
Exploring Gender and Intersectionality in Climate Change: Flood Impacts on Rural Communities in District Kot Addu, Southern Punjab, Pakistan

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This paper explores the critical issue of environmental degradation due to the disproportionate catastrophic impacts of climate change. It highlights how gender and intersectionality influence the mechanism of resilience and adaptability in the face of climate change. Women, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, are bearing the brunt of climate change due to stark inequalities in society. Their roles are diverse, ranging from household domestication to outdoor agriculture and resource management, wherein they have to face the consequences of climate change, including water scarcity, food insecurity, job displacement, and violence in shelter homes. In this regard, a study was conducted in flood-affected rural areas of District Kot Addu in the Southern region of Punjab Province, and 80 interviews were conducted using Qualitative research methodology in these flood-affected areas with the sole aim to analyze the intricate relationship between gender, intersectionality, and climate change. However, the concept of intersectionality explores one key aspect in this regard that traumatic experiences of climate change vary based on race, color, disability, ethnicity, and other social and sexual orientations. This very thing proves that intersectionality encapsulates compound effects in the face of climate change, and multiple genders confront multifaceted problems due to the drastic events of climate change. Similarly, marginalized women living in far-flung areas face gruesome consequences. Such indigenous women live in geographically vulnerable areas and lack proper

access to resources, resulting in their limited participation in key decision-making, particularly in matters related to climate change adaptability, resilience, and mitigation. On the other hand, the inclusivity of such varying intersectional identities not only helps identify core issues sprouting from climate change but also influences adaptive capacities and resilience techniques, underlying the importance of inclusive and context-specific climate policies. Moreover, women have diverse knowledge and wide experience in their respective communities, positioning them as key agents needed to help mitigate the risks of climate change through sustainable policies. It will happen only when diverse intersectional groups are taken on board. Hence, diverse intersectional groups are essential to tackle differentiated impacts of climate change on various segments of society by incorporating the Intersectional and Human Rights theoretical framework, needed for devising a timely yet gender sensitive and holistic approach to climate action.

Keywords: Gender, Climate Change, Intersectionality, Gender-based violence, socioeconomic Dependency, Marginalization, Flood-affected areas, Climate Action, Climate Policy

Introduction

There is no denying the fact that climate change is an existential threat to humanity. It has far-reaching impacts on global ecosystems, national economies, and human societies. Its impacts are universal, but they are not experienced equally by all societies and different populations in various regions of the world. In this regard, gender and the widely contested issue of intersectionality are of paramount importance because these are key drivers in deciding the differential exposure, impacts, and responses of various individuals, populations, and communities towards climate change. Hence, this introduction explains the key connection and interdependence between gender, intersectionality, and climate change and it highlights the nuanced humanitarian approach to understand and address these pertinent issues with an integrated approach. Gender, no doubt, is a fundamental factor that can help understand the diverse and varying experiences of various individuals amid climate change. Both men and women have different roles, responsibilities, and levels of access to the available resources, which decide their level and severity in terms of vulnerability to climate change impacts¹. For instance, women, unlike men who also face anguish to some extent in the context of climate catastrophes, assume in many parts of the world, different tasks and responsibilities due to the varying nature of the chores and they fetch water, collect woods for firework in some places whereas they have to assist their spouses in diverse fields in various parts of the world. This very thing, due to climate change, makes their life arduous, especially in underdeveloped communities, because resources get scarce due to disturbance caused by climate change². Similarly, women have less access to the vital resources, property and equal opportunities, which takes away their right to exercise decision-making processes, resulting in more horrible forms of vulnerabilities³. Moreover, intersectionality, a concept developed by Kimberle Crenshaw, refers to the interconnected and interlinked nature of various social categories such as race, ethnicity, color, class, and gender, which breed an overlapping system of discrimination and disadvantages⁴. Linking it to climate change highlights how intersectionality leads to differential impacts on different communities and underscores their adaptive and resilient strategies on the basis of various identities. For example, rural women confront compounded risks in underprivileged rural areas due to their marginalized status in society and also because of their socially inferior group status based on their gender⁵. Henceforth, these intersecting identities pose unique challenges and require a tailored response to address the demands and concerns of various ethnic communities. The impacts of climate change on gender and

