



GENDER AND CHILD INCLUSION IN POLICIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA

A study from Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

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Save the Children

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Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA) is Asia's largest coalition of NGOs addressing the climate crisis. With almost 300 member organisations from eight South Asian countries, CANSA promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Find us online at www.cansouthasia.net; Twitter: @CANSouthAsia; Facebook: Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA); and LinkedIn: CANSouthAsia

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Gender and Child Inclusion in
Policies on Climate Change
in South Asia

Abbreviations.....	1
Executive Summary.....	2
1. Overview.....	3
1.1. Limitations of the Study	
1.2. Climate Vulnerability in Nepal	
1.3. Climate Vulnerability in Bangladesh	
1.4. Climate Vulnerability in Sri Lanka	
2. Gender, Children and Climate Change.....	10
2.1. Climate Change and Impact on Forestry, Energy, Water and Agriculture	
3. Gendered and Child Situation Analysis in Nepal.....	17
3.1. Existing climate policies	
3.2. Sector-specific policy documents	
3.3. Budget Allocations	
4. Gendered and Child Situation Analysis in Bangladesh.....	25
4.1. Existing climate policies	
4.2. Sector-specific policy documents	
4.3. Budget Allocations	
5. Gendered and Child Situation Analysis in Sri Lanka.....	36
5.1. Existing climate policies	
5.2. Sector-specific policy documents	
5.3. Budget Allocations	
6. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	42
References.....	45
Bibliography.....	50

ABBREVIATIONS



Gender and Child Inclusion in
Policies on Climate Change
in South Asia

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADS	Agriculture Development Strategy
AEPC	Alternative Energy Promotion Centre
BCCGAP	Bangladesh Climate Change and Gender Action Plan
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
CFUG	Community Forest Users Group
DoFSC	Department of Forests and Soil Conservation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DWRI	Department of Water Resources and Irrigation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalaya
IPCC AR6	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDC	Least Developed Countries
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoAD	Ministry of Agriculture Development
MoALD	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development
MoFE	Ministry of Forest and Environment
MoFSC	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
NAP	National Adaptation Plans
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NATCOM	National Communication
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WUA	Water Users' Associations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank



Climate change is a natural process, but its exacerbation in recent decades due to anthropogenic activities has created severe problems and challenges. Though children and women contribute little to the causes of climate change, they are the ones hardest hit by it. Poor governance with respect to climate risks and lack of policies and programmes specifically including children and women compound their vulnerabilities. This study aims to review policies on inclusion of child rights as well as on the aspects of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), across Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The changing climate poses a challenge to child security and gender equality. Droughts result in famine, increasing the workload of children and women and increasing the threat of child labour and trafficking. Because of climate-induced disasters like floods or cyclones, children and women are at risk of drowning. Traditional wells, springs, and streams are drying up, so women and children have to travel long distances to fetch water. The impacts of climate change on female-headed households and climate-sensitive livelihoods affect children indirectly. A situation analysis review of the existing policies across the countries is as follows:

- **Nepal:** Since 2015, inclusion of GESI has been consistent across all climate change-specific policies in Nepal, however, it is not the same for child rights. The government has revised, and updated key policies, and laws related to the environment and climate, and aligned them to achievement of SDGs and the Paris Agreement. While most policies are gender-sensitive/responsive across sectors, there are very few that are gender-transformative.
- **Bangladesh:** Bangladesh is a pioneer in the adoption of international multilateral agreements related to gender in climate change and environmental protection. The Government of Bangladesh has made efforts to mainstream gender equality into climate actions and has adopted a unique approach to integrate the NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) and NAP (National Adaptation Plan) under a joint governance structure, connecting with key national processes such as the Five-Year Plan and the implementation of the SDGs, and with strategic documents. The National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023-2050) and Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020 are very transformative and influence policies across all the four sectors.
- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is comparatively behind Nepal and Bangladesh, when it comes to GESI and child inclusion. While a lot of policies are gender-sensitive/responsive, a good number of plans, policies and strategies in Sri Lanka are gender- and child-blind/neutral. However, the recent Agricultural Policy (2019) is a good start and may indicate change in the future policies to come.

Recommendations

Considering the impacts on women and children across the three countries following are some of the high-level recommendations:

- Increased participation of women and youth in local associations, decision-making and policy formation to improve access to governmental and non-governmental initiatives.
- Regular evaluations of gender-/child-responsive and climate policy implementation, this should also consider gender and child-responsive budgeting and audits of climate policies.
- Investing in women and child awareness-generation and capacity-building programmes across sectors, will help empower them to be active players in decision-making at all levels.
- Making information more accessible to women and youth can increase their resilience and adaptive capacity in many contexts.
- Implementing a framework for sharing good practices and information via national gender-, child-responsive and climate change focal points would promote implementation of coherent analyses at different levels
- Undertaking a child- and gender-centred approach in climate programming.

