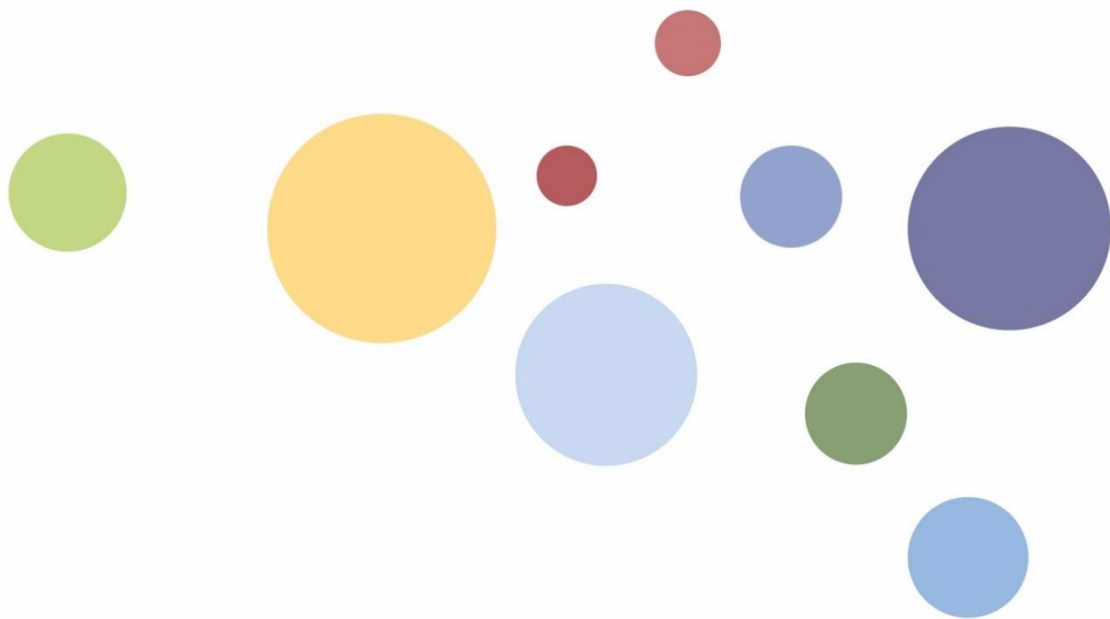


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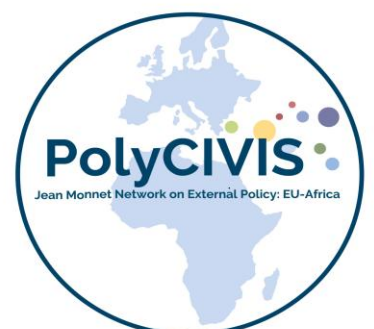
Gender impact of Global Polycrises in Kenya and Italy

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The Polycrisis & Policy Brief Series is coordinated by the *Policy Work Package* which is part of [the PolyCIVIS Network](#). The PolyCIVIS Policy brief series aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers, at various levels and to foster dialogue among stakeholders on effective policy responses.



Executive Summary

Kenya and Italy, though differing significantly in socio-economic and geopolitical contexts, are both facing the unprecedented convergence of multiple, interlinked and structurally entangled crises—commonly referred to as a polycrisis. These include the protracted repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-induced disasters, escalating economic instability, political unrest, and considerable reductions in international aid. This convergence of crises has disproportionately impacted women and children, exacerbating gender inequalities, increasing vulnerabilities, and threatening hard-won gains in social development. The need for urgent and sustained policy responses is critical, as continued inaction risks long-term damage to social cohesion, economic resilience, and human development outcomes.

This policy brief examines two core questions:

1. In what ways have overlapping global crises specifically affected women and children in Kenya and Italy?
2. What policy interventions are required to mitigate these gendered and generational impacts and enhance resilience to future shocks?