relevant intersecting identities are profound and demand effective responses because women in various parts are more likely to be affected by climate-related disasters such as droughts, hurricanes, and floods. This happens because women get uneven access to equal salary, information, and other social, political, and economic resources, making them vulnerable to disproportionate impacts of climate change⁶. Furthermore, climate change also exacerbates already existing inequalities, further restricting the possibility of women to participate in community development and decision-making processes due to limitations on women's equal education and chances to secure livelihoods⁷. Therefore, addressing the gendered impacts of climate change requires an intersectional and integrated approach, a holistic approach based on fair representation of all ethnic segments and marginalized communities without limiting the scope of participation⁸. For instance, climate adaptation and mitigation strategies must allow women to come forward, participate in leadership programs, and share their experiences and knowledge, discarding the established traditional structures and setups in order to mitigate the horrible impacts of climate change for the better future of the world⁹. In the same manner, recognizing the intersectionality of climate change can foster more just and effective solutions for the global communities based on their knowledge and experience not only help mitigate the uneven and adverse impacts of climate change related disasters but also holds potential to enhance their effectiveness and cultural relevance¹⁰. To conclude, while understanding the vital link between gender, intersectionality, and climate change, it is essential to devise a comprehensible mechanism to deal with this global challenge. Without integrating diverse ethnicities and communities, a resilient and adaptable framework cannot be developed to address the vulnerabilities of diverse groups. As the world is under the severe grip of climate change and if all stakeholders are willing to join their heads for effective handling of this global earthquake, then taking all ethnicities on board and integrating gender and intersectionality in this noble endeavor is not a matter of justice but also a mandatory strategy needed for implementing a robust plan for a sustainable climate solution.

Climate Change and Its Impacts on Different Genders in Terms of Vulnerability and Resilience – A Human Rights Perspective

Climate change is inflicting heavy injury on different genders, but the main concern is that both men and women go through different experiences when it comes to the extent of the sufferings and vulnerabilities due to their social roles, economic status, and access to resources or information. The

following paragraphs highlight the vulnerability and resilience of both genders in the face of climate change in modern times.

Men, In terms of vulnerability from climate change-related disasters, face gruesome consequences in socioeconomic domains. Men are often employed in those sectors that are highly vulnerable to climate change, such as agriculture, construction, and fishing. These occupations are directly impacted due to sudden, drastic weather events, rising atmospheric temperatures, and soaring sea levels, leading to job losses due to economic disruptions. For instance, rising droughts and increasing sea levels in various parts of the world are leading to reduced agricultural productivity due to decimation of standing crops, resulting in poverty among male farmers as their source of income vanishes. Moreover, the fishermen's community is also bearing the brunt due to ocean warming and subsequent acidification. In this way, their ways and means of livelihood are sinking as they are plunging into the quagmire of poverty, especially in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, because the majority of the population in these countries is associated with the fish business due to long coastal areas. Furthermore, displacements and migrations are happening owing to climate-induced disasters, and men are receiving its shocks disproportionately because they are normally the sole breadwinners and they have to travel to new places in search of new jobs and businesses. Their migration often results in exploitation, family separation, and health problems in a new environment. In addition to that, migrated men face societal marginalization and integration problems in new communities, which result in their socio-economic isolation and exacerbate the extent of discrimination.

Having said that, women too are under the severe grip of climate change-related calamities wherein they face social, economic, and sexual exploitation, which affects their mental health and wellbeing. Increased workload and economic dependency are at the top of the list in this regard. Women, particularly in developing nations, are bearing the brunt of climate change in the form of massive household responsibilities, including fuel, water, and food. Due to calamitous events, resources are shrinking which are impacting the lives of women in the form of economic insecurity. Women have to travel long distances for the purpose of fetching water amid climate-induced droughts. Such things expose women to physical harassment and sexual exploitation, and their dreams to attain modern and higher education remain elusive.

Similarly, women are most vulnerable to climate-induced diseases because they are the primary caregivers in their families, so they are more exposed to climate change-related diseases such as Malaria, Dengue, and skin-

related diseases due to heat waves and polluted water. Such diseases not only affect their health but also pose serious threats to the children ¹¹.