1 OVERVIEW



Gender and Child Inclusion in
Policies on Climate Change
in South Asia



Women cycling to fetch water for household needs.
Credit: Shailendra Yashwant

Climate change is a global emergency that extends beyond national borders and impacts both human and natural systems. South Asia is most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. Its adverse impacts are worsening and becoming more evident. About 40% of all global climate-related disasters occur in South Asia, which has geologically fragile areas such as mountains and coastal floodplains – vulnerable to erosion, landslides, floods, drought, and saline intrusion. Nepal, faces high rates of glacier melt, erratic precipitation patterns, and increased incidences of floods and dry spells. The most frequent disaster in Bangladesh is flooding and in Sri Lanka it is droughts that occur almost annually, with periodic severe droughts.¹

Rising temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and an increased incidence of hazards have clear and severe impacts on the poorest and most marginalised communities, that increase the existing social and gender inequalities. An understanding of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), among other issues, is central to understanding people's capacities to cope with and adapt to climate change-induced impacts, including recognising the prevalence of patriarchal systems in South Asian countries.

The main goal of this study is to provide evidence to review the development and implementation of gender- and child-responsive climate policies and programmes at the country level in South Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka). In this regard, the report assesses the state of gender and children/youth inclusion in national level climate change policies as well as analysing four climate-affected sectors – agriculture, forest, water, and energy (with a focus on renewable energy).



While education as a sector is also important, it has not been considered separately as it is more specific to child rights. Information for the assessment was gathered from national policy documents and reports. The assessment divides the policies on the following basis:²

- **Gender-blind/neutral:** Provisions that ignore gender differences and fail to acknowledge differing needs of women, men, boys and girls (children). These provisions make no mention of gender/ children and potentially perpetuate unequal gendered power dynamics.
- **Gender-responsive/sensitive:** Provisions that explicitly recognise the specific needs of women, girls and children and attempt to reduce gender inequalities within communities. They fail to identify clear implementation strategies to address these inequalities.
- **Gender-transformative:** Provisions that acknowledge structural and cultural barriers to gender equality and child rights. These provisions provide clear implementation strategies to address the root causes of gender inequality and consideration of child rights in society.

1.1. Limitations of the Study

This study was based on secondary literature and assessment of policy documents, and there is lack of data on gender- and child-specific impacts of climate change as well as actions taken on the ground. Moreover, analysis is mostly qualitative, and the gender-/ child-sensitivity could be interpreted differently to some extent.

The report is also not a comprehensive study of all existing policies in the specific sectors, due to limited time and information sources, therefore it may exclude other aspects of climate change impacts and actions. This report aims to indicate that more evidence building is required, and this study only informs the policy advocacy that is needed.

1.2. Climate Vulnerability in Nepal

A landlocked country located in the Himalayan mountain range, Nepal is one of the world's poorest developing countries, with a quarter of its population living in poverty.³ About 80% of the country's 28 million inhabitants (2019) live in rural areas. Small-scale, subsistence agriculture is a mainstay of Nepal's economy, employing 69% of the country's workforce in 2015. Despite this, agriculture contributed only 25% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019, compared to a 60% contribution from the service sector.⁴ Nepal's National Planning Commission estimated in 2018 that around 28.6% of the population experiences multidimensional poverty, with a clear divide between rural areas, where the rate is 33%, and urban areas where the rate is 7%.⁵ An estimated 8% of Nepal's population is undernourished.⁶

Nepal's varied topography and social vulnerability make the country particularly susceptible to geological and climate-related disasters. It has already experienced changes in temperature and precipitation at a faster rate than the global average. By the 2080s, Nepal is projected to warm by 1.2°C–4.2°C, under the highest emission scenario, RCP8.5 (Representative Concentration Pathway),⁷ as compared to the baseline period 1986–2005. Impacts from these changes will have wide-ranging consequences. Nepal is exposed to a range of water-related hazards, including floods and landslides. These hazards are often triggered by rapid snow- and ice-melt in the mountains and extreme, torrential rainfall episodes in the foothills during the monsoon season. By 2030, the number of people annually affected by river flooding could more than double due to climate change. At the same time the economic impact of river flooding could triple.⁸ The estimated costs of floods and landslides have been large, equivalent to approximately 1.5 percent of current GDP per year. Recent studies by the Asian



Development Bank suggested Nepal faces losing 2.2% of annual GDP due to climate change by 2050.⁹ Nepal's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (2020) identifies the country's energy, agriculture, water resources, forestry and biodiversity and health sectors as the most-at-risk to climate change.¹⁰ The vulnerability of Nepal's communities, particularly those living in poverty, in remote areas, and operating subsistence agriculture, increases the risk posed by climate change. Some important adaptation approaches, such as air conditioning, irrigation, water storage and new crop varieties, may be inaccessible to these communities, and even with adaptation they are likely to experience damage and loss. Without support to the poorest in Nepalese society, inequalities are likely to widen.¹¹

