

KASHMIRI WOMEN AS THE AGENT OF CLIMAT CHANGE

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Abstract

In recent years, the increasing awareness of environmental concerns and its effect on public consciousness has become one of the most noticeable trends on a global level. Environmental degradation is a major threat to the life of society in the current days. The global community's unfulfilled promise of a society in which every woman enjoys complete gender equality, as well as the eradication of all legal, social, and economic obstacles to women empowerment, persists. Education disadvantages result into a lack of access to skills and opportunities in many areas of growth and development. Gender inequality is a basic human right regardless of where you live. Women comprise the largest proportion of the impoverished are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged group. This community depends more on natural resources, but has less access to them. In fact, they often face a significant burden for procuring food, water, and fuel. These areas are mostly threatened by climate change. In Kashmir women is consider as agent beyond these disasters. Hence an attempt has been made to emphasis the aura of Kashmir Valley and women as agent of change.

Keywords: *Gender inequality, climate, biodiversity, food, water, forest.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Jammu & Kashmir is described as "heaven on earth" because to its scenic attractiveness, snow-capped mountains, valleys, green forests, meadows, lakes, rivers, and streams, as well as its unique topography, which includes of all the largest land forms, i.e., mountain ranges, plateaus, plains, valleys, etc. It is a location that attracts visitors and wildlife enthusiasts from all over the world.

Climate change has a greater impact on those sections of the population, in all countries, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes. Women commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situations of poverty, and the majority of the world's poor are women. Women's unequal participation in decision-making processes and labor markets compound inequalities and often prevent women from fully contributing to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation. In spite of all hurdles and difficulties women can play a critical role in response to climate change due to their local knowledge leading to sustainable resource management. At the local level, women's inclusion at the leadership level has led to improved outcomes of climate related projects and policies. On the contrary, if policies or projects are implemented without women's meaningful participation it can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness. The practical outcome of almost nil participation of women we are experiencing in our situation.

2. WOMEN AS THE AGENT OF CHANGE

Negative effects of Climate change may be seen in the short term by natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and storms, and in the long term through more gradual deterioration of the environment. These disasters have already had a negative impact on agriculture and food security, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, human health, human settlements, migratory patterns, and energy, transportation, and industry. We have felt it more this year than in previous years in the form of harsh weather conditions, landslides, and other weather issues in India. Women are more susceptible to the consequences of climate change than males because they relied more on natural resources that are endangered by climate change. Women also suffer social, economic, and political restrictions that hinder their ability to cope. On top of that, women are responsible for securing water, food, and cooking fuel, as well as having uneven access to resources and decision-making processes, which restricts them. Consequently, it is essential to find gender-sensitive responses to the environmental and humanitarian problems brought on by climate change. In addition to being susceptible to climate change, women are also effective actors or agents of change in terms of both adaptation and mitigation. Women often have a multitude of skills and knowledge that may be used to climate change mitigation, disaster relief, and adaption methods.

The need of gender-sensitive strategies to the impacts of climate change has significant implications for four aspects of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food usage, and food systems stability. In developing countries, women farmers today produce between 45 and 80 percent of the food. Women's health has been observed to decrease more than male health during food shortages, and they are excluded from decision-making on accessibility, use of land and resources essential to their livelihoods. For these reasons, it is vital that rural women's rights to food security, non - discriminatory access to resources, and equal participation in decision-making processes be protected. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment says that by the end of the century, climate change is likely to be the main reason for the loss of biodiversity. Biodiversity is important for climate change adaptation and mitigation. For instance, in places where deforestation is responsible for an average of 20% of human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, the conservation of natural habitats can decrease the level of Carbon Dioxide released into the atmosphere. Most majority of the people in rural Kashmir depend on biomass like wood, crops, waste, and forest resources for their energy and income, and almost all of this work is done by women. Climate change, on the other side, makes it harder for women to get these essential resources. The decline in biodiversity does not just affect people's material well-being and livelihoods. Climate change, on the other hand, makes it more difficult for women to get these vital resources.

Women in Kashmir's mountains have the laborious responsibility of gathering traditional fuels, burning them, and making charcoal for Kangris. Because of this, women have less time to accomplish things like protect their homes and families, work and participate in public events, further learning new skills. Women and girls are further disempowered when they are often kept out of school to collect firewood. When women have to travel longer distance in pursuit of resources because of environmental deterioration, they are more likely to sustain injuries from carrying large burdens and are more likely to be the targets of sexual harassment and assault. During the course of this laborious work, Women acquire awareness of the environment which include understanding of the wild ancestors of food, medicinal plants, and domestic animals; symbiotic relations with ecosystems; an awareness of the structure of ecosystems and the functionality of specific species as well as the geographic ranges of said species. Changing climate

has a significant influence on fresh water sources, affecting the availability of water for domestic and agricultural use. More frequent floods and droughts have far-reaching effects, especially on vulnerable populations like women who are often responsible for household water management. Many hours of each day are spent by women in rural Kashmir carrying water from far away sources to provide their family. In our case, the women pay the greatest price for the lack of hygiene since water from far away sources is rarely sufficient to suit the demands of the family and is often polluted.

Given the changing environment, limited access to water and poor water quality affect not only women, their obligations as primary cares, and the health of their families, but also affects the agricultural productivity and the care of animals; and raise the total quantity of labor required to collect, store, preserve, and distribute water. In terms of health, some possible effects of climate change include heat waves, floods, storms, fires, and droughts that cause more illness and death. Climate change-related environmental hazards raise the probability of getting serious disease. Due to the expansion of risk seasons and larger geographic dispersion of disease vectors, there is a higher prevalence of infectious diseases such as cholera, malaria, and skin problems. Many times I have seen hundreds of young girls with skin diseases were in front of the renowned clinics in the different parts of Kashmir I realized that this is mostly our fault. By increasing environmental degradation, climate change adds a new layer of difficulty to human mobility and habitation. In the coming decades, the gradual degradation of the environment is projected to increase both national and international migration, resulting in a bigger number of displaced people. Higher mortality rates for women in least Developed Countries are directly linked to their socioeconomic situation, to behavioral limitations, and inadequate access to information because of the migratory implications of environmental variables. While migration is a survival reaction to climate change, repeated human relocation exacerbates the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem in addition to massive changes in land-use, the physical alteration of rivers, and river water extraction.

3. CONCLUSION

Women in Kashmir represent a high percentage of poor communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, particularly in rural areas where they shoulder the major responsibility for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security. They have limited access to and control of environmental goods and services; they collect firewood and logs from growing trees for windows, doors and roofs, digging land for bricks for their personal construction. They have negligible participation in decision-making, and are not involved in the distribution of environment management benefits. Consequently, they are less able to confront climate change. Their priorities and needs must be reflected in the development planning and funding. They should be part of the decision making at national and local levels regarding allocation of resources for climate change initiatives. It is also important to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programs for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building.

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