Key messages

- ❖ Both countries witnessed a surge in gender-based violence during COVID-19 lockdowns, with heightened economic stress compromising household safety, particularly for women and girls.
- ❖ In Kenya, prolonged school closures significantly disrupted education, contributing to high dropout rates among adolescent girls and deepening educational inequalities. Kenya has also experienced acute food insecurity exacerbated by drought and economic hardship, leading to widespread hunger and rising rates of child malnutrition.
- ❖ In Italy, although women experienced a reduction in working hours similar to that of men, they were more likely to lose their jobs. Horizontal segregation in the labour market exacerbated already existing inequalities. The increase in caregiving responsibilities—linked to the blurring of boundaries between home and work—had a negative impact on women's well-being, contributing to widespread anxiety, stress, and frustration.
- ❖ Economic instability, driven by cuts in international aid in Kenya and austerity policies in Italy, has undermined women's economic security and widened existing poverty gaps.

(1) Introduction

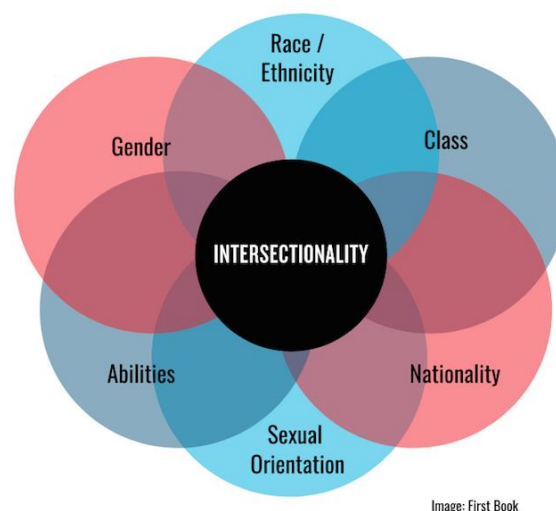
In recent years, Kenya and Italy have both confronted an unprecedented convergence of crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, economic shocks, political instability, and cuts in aid have combined to form a global “polycrisis” disrupting health, livelihoods, and social systems. Women and children are at the forefront of this fallout, disproportionately bearing the brunt of disrupted services, economic hardship, and insecurity.¹ From prolonged droughts in Kenya to pandemic lockdowns in Italy, these multifaceted challenges exacerbate existing inequalities and threaten to erode decades of progress in human development. And this is precisely why, in order to address such complexity and prevent future disruptions, it is essential to understand the structural entanglement of the multiple crises which, at different times, act as accelerators, amplifiers, and conduits for further crises.

The decision to focus on Kenya and Italy in this study is grounded in both their different socio-economic and institutional contexts and their shared exposure to the multidimensional effects of recent global crises. Italy, as a Southern European country and member of the European Union, represents a welfare state with longstanding gender inequalities in labour market participation and care responsibilities, yet operating within a relatively structured institutional framework for gender equality policies. Kenya, by contrast, as a Sub-Saharan African country, exemplifies the dynamics of a developing economy with different governance capacities, demographic pressures, and socio-cultural determinants of gendered vulnerabilities. By comparing these two countries, the reflection aims to highlight both the divergences and convergences in policy responses to the gendered impacts of polycrises, offering insights into how structural inequalities are either exacerbated or mitigated across different settings. The comparative approach allows for a critical reflection on the effectiveness, reach, and

inclusiveness of policy measures in contexts marked by different welfare regimes, levels of institutionalisation, and feminist mobilisation. The decision was also influenced by the goals of the PolyCIVIS network, which include inter-country and inter-cultural discussions to inform broader Euro-African responses to the polycrisis.

This policy brief adopted an intersectional approach to analyse the manifestation of and responses to polycrisis by the respective countries. Intersectionality demonstrates how interconnected identities lead to simultaneous experiences of privilege, oppression, and marginalization [43]. Understanding the complexities of the polycrisis requires an understanding of intersectionality theory. This theory looks at how different social categories such as race, gender, and class interact to shape individual experiences (see Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Intersectionality



Source: [Inclusify](#)

Methodological approach

¹ Khosla *et al.*, 2024

This study adopts a mature feminist perspective aimed at critically deconstructing dominant and stigmatizing conceptions of the world and of the relationships among women from different cultural and socio-geographic backgrounds. Rather than reproducing essentialist or hierarchical views, the analysis seeks to unveil the power dynamics embedded in global narratives and policy frameworks, and to foreground the situated knowledge and agency of women at the global level.