Index	Description
Human development, gender, inequality, and poverty related indices	
Human Development Index (HDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nepal's HDI value for 2021 is 0.602— which put the country in the 'medium' human development category—positioning it at 143 out of 191 countries and territories.
Gender Development Index (GDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The 2021 female HDI value for Nepal is 0.584 in contrast with 0.621 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.942, placing it into Group 3.
Gender Inequality index (GII)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nepal has a GII value of 0.452, ranking it 113 out of 170 countries in 2021.
Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPI value is 0.074. The lower MPI values represent a better performance regarding multidimensional poverty.
Climate vulnerability related indices	
Global Climate Risk Index ¹³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2021 published by Germanwatch based on data from 2000-2019 ranks Nepal as the tenth most climate change vulnerable country. As per this index, Nepal ranks 16th in fatalities among all countries analysed in the CRI study; 18th in fatalities per 100,000 inhabitants; and 56th in losses and 40th in losses per unit GDP.
Index for Risk Management (INFORM) ¹⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nepal experiences significant disaster risk and is ranked 31st on the 2019 INFORM Risk Index. Key drivers of risk in Nepal include its high exposure to flood hazard as well as its lack of coping capacity. Nepal also holds moderate exposure to drought hazard, and moderate levels of vulnerability. More precipitation and higher temperatures affect the stability of terrain and hence susceptibility to hazards from mudflows, avalanches, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and landslides that could be triggered by an earthquake.



Climate vulnerability related indices

Notre Dame-Global Adaptation (ND-GAIN) Index ¹⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high vulnerability and low readiness score of Nepal places it in the upper-left quadrant of the ND-GAIN Matrix. It has both a great need for investment and innovations to improve readiness and a great urgency for action. Nepal is the 42nd most vulnerable country and the 120th most prepared for climate impacts.
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1.3. Climate Vulnerability in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a predominantly low-lying region at the intersection of the Ganga, Meghna, and Brahmaputra rivers. The Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) delta is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to a changing climate.¹⁶ Ericson et al. (2006) estimated that by 2050 more than 1 million people will be directly affected by relative sea-level rise (i.e., including subsidence) in the GBM delta.¹⁷ Most of the country is less than 10 m above sea level (and 10% is less than 1 m), and more vulnerable to flooding.¹⁸ In an average year, about 25% of the country is inundated (MOEF, 2009).¹⁹ This contributes to further salinization of coastal lands, causing not only loss of harvests but also of productive agricultural land. The country is also hit by a severe cyclone on average every three years. Recently, Cyclone Amphan (20th May 2020) that hit Bangladesh, caused massive devastation to the western and northern regions. Floods, tropical cyclones, storm surges and droughts are likely to become more frequent and severe in the coming years.²⁰

The eighth most populous country in the world, Bangladesh has a population of approximately 165 million people, of which nearly one in three live in poverty. The population density is 1,252 persons per sq. km.²¹ Almost half (47%) of the Bangladeshis are engaged in the agricultural sector, contributing only 16% to the country's GDP.²² Within the agricultural sector, the largest sub-sector is crop cultivation (8.73% of GDP), followed by fisheries (3.29%), livestock (2.07%) and forestry (1.42%). The service sector comprises more than half of total GDP. The first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) submitted to the UNFCCC in September 2016 discusses Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate change with projections that it will experience an annual loss of 2% of GDP by 2050 and a loss 9.4% of GDP by 2100.²³

Index	Description
Human development, gender, inequality, and poverty related indices²⁴	
Human Development Index (HDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangladesh's HDI value for 2021 is 0.661— which put the country in the 'medium' human development category—positioning it at 129 out of 191 countries and territories.
Gender Development Index (GDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2021 female HDI value for Bangladesh is 0.617 in contrast with 0.688 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.898, placing it into Group 5.
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangladesh has a GII value of 0.530, ranking it 131 out of 170 countries in 2021.
Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPI value is 0.104. The lower MPI values represent a better performance regarding multidimensional poverty.



Climate vulnerability related indices	
Global Climate Risk Index ²⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2021 published by Germanwatch based on data from 2000-2019 ranks Bangladesh as the seventh most climate change vulnerable country. As per this index, Bangladesh suffered from loss of lives of 11,450 people and economic losses worth \$3.72 billion dollars due to 185 extreme weather events from 2000-2019 that could be attributed to climate change. UNISDR estimated the average annual losses to disaster at around \$3 billion, or around 1% to 2% of GDP.
Index for Risk Management (INFORM) ²⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangladesh faces some of the highest disaster risk levels in the world, ranked 22nd out of 191 countries by the 2019 INFORM Risk Index. Bangladesh has extremely high exposure to flooding (ranked 1st in the world), including, riverine, flash, and coastal, as well as high exposure to tropical cyclones and their associated hazards (ranked 19th) and drought (ranked 47th). Disaster risk in Bangladesh is also driven by its social vulnerability. Bangladesh's vulnerability ranking (37th) is driven by its high levels of socioeconomic deprivation.
Notre Dame-Global Adaptation (ND-GAIN) Index ²⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high vulnerability score and low readiness score of Bangladesh places it in the upper-left quadrant of the ND-GAIN Matrix. It has both a great need for investment and innovations to improve readiness and a great urgency for action. Bangladesh is the 29th most vulnerable country and the 167th most prepared for climate impacts.

