-dominated ☐ Too busy ☐ Not invited ☐ Others: _____
- Are there any specific diseases that are prevalent during any climate change action? If yes, what are they? _____
- What would make it easier for women to participate in decisions in your community? (Open-ended)

Semi-Structured Interview / FGD Guide

Target Groups: Women caregivers (divorced, widowed, married, disabled); Local leaders; CBOs and LGA reps

Duration: 45–60 minutes

A. Perceptions of Climate Change

- What changes in weather or environment have you observed in recent years?
- How do these changes affect your home, income, or caregiving roles?

B. Impact on Unpaid Care Work

- Can you describe a typical day caring for your household?
- During times of flood, drought, or heat, what changes in your daily tasks?
- Do women who are widowed, divorced, or disabled face more challenges? How?
- Do you get support from others in your family or community?
- Are there communicable diseases that you experience when affected by climate and how does that add to care work burden?

C. Coping and Adaptation

- What do you do when water is scarce or food is limited?
- Have you had to stop any paid work because of caregiving needs?
- What helps you manage when care work becomes overwhelming?

D. Institutional and Informal Support

- Are there any organisations, government, or community groups that help you?
- Have you received anything like food, water, shelter, or child care support in hard times?

E. Participation and Decision-Making

- Do women take part in community meetings or decisions on climate or farming?
- Have you ever spoken up in a meeting? What happened?
- What stops women from participating more actively?
- What would help women to be more involved in decision-making?

F. Income and Care Work

- How would having your own income help you manage caregiving responsibilities during times of drought, flooding, or food scarcity?