By doing so, the research engages with intersectional and decolonial feminist approaches, challenging Eurocentric assumptions and highlighting the pluralities of women's experiences. It promotes a rethinking of solidarity and justice through the lens of relationality, interdependence, and mutual recognition, resisting homogenizing discourses and embracing difference as a source of epistemic and political strength. A feminism that advocates for equal rights, access and opportunities not only as a women's concern but also as an important democratic value that adds legitimacy to political systems. It also calls for inclusion of women through legislation and policy, to promote women's access to resources such as education, employment among others.² The polycrisis emphasizes how interlocking systems of inequality present difficulties for marginalized populations like women and children.

This polycrisis demands urgent policy attention because its impacts on vulnerable groups are both acute and long-lasting. In Kenya, a severe drought coupled with pandemic-related economic strain has left over 4 million people facing hunger, including nearly one million acutely malnourished young children³. In addition, reductions in international aid are jeopardizing lifesaving programs for women and children.⁴ Meanwhile, surging food and energy prices linked to global inflation and conflict have

deepened poverty and instability. In Italy, the pandemic's economic shock set back gender equality: at one point, 99% of jobs lost were held by women, and many women were forced to leave work to care for children during school closures⁵, facing greater income loss than men. The increase in caregiving responsibilities—linked to the blurring of boundaries between home and work—had a negative impact on women's well-being, contributing to widespread anxiety, stress, and frustration.⁶ These examples underscore the urgency of action – without intervention, today's crises will have irreversible generational consequences, from entrenched child malnutrition and education gaps to widened gender poverty gaps.

To tackle these compounded challenges, this brief asks:

1. How have the overlapping global crises impacted women and children in Kenya and Italy?
2. What policy measures are needed to mitigate these gendered generational impacts and build resilience against future shocks?

In the sections that follow, the brief analyses these questions and links findings to poly-solutions. Drawing on evidence from both contexts, the final recommendations propose concrete actions for transformative policies realized by governments, international organizations, and civil society. By connecting analysis to action, the brief charts a path forward to protect women and children and prevent today's polycrisis from becoming tomorrow's generational catastrophe.

(2) The Polycrisis in Kenya and Italy: Key Dimensions and Gendered Impacts

Both Kenya and Italy have been navigating a polycrisis – multiple, concurrent global crises

² Martinez *et al.*, 2002.

³ Del Casale *et al.*, 2022

⁴ Brini *et al.* 2024

⁵ Bevitori and Russo, 2024, p.283.

⁶ Tafere *et al.* 2023

– that disproportionately affect women and children. This section examines key dimensions of the polycrisis – pandemic, climate change, conflict, economic instability, and food insecurity – and analyses their impacts on gender equality in Kenya and Italy. The mechanisms by which crises become entangled with reciprocal effects, underscores the importance of holistic and interdisciplinary responses,

2.1. Health and Pandemic Challenges

In Kenya, movement restrictions and school closures created a “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence – a third of all crimes reported after COVID’s onset were sexual offenses, as women and girls were trapped at home with abusers.⁷ Child abuse and exploitation surged; in some regions, adolescent pregnancies spiked alarmingly (one survey noted a 40% increase in teen pregnancies during a 3-month lockdown)⁸. These trends jeopardize girls’ education and life prospects. With schools closed for nine months, many Kenyan children – especially girls – lost a safe space and access to school meals and health services.⁹ Some never returned to class, pushed instead into early marriage or child labour amid the economic strain.¹⁰

In Italy, too, confinement measures exacerbated domestic violence: Calls to the national helpline increased by 79.5% in 2020 compared to 2019, both via telephone and online chat (+71%). During this period, there was a notable rise in requests for assistance from very young women (11.8% in 2020 vs 9.8% in 2019), as well as in cases of violence perpetrated by family members (18.5% vs 12.6%). Among the more than 20,000 women who contacted anti-violence centres (CAVs) during the first five months of 2020, 8.6% did so due to forced cohabitation. The CAVs were compelled to identify new methods of contact and support for women in distress.¹¹

Women disproportionately shouldered the care burden as schools and day-care centres shut down.¹² Italian mothers juggled home-schooling and telework with minimal external support, leading to burnout and career sacrifices. As one Italian gender expert observed, lockdown forced women to “manage...child care, school, work and the home” often alone.¹³ Consequently, many women reduced work hours or quit jobs, deepening Italy’s pre-existing gender employment gap.¹⁴ In the framework of an already weak welfare system lacking adequate measures supporting the sharing of care responsibilities within the family, the pandemic highlighted the need to reform leave systems with more incentives for fathers and better financial support for mothers.¹⁵

