

Gender and Climate Change in South Asia: An Intersectional Analysis

Climate change poses pervasive challenges to South Asia, manifesting in extreme weather events and escalating temperatures, jeopardising its diverse populace. These climatic shifts exacerbate existing social and economic disparities, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups like women and children. Considering gender disparities is crucial because they profoundly influence experiences during climate-driven disasters.

The intersection of gender and climate change demands concerted attention and a strategic response from both individuals and institutions. When discussing the implications of climate change for the women of South Asia, it is essential to recognise the myriad cultural, social, and economic obstacles they encounter. These challenges compromise their ability to adapt to and recover from climate-related adversities. Numerous barriers limit their access to fundamental necessities as outlined by the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes restricted access to resources, education, healthcare, and pivotal leadership roles in decision-making, management, and governance. In fact, during such adversities, both women and children, face a higher mortality rate than men due to unequal access to resources in the form of disaster management services (emergency services, early warning systems, evacuation mechanisms). Plus, they also have limited mobility, which makes it difficult for them to avoid such circumstances and seek welfare and protection.

The primary objective of this panel is to highlight the intersectionality of gender inequality and the repercussions of climate change in the region and discuss how deeply embedded gender prejudice results in asymmetrically affecting women in times of catastrophe. By inspecting and looking at such factors, this panel aims to advocate policies, reforms and actions that are gender-responsive in nature. The following key questions will be debated:

1. In what way do the gendered impacts of climate change in South Asia manifest themselves in climate-related disasters, and how do some of the barriers (social, economic, cultural) faced by women amplify their vulnerability and their ability to adapt to these disasters?
2. What can be done to develop gender-responsive policies addressing the unfavourable effects that climate change has on women in South Asia?
3. What are the trials and barriers that women face in accessing resources, decision-making processes, and opportunities for adaptability and mitigation during a catastrophic disaster in South Asia?
4. What are some of the dynamic initiatives taken up in South Asia that address gender disparity within the region as well as advocate the active participation of women in the measures (whether mitigation, adaptation or disaster risk reduction) to tackle climate change?
5. How can we strategise to enhance gender equality in climate change policies and actions within South Asia?

6. What role can others (civil society, academia, private sector) besides the government play in promoting gender-responsive actions and policies to mitigate the impacts of climate change in South Asia?

Experts and stakeholders from civil society, academia, parliamentarians, and the private sector will be involved in this panel to foster an elaborate discussion on the discourse of gender disparity and climate change impacts in South Asia.

Panel Organiser

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