

PRE COP - 28 *Season 2*CLIMATE AND GENDER  
BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING RESILIENCE

## SESSION - 9 ISLAMABAD



## CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER

## BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING RESILIENCE

Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) hosted a session titled “Climate change and Gender: Breaking Barriers, Building Resilience” on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The deliberative session was joined by experts and practitioners from different platforms such as Asia Foundation, Muslim Hands, National Youth for Climate Change, New Sehar Foundation, Islamic Relief, Potohar Organization for Development Authority, Youth Corner, UGOOD, Child Right Movement, Fatima Jinnah Woman University and National Defense University.

## Prelude

Climate Change is hovering as one of the existential threats that humanity is facing in the contemporary epoch. The

transformative and destructive role of climate change is impeding the country’s socio-economic development and has an adverse impact on the existing vulnerabilities of developed and developing countries of the world. SSDO, in this regard, pitched a much-needed and often sidelined linkage of Climate and its impact on Gender, especially women and children.

## Overview

The climate crisis is not “gender neutral”. Women and girls experience the greatest impact of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. Climate change is a threat

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*Women and girls experience the greatest impact of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities*



multiplier as it escalates the prevailing complex socio-political and economic tensions in fragile and conflict-affected areas. Women and girls face increased vulnerabilities to all forms of gender-based violence, including human trafficking, child marriage, and other forms of violence. Besides, climate change directly impacts women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and neonatal outcomes. Vulnerabilities refer to the reduced capacity of an individual to anticipate, cope, resist, and recover from the impact of natural or man-made climatic hazards. In many developing countries, women's livelihoods are particularly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors. Furthermore, this has been exacerbated by the gender inequalities in the distribution of assets, opportunities, and constrained choices for women in the face of climate change.

Climate change has a significant impact on securing household activities that are considered to be the responsibility of women and girls. These household activities multiplied during the disaster days

compared with their male members' counterparts. Women contribute significantly to adaptation and resilience to climatic extremes. The drivers of their resilience are hard work and the diversity of livelihood resources. During emergencies, especially conflicts and disasters, women are at high risk of Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) because of crises in the family and society as well as due to the sudden breakdown of family and community structures arising from forced displacement.

Pakistan is ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change according to the Global Climate Risk Index. The floods in Pakistan are the deadliest in a series of recent extreme weather events that have wreaked havoc across South Asia. More than half of South Asians collectively comprising almost 750 million people, have been affected by one or more climate-related disasters in the past two decades. Out of the stricken, females are facing the most severe impacts.



### Objective of the session

To draw attention to the effects of climate change on women due to social imbalance and disproportion in societies creating distinct risks to women's safety and health while worsening already existing gender disparities in developing nations.

### The Challenge

In rural areas of underdeveloped countries, women are primarily responsible for the home makeup of a large portion of the population and are heavily dependent on the natural resources in the area for their subsistence. Women have limited access to and control of environmental goods and services, for instance, they have negligible participation in decision-making and are not involved in the distribution of environmental management benefits. Consequently, women are less able to confront climate change.

### Key Takeaways

- Pakistan repeatedly being hit by calamities is doing its best in limited capacity and resources to fight climate change.
- Instead of relying on borrowed data and analysis, Pakistan needs a home-grown environmental, social, and governance framework to assess best practices and performance on various sustainability and interrelated issues.
- There is a dire need for an in-depth engagement, as climate change and gender should not be put in a biological category but there is a need to understand the social construction of gender.
- We need to opt for policies that are aligned with our own culture and the position of women in our society.
- Special attention needs to be given to women's sexual and reproductive health by strengthening climate-resilient health systems.
- A bottom-up approach may be followed, having comprehensive cognizance of understanding gender in particular within which a social construct of culture is understood.
- Important indicators include how to assess the risk of disaster and gauge



the vulnerabilities of men and women respectively.

- A holistic approach to the issue is needed. Governance is not at par, during the recent floods, most of the affected areas comprised of marginalized groups of society.
- From a governance and planning angle, we need preparedness for flash floods, as we are not adhering to the repetition of catastrophic events and not addressing the root cause.
- We also have an opportunity through such events for better planning.
- Social safety nets should be improved and established.
- Academia needs to start from the basics, where they must treat it from a realist point of view.
- Pakistan needs to rely on a localized approach and come out of silos towards such sensitive issues.
- Sustainable and constant behavioral change is a significant intervention to work on.
- To deal with the climate challenge and its impact on gender and law, a framework is very effective.

### Recommendations / Way Forward

- Preparedness and resilience in the face of climate change require placing gender at the center. Women must be guaranteed a seat at the decision-making table, in terms of

policymaking at the local and national level.

- Narrowing the gender gap and empowering women and girls through gender-responsive climate policies, will help build a sustainable future.
- A broader multi-disciplinary approach involving sustainable and climate-resilient urban and rural development, risk reduction and management plans including community responses must be designed in such a manner that they reach the most vulnerable people.
- In order to introduce or commence any new projects, the planning commission should look at it from the sustainability and climate resilience lens and such parameters are to be applied mandatorily.
- Make gender analysis mandatory for all project cycle stages, including project identification, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- There is a need to act in a localized manner, by starting from the grassroots level.
- An inclusive approach is the need of the hour with communities and the significant role of faith leaders.
- Due to the unavailability of real-time surveys, there is a need to completely

monitor the exercises. This would require putting confidence at local and district levels.

- HEC should introduce and implement environment-related subjects, climate and gender resource centers to be established in different universities.
- A centralized secretariat where all the local organizations may concentrate their efforts in a structured way.
- All the media platforms regularly need to be sensitized on the issue and should play a role of advocacy on the subject.
- The subject, climate and gender need to be contextualized into the local

language, starting from early-level education.

- Organized awareness campaigns in urban and rural areas will not only sensitize the masses but government and policymakers.
- Youth engagement plans should be part of awareness and advocacy.
- Need to delve into facts, policy approaches, and implementation stages.
- Legislative bodies need to step in and be part of consultative dialogues and frameworks.
- A gender-sensitive, cross-sectional approach must be opted.

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