Furthermore, women are victim of gender based violence in many parts of the world due to climate induced displacements. Due to natural disasters infused by changing weather patterns, women face scarcity of resources due to job loss and displacements. Resultantly, they get shelter in camps in which they are forced to share the same place and space with men, who exploit them physically and sexually due to lack of proper security. Hence, it proves one thing and that is obvious, women face greater vulnerability than of men due to their diverse social roles, economic dependency, and lack of proper access to resources.

On the other hand, both genders are employing strategic tactics and techniques to show resilience in the face of climate change. Men are relying on both traditional and modern methods to mitigate the severe impacts of climate change. They are relying on traditional yet time-tested farming practices to build lasting resilience against climate change. Such practices often include crop diversification, enhancing and improving soil fertility, and ensuring intercropping by using organic methods. Hence, these techniques only enhance food security through sustaining agricultural yield but also ensure sustainable land that has huge potential to bear climatic shocks. For instance, native communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are using these techniques to manage irregular weather patterns, ensuring that crops produce enough yield even during low rainfall.

Moreover, men are also using climate-smart technologies to bear the brunt of climate change. They are relying on such modern and adaptive techniques that boost crop productivity and enhance the fertility of the soil. These technologies include drip irrigation and precise farming, which ensure optimum resource utility and multifold crop productivity, even during erratic climate conditions. For instance, in India, the introduction of drought-resistant crop varieties and modern irrigation techniques in India are improving the capacity as well as capabilities of male farmers to deal with mercurial weather patterns due to climate change.

In the same way, men are also actively participating in community-based adaptation initiatives to devise better, innovative, and adaptive ways necessary to mitigate the climate impacts. These initiatives involve forest management through plantation and reforestation drives, communal water storage systems, and installing early warning systems to spread timely awareness and response about changing weather patterns and climatic events. These initiatives not only foster community bondings but also allow people to share resources, which are crucial for building resilient

infrastructure. For instance, Community-driven projects led by men are crucial in managing the overflow of water by mainstreaming embankments and shared water management practices.

On the other hand, women are also striking a great amount of deal in terms of dealing with the adverse impacts of climate change and building resilient frameworks. For that to happen, they are using both traditional and adaptive strategies. Women, in this regard, have always been the custodians of agricultural knowledge since ancient times, resulting to the adaptation of resilient mechanisms against climate change. They are using their indigenous skills, native knowledge, and local working experience to ensure crop rotation, crop mixing, and careful selection of the drought-resistant crop varieties in order to stand the test of time during disastrous events. For instance, women in Kenya have revived the use of seed banks and drought-resistant seeds to cultivate those crops that are rich in yield and bear the capacity of prolonged dry spells.

Moreover, women are adopting water conservation strategies in order to pass the long drought and dry seasons induced by climate change. In this regard, they are building water conservation tanks and revamping the small-sized and outdated irrigation system according to the modern demands and needs of the time. For instance, women in the Indian state of Rajasthan have been playing their crucial part in conservation and harvesting techniques of water, which has sufficiently improved the sustainability of water availability for domestic use during the long spans of droughts. Besides, women are also actively participating in community-based rehabilitation and development projects and exercising their leadership roles in various capacities in adaptation projects, advocating for sustainable practices to implement climate-resilient initiatives. They, by doing so, ensure that the basic needs and concerns of every individual from any community are addressed. Women in Bangladesh have cemented the projection of their leadership roles by implementing mangrove restoration projects, which act as a bulwark against cyclones and storms, protecting the lives and livelihoods of the local communities.

Intersectionality and Climate Change: Gruesome Impacts on Multiple Gender Identities

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that highlights how various social identities, interlinked and interdependent, overlap and create a system of discrimination. These identities can be diverse, based on color, creed, ethnicity, gender, and class. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 to highlight how black women face unique and

novel challenges, which too based on their color as well as their race and gender or sometimes both¹². Climate change disproportionately affects various marginalized communities, and an intersectional approach helps understand its underlying complexities because vulnerability to climate change is influenced by a range of factors such as socioeconomic status, political marginalization, geographic location, race, gender and ethnic history. Hence, intersectional analysis reveals how such diverse groups experience the shocks of climate change uniquely, allowing for more comprehensive and holistic action.

