



Indian Journal of Agriculture and Allied Sciences

A Refereed Research Journal

ISSN 2395-1109

e-ISSN 2455-9709

Volume: 3, No.: 2, Year: 2017

www.mrfsw.org

Received: 10.04.2017, Accepted: 15.05.2017

ROLE OF WOMEN TO CONTROL CLIMATE CHANGE

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Abstract: Humans are causing climate change. That is a fact that has been known for well over 100 years. There will be significant social and economic costs from the effects. In fact, the effects are already appearing in the form of more extreme weather, rising sea levels, ocean acidification etc. The tragedy is that humans have not done much about the problem. Climate change damages the global economy and slow growth. Major health problems associated with climate change is as one of the gravest threats to the society. Women make the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent than men on natural resources for their livelihoods and survival. They tend to have lower incomes and are more likely to be economically dependent than men. Women have less access to education and information that would allow them to manage climate-related risks to agriculture and livestock. Gender equality and women's empowerment is a powerful tool in the race to combat climate change.

Keywords: Climate change, socio-economic effect, health problems, women role, economic dependency, agriculture and livestock.

Introduction: Climate change damages the global economy and slow growth in the coming decades. It found that temperature change due to unmitigated global warming will leave global GDP per capita 23% lower in 2100 than it would be without any warming.^[1] Climate change is a warning of more deaths from extreme heat, longer allergy seasons, increasingly polluted air and water, diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and ticks spreading farther and faster. Major health problems associated with climate change is as one of the gravest threats to the nation.^[2]

Asia is the largest continent spreads over four climatic zones: boreal, arid and semi-arid, tropical and temperate. The region faces formidable environmental and socio-economic challenges due to climate change which has affected to South Asian countries in many sectors, including water resources, agriculture and food security, ecosystems and biodiversity, human health and coastal zones. Global warming is causing the melting of glaciers in the Himalayas which could lead to a rise in the snowline and disappearance of many glaciers causing serious impacts on the populations relying on the 7 main rivers in Asia fed by melt water from the Himalayas. Throughout Asia one

billion people could face water shortage leading to drought and land degradation by the 2050s. In Asia, the principal impacts of climate change on health will be on epidemics of malaria, dengue, and other vector-borne diseases^[3].

Climate Change: Effects on Women: Women make the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent than men on natural resources for their livelihoods and survival. They tend to have lower incomes and are more likely to be economically dependent than men. Women have less access to education and information that would allow them to manage climate-related risks to agriculture and livestock. In India, many women have considerably less access than men to critical information on weather alerts and cropping patterns, affecting their capacity to respond effectively to climate variability.^[4]

Many women around the world adapt their lives to a changing climate. Increases in extreme weather conditions have altered economies, economic development, and patterns of human migration, and are likely to be among the biggest global health threats of this century. Vulnerability to climate change will be determined by a community or

individual's ability to adapt.^[5] Women disproportionately suffer the impacts of disasters, severe weather events and climate change because of cultural norms and the inequitable distribution of roles, resources, and power, especially in developing countries.

Women are engaged in traditional roles as mothers and family caregivers. Men may migrate for economic opportunities, but women are more likely to remain home to care for children and elderly or sick family members. Climate change has a significant impact on securing household water, food, and fuel that usually are the responsibility of women and girls. They spend hours each day hauling water for their family to drink and wash, as well as for their livestock and crops. Due to shrinking of source of water over the past 20 years, they collect water farther away.^[6] Lack of independence and decision making power constrain women's ability to adapt to climate change. Women often have limited or no control over family finances and assets. Cultural restrictions on mobility can impede women's access to information and services. Early childbearing and high fertility are associated with poor health and lower levels of education, and limit women's ability to earn and save money and to adapt to climate change.^[7] Nevertheless, reproductive health and family planning are largely absent from strategies for adapting to climate change, as are activities that address rapid population growth and high fertility that result from unintended pregnancies and an unmet need for family planning.^[8]

Climate Change: Role of Women: Gender equality and women's empowerment is a powerful tool in the race to combat climate change. Around the world, women from the poorest communities face increased hardships as climate change affects land productivity and the availability of clean water. Women and children are also directly affected by energy poverty and the threat to health from burning dirty fuels in the home for cooking, light and heat. Climate-smart agriculture, low-carbon growth and sustainable energy for all can relieve many of these burdens and empower women.^[9]

The challenges women face are too often compounded by inequality. Women, in the fields of science, politics, medicine, business, design, education, agriculture and natural resource management, have tremendous potential to alter the direction of future. Society will never realize

this potential until women have equal rights. They must be safe at home and in public and free from discrimination at work and in the corridors of power. When girls are healthy and educated and women have equal access to land, property and economic opportunity, nations have a better chance to thrive.^[9] Women have untapped potential for increasing energy access, which directly relates to climate change. Women create a multiplier effect in local communities because they disproportionately spend more of their earned income on food, healthcare, home improvement, and schooling. Women have capacity to change strategies in response to new information and to make decisions that minimize risk.^[10]

In the context of above mentioned role of women it can safely be said that when women are empowered, they can be extremely effective agents of adaptation to climate change. The humanitarian organization CARE seeks to include and empower women in planning and implementing climate-change adaptation strategies. CARE helped farmer women for participation in household and community decision-making by empowering them in Bangladesh.^[11]

Women suffer disproportionately from, the impacts of climate change but they are also a powerful force for finding solutions to climate change including in areas such as agriculture, sustainable forest management, and energy access. Agriculture, which accounts for approximately 14 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and is a sector that can be particularly sensitive to climate variability and change, is one key area where women can play a major role.^[12] Women are the main producers of the world's staple crops, particularly in developing countries and regions likely to be adversely affected by climate change impacts. Only a few percentages of women farmers have access to land tenure. This is a problem of many reasons including that it limits women's potential to combat climate change.

Conclusion: Humans are causing climate change. That is a fact that has been known for well over 100 years. There will be significant social and economic costs from the effects. In fact, the effects are already appearing in the form of more extreme weather, rising sea levels, ocean acidification etc. The tragedy is that humans have not done much about the problem. The review points out that since the 1970s, extensive efforts to educate people have not led to

significant shifts in behavior. They also acknowledge that using fear or guilt has not been effective in getting people to act. Here is really the center of the problem, the social dilemma wherein it is in the collective's interest to act in one way but individuals may benefit personally if they act in another way.^[13]

Other problem is that the experts on environment face a challenging political climate, while climate shouldn't be a political issue".^[14] The political atmosphere is different. That is why President Trump has opposed it and has called climate change a "hoax."^[15] According to Eleanor Blomstrom, co-director of the Women's Environment & Development Organization, "I don't think one administration should change how we address such an urgent issue.....President's Trump's words are not enough to stop this process."^[15] As far as history is concerned, this is a new type of threat that the society is facing. The solution is not going to be simple, but it is possible. For it government should partnerin with universities to ensure that more women get degrees in the sciences. Dr. Vivek Murthy, an U.S. Surgeon, rightly said, "The changes are happening right now,"^[16]

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