2.2. Climate Change and Humanitarian Crises

Kenya has faced alternating cycles of extreme drought and floods: a prolonged multi-year drought in arid regions has decimated crops and livestock, while erratic heavy rains elsewhere trigger floods and landslides. Women and children are most affected due to their roles and vulnerabilities.¹⁶ For example, in 2018 the Solai Dam collapse in Nakuru County (after heavy rains) swept away entire villages – of the 47 people killed, most were women, children, or elderly. Schools and clinics were destroyed, disrupting education and healthcare for hundreds. This was also the case in Mombasa and West Pokot.¹⁷ In April 2024, Kenya experienced a devastating flood in the Mai Mahiu area of Nakuru County, where a dam burst led to the deaths of at least 45 people. The majority of the victims were women, children, and the elderly, who were unable to escape the fast-moving floodwaters.¹⁸ These tragedies underscore

⁷ Tafere *et al.* 2023

⁸ UN Women, 2020

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Istat 2021

¹² Del Casale *et al.*, 2022

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Rymkevich, 2021

¹⁶ UNDP, 2020

¹⁷ Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), 2018

¹⁸ Malesi, 2024

that when disasters strike, women and kids are less able to escape harm and more likely to be among casualties. More slowly unfolding is the drought emergency: by early 2023, 4.4 million Kenyans were acutely food-insecure, and nearly 800,000 children and 140,000 pregnant or lactating women were suffering acute malnutrition in hard-hit pastoral areas.¹⁹ Women in drought zones trek longer distances for water – as they are the main water provider or household needs – and many are forced to skip meals, compromising their health and pregnancy outcomes.²⁰ Malnourished mothers give birth to underweight babies, and malnourished young children face stunting or even starvation.²¹ Drought also has child protection consequences – as livelihoods collapse, families may pull daughters from school for marriage or send sons to work, and some children are left without care.²² One study in Kenya's arid counties found increased school dropouts (especially due to family migrations), child labour, and a worrying rise in child marriage and teenage pregnancy during drought periods.²³

Italy is not immune to climate stress, though the scale is different. The country has witnessed record heat waves, progressive aridification and drying up of rivers and lakes, particularly in the southern regions. The wildfires in the south, and floods/landslides in various regions (for instance, the 2022 Ischia landslide and 2023 Emilia-Romagna floods)²⁴ have led to the displacement of entire families and disrupt local economies. In the summer of 2022, drought in the Po River valley – Italy's agricultural heartland – hit crop yields and led to water rationing²⁵. Women in farming communities were affected as both workers and primary managers of household food supplies. A recent study by Pulighe et al. (2024) highlights how climate

change has had a severe impact on viticulture, leading to a decline in the quality of fine wines and a reduction in production; on fruit and vegetables, with lower quality of well-known labels and brands, reduced product variety, and decreased production levels; and on dairy cattle farming, resulting in lower milk yields and reduced production of high-quality cheeses.²⁶ Although Italy's stronger infrastructure and emergency services prevent large-scale loss of life, children and the elderly are particularly at risk from heat-related illness or trauma from disasters.²⁷ In Italy, 12% of paediatric hospital admissions are related to pollution.²⁸ Moreover, another significant impact of climate change on the population – not only on women – concerns mental health: a topic still underrepresented and insufficiently studied in Italy, yet one about which several authors have raised concern.²⁹ Floods and earthquakes can lead to anxiety, depressive states, and sleep disturbances; heatwaves are associated with increased aggression, the worsening of pre-existing mental health conditions, and a rise in suicidal tendencies. Moreover, there is growing recognition of so-called eco-anxiety and climate grief, particularly among younger populations. Therefore, a close interconnection emerges between climate change, and its socio-economic and health impacts. Additionally, some authors have highlighted how women's political participation in local administrations fosters greater attention to environmental policies and more environmentally responsible individual behaviours, thereby supporting the strengthening of ecological resilience and social cohesion as responses to the threats posed by climate change.³⁰

2.3. Conflict, War and Political Unrest

¹⁹ World Food Programme, 2023

²⁰ Sinaga *et al.*, 2023

²¹ World Food Programme, 2023

²² Ibid.

