

When Climate Forces Movement: A Gendered Analysis of Displacement and Migration

¹Dr. Rubina Sajid, ²Dr. Sakshi Arora, ³Ms. Ruchi Sethi

¹ (HOD Commerce and Management), Professor Maharishi Arvind Institute of Science and Management, Ambabari, Jaipur

²Associate Professor, Maharishi Arvind Institute of Science and Management, Ambabari, Jaipur

³Assistant Professor, Maharishi Arvind Institute of Science and Management, Ambabari, Jaipur (Corresponding Author)

Abstract

The greatest pressing worldwide issue facing human society now is climate change. In addition to creating environmental imbalance, the rising temperatures, swift sea level rise, cyclone and flood strength, and famine frequency have put a severe impact on the people. As a result, migration and displacement brought on by climate change are becoming major topics of discussion on a global scale. However, it is unrealistic to believe that everyone is equally impacted by the climate problem. Who will be more at risk and how the process of displacement will impact a group more is determined by anticipated disparities in social, cultural, and economic institutions. Of these, gender disparity is the most notable.

This essay focuses on the reality that women, men, and other gender identities have different experiences with migration and displacement brought on by climate change. For instance, during floods or droughts, males frequently leave in search of work, which increases the burden on women who are left behind in terms of both family care and subsistence. However, amid new social and economic arrangements, migrant males frequently experience insecurity and discrimination. However, the difficulties faced by non-traditional gender groupings, including the LGBTQ+ community, are frequently overlooked in policy discussions, which exacerbates their uncertainty. In order to comprehend that climate-woken relocation is not just an economic issue, but it's also one that involves social structure, strength, and lacquer, the study makes use of foundational structures like eco-feminism and interactionality. Additionally, various researchers have shown how men and women are impacted differently in several regions of Asia and Africa.

In the end, this study makes the case that if we simply consider climate-related migration and displacement from an economic or environmental perspective, the answer would still be insufficient. In policy-making and migration management, gender sensitivity and inclusivity must be prioritized. Only then will we be able to progress toward a more sustainable and equitable future and lessen the disparities brought on by the climate crisis.

Keywords: Climate Change, Gendered Displacement, Climate-Induced Migration, Feminist Political Ecology, Intersectionality, Policy

Introduction

There is no doubt that climatic changes are one of the most prime reason for sudden disastrous events. In addition to being an environmental issue, social, political, and economic structures have a significant impact. Globally, the impact of these climatic conditions are manifesting in a variety of ways. For example, temperatures are steadily rising, sea levels are threatening to submerge coastal populations, cyclones and floods are becoming more frequent and intense, and farmers are now homeless due to prolonged drought and famine. Due to these conditions, millions of individuals worldwide have been compelled to relocate and engage in forced migration or displacement. According to UN, thousands of people have been displaced over the years due to natural disasters.

However, it is a far cry from reality to assume that everyone is equally impacted by the climate problem. Who bears the weight of a crisis is determined by the social structure's preexisting inequities. These disparities are caused by a number of factors, including caste, class, race, religion, and most significantly, gender. This explains why the experiences of migration and displacement brought on by climate change differ for men, women, and other gender identities.

During climatic crises, women are viewed as the most vulnerable, particularly those from rural and impoverished areas. Women's resources have been restricted by patriarchal systems and social customs. They remain in a far weaker position than men due to land scarcity and property dominion, restricted healthcare entries and educational opportunities, and an unequal distribution of caregiving and household duties. For instance, women bear the whole burden of running the household, caring for the family, raising children, and serving the elderly when there is a drought in the area and men leave to find work. For them, it is a significant source of social and psychological burden in addition to being an environmental issue.

However, migratory males also have other difficulties in unfamiliar environments. They must perform low-paying, risky jobs where prejudice and exploitation are possible. Migration frequently causes them to spend extended periods of time away from their family, which has a detrimental impact on their mental and familial relationships. The situation for members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who identify as non-traditionally gendered also gets much more complex. These groups not only experience prejudice when it comes to funding and aid during the climate crisis, but they also deal with issues of social reality, violence, and invisibility.