1.4. Climate Vulnerability in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a small island nation, located in the Indian Ocean, off the southwest coast of India, with a physically diverse geography and tropical climate. With a land area of 65,610 square kilometres and 1,340 km of coastline, Sri Lanka is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.²⁸ The estimated population of Sri Lanka is over 22 million, with roughly 50 percent of inhabitants living in coastal areas on the west, south-west, and southern coasts of the island. Colombo, its commercial capital, has the highest population density with 21,000 inhabitants per square km.²⁹

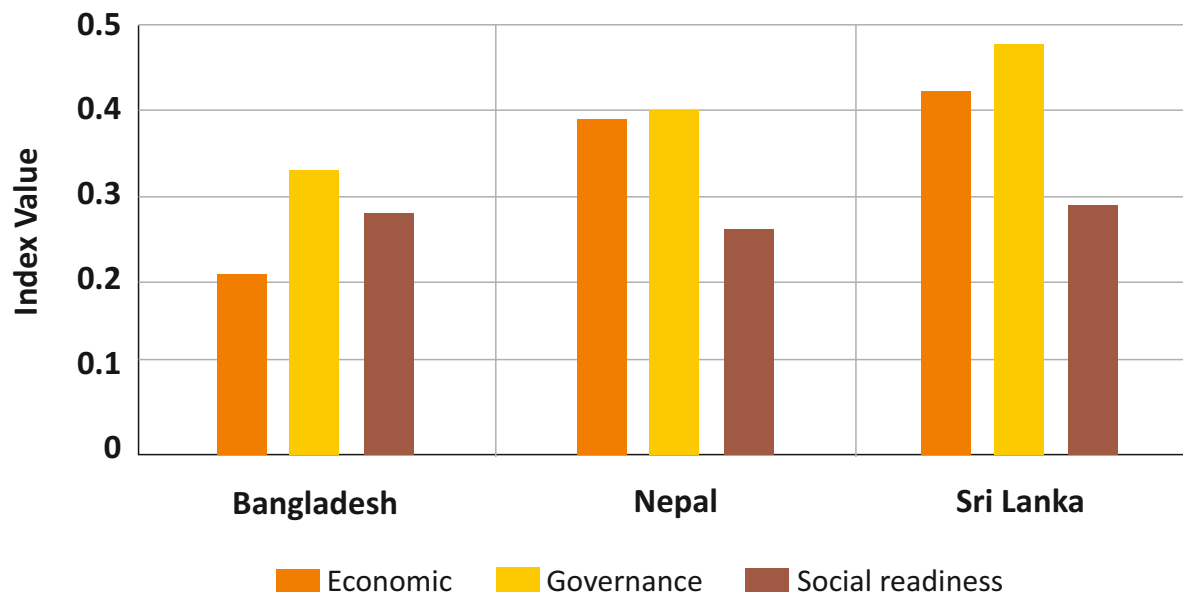
Temperature rise in Sri Lanka is projected to be marginally lower than the global average. Under the highest emissions pathway (RCP8.5) temperatures are projected to rise by 2.9°C–3.5°C by the 2090s, over the 1986–2005 baseline. Projected rainfall trends for Sri Lanka have a high degree of variability but increases in heavy rainfall events are likely to increase in Sri Lanka's southern areas. Sri Lanka faces significant threat from extreme heat, with the number of days surpassing 35°C, potentially rising from a baseline of 20 days to more than 100 days by the 2090s, under emissions pathway RCP8.5. Extreme heat threatens human health and living standards, particularly for outdoor labourers in urban areas without adequate cooling systems; this will particularly impact communities in Sri Lanka's northern region. There is also potential for adverse implications



to Sri Lanka's large tourism sector. Temperature rise is likely to put downward pressure on agricultural yields, including key staples such as rice. This may impact negatively on national and household food security. Without adaptative action, the projected increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme precipitation events may put lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure at risk through their link with riverine flooding, flash floods, and landslides.³⁰