²³ Mburu *et al.*, 2024

²⁴ Giuffrida, 2022a; Cremonini *et al.*, 2024

²⁵ Giuffrida, 2022b

²⁶ Pulighe *et al.*, 2024.

²⁷ Giuffrida, 2022a; Cremonini *et al.*, 2024

²⁸ Fragomeni and Rizzo, 2020

²⁹ Massazza *et al.*, 2022

³⁰ Lodi *et al.*, 2024

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sent shockwaves far beyond Eastern Europe. Italy, as an EU state, suddenly faced an influx of refugees (mostly women with children) fleeing the war.³¹ The substantial flows of refugee women crossing the border increase their risk of falling victim to human trafficking, both because the procedures for issuing temporary residence permits in Italy reveal critical shortcomings that heighten the vulnerability of applicants, and due to gaps in identification processes that further raise the risk of trafficking, especially in the absence of a long-term assistance programme.³² Italian communities mobilized to provide schooling, healthcare, and housing for Ukrainian families. This demonstrated Italy's capacity for compassionate response, but also tested its social services.³³ The war also precipitated an energy and cost-of-living crisis in Europe; Italy saw gas prices and electricity bills soar, straining household finances and government budgets.³⁴ It should be noted, however, that according to OECD data in Europe the price of oil had already doubled, coal had quadrupled, and the price of natural gas had increased eighteenfold by the end of 2021 — a full three months before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.³⁵ Nevertheless, in Italy the increase proved to be even more severe, constituting an anomaly due to bold speculation and arbitrage practices carried out by major energy operators.³⁶ Families had less disposable income, which can translate into hardship for women (who often manage day-to-day household needs) and children (through poorer diets or fewer enrichment activities).³⁷

In Kenya, the Ukraine war's impact was felt through spiking fuel and fertilizer costs and reduced wheat imports, contributing to food inflation and economic instability.³⁸ Geopolitical conflicts can thus entrench

poverty and hunger in distant countries, hitting the poorest women and kids hardest.³⁹ Beyond economic effects, Kenya contends with its own episodes of unrest. In 2023, widespread Gen Z-led protests broke out against a proposed Finance Bill that would raise taxes on essentials. Young people, organized via social media, took to the streets in largely peaceful demonstrations — a movement notable for high participation of young women leaders. These female activists explicitly linked economic justice to gender justice, galvanizing crowds to decry not just taxes but also a rise in femicides and gender-based violence, and the government's failure to fund GBV prevention services.⁴⁰ The protests, however, were met with brutal police crackdowns; reports describe dozens killed or injured. Periods of political violence or instability, as seen in Kenya's protest crackdown (and historically during contested elections), often lead to increased sexual violence and exploitation of women and children. Curfews or security vacuums heighten the risk of GBV, and children may be separated from caregivers amid chaos.⁴¹

Economic Crises, Food Insecurity, and Aid Cuts

In Kenya, pandemic lockdowns destroyed many informal sector jobs (where women are a majority, e.g., market traders, domestic workers)⁴² and the drought killed off livestock herds (wiping out pastoralist women's assets like milk goats). Global inflation, coupled with local fiscal troubles, drove up prices of basic goods by double digits; even staple items like maize flour, bread and cooking oil became exorbitant for low-income families.⁴³ When households struggle economically, women and girls often sacrifice first: surveys showed mothers reducing their food intake so children could eat, and adolescent girls from

³¹ Stefanelli and Cinti, 2025

³² Cimino, and Degani, 2023

³³ Stefanelli and Cinti, 2025

³⁴ Melotti *et al.*, 2024

³⁵ D'Amico, 2022

³⁶ Bidoia, 2021

³⁷ Melotti *et al.*, 2024

³⁸ Davalos *et al.*, 2024

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Kinoti and Moraa, 2024

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2020

⁴³ *Ibid.*

poor families at higher risk of transactional sex or child marriage as financial coping strategies.⁴⁴Indeed, stakeholders noted a correlation between the economic stress of COVID-19 and increased domestic violence, sometimes called “economic violence,” as men vent frustrations on partners or use financial control as abuse [32] In both Kenya and Italy, stay-at-home orders and job losses early in the pandemic created conditions for more intimate partner violence.