Given this context, it is evident that migration brought on by atmospheric conditions is far more dangerous than just a financial or social problem. Additionally, it is a sexual and social issue that cannot be resolved solely with technical fixes or resource remarriage. This calls for a thorough analytical approach that considers gender roles, social structure, and power dynamics. In this context, concepts like interactionality and feminist political ecology are quite helpful. They have a significant impact on access to and control over environmental resources. However, this relationship implies that disparities get more complex when social stratifications are combined. In the context of South Asia and India, this question is also crucial. Sea level rise in the Sundarbans islands, recurrent floods in the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin, and millions of droughts in central India have all been caused by these factors. Women and girls bear an unfairly greater burden in these situations. They struggle to get food, safe housing, and clean water. In dangerous camps and makeshift homes, they frequently experience sexual assault and exploitation as well. In this sense, the climate issue exacerbates already-existing sexual inequality.

This research work aims to gain a thorough understanding of this difficult subject. Its fundamental contention is that the answer will be insufficient if we simply consider environmental or economic factors when analyzing displacement and migration brought on by climate change. To make it evident how the experiences of men, women, and other sexual groups differ, we must examine it from a sexual perspective. This study also highlights the significance of maintaining gender sensitivity in adaption plans, relief distribution, and policymaking. Similarly, we can lessen the disparities brought forth by the climate problem and work toward a fair and sustainable future.

Literature Review

Although research on climatic conditions has a long history, tendency to view it from a sexual viewpoint is relatively recent. Displacement was only regarded as "compulsory results of natural disasters" in early research, which was primarily concerned with environmental and economic factors (Black, 2001; Myers, 2002). However, it's evident that migration is not just an ecological phenomenon but also covers gender roles and social injustices.

1. **A worldwide view of migration:** According to reports from international agencies including the UNHCR (2018) and IOM (2020), millions of people could relocate by 2050. The majority of these will take place in developing nations, where resources and adaptive skills are severely lacking. However, gender-based analysis has frequently been cursory, even in these papers. Women are especially sensitive during environmental disasters, according to research

by Denton (2002) and Dankelman (2010). They hardly get entry to reserves and are debarred from taking decisions. As a result, during displacement, women frequently experience mental trauma, sexual abuse, and food shortages.

2. **South Asia is mentioned:** South Asia, particularly Bangladesh and India are greatly affected. According to research by Bose (2013) and Chowdhury et al. (2018), women in Bangladesh must bear a disproportionate amount of the losses during cyclones and floods. Their uneasiness is exacerbated by the prevalence of sexual abuse and the unsanitary conditions in aid camps. According to Rao et al. (2019), females in India lag behind men they migrate from drought-affected areas face “feminization of agriculture,” where they are left to do household chores, farming, and animal husbandry by themselves. For them, this circumstance adds to their financial burden as well as social and mental strain.

3. **A theoretical perspective Feminist Political Ecology:** It was demonstrated in the writings of Agarwal (1992) and Rocheleau (1996) that sexual roles influence resource access and environmental disasters. From this vantage point, it is evident that climate change is a gender justice issue in addition to an ecological one. International: According to the theory put forth by Crenshaw (1989), caste, class, gender, race, and sexual orientation all contribute to the further entrenchment of inequality. It is evident from recent studies on climate-inspired migration (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014) that the Dalit group, LGBTQ+ people, and marginalized women face multiple forms of persecution.

Human Security Framework: By going beyond a military approach alone, UNDP (1994) broadened the notion of security to include gender equality, food, health, and the environment. Climate migration is viewed as a human safety emergency within this framework.