Projected changes are expected to impact on Sri Lanka's poorest and most marginalized communities most strongly, exacerbating poverty and inequality. Primary economic drivers, including tourism, commercial agriculture, and manufacturing are extremely vulnerable to extreme weather events and sea level rise. In addition, deforestation, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity also threaten to reduce the country's economic output. The Sri Lankan government has made great progress in improving quality of life for most of the population, with large development projects providing piped water, electricity, and access to health services. However, even as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita continues to climb, having reached USD 13,000 in 2017, Sri Lanka still suffers from substantial income inequality and rural poverty. The country has a low unemployment rate (4 percent) and much of its GDP is generated by the service industry, including tourism, which employs 45.9 percent of the population.³¹

Index	Description
Human development, gender, inequality, and poverty related indices ³²	
Human Development Index (HDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sri Lanka's HDI value for 2021 is 0.782— which put the country in the High human development category—positioning it at 73 out of 191 countries and territories.
Gender Development Index (GDI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2021 female HDI value for Sri Lanka is 0.755 in contrast with 0.795 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.949, placing it into Group 3.
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sri Lanka has a GII value of 0.383, ranking it 92 out of 170 countries in 2021.
Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPI value is 0.011. The lower MPI values represent a better performance regarding multidimensional poverty.
Climate vulnerability related indices	
Global Climate Risk Index ³³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2021 published by Germanwatch based on data from 2000-2019 ranks Sri Lanka as the twenty third most climate change vulnerable country. As per this index, Sri Lanka ranks 35th in fatalities among all countries analysed in CRI study. 42nd in fatalities per 100000 inhabitants, 28th in losses and 45th in losses per unit GDP.
Notre Dame-Global Adaptation (ND-GAIN) Index ³⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high vulnerability score and high readiness score of Sri Lanka places it in the upper-right quadrant of the ND-GAIN Matrix. It is on the road to responding effectively to climate change, but the adaptation needs and urgency to act are greater. Sri Lanka is the 60th most vulnerable country and the 100th most prepared for climate impacts.

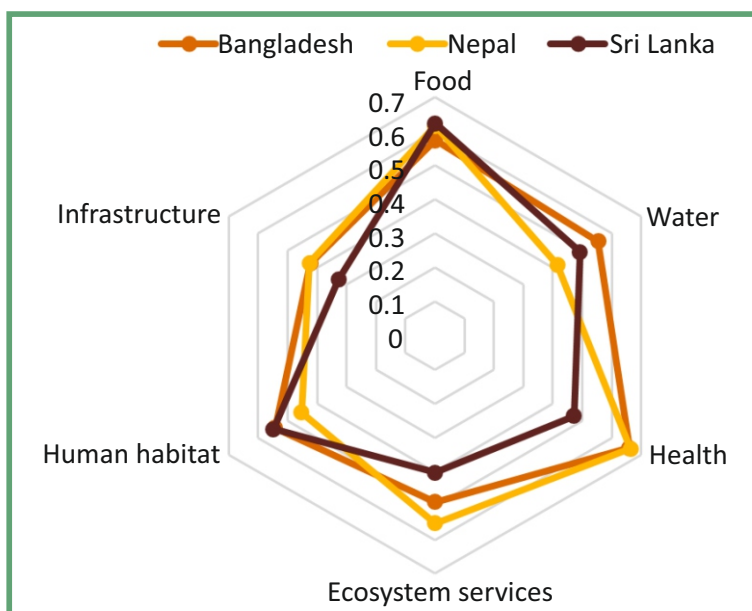


Readiness. Source: ND-GAIN Index 2020



Woman and child in kitchen near wood-fired cookstove.
Credit: Yogendra Singh, Pexels

Gender-differentiated impacts of extreme weather events due to climate change have been recognized by UNFCCC in multiple studies including Subsidiary Body for Implementation sessions.³⁵ Multiple studies have highlighted that the adverse effects of drought, floods, hurricanes, extreme rainfall events and sea level rise are often felt more keenly by women than men as a result of systemic gender discrimination and societal expectations related to gender roles. These adverse effects have varied social, financial and economic dimensions.



Sector-wise vulnerability
Source: ND-GAIN Index 2020



This is in line with the recognition in the IPCC Assessment Report 6 (AR6) that climate change affects groups differently as a result of the intersection of discrimination based on social factors such as urban or rural location, sexual orientation, educational background, income, gender, ethnicity, age, class and (dis)ability. The gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, especially in South Asia, result from power relations and gender and other social discrimination causing many women and girls to not have the same right as their male counterparts, for example, own or control land or other assets or access education, public information or climate finance. Some of the key impacts of climate change on gender and social inclusion are as follows:

- Extreme weather events due to climate change disproportionately affect women and girls and their ability to perform their everyday tasks, which partly explains why some girls are forced to drop out of school. The tasks of collecting firewood and water in South Asia (Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh), which traditionally fall to women and girls, are heavily affected by adverse climate change impacts, which force the women and girls to travel further from their homes to complete the tasks and provide for their families. In turn, the longer journeys increase their exposure to gender-based violence outside the home.³⁷
- Extreme weather events have been observed to result in increased rural-to-urban migration of men in some countries, leaving women in charge of land, the household and other tasks traditionally performed by men. Men migrate because they are more likely to find employment than women, who have limited skillsets as part of their socialization. Also, this happens due to stereotyping of men as the bread winners for the family and women in roles restricted to household work and caring. Men who secure employment in urban locations do not always return to their rural communities or fulfil their promise to send some of their income back home. This results in an increased workload and decreased income for women, whose opportunities to earn income are limited by gender norms that affect their access to land ownership, thus increasing their current and future vulnerability to climate impacts.³⁸
- Increase in female-headed households can negatively affect the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities by reducing their income potential and general access to resources, since the women left behind often lack the educational background and legal rights that would enable them to secure funding through climate funds as per a study conducted in 2014.³⁹

While climate change impacts gender disproportionately, women and girls across South Asia still face many barriers to accessing resources and participating fully in global climate change decision-making. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, women and girls do not always have the same access to education as their male counterparts. This is due to traditional gender norms and may be aggravated by the impacts of climate change, for example if they result in girls being taken out of school or subject to child marriage. Lack of formal education for women and girls and their resulting higher illiteracy rates make it more difficult for them to access government subsidies and other funding.⁴⁰

Illiteracy can also make it more difficult for women to obtain land ownership; this is compounded by discriminatory laws and gender norms in South Asian contexts. Similarly, women's access to climate funding, in areas where such funding is available, is limited as they cannot access most of the climate and emergency funds that should be available to them.⁴¹

The adaptive capacity of women and men also differs owing to women being less integrated into the formal



economy, which in turn affects their position in decision-making processes. In addition, systemic gender discrimination and bias result in women being under-represented in decision-making processes in the formal economy. Increased participation of women in the formal economy resulting from shifts in gender norms is one way of reducing their vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change.⁴²

In order to demonstrate how climate change impacts children and why they are particularly at risk, the findings from the vulnerability analysis should be studied from the lens of child rights. The UNCRC framework, commonly known as the Rights Framework for Children, was used for this purpose. The UNCRC is an international legal framework that defines the fundamental rights of children and responsibilities of governments towards protecting those rights.

The UNCRC defines the child as a person under 18 years of age and specifies 54 articles on children's rights that may be grouped together under four themes – survival rights, development rights, protection rights, and participation rights of the child. 15 of the 54 articles of the UNCRC are directly or indirectly impacted by climate change.

Child rights under risk	Climate risk and interface with climate change
Article 2: Right to non-discrimination	Climate change exacerbates inequity because its impact often hits children from poor families the hardest and for a long period of time. This right can be threatened if the special needs of affected children are not recognised and they are excluded from planning and decision-making about emergency responses, including execution of such responses.
Article 3: Best interests of the child must be a top priority	Climate change is seen to work against the best interests of children. This right is threatened by the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters as a result of climate change, which put children at risk of health hazards and disruption in education, and adversely impact child protection.
Article 4: Protection of rights	Climate change impacts the lives of children in many ways and thus impact many rights such as right most directly during normalcy and in times of crisis. Without adequate policy response to climate threats at the global, national and sub-national levels, rights of children cannot be fulfilled. Action to tackle climate change is therefore essential.
Article 6: Right to survival and development	A child's right to survival is directly challenged by increasing climate-related disasters. Further, climate change and climate-related disasters increase risks of disease and hunger. Destruction of infrastructure such as houses, hospitals and school buildings and essential services such as WASH pose the most direct and immediate threat to a child's right to survival.
Article 12: Right to a voice	A child's right to a voice is under threat due to limited opportunities for them to voice their opinions and contribute solutions to problems of climate change and climate-induced disasters.