Intersectional approach is relevant amid climate change-induced catastrophe, especially in developing countries, because it calls for the incorporation of diverse communities into climate change policies and it demands unique, novel, and personal experience of a range of population groups in order to ensure more sustainable outcomes¹³. Therefore, various intersectional identities can be discussed in this regard. Firstly, gender and climate change in terms of socioeconomic status imply that the effects of climate disasters affect various classes differently, as the severity of damage and vulnerability depend on the availability of resources to various genders. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa are dependent on women to meet their social and economic demands, and they lack access to resources as well, making them vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation when they travel long distances to collect firewood or fetch water. Resultantly, they face mental as well as health issues. Similarly, socioeconomic opulence also determines a person's ability to react, respond, and recover from any injury. Those who lack access to resources always find themselves at the receiving end and have no access to modern resources, necessary for mitigating the impacts of climate change. Henceforth, lower-income households are more prone to the adverse impacts of climate change as they lack basic financial resources to invest in sustainable infrastructure. For instance, lower-income communities, particularly of African American origin, after Hurricane Katrina, were under severe disruptions because those communities were financially unstable and were unable to acquire basic resources, needed to evacuate themselves, or get access to basic support systems, leading to delays in recovery and severe economic losses. Hence, this example proves that indigenous communities always face the music due to climactic events because they are marginalized and destitute and this is the purpose of an intersectional approach to cater to the demands of such calamity struck communities when it comes to differential treatment amid climate change and subsequent socioeconomic losses¹⁴.

Similarly, the concept of intersectionality also explains the horrible impacts of climate change on various ethnic groups having different racial identities. Their racial identity and societal marginalization also exacerbate the severity of their problems. Women, hailing from Pashtun or Baloch ethnic communities, face the music because they rely on natural resources for their survival, primarily fulfilling their needs from agriculture and livestock. Climate-induced catastrophic calamities not only threaten these resources but also increase the extent of their social and economic vulnerabilities, leading to socio-economic instability and food insecurity. Resultantly, their miseries increase and they sink into the vicious cycle of dependency for their survival. A notable example in this regard is of 2022 floods in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces, wherein a significant portion of ethnic minorities were on the receiving end. These ethnic communities, especially women, were dependent, devastated, and hapless for rehabilitation services due to their limited representation in decision-making as well as management processes, further marginalizing sane voices.

Moreover, access to climate change adaptation resources and mitigation technologies is limited for women from ethnic minorities, suppressing their liberties and hindering their capacity and ability to cope with climate change-induced disasters. Sociocultural norms, practices, values, and discriminatory indigenous policies restrict the valuable contribution from these ethnic minority groups in climate change mitigation practices in our country. For example, the Kailash ethnic minority in the Chitral district of Pakistan confronts significant challenges in terms of climate change. Their socio-economic status stands low due to devastation incurred by melting glaciers and changing weather patterns in the region. Resultantly, they are marginalized due to limited access to technology, resources, and community-oriented sustainable programs. Besides, they are also unable to capitalize on agricultural practices to boost the yield of crops amid climate-induced droughts and mercurial weather patterns.

Furthermore, intersectionality also plays a major role whenever migrations happen due to climate change-induced disasters. Women, as usual, face compounded challenges due to mass migrations, internal displacements, and ethnic discrimination. During floods and droughts, families in Pakistan face adversaries in the form of dislocation and relocation. For instance, many families from the Saraiki speaking minorities in South Punjab faced the brunt of displacements, leaving them homeless, jobless, and penniless due to violence, discrimination, and trauma in relief camps, impacting their access to resources and timely support¹⁵.

In the same way, gender and disability are other areas where the combined effects of vulnerabilities and challenges faced by a minority section of society can be illuminated in the face of climate change under the umbrella of an intersectional approach. When it comes to an integrated response in terms of intersectionality between gender and disability in a country like Pakistan, there emerge several significant challenges and they call for targeted responses too. In this regard, women with disabilities, hailing from a marginalized group, confront multiple challenges due to prevalent gender disciplinary roles, thereby exacerbating the impacts of climate change-related disasters on such groups.