4. **Inadequate research:** Despite the fact that migration and climate change have been sufficiently discussed in literature, there are still several significant shortcomings: The majority of research ignores non-binary and LGBTQ+ identities and exclusively looks at males and women. Although the term “gender mainstream” is frequently used in policy discussions, its actual application is often lacking. While the majority of the literature concentrates on catastrophic disasters (cyclones, floods), there is a dearth of research from a sexual viewpoint on long-term, gradual shifting crises (such land-death, sea level rise).

Theoretical Framework

Any research must be well understood and analyzed using a theoretical approach. Numerous theoretical frameworks have been effective in bolstering gender analysis concerning migration and displacement. Three methods are the primary focus of this study:

1. **Ecofeminism:** According to this, power dynamics, social structure, and gender roles all influence how people access and use environmental resources. Women are frequently denied access to natural resources (such as fuel, land, and water), despite the fact that they make the largest contributions to their care at the household and communal levels, according to research by Agarwal (1992) and Rocheleau (1996).

It becomes inequality and deepening during the climate crisis. For example, in the event of floods or droughts, women struggle more for the availability of water and food, as they have an additional burden of domestic responsibilities. FPE also states that the absence of women in policy decisions ignore their experiences and needs. From this point of view, this research makes it clear that climate-inspired displacement is not only “natural”, but it is a socially manufactured and depth experience with gender inequalities.

2. **Intersectionality:** According to this idea, which was put forth by Crenshaw in 1989, inequality is influenced by many elements, such as caste, religion etc, and is not only determined by one dimension, such as gender. This strategy is quite helpful when it comes to migration caused by climate change. For instance, middle-class urban women cannot have the same experience of displacement as destitute Dalit women in rural India. In a similar vein, LGBTQ+ migrants face not only the climatic crisis but also the possibility of violence and social rejection. The interconnection

makes it easier to see that climate change-related insecurity is multifaceted and intricate, defying easy categorization.

3. **Framework for Human Security:** The UNDP expanded the military concept which covers aspects like gender equality, environmental and food concerns. Under the framework, it is evident that climate-driven migration involves more than just losing a place to reside; it also involves a person's overall security, means of subsistence, and sense of dignity. It has been discovered that women and children are particularly insecure with regard to physical protection, nutrition, and health care. The climate change is a problem of profound civil liberty, gender justice in addition to being a "environmental crisis" thanks to human safety structures.

4. **The Integrative Method:** Together, the three structures mentioned above provide a thorough approach to this topic. Gender-based differences in resources and power dynamics are explained by FPE. It is evident from interstionality that the sensation of displacement is exacerbated by caste, class, sexual orientation, and the penis. The Human Security Framework demonstrates a direct correlation between displacement and an individual's rights, safety, and dignity.

Case Studies

"It has become clear from theoretical structure that the process of climate-induced migration and displacement is deeply affected by gender-based inequalities. But it is necessary to pay attention to real examples to make these arguments more clear. Studies conducted in various countries and regions have revealed that climate crisis affects different ways on women, men and other gender identities. Some case studies presented below indicate how climate disasters and migrations shape sexual experiences. "

CASE 1:

Bangladesh: Women's insecurity following cyclones and floods: Bangladesh is among the world's most climate-vulnerable nations. Millions of people here are displaced annually by cyclones and floods. According to studies done following Cyclones Sidr (2007) and Aila (2009) (Chowdhuri et al., 2018), death rate of women was far more than males. The reason is that social conventions prohibit women from leaving the house, they are not taught to swim, and they have difficulty getting to relief camps. In addition, women living in relief camps were suffering from inadequate sanitary facilities and unsafe housing. Sexual violence and harassment events were frequently documented as well. This case study shows that climate disasters are not just "natural," but also more dangerous for women because of patriarchal systems.

