

## **Gender Disparities in Climate Change Policies and Actions: A Case Study of Pakistan**

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### **Introduction**

Climate change is a complex phenomenon. Due to the continuous warming of the earth's biosphere, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are rapidly increasing. Pakistan has recently experienced a number of climate disasters, including heat waves and extreme precipitations, which eventually led to the devastating floods of 2022.<sup>1</sup>

Climate crises are directly impacting the underprivileged and marginalized communities.<sup>2</sup> Globally and in Pakistan, women are mostly at a disadvantage during a natural disaster because of their cultural and social limitations. They are under pressure due to dependency and limited access to economic resources. As the scarcity of resources exacerbates, the competition to consume necessary resources becomes more violent and, in that regard, women have to make a lot of effort just to access them. Similarly, the impacts of extreme weather on the health of the majority of Pakistani women are also concerning. After a disaster, women and girls are more likely to experience domestic and sexual abuse, especially when families have been uprooted and are staying in overcrowded temporary accommodations where they lack privacy.<sup>3</sup> Women also suffer because of sub-standard medical care and the limited number of hospital utilities in the least developed

regions which are also vulnerable to climate risks.

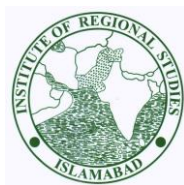
Cultural norms and hegemonic masculinity prevent women from participating in decision-making at the local and national levels. Despite the fact that women are vulnerable, the policies are silent on the participation of women in climate action.<sup>4</sup> Women's vulnerability may increase as a result of the existing gender gaps in Pakistan's social structures and lack of adequate attention to them in the country's climate change policies. The main objective of the study is to examine the gender disparities in climate change policies. It also sheds light on the barriers to effective role of women in decision-making.

### **Gender Disparity in Climate Change Policies**

In Pakistan, gender disparity is not a recent issue with rising global warming, which is a threat with multiple catalyze impacts on women, and now it is becoming worse due to the destructive climate changes. Through inclusive policies, women's roles could be identifiable responsibilities, and perspectives in an era of change can set a path for mitigation and adaptation.<sup>5</sup> Women and children are included in vulnerable groups, but they are not actively involved in action plans to cope with the effects of change or to adapt to it. In policy planning and making, the role of women as a central part is vital for the country. However, the *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2017* for implementation of the Pakistan Climate

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Change Act clearly lays out policy measures that empower women to strengthen their role in the planning and implementation.<sup>6</sup>

Owing to Pakistan's susceptibility to the adverse impacts of climate change, the country developed its first National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) in 2012. Before the NCCP, it was the Ministry of National Disaster Management that dealt with all the climate-related calamities. In 2021, Pakistan updated its NCCP and equally focused on adaptation and mitigation strategies and its major emphasis on nature-based solutions.<sup>7</sup> By announcing Pakistan's first-ever Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) on 21 July 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change have adopted a new roadmap to include gender equality and women's empowerment in climate change discourse and actions. This is done with the financial support of the Green Climate Fund.<sup>8</sup> The ccGAP's goal is to make sure that women can have an impact on climate change decisions and policy making.

The ccGAP promotes gender equality as a fundamental value and includes women in the development of local and national policy programmes. It also supports its inclusive policy discourse, capacity building, and pilot initiatives for women. Months-long consultative meetings between numerous stakeholders, including important sector experts from IUCN, the government, civil society, think tanks, and academic leaders were held as a part of the process to support the role of women in climate action and build their resilience in the face of climate-related impacts.

### **Being Incisive**

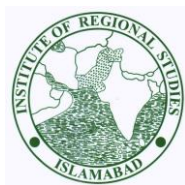
In the aforementioned policies, there are a number of gender commitments made by the government. Nevertheless, gender

commitments are poorly integrated or entirely left out of climate change actions. Lack of implementation of these commitments towards gender integration undermine a meaningful inclusion of women's perspectives and needs in policy formulation. This maintains existing power disparities and gender stereotypes, leading to policies that do not address the particular issues women confront as a result of climate change.

Gender gaps in climate change policies in Pakistan are adversely impacted by inadequate fund allocation. Inadequate finance for programmes promoting women's involvement, empowerment, and education limits their capacity to influence climate change policy and successfully mitigate the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities, including women. Pakistan's National Determined Contributions (NDCs)—the plans for tackling climate change—do not incorporate gender budgeting, which is essential for considering the different impacts and needs of women in climate policies. By not incorporating gender perspectives into financial planning, there is a missed opportunity to create policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the diverse challenges that climate change poses to different genders. The funding decisions do not take into account the different vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities of women. Without gender budgeting, the commitments in policies are likely to remain a rhetorical display rather than a concrete and impactful approach.