Firstly, women with disability in a country like Pakistan are under the tight grip of social and economic vulnerabilities. During the 2022 floods in Pakistan, women with disabilities faced several barriers in their access to relief services and were left behind during evacuations due to inadequate access to mobility and community aids. Moreover, social stigmas due to their disabilities also limit their access to necessary resources, leaving them prone to adverse impacts of floods.

Likewise, acknowledging the core intersectionality of gender and disability is inevitable for devising effective and long term strategies to ensure equitable and sustainable solutions for all types of social and communal groups. In this regard, it is crucial to understand that incorporating various Intersectional perspectives leads to more pragmatic and acceptable climate change responses. The inclusion of women with disabilities in planning and decision making processes is more successful in building community resilience because their participation and presence ensure improved access to resources, increased women participation in community service and enhanced adaptive capabilities of affected communities, thereby leaving no stone unturned to ensure robust implementation of climate adaption strategies even in far-flung areas.

Last but not least, age is another factor that intersects with gender in order to influence climate change vulnerabilities. Young children and the elderly in particular are susceptible to health hazards of climate change, such as heatwaves, malnutrition and waterborne diseases. Older women face double vulnerability due to both age and lack of mobility, making them more dependent on the community for support during disasters. The 2022 Monsoon floods highlight a concrete example of how these gendered identities intersect in Pakistan to affect individuals differently and disproportionately. These floods affected over 33 million people, and women as well as children were adversely affected due to already existing social inequalities and cultural norms. Women in those areas faced

healthcare, hygienic and safe shelter problems, resulting into loss of livelihoods and education. Older women in particular faced horrific consequences because they were dependent on other family members for their mobility but floods disrupted their family structures and it left such a vulnerable section of society isolated and devastated.

Objective of the Research

This research aims to highlight the intricate interplay between gender, intersectionality and climate change. It focuses on the adverse impacts of climate change on various sections of gender and encapsulates the vulnerabilities of various intersectionalities on the basis of the availability and scarcity of resources. Some other subsidiary objectives are given below:

- i. *To investigate how climate change disproportionately affects different genders.*
- ii. *To explore how intersecting identities compound the effects of climate change in different gender groups*
- iii. *To evaluate the effectiveness of existing climate change policies and adaptive strategies to tackle gender specific vulnerabilities.*
- iv. *To promote mainstream gender responsive strategies and informed intersectionality policies to mitigate climate change.*

Methodology of the Study

As methodology provides a framework, designs, and instruments to carry out good as well as reliable research, so is the case in this study. This study employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the key concepts and important themes thoroughly. Firstly, it attempts to highlight the key concepts, and later it explores the differential impacts of climate change on various social groups and indigenous communities by using the interview method. The main data collection was undertaken in the areas close or adjacent to the Indus River delta, where affected populations are residing in shelter camps or in open air in District Kot Addu. During this rigorous process, a total number of 80 women and men were interviewed and that too from different yet severely affected rural areas of the district in order to validate the responses and understand the gravity of the situation through a different looking glass.

Moreover, the data resources consulted for this research are also primary and secondary in nature. The valuable material used in this research is collected after careful and arduous research. The stuff is taken from the community interviews and the journals of the renowned academic authors.

Similarly, multiple online sources such as Google Scholar are also consulted to inculcate effectiveness and maintain the reliability of our research paper. The core intention behind relying on diverse sources is to ensure reliability, validity, authenticity and replicability of our research. Likewise, the ethical factor is also intact in our research. Nothing in this paper contains any malicious content nor are we using any book reference or academic journal without giving due credit as we are fully aware of this basic research principle that a good researcher always strives to provide relevant and authentic data with valid sources and he or she always upholds ethical standards to make research valid, effective and credible to the maximum extent.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the sake of data collection, an interview method was employed, containing a guidebook of ten questions. These questions followed the previously designed research questions and they met the essence of the questions given above. In this regard, the researchers collected qualitative data on their own through rigorous interactions and research. Besides, consent was also obtained from the participants that their provided data and information will be used for academic purposes. However, interviews were conducted in both Urdu and Saraiki languages because the majority of the climate migrants were residing on the banks and vicinity of the Indus River and they were from the South Punjab region. Later on, their provided information was transcribed into English language for the sake of reliability. Last but not least, data was analyzed fully and carefully and themes were addressed properly according to the research questions.