CASE 2:

"Feminization of Agriculture" in India: Countless farmers are compelled to leave the land and relocate closer to the cities due to recurring droughts in regions like Maharashtra and Bundelkhand. Women are left alone in the villages as a result of men migrating. According to research by Rao et al. (2019), these women have the dual load of caring for the farm, the animals, the elderly and children, and household chores. The term "feminization of agriculture" refers to this state. However, women still do not have equal rights when it comes to land ownership, bank loans, and government aid programs. This case demonstrates how migration brought on by climate change alters sexual roles and increases the economic and societal pressures placed on women.

CASE3:

Africa: The effects of drought on the education of girls There is a severe lack of food and water due to the ongoing droughts in many EACs. According to the UNHCR (2018) study, families frequently pull their daughters from school in these situations and provide water and household chores. In order to lessen the burden on the family, girls are frequently married young as well. This suggests that the climate catastrophe has sociocultural repercussions in addition to economic ones, which particularly impact the freedom and prospects of women and girls.

It's apparent from case studies that atmospheric changes are not only environmental or economic challenge, but it is deeply related to social and gender inequalities. Examples of Bangladesh floods, India's drought-influential region, and long droughts in Africa show that women and girls have unevenly more burden of crisis. It is also clear that climate-inspired migration not only affects the means of living, but also challenges human dimensions such as education, health, safety and dignity. Therefore, it is mandatory to address this problem from a sexual view at the policy level.

Discussions

The aforementioned case studies and theoretical framework make It abundantly evident that gender-based inequality is closely related to the experience of displacement and migration brought on by climate change. Women leave behind and bear the added load of household and communal duties, whereas men frequently relocate in pursuit of work and financial possibilities. This burden impacts them more on a mental, social, and emotional level in addition to being restricted to manual labor.

1. **Patriarchy and unequal burden:** Women's mortality and insecurity during disasters are high, as evidenced by Bangladesh and India. This is caused by a patriarchal societal framework as well as a natural disaster, which hinders women's ability to make decisions on their own, find safe havens, and access aid. In this sense, climate catastrophes exacerbate already-existing disparities.

2. **Women's increased labor and financial insecurity:** It was noted that following men's exodus, women began to take on household and agricultural duties in drought-affected regions of India. "Feminization of Agriculture" is one term for it. However, due to rights deprivation over loans and land, women continue to face financial instability. This begs the question of whether migration brought on by climate change strengthens or weakens women.

3. **Impact on social chances and education:** Examples from Africa showed that food instability and drought have the most effects on females' schooling. They are frequently married off at a young age and are dismissed from school to provide water and household chores. This suggests that in addition to affecting the present generation, the climate issue restricts the freedom and possibilities available to future generations.

4. **The invisibility of excluded groups:** Reviews of the literature and case studies also demonstrate how non-binary and LGBTQ+ communities are frequently overlooked in migration driven by climate change. For them, the danger of violence and social realities is doubled. This suggests that there is still a significant lack of "inclusion" in policy frameworks.

5. **Global perspective and policy:** Despite the fact that international organizations like the UNFCCC, IOM, and UNHCR discuss the integration of sexual approaches in migration and climate policies, their practical implications are little. Although policymaking appears to be "gender-neutral," it is actually "gender-light," ignoring the inequalities between males and females.

Overall evaluation The conversation makes it abundantly evident that migration brought on by climatic variations addition to an environmental one. This dilemma is made more complex by social views, economic disparity, and patriarchy. The disparities brought on by the climate catastrophe will worsen in the coming times.

Policy Implications

In addition to being an environmental issue, climate-related migration and displacement also raises issues of social, economic, and gender justice. The debate and case studies above make it abundantly evident that the particular needs of women and other oppressed groups cannot be sufficiently met by the policies and mechanisms in place. As a result, the following policy consequences require careful consideration:

1. **Developing policies that are responsive to sexuality:** Plans for migration management and climate policies must prioritize women's perspectives and experiences. Plans for disaster management, rehabilitation initiatives, and relief camps should prioritize the needs of various gender groups.