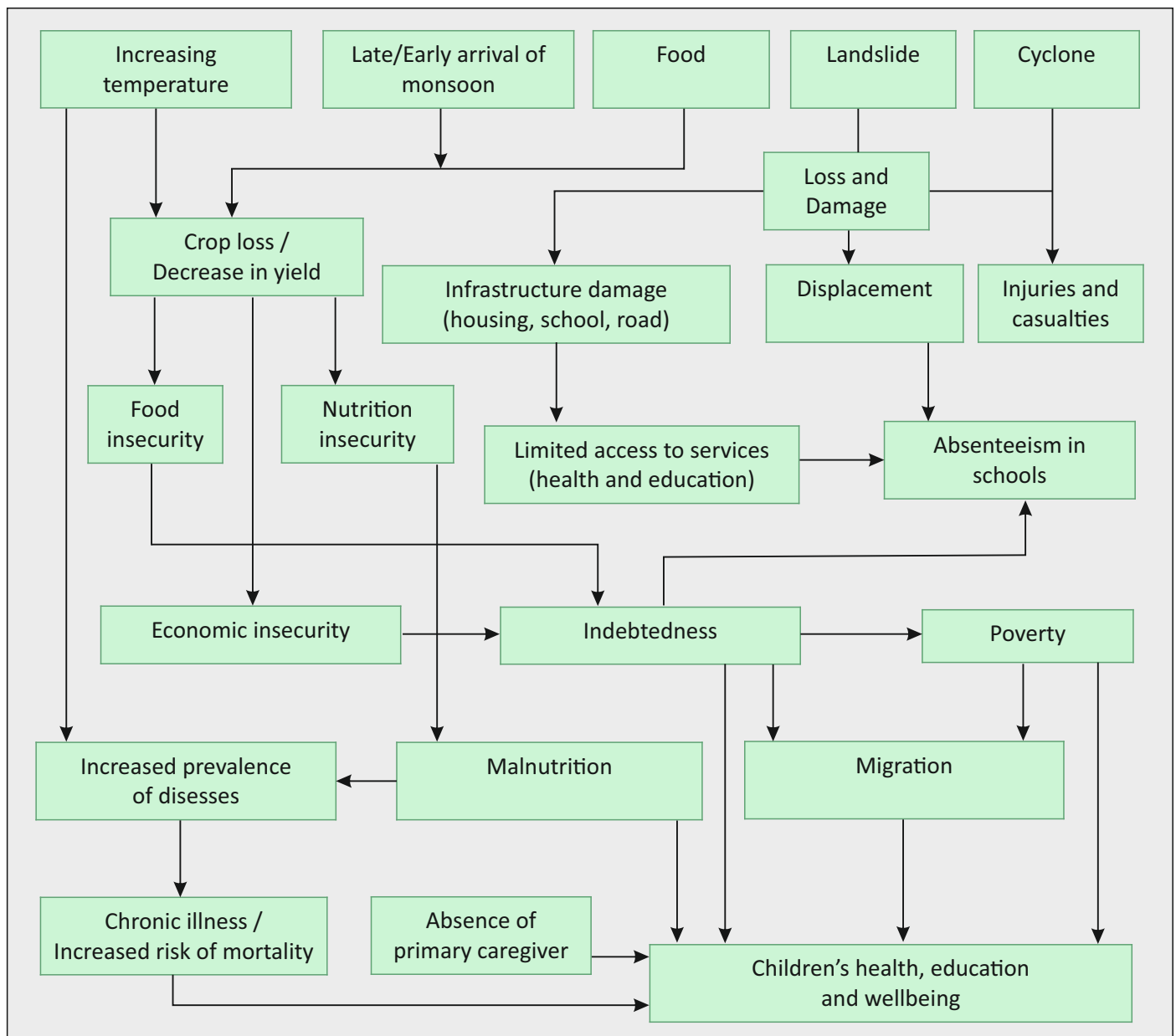


Child rights under risk	Climate risk and interface with climate change
Article 22: Right to protection as refugees	Environmental disturbances due to climate change and climate-induced disasters are forcing millions to migrate from areas that have been rendered dangerous or uninhabitable. Climate change is making a child's right to refugee protection increasingly necessary.
Article 23: Children with a disability	A child with a disability faces great risks because of challenges with mobility during natural hazards. Disabled children have the right to live a full and decent life and to play an active part in the community. There is a need to support disabled children and their families.
Article 24: Right to health and Right to health-sustaining conditions	A child's right to health is directly and indirectly threatened by climate change and natural disasters. The risks of water-borne diseases, vector-borne diseases and complications due to malnutrition are on the rise because of the changing climate. Children's right to health is infringed on when health-sustaining conditions such as clean water, sanitation, clean air and nutritious food are compromised by climate change and natural disasters.
Article 26: Right to social protection	Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Due to climate change, there is a need for resources to ensure children can cope. This right is increasingly at risk owing to slow progress in developed countries in providing additional funds for children to cope with and adapt to climate change.
Article 27: Right to an adequate standard of living	Climate-induced sea-level rise, flooding and extreme weather events such as storms and cyclones destroy houses and create unsafe living conditions for children for weeks and months.
Article 28: Right to education	Every child has the right to an education, but children are kept from attending school when family livelihoods and financial resources are negatively impacted by climate change. Furthermore, children's access to education can be disrupted when roads and schools are damaged or destroyed by climate-related disasters or shocks to the household economy.
Article 30: Right to indigenous culture and language	Living in highly climate-sensitive ecosystems, indigenous populations are often marginalised and among those most vulnerable to climate-related impacts. Loss of traditional species and land and migration can impact the right to identity (including language and culture) of a child from an indigenous minority community.
Articles 34, 35 and 36: Right to protection from exploitation	Climate change-induced economic stress and unhealthy living conditions, including lifestyle changes, pose several risks to a child's right to protection from exploitation. The greater frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters are likely to increase the protection risks to children through increased child labour, abduction, recruitment into fighting forces, sexual violence and labour migration.



