



Gender and Climate Change: An Analysis of Climate Change Impact on Women

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ABSTRACT:

Climate Change is a global phenomenon affecting each and everyone be it men or women. But it is women who suffer more as compared to men. Women constitutes half population of the world but they are often exploited and discriminated on the grounds of being of inferior gender and she is deprived of her rights. Climate change impact women severely because of their dependence on climate related phenomenon. Women have to deal with climate related problems without giving them ample resources. Women representation is less in decision making which further exacerbates their vulnerability to climate change. Inclusion of women is required if one has to frame better policies so as to tackle climate change in an efficient way.

KEY WORDS: Climate Change, Women, Vulnerability, Adaptation.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most serious threats which the world is facing today is the problem of climate change. In-fact it is the most talked problem in any forum. As per Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC “Climate change is a change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean temperature and the change of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer”. Climate change doesn't only mean that earth getting hotter but it is more than that. Apart from being the increase in temperature it also means the erratic change in weather phenomenon. At some places there will be high rain whereas at other places it will be a total dry spell. There are both natural as well as manmade causes of climate change. Natural causes include volcanic eruptions, tectonic moments and natural disaster whereas man made factors include excess use of fossil fuels. As per records, since, 1900 the top 10 warmest years have been recorded after 2000, wherein 2015 was the warmest. This shows how much there has been change in climate in the last 20 years which is really a worrisome issue.

It is a very well known fact that climate change impacts are gender neutral and affect both men and women like wise but it is women who faces more issues and problems related to climate change because of the fact she is more dependent on climate related resources as well as the inability to move-out in case of climate related disasters. While awareness of climate change and its impacts have risen drastically but what is missing is the gender aspect of climate change. Further, women constitute majority of poor population and thus face the heat of climate change. Also in case of decision making with respect to climate change related phenomenon, her involvement is very less and thus most policies are made which suit men rather than both men and women.

OBJECTIVE

1. The main objective of the paper is to study the impact of climate change on different aspect with respect to women.

CLIMATE CHANGE and WOMEN

Broadly speaking, climate change has more severe impacts on women as they are having more dependence on natural resources and also due to their limited access to recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Women are generally seen as homemaker and care taker when it comes to managing the households and thus it makes them more vulnerable when any climatic disaster struck. Furthermore, women are marginalized from political and economic power particularly in conflict-affected, post-conflict which further increase their vulnerability to climate change. There are basically six factors which make women more vulnerable to climate change than men. The first is economic factor as economic vulnerability impact women severely as post disaster women have more difficulty in finding employment be it formal or informal sector. Also women are mostly underpaid and have less access to resources which further increase their vulnerability. Secondly, women also face social vulnerability where in social changes occurring causes women to have difficulties in these changed social systems. During extreme weather such as droughts and floods, women tend to work more to secure household livelihoods. This will leave less time for women to access training and education, develop skills or earn incomes. Socio-cultural norms and childcare responsibilities prevent women from migrating or seeking refuge in other places or working when a disaster hits. Thirdly, there is ecological vulnerability wherein after disaster, women have to move in search of food and also fodder for the livelihoods. For women it becomes difficulty to adapt to new environment quickly and as a result faces various hardships. Fourthly, political vulnerability make it difficult for women to participate in decision making as women are generally working at grass-root level and can very well give opinion regarding changes required post disasters but patriarchal society don't involve them in decision making and thus they have to just follow the men dominated decision which further increase their vulnerability. Fifthly, physical vulnerability as most of the women are psychologically affected during disasters which has negative impact over their body like, soreness, miscarriages, sleep, physical impairments, gynecological problems, etc because of lack of health facilities or access to health resources. Sometimes health centers are too far away and during emergency, it becomes difficult to carry them and thus many women have miscarriages or die while giving birth as they don't reach health centre on time. Finally the sixth vulnerability is the emotional vulnerability which is again found more in women than in men, during disaster or post disaster women faces various emotional problems like fear, anger, anxiety, frustration etc. Each of the vulnerabilities occurring due to climate change can be explained with the help of a figure given below:

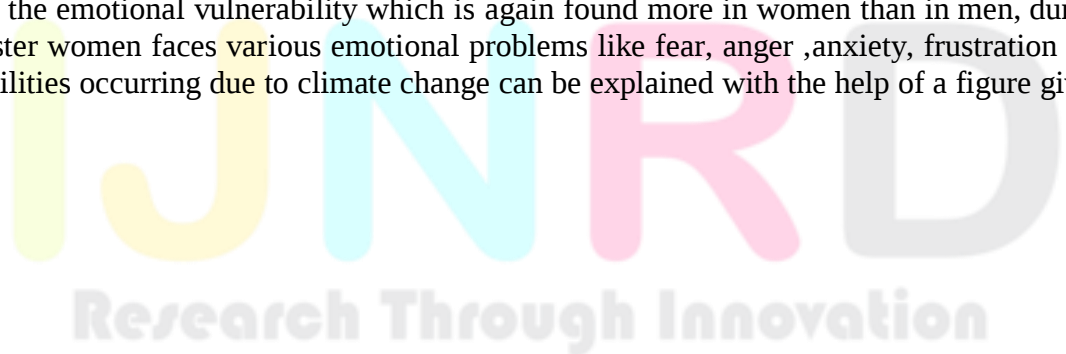
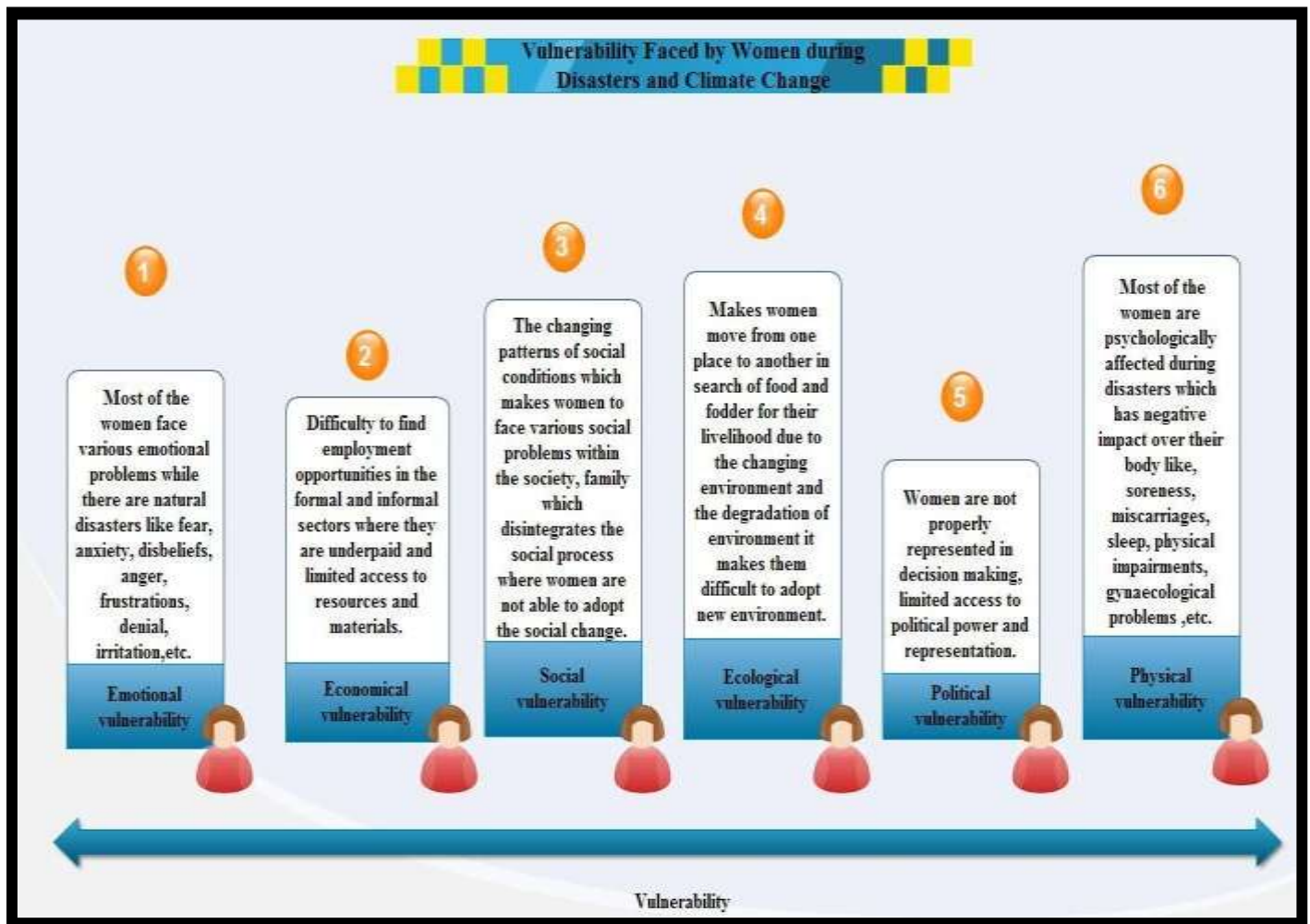