2. The rights of women to land and resources: In regions affected by drought, “women-focused agriculture” is a reality, but women’s legal rights regarding loans and land remain restricted. Equal rights for women in banking, land ownership, and government aid programs should be guaranteed by policy.

3. Pay attention to health and education services: Africa’s instances make it very evident that during times of conflict, females’ education is most negatively impacted. Policies should take proactive measures to ensure that, even in the event of natural catastrophes or displacement, children’s education—especially that of girls—continues uninterrupted. In a similar vein, measures for climate adaptation should include health services and care for mothers and infants.

4. Guaranteed dignity and safety: In Bangladeshi relief camps, women faced insecurity and sexual abuse. Therefore, it is important to make sure that camps and rehabilitation facilities for displaced people have sufficient security, privacy, and hygiene safeguards in place at the policy level.

5. Incorporating underrepresented groups: The experiences of the LGBTQ+ community and non-dwellers are frequently overlooked in policy discussions. Plans for climate-induced migration must take into account their unique requirements and difficulties.

6. Community involvement and a local perspective: Instead of imposing regulations, local populations, particularly women, should actively participate in the preparation of the policies. Policies will become more useful and efficient as a result.

7. International Collaboration and Financial Support: Since climate change is a worldwide emergency, developed nations and international organizations ought to offer financial, institutional, and technical assistance to nations impacted by migration and displacement brought on by climate change. Initiatives like the Green Climate Fund and the Loss and Damage Fund are particularly significant.

Overall assessment At the policy level, it must be assumed that migration and displacement brought on by climate change are not just the product of “natural disasters,” but are also closely linked to gender and social systems. This crisis will exacerbate already-existing inequities if policies are not gender-sensitive, inclusive, and justified.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how climate-driven migration and displacement are closely linked to social structure and gender inequality in addition to being an environmental or economic disaster. Women and children are more susceptible to natural catastrophes and migration, according to case studies from Bangladesh, India, and Africa. In front of them, he is experiencing a unique crisis involving his health, education, security, and dignity. Understanding why the burden of the climate issue does not fall equally on different segments of society is made easier by theoretical political ecosystems, such as the theoretical frameworks of political ecology, interdependence, and human security. Women are particularly weakened by unequal rights over patriarchal systems and resources.

The fact that plans and policies frequently make the claim that they are “gender-neutral” but are actually “gender-light” was also evident. Future climate strategies must therefore be more inclusive and sensitive than a sexual perspective. To put it briefly, viewing migration and climate change as merely “environmental problems” is insufficient. The perspective of females and others experiences must be at the forefront of policy and solutions in order to address this issue of broad social justice and human rights.

References

- [1] Agarwal, B. (1992). The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India. Feminist Studies
- [2] Adger, W. N. (2003). Social capital, collective action, and adaptation to climate change. Global Environmental Change
- [3] Adger, W. N., et al. (2014). Economic and social dimensions of climate change impacts and adaptation.

(chapter/edited volumes)