### **Lack of Value-Driven Information**

There is a lack of gender-disaggregated data across an array of social, political, economic, and environmental issues. Data collection on the impacts of climate change on gender is lacking, which makes policymakers



unaware of the looming danger that climate change poses to vulnerable women.<sup>9</sup>

The ability to accurately analyse existing issues is crucial for academics and policy experts. This is essential for creating carefully crafted policy options that can then be precisely evaluated. If effective initiatives are to be acknowledged and given, more financial support and assessment is crucial. Likewise, less effective projects need to be recognized, changed, and, if necessary, abandoned. The basis for developing, evaluating, and successfully implementing policies is having high-quality data that includes data that is precise, consistent, complete, regular, and longitudinal.

### **Women's Limited Participation in Decision-Making**

Women, being susceptible to direct impacts of climate change, natural catastrophes, and consistent environmental deterioration, should have active participation in order to create a barrier to these global challenges. Pakistan has a population of approximately 238.1 million, and women share almost half of the population. The majority of the population lives in rural areas, which are particularly vulnerable to climate change. One of the Glasgow meeting's reports suggests that most of the people who can make decisions about how much the planet will warm in the future decades are male and older. The majority of young people and women are the ones who are most upset about the pace of climate action.<sup>10</sup>

Pakistani society is clearly patriarchal, which leads to a clear gap in the representation of women. There is space for various viewpoints and types of expertise when civil society groups are permitted to participate directly in climate negotiations. This is significant because

solutions are frequently more thorough and long-lasting when decision-making procedures include gender views and meaningful participation by women.<sup>11</sup> If women are given equal opportunities and considered of equal value, the structural problems will partially be solved.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Extreme weather events are now more frequent and intense. Due to a lack of consideration for gender-centric approaches, efforts to reverse environmental degradation and adapt to climate change in Pakistan are failing and wasting resources. We must acknowledge that women are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change, but we must also acknowledge that women's participation leads to innovative and long-lasting solutions to both the climate emergency and social inequities. Without fully integrating women in the decision-making process, it will be impossible to combat climate change and environmental damage.

Critical actions are required to recognize and harness the potential of women as key agents of change in the fight against climate change. Following are some gender-inclusive climate change policy recommendations:

- Establish a Women's Rights Desk within the adaptation fund, this would have the authority to decide on financing priorities. It is applicable in numerous centres for gender equality and empowerment as well as development organizations that concentrate on women's rights and economic empowerment.
- Develop a sourcebook on Gender and disasters that provides information topics, including planning and practice tools and case studies on gender and disaster risk



reduction, as well as updates on forthcoming events.

- Develop a social model that is gender equitable and places more of an emphasis on services that enhance people's (mostly women's) health, lowers stress levels, and alleviates time poverty.
- Offer positions for women IT specialists in projects involving the use of technologies for mitigating climate change and preparing for it, including early warning systems, geo-mapping, etc.
- Develop a dashboard that is gender-focused and includes elements such as data on the representation of women in decision-making bodies, the digital divide, the gender pay gap, the engagement of women in the workforce, and violence and safety, etc. In order to eliminate gender disparities and advance women's rights, such a

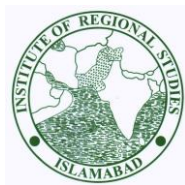
dashboard could act as a focal point for data collection, analysis, and actions, enabling stakeholders to take decisive actions and targeted steps.

- Establish digital skill training centres with the aim of providing digital literacy and skill development programmes for women, enabling them to effectively use smart city technologies, access online services, and participate in the digital economy. Moreover, develop gender-responsive smart cities that ensure women's safety, access to public spaces, and participation in urban planning decisions.

Build green entrepreneurship incubators for women to aid female entrepreneurs in the fields of sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and eco-friendly products. Encourage the growth of women-owned enterprises by offering mentorship, finance, and training.

## Notes and References

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- <sup>3</sup> Nicole Detraz, *International Security and Gender* (UK: Polity Press, 2012), 190.
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- <sup>9</sup> Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Micheal E. Brown, "Gender, Climate Change, and Security: Making the Connections," *Wilson Center*, 25 January 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/gender-climate-change-and-security-making-connections>.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.



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