Figure1: Bench marking on the Vulnerability faced by Women during Climate Change (Dimitrov,2019)

Agriculture and food Security

Climate change has a severe impact on four dimensions of food security i.e. food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food stability. Women farmers account for and about 45-80 percent of all the food production in case of developing countries and constitutes about two-third of the total labour force. Climate change cause diseases in crops also cause reduction in production which ultimately impact women. In case of food shortage, it is women who are comprised as it is felt that men have to go out for arranging food and thus they require more food and the women have to go away so that men can feed properly so as to be able to earn livelihood. Furthermore women are not included in decision making with regards to use of land and access to it which is critical to their livelihood. Poor nutritional status of women further resulting in their less access to food and causing them decrease in their productivity. In case of climate related disasters they are not able to cope and adapt themselves due to food and thus are more susceptible to climate change.

Deforestation

It is one of the important phenomena which affect the land pattern and land use, resulting in loss of surface soil which is fertile and also loosening of soil. This results in declining of food production and crop yield causing scarcity of food. Since men is considered to be requiring more food as he has to go out and earn livelihood, it is women whose food intake is compromised resulting in lack of food and nutrition to women. Further, forest act as a source of fuel and firewood for local workers and it is often the woman who goes to forest to collect forest products for fuel and firewood. As result of deforestation women have to cover long distance to get forests products which cause various problem for women.

Natural Disaster

Another important phenomenon where women are highly comprised is the natural disaster. Changing climate results in disasters like flooding, sea-level rising, famines etc and it is women who suffer more than men. It is due to the fact that most of the women are not well aware of the various information regarding flooding,

cyclones, tsunamis etc. and thus are more vulnerable. Life saving skills are mostly taught to men and thus during disasters women fail to cope with them and thus suffer more.

Health

Climate change impacts health and it is women who are more vulnerable to climate related health issues. Various water borne diseases, malnutrition, mental disorders and depression impact women more their impact on men. Furthermore although women are primary produce of food but in case of climate related disasters, there are usually shortage of food. Lack of proper nutrition, makes women under weight and their growth is also stunted and thus when they give birth to child it always low weight. As per latest reports, 50 percent of pregnant women in developing countries suffer from iron deficiency. Further each year, 3,15,000 women die during child birth due to deficiencies. Thus we can say that women's health is more vulnerable.

Displacement and Migration

One of the most negative impacts of climate change is the forced migration or displacement due to the climate related events. The climate related displacement has serious repercussions on social, political and economic system of the communities. Migration and displacement are often very much tougher for women as they have too few issues like kidnapping, trafficking, rapes etc thereby by adding to their woes.