- [4] Biermann, F., & Boas, I. (2010). Preparing for a warmer world: Towards a global governance system to protect climate refugees. *Global Environmental Politics*.
1. Black, R. (2001). Environmental refugees: Myth or reality? *New Issues in Refugee Research*, UNHCR.
2. Bose, M. (2013). Climate-induced migration in India and Bangladesh: drivers, impacts and adaptation mechanisms. (journal/MDPI or similar — verify).
3. Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century. IDS Discussion Paper.
4. Chowdhury, S., et al. (2018). Impact of cyclones and floods on women in Bangladesh: Evidence from Cyclone Sidr and Aila. (peer-reviewed article / report).
5. Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*.
6. Dankelman, I. (2010). Gender and climate change: An introduction. Routledge / Earthscan (or chapter in edited volume).
7. Denton, F. (2002). Climate change vulnerability, impacts, and adaptation: Why does gender matter? *Gender & Development*.
8. Ekholm-Ferry, S., et al. (2016). Gender, migration and climate impacts: linking social reproduction and mobility. (article/chapter).
9. Felli, R., & Castree, N. (2012). Neoliberalising adaptation to climate change: the new environmental governance. (book chapter / journal).
10. Gemenne, F. (2011). Why the numbers don't add up: A review of estimates and predictions of people displaced by environmental changes. *Global Environmental Change*.
11. Gordon, C., et al. (2017). Climate change, migration and gender: pathways, policy and practice. (policy brief / journal).
12. Hunter, L. M., et al. (2015). Climate change and migration: empirical evidence from developing countries. *Population and Environment*.
13. IPCC (2012). Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
14. IPCC (2014). AR5: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — Working Group II. (relevant chapters on human security and vulnerability).
15. IPCC (2023). AR6 Synthesis Report (SYR). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
16. IOM (2019/2020). World Migration Report 2020: Chapter on Migration, Environment and Climate Change. International Organization for Migration.
17. IOM (2021). IOM Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change (2021–2030). IOM.
18. Kaijser, A., & Kronsell, A. (2014). Climate change through the lens of intersectionality. *Environmental Politics*.
19. Kibreab, G. (1997). Environmental causes and impact of refugee movements: A critique of the dominant Malthusian and adaptation models. *Journal of Refugee Studies*.
20. Laudazi, I. (2003). Female-headed households and coping strategies in times of crisis. (report/chapter referenced in SREX).
21. McLeman, R. (2013). Climate and human migration: Past experiences, uncertain futures. Cambridge University Press.

22. McLeman, R., & Smit, B. (2006). Migration as an adaptation to climate change. *Climatic Change*.
23. Myers, N. (2002). Environmental refugees: a growing phenomenon of the 21st century. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*.
24. Nawrotzki, R. J., & Bakhtsiyarava, M. (2017). International migration and climate variability in developing countries. *International Migration Review*.
25. O'Brien, K., et al. (2004). Mapping vulnerability to multiple stressors: climate change and globalization in India. *Global Environmental Change*.
26. Parry, M., et al. (2009). Assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. (IPCC related literature / reports).
27. Rahman, M. (2011). Gendered impacts of cyclone Aila in Bangladesh: livelihoods, migration, and social protection. (journal article/report).
28. Rao, N., et al. (2019). Gendered impacts of climate change and migration in India: feminization of agriculture and livelihood security. (peer-reviewed article).
29. Reuveny, R. (2007). Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict. *Political Geography*.
30. Rocheleau, D., Thomas-Slayter, B., & Wangari, E. (1996). *Gender and Environment: A Feminist Political Ecology Perspective*. Routledge.
31. Renaud, F. G., et al. (2011). A decision framework for environmentally induced migration. *International Migration*.
32. Sultana, F. (2011). Suffering for water, suffering from water: emotional geographies of resource access, control and conflict. *Geoforum*.
33. Tacoli, C. (2009). Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in a context of high mobility. *Environment and Urbanization*.
34. Turner, B. L., et al. (2003). A framework for vulnerability analysis in sustainability science. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
35. UNFCCC (various years). Reports and decisions on gender and climate change (gender action plans, COP decisions). UNFCCC Secretariat.
36. UNHCR (2011/2018). Guidance and reports on displacement, protection and environment— links to gender concerns. UNHCR.
37. Warner, K., Hamza, M., Oliver-Smith, A., Renaud, F., & Julca, A. (2010). Climate change, environmental degradation and migration. *Natural Hazards*.
38. Weiss, H., & Renaud, F. (2016). Planned relocation and resettlement in the context of climate change. (IOM/UN reports or journal chapters).
39. West, C., & Zimmermann, D. H. (1987). *Doing Gender*. *Gender & Society*.
40. WHO (World Health Organization) (2015/2018). Reports on health, gender and climate change impacts. WHO.
41. Zickgraf, C. (2015). Migration, mobility and gendered vulnerabilities: perspectives from the Sahel and Horn of Africa. (journal article / report).