Participants

A purposive sampling method was used for the selection of participants in this study. Only those women were interviewed who had been living in camps for some time to get the personal insights as well as the harsh experiences out of the survivors of climate-induced disasters. Such women were keen to share their misery and plight because they were living in camps and were aware of the living conditions. One of the researchers were living in such areas during their educational days so comfort was there during interaction with the local people, and the local masses were also able to share their personal details and sufferings without any hesitation. Before starting the formal interview, native people, especially women were taken into confidence that their identity will be kept anonymous. After assurances,

all of them shared their diverse experiences which proved helpful for the researchers in analyzing the situation minutely and thoroughly. Lastly, all interviews were conducted individually and privately to maintain the decorum and sensitive nature of the research.

Limitations of the Study

During the whole research process, the main hurdle faced by the researchers was to convince women so they participate in the interview. Firstly, women hail from rural areas and they were from traditional families where women are not allowed to get frank or even interact with new faces. Secondly, they thought it was inappropriate to share their personal as well as private details and experiences with anyone whom they do not even know. The primary reason behind their fear was their family, particularly the fear of their spouses. Hence, the researchers conducted meetings with the elder family members and convinced them that the identity of the interviewees will be kept under secret and it is a pure academic research, meant for highlighting the plight of not only your community but also other indigenous communities with a sole purpose of devising climate-change resilient framework based on provided information. Finally, they showed their concern and assisted the researchers in carrying out the detailed interviews. The researchers also facilitated interaction in native language of the flood-affected families so that they feel ease in reciprocation.

Results and Discussion

After carrying out interviews, a thorough analysis was performed and the results were based on thematic analysis. The following are the themes which were identified on the basis of collected information, highlighting the severity of climate-induced disasters on various genders in terms of intersectionality:

- a) Women faced social, economic and emotional violence, provided availability of basic resources and access to health, education and employment facilities.
- b) Men are helpless and hapless due to loss of their agricultural lands, employment opportunities and means and modes of livelihood, especially the elderly and the disable who cannot move easily.
- c) The government and the community's influential leaders lack due concern in terms of provision of resources ranging from initiatives to deal with climate change scourges to the provision of alternate

lands, employment and housing facilities, as the majority of the victims lack camps to live peacefully and comfortably.

Climate Change and Women's Vulnerability: A Thorough Analysis From Personal Experiences

After and during the disastrous floods due to climate change, women are the primary agents who face the gruesome consequences. Due to landslides, heavy floods, scorching heat cycles and infectious diseases, women are unable to perform their assigned duties, leaving them vulnerable to various forms of violence and suffering. Firstly, climate-induced calamitous events are inflicting misery on women in the form of economic dependency, primarily in those regions that are associated with agriculture. Heavy floods and resultant droughts decimate standing crops and destroy their livelihoods, leaving them helpless and penniless. Hence, they stand dependent on family members, who themselves are bankrupt due to displacements and limited work opportunities. Moreover, due to weak social safety networks, women are not financially independent anymore. In this regard, one woman, while narrating her trauma told me,

"We are helpless. We are destroyed. Our lands are submerged in river water. We cannot cultivate crops, the primary source of our finance. My children are hungry because we are surrounded by water everywhere and cannot move anywhere. Now, I cannot do husbandry or artistic work, such as embroidery to support my family. Such a situation is hitting hard on my nerves but we are all helpless and nobody is there for us during this high time."

Similarly, lack of financial autonomy restricts women from taking independent decisions regarding their lives and the welfare of their family, leading to the vicious cycle of poverty and dependency where women are losing their autonomy, identity and their independence in matters of life¹⁶. While visiting such submerged areas, we were unable to figure out how these people are even keeping pace with their daily needs under such plight when their lands are submerged, roads are broken and their dreams to aspire for a good life are shattered. In the middle of this chaos, an old woman told me her plight in the following words,

"We are drowning slowly but gradually. Water is everywhere, and, unfortunately, we lack camps for a safe shelter. Our means of

production are destroyed and we are living in a sheer socio-economic plight, totally helpless and hapless."