CLIMATE CHANGE, WOMEN and ADAPTATION

In spite of various vulnerabilities women are facing due to change in climate, they can also prove to be effective in promotion of adaptation and mitigation strategies as they are having the basic knowledge and skills related to storage, food preservation, rationing and natural resource management. This knowledge and skills need to be passed to coming generations to enhance adaptive capacity and have a sustainable future. For this to be achieved, the following recommendations need to be considered:

1. Adaptation initiatives taken should be gender specific particularly in areas like water, food security, agriculture, energy, health, disaster management, and conflict. Further, gender issues related to adaptation like inequalities in access to resources, including credit, extension and training services, information and technology should also be taken into consideration.
2. Decision making power needs to be decentralized and women should also be involved in decision making as they are one who are closely associated with nature. Further women priorities have to be taken into consideration in decision on planning and funding. It is also important to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building.
3. Funding organizations and donors should also take into account women-specific circumstances when developing and introducing technologies related to climate change adaptation and to try their best to remove the economic, social and cultural barriers that could constraint women from benefiting and making use of them. Involving women in the development of new technologies can ensure that they are adaptive, appropriate and sustainable.

INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, WOMEN and CLIMATE CHANGE

After so much of discussion one thing that comes out that although climate change is affecting all of us but it is a woman who is suffering more due to lack of access to resources, lack of information, lack of decision making power etc. However at international levels, the gender impact of climate change has come into consideration and there are various deliberations at international level trying to work on different aspects so as to make women less vulnerable to changing climate.

Gender analysis of climate change has been incorporated in the latest agendas of USAID (United States Agency for International Development). In fact they are working on to make the various aspect so as to make women less vulnerable to climate change like cleaner-burning fossil fuel, integration of women in watershed management and adaptation to receding glaciers and also involvement of women in ecosystem services and community investment plans. Similarly, the Beijing agenda for Global action on Gender-sensitive disaster reduction also came with few agendas to attain so as to make women less prone to climate related disasters. Some of the main points of the agendas were:

1. Taking of various administrative measures and linking them with climate change reduction policies through gender perspective.
2. Focusing on gender analysis and reduction in climate change related problem by inclusion of women in civil society decision making.
3. Developing the gender sensitive indicators by collecting various statistics on the gender impact of climate change related disaster.
4. Reduction in climate change vulnerability of women by making them more aware through media and other public platforms.
5. Enabling gender mainstreaming among all the development sectors through various capacity training to professional organization communication, local bodies, etc.
6. Developing the gender sensitive indicators by collecting various statistics on the gender impact of climate change related disaster.
7. Reduction in climate change vulnerability of women by making them more aware through media and other public platforms.
8. Enabling gender mainstreaming among all the development sectors through various capacity training to professional organization communication, local bodies, etc.

Similarly, The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) argues: “A gender-responsive climate finance architecture can play a profound role in supporting a climate change/change framework, and complementary sustainable development pathway, that promotes an equal, and resilient, economy for women and men. Historically, climate finance has had limited focus on and benefit for the poorest and most disadvantaged populations within developing countries, and for women in particular. This exacerbates vulnerability and climate injustice, and overall reduces the resilience of nations to the impacts of climate change. Gender-responsive climate change finance can play a role in creating an enabling environment for those who have typically been excluded.” Furthermore, Green Climate Fund (GCF), a part of UNFCCC emphasized on inclusion of women-centric decision making and also allocation of a part of funds to be used to support women in adaptation and mitigation processes.

CONCLUSION

Apart from being an environmental concern, climate change is an economic and social issue affecting each and everyone. However, in all spheres, women are disproportionately affected by climate change. Climate change is as much an economic, human security, and human rights issue as it is an environmental concern. In all of these arenas, women are uniquely, and in some cases disproportionately, affected by the consequences of climate change. It is important to take into consideration women's experiences and aspirations from various contexts when formulating solutions to address climate change. Women in the whole world do not have much assets compared with men, mostly all the assets are owned by men. When men try to conquer the nature it sometimes shows negative impacts on women. It becomes very important it becomes very much essential to understand the women issues and take into consideration the aspirations of women while framing policies to tackle climate change. Educating women and empowering them to take part in decision making processes is an important strategy to enable women to be in forefront of climate change policies. Prioritizing women capabilities and providing them opportunities to express themselves in an important aspect of including women in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. In the end it can be said that incorporating gender consideration in various projects related to climate change related disasters and risks will help in making policies more effective and will also result in improving the condition of women and increase in their resilience to climate change. By addressing gender, adaptation and mitigation, together, can help in building up of various approaches which can have better results and also results in development of women so as to have an equitable climate resistant society.

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