In Italy, during the pandemic, although women experienced a reduction in working hours similar to that of men, they were more likely to lose their jobs. According to the Italian Institute of Statistics (Istat) the 2020 pandemic disproportionately affected women: of the 444,000 jobs lost, as many as 70% (over 300,000) were held by women. Horizontal segregation in the labour market exacerbated already existing inequalities⁴⁵. The increase in caregiving responsibilities—linked to the blurring of boundaries between home and work—had a negative impact on women's well-being, contributing to widespread anxiety, stress, and frustration.⁴⁶ Women also faced greater income loss and a rise in cases of gender-based violence. Although during the pandemic, in 2021, Italy's minimum income provision (Reddito di Cittadinanza) protected around two million households and over 5.6 million individuals living in absolute poverty from severe economic hardship,⁴⁷in the following years — particularly after the substantial dismantling of the measure — poverty rose once again. By 2023, it affected more than two million households, with an increase also in the number of individuals living in such conditions.⁴⁸ Economists and the central bank warned this could hurt the poor even as

prices remain high. As a consequence, although the prevalence and incidence rates of absolute poverty did not rise dramatically, inequalities increased significantly, and in 2024 the share of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion reached a peak of 23.1%.⁴⁹This paradox is attributed to uneven distribution of gains and high inflation eroding real incomes. Women and children make up a large share of Italy's poor (for example, single mothers, or large families with one breadwinner). Thus, withdrawing income support without a gender-sensitive alternative may leave these groups more exposed in a polycrisis.⁵⁰

In early 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order to freeze USAID funding has had a profound impact on Kenya, particularly affecting women and children. The abrupt halt in aid disrupted critical health programs, including HIV treatment and maternal care services.⁵¹ For instance, over 72,000 HIV patients in Nairobi and Kajiado counties lost access to antiretroviral therapy due to the suspension of the Fahari Ya Jamii project, which led to the closure of more than 150 clinics. This disruption has endangered the lives of many women and children who rely on these services for survival.⁵²

Many women, who constitute a significant portion of the healthcare workforce, faced unemployment, making it challenging to provide for their children and meet basic needs. Additionally, programs aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies and providing contraception were halted, increasing the vulnerability of young girls to early pregnancies and associated health risks.⁵³This situation has created a broader polycrisis in Kenya, intertwining health, economic, and social challenges.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Bettin *et al.*, 2024