Moreover, elderly women were facing health problems due to inadequate sanitation and overcrowded conditions. Children were not given regular health doses due to inability of the health workers to reach at their places, submerged in rain water. Resultantly, a large population was on the risk of malnutrition and subsequent diseases such as Malaria, Foot worms and Measles due to infections and unavailability of the timely vaccines¹⁷. Similarly, women, who were pregnant or breastfeeding, were also vulnerable due to lacking or healthcare facilities. Due to intersectionality, such women from marginalized and remote areas, face compounded effects in terms of timely healthcare access and mobility towards safe places. One person told us that,

"My wife was pregnant and due to the presence of water everywhere, I was unable to find any transportation so I held her in my arms until we reached a safer place from where I arranged a private van to reach hospital. I was helpless because I was unable to access basic healthcare facility because the local basic health unit was far away and I was left with no option but to borrow money to pay the rent of the van. Now, I am penniless."

Last but not the least, the psychological toll is another prominent factor which is haunting the women because they are facing the consequences of climate-induced displacements in their camps. This includes intimidation, verbal abuse and a sense of forceful confinement and women who are economically dependent on their family members are prone to it because they are under unfair treatment in camps. Additionally, they are unable to complete their education due to repeated displacements, turning the tide to gender-based violence when they try to be stubborn in seeking their educational rights. However, traditional protective mechanisms are weak in such condition. Another respondent shared her anguish with us in such heart-wrenching words,

"My father cannot send me to school now and I have to spend my days and nights in camps. I am becoming a slave now."

Multidimensional Problems of Men amid Climate Induced Events: Revealing Firsthand Experiences

Men too, of all age groups, are feeling the heat due to climate-induced events, leading to unemployment, displacement and socio-economic plight, especially in rural areas. South Punjab is a region highly dependent on agriculture. Therefore, the majority of the population of men is also associated with this field. However, the shifting weather patterns are causing havoc in the horrible form of low agricultural productivity due to decimated crops. Men, who are only breadwinners of their families, are unable to do anything. They are witnessing their lands engulfed by the river water due to heavy rains. They are also experiencing sinking crop yield on remaining lands. Resultantly, they are forced to migrate in search of jobs and means of livelihood. Such wide-scale displacements disrupt social setups and family setups, surrounding men around difficult circumstances. In the same way, men are facing mental health issues and their health is deteriorating day by day amid the responsibility of fulfilling the basic needs of their families. Their stress reflects from their faces but due to social stigmas they avoid sharing it with their kins, leading to more stress and anxiety. One of the respondent expressed the mental condition of his family member in the following words,

"My father is suffering from mental health nowadays. Once we were local landlords. During heavy monsoons, our lands fell to the river and now our land is submerged. We have no option except to leave this place. Such calamity has inflicted heavy injury on the mind of my father. We are devastated and no-one is there for compensation."

Hence, such drastic events are compounding the mental trauma of losing agricultural lands, means of livelihoods and even loss of loved ones, leading to mental pangs and emotional stress. Last but not least, as men migrate to avoid the calamitous events of the climate-induced disasters, they experience social isolation, resulting in the breakdown of the historical and social lineages as well as links. They face troubles and hurdles in finding new jobs in new lands. They lack local support systems. Such kind of isolation leads to loss of identity as men struggle to find their place and job in a new place. In this regard, a gruesome experience was shared by a local member stating that,

"We have nothing left here, and we do not find anything anywhere. I can only laugh at my helplessness because I am feeling as if I am already dead."

Apathy of the Government: From Doing Nothing to Being Nothing:

During our interaction with the local community members, we came to know an alarming fact that the majority of the people were showing no interest in the government, as if they were disappointed and dismayed due to the lackluster approach and performance of the concerned government. Their criticism reflected their plight because they were devastated and facing this torture for years, and in between all these years the efforts of the governments were minuscule as compared to the fortitude of the locals. One native member expressed his concern in such painful words,

"I was unable to take my grandfather to the health unit timely because I was surrounded by water and the government could not build a bank or any long lasting dykes on the edge of river, which over flows during heavy rainfall. Their negligence is deliberate because they are not interested in redressing our plight. Not only the government but also the local influential people are also engaged in criminal negligence. In this blame game, we are the only losers because we have lost nearly everything. It is very painful for us, of course not for the government."

So, the absence of robust mechanisms exacerbates gender inequalities, leaving women and marginalized groups vulnerable¹⁸. Furthermore, there is inadequate funding for gender responsive climate action due to the negligence and insufficient allocation of resources to the local setups. Even if policies exist, the lack of financial commitment renders them ineffective, leaving the native vulnerable communities entirely abandoned. Such kind of negligence leaves gender disparities and erodes the trust of local communities when it comes to effective handling of the situation.

Similarly, the government lacks those policies which are in synchronization with the intersectional approach, needed to address the fears of everyone based on caste, creed, class and gender. When the government fails to address the needs and demands of the various social groups, it adopts those strategies that are selective. Such an approach not only fuels existing inequalities but also widens the gap between those who can improvise climate mitigating strategies and those who cannot¹⁹.

Furthermore, the government is also under the hot waters due to excluding marginalized voices from climate decision-making. During the interaction, we learnt that the flood-affected community members were not happy with the government due to its unplanned decisions. They maintained that the government does not respond to the demands and suggestions of the local populations. Policy makers are paying heed to the proposals of local influencers, who are not even aware of the core problems and grey areas. Hence, their exclusion shows that the government overlooks our concerns, leading to policies that are neither inclusive nor do they address the impacts of climate change.²⁰

Last but not the least, there is an element of failure to monitor and evaluate gendered climate policies due to the lack of political will to assess the impacts of climate-induced disasters, especially in far-flung areas such as the areas in vicinity of the Indus River in South Punjab region in which we conducted research. This apathy from the government not only highlights its priorities but also creates bottlenecks in formulating responsive climate strategies, timely, needed to mainstream all segments of society to mitigate the gender-specific vulnerabilities.²¹

Way Forward and Concluding Remarks

Finally, it can explicitly be said that there is an intricate relationship between gender, intersectionality, and climate change. There is no denying the fact that climate change has become an existential threat for humanity and different genders, particularly marginalized groups hailing from various ethnicities, races, and sexes are bearing the horrible consequences. Amid all the debates of various implications brought about by the scourge of climate change, the concept of intersectionality remains vague because less importance is given to understanding this vital concept. We all must understand that intersectionality is a reality that cannot be taken for granted. It stands midway between genders and climate change. It determines how disproportionate impacts of climate change impart vicious impacts on various races, social and ethnic groups and marginalized genders. In this regard, in the light of our research, we have concluded that marginalized communities, especially women, are under severe problems, restrictions, and complications due to the uneven effects of climate-induced catastrophes. Women are already in trouble in our traditional society due to obsolete norms and cultural practices. Adding fuel to the fire, climate change and patriarchal structures are damaging their autonomy, financial independence, and educational attainment. They are facing torture and violence in camps due to overcrowding. They are devoid of basic health

facilities. In the Southern regions of the Punjab, we conducted interviews from the internally displaced populations and we came to know that women's plight is compounding with each passing day. Similarly, men are also witnessing the heat in terms of loss of jobs, livelihoods, crops and land, plunging them into the whirlpool of poverty, mental trauma, and societal isolation. Even worse, elderly men, who cannot move easily due to any disability, are experiencing multiple sufferings due to the unavailability of basic facilities. The sole responsibility of the government, henceforth, is the provision of these facilities and it can do so by enacting and implementing responsive strategies but unfortunately, it is not happening due to the apathy of the government. There is a communication gap between the higher authorities and the native people. That is why their plight is not adequately addressed, and the locals hold the government officials responsible for their sufferings. The onus lies on the government to show proper concern and prioritize the remedial measures, aimed at redressing the injuries of vulnerable communities. Through our research, we have also known that such vulnerable communities are not happy with the response of the government during natural disasters. They want local members to be included in the national-level decision-making process because only native people can highlight the local problems. Therefore, the right way is to mainstream awareness about intersectionality and its compounded effects on various genders amid the global earthquake known as climate change. This dream will only be materialized when women-centric and women-led drives will be initiated, and women will be in key leadership positions in climate-related campaigns due to their awareness of the community and gender problems. The government of Pakistan must implement climate emergency programs to spread awareness about the intersectionality of climate change and gender plight. Unless a humane approach is implemented, the sufferings of the marginalized communities find no escape and a dream to envisage a sustainable environment, free from the evils of climate-induced disasters and resultant catastrophic impacts in various gender groups will remain a dream.

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