⁴⁶ Brini *et al.* 2024

⁴⁷ Istat, 2022

⁴⁸ Istat, 2024

⁴⁹ Istat 2025

⁵⁰ Reuters 2024

⁵¹ Olingo, 2025

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

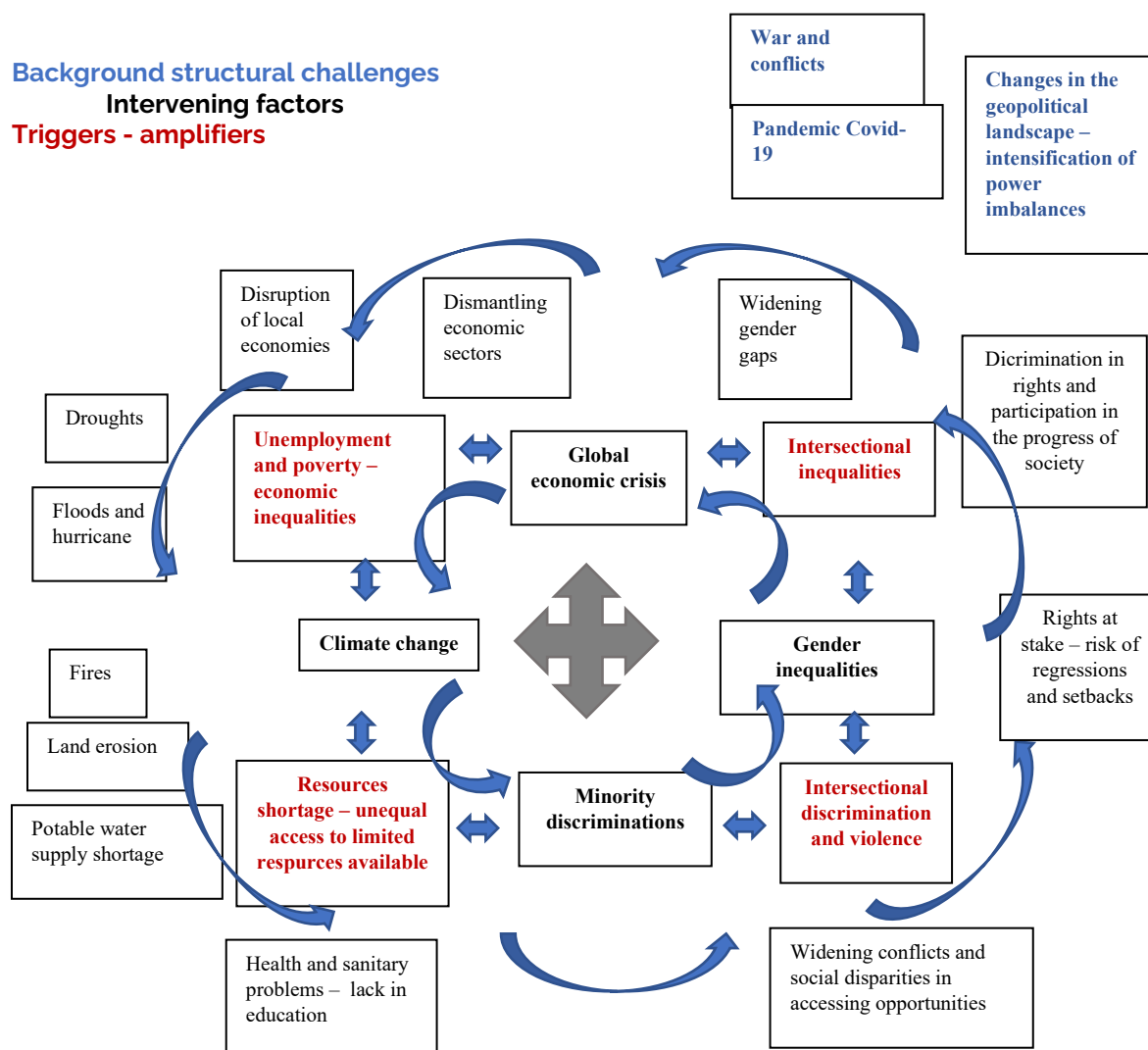
Box 1. Representation of the interlinked structure of polycrisis in Italy and Kenya

This box illustrates a diagram showing the interconnectedness of global structural challenges, overlaid by multiple crises. These crises reinforce each other, acting as triggers, drivers, and amplifiers, posing severe impacts on populations—especially vulnerable groups. The framework also accounts for unexpected or unpredictable events that worsen existing disadvantages.

The diagram highlights four fundamental global challenges present worldwide, though varying in intensity: **the ongoing global economic crisis, climate change, gender inequalities, and minority discrimination**. These underlie employment and poverty patterns, social exclusion, and unequal access to resources, shaping economic and social inequalities as well as marginalization of vulnerable groups.

Within this context, unforeseen events—such as the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing wars, and geopolitical shifts—can intensify these crises, setting off ripple effects with global repercussions.

This interconnected system of structural, cyclical, and contingent crises produces both tangible and intangible effects on societies, with disproportionate impact on vulnerable minorities.



(3) Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations should be seen as part of an integrated framework, including multiple measures and actions aimed at maximising transformative impact.

Strategic actions:

- Strengthen and expand gender-responsive and transformative policies, effectively challenging unbalanced power structures, and promoting structural change. Gender-neutral policies disproportionately impact on women.
- Provide comprehensive, accessible social protection with targeted legal, medical, and psychosocial support for women and children,
- Ensure continuous access to education for vulnerable children, especially adolescent girls, to prevent exclusion and educational loss.
- Integrate gender considerations into climate resilience strategies, ensuring women's participation and leadership in environmental adaptation planning.
- Empower women economically with targeted job creation, vocational training, and skills development in crisis-resilient sectors.
- Foster multi-stakeholder coordination among governments, international bodies, and civil society to address gendered vulnerabilities and prevent irreversible harm across generations.

Policy recommendations

- 1) Treat services for survivors of violence against women and femicide as essential, allocating sufficient funds for shelters, hotlines, and child protection even during crises. Launch awareness campaigns to inform victims and challenge norms enabling abuse. Enforce laws robustly—from Kenya's Sexual Offences Act to Italy's domestic violence statutes—and prosecute offenders swiftly. Governments should consider allocating at least 1% of GDP to these services. These actions align with CEDAW, SDG 5, SDG 16.2, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the EU Gender Action Plan.⁵⁴
- 2) Strengthen education resilience: Kenya should fund scholarships, community campaigns, and remote learning infrastructure to re-enrol girls and support catch-up. Italy should use EU recovery funds to expand universal broadband, provide devices, and enhance remedial education. Both countries must prioritize keeping schools safe and open during emergencies, given their role in child protection and nutrition. These efforts support SDG 4 and align with Agenda 2063 and EU commitments to equitable education.
- 3) Integrate women farmers and pastoralists into climate-smart agriculture in Kenya, improve access to water and energy to ease burdens on girls, and strengthen child protection systems against exploitation. Italy should prioritize support for vulnerable groups through heatwave plans and green transition projects. International climate finance should ensure gender-responsive and transformative aid, involving women's groups in resilience planning. Such measures contribute to SDG 13, SDG 5, Agenda 2063, and the EU Gender Action Plan. Mitigation and adaptation should be combined to address climate impacts on women's

⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, 1979; African Union Commission, 2015; European Commission, 2020; UN General Assembly 2015

lives.⁵⁵ For example, decarbonization in energy and agriculture and resilience strategies can improve public health immediately.⁵⁶

- 4) Promote women's full economic and political participation by enacting policies that secure decent work and entrepreneurial opportunities.⁵⁷ Affirmative action should ensure women's representation at all levels. Invest in vocational training and reskilling for growth sectors like green energy and digital services, improve access to credit for women-led enterprises, and enforce equal pay laws. Reduce unpaid care burdens by expanding childcare, eldercare, and flexible work arrangements (e.g., Kenya's National Care Policy). Italy should reform work-life balance policies by expanding childcare and encouraging paternal leave. These align with SDG 5 and SDG 8 and advance the African Union's and EU's gender economic equality goals

☀️ Italy's **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)** represents sound practice. It mainstreams gender across investments and targets women's economic participation. Its procurement policies include a minimum 30% employment quota for women and youth. Approximately 1.6% (€3.1 billion) of PNRR resources support female employment, entrepreneurship, STEM education, and care sector valorization. An additional 18.5% (€35.4 billion) address gendered polycrisis effects. Investments in nurseries, early childhood infrastructure, education, and care services address disproportionate responsibilities on women. The Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance projects a 4% female employment increase by 2026, outpacing general growth at 3.2%.

(4) Conclusion

This brief has highlighted the severe, interconnected impacts of crises—including COVID-19, climate change, economic shocks, political unrest, and aid cuts—on women and children in Kenya and Italy. These overlapping challenges deepen inequalities, fueling increased gender-based violence, interrupted education, economic hardship, impaired child welfare, and food insecurity. Despite different national contexts, both countries urgently need targeted, gender-responsive measures.

Recommendations call for strengthened legal frameworks and support systems to combat violence, resilient education systems, gender-sensitive climate and disaster responses, and economic empowerment initiatives for women. Affirmative action and deliberate inclusion of women in decision-making across sectors are essential to amplify their voices on matters affecting them. Policymakers in Kenya, Italy, and global institutions must act decisively. Delayed or inadequate responses risk entrenching inequalities and undermining future development. Immediate, coordinated, gender-sensitive interventions are vital not just to alleviate current suffering but to build sustainable resilience.

Future research should explore intersections of economic shocks and gender, evaluate crisis-response mechanisms, and assess long-term impacts on children's wellbeing and education. Enhanced data collection and analysis will support informed, adaptive policymaking. Safeguarding women and children amid polycrises demands sustained commitment, international cooperation, and strategic investment in gender equality and resilience.

⁵⁵ Fragomeni, and Rizzo, 2020

⁵⁶ Alfano *et al.*, 2023

⁵⁷ Lodi *et al.*, 2024

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