2.1. Climate Change and Impact on Forestry, Energy, Water and Agriculture

An increasing body of research has shown that climate-related disasters have impacted human populations in many areas including agricultural production, food security, water management and public health. The level of impacts and coping strategies of populations depends heavily on their socioeconomic status, socio-cultural norms, access to resources, poverty as well as gender. Research has also provided more evidence that the effects are not gender neutral, as women and children are among the highest risk groups. Key factors that account for the differences between women's and men's vulnerability to climate change risks include gender-based differences in time use; access to assets and credit, treatment by formal institutions, which can constrain women's opportunities, limited access to policy discussions and decision-making, and a lack of sex-disaggregated data for policy change.⁴³



Key factors affecting children's health, education and wellbeing

Source: Literature review



Impacts and Vulnerabilities from Climate Change	
Agriculture and food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced crop yields • Fisheries and livestock losses • Increased food insecurity
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased potable water supplies • Changes to river flow • Decreased irrigation water
Coastal zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal flooding and inundation during cyclones • Seawater intrusion and salinization of coastal aquifers • Coastal erosion and loss of sand beaches
Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity loss • Loss of livelihoods • Reduced natural flood protection
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased heat stress • Higher prevalence of infectious diseases • Injury and death from cyclones and floods
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher cooling demand in summer. • Damaged energy infrastructure • Increase in the cost of power production
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of natural attractions • Decrease in ecotourism activities

Source: Climate Risk Profile, USAID

Many of the climate change trends are likely to disproportionately affect the poorest groups in society. For instance, heavy manual labour jobs are common among the lowest paid whilst also being most at risk of productivity losses due to heat stress.⁴⁴ In addition, poorer farmers and communities are least able to afford local water storage, irrigation infrastructure, and technologies for adaptation.

The World Food Programme estimates that without adaptation, the risk of hunger and child malnutrition on a global scale could increase by 20%, respectively, by 2050.⁴⁵ There could be approximately 73 climate-related deaths per million population linked to lack of food availability in Sri Lanka by the 2050s under RCP 8.5, whereas 61.9 and 67 climate-related deaths per million population each year in Nepal and Bangladesh, respectively.⁴⁶ Work by Honda et al. (2014), which utilized the A1B emissions scenario from CMIP3 (most comparable to RCP6.0), estimates that without adaptation, annual heat-related deaths in the South Asian region will increase 149% by 2030 and 276% by 2050.⁴⁷ Modelling by WHO estimates the change in the number of diarrhoeal deaths in under-15-year-olds are attributable to climate change under the A1B scenario in the South Asia region. Climate change is projected to increase the number of deaths in the 2030s by 5–15% and by 10–20% in the 2050s.⁴⁸



One of the most evident outcomes of how climate change affects communities and economy is the prevalence of migration in the country. Work by the World Bank Group suggests that South Asia could experience an estimated 17 million to 36 million internal climate migrants by 2050 as a result of slow-onset climate changes.⁴⁹

Indicator	Nepal	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Source
Population Undernourished	6.1% (2017–2019)	13.0% (2017–2019)	22.1% (2014–2016)	FAO, 2017; FAO, 2020
National Poverty Rate	28.6% (2018)	21.8% (2018)	4.1% (2016)	ADB, 2018a; National Planning Commission, 2020; ADB, 2020
Net Annual Migration Rate	0.15% (2015–2020)	–0.23% (2015–2020)	–0.47% (2010–2015)	UNDESA, 2017; UNDESA, 2019
Infant Mortality Rate (Between Age 0 and 1)	–3.2% (2015–2020)	2.7% (2015–2020)	0.82% (2010–2015)	UNDESA, 2017; UNDESA, 2020
Dependents per 100 Independent Adults	53 (2020)	47 (2020)	71 (2015)	UNDESA, 2017; UNDESA, 2019



Anjali and her family, Udayapur, Nepal.
Credit: Shailendra Yashwant/Save The Children

Nepal has a number of policies, plans, strategies, and programmes aimed at promoting gender equality and social inclusion. The key document for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is the Constitution of 2015, which guarantees non-discrimination of people based on origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, economic condition, language, region, or ideology. Following this, the government has adopted various policy measures and programmes to promote social inclusion and gender equality through its three-year plans specifically the Fourteenth Three-Year Plan (2016/17–2019/20), which regards gender equality, social inclusion, and gender mainstreaming as key cross-cutting goals.⁵⁰

The Fifteenth Three-Year Plan (2020/21–2023/24) also aims to end all kinds of discrimination, poverty and inequality by developing the capacity of individuals and groups to access resources and opportunities. The Plan document states that **gender related policies and programmes shall be developed for every sector and that 50 percent women participation shall be ensured in all government bodies**. The Plan also states that gender responsive budgeting shall be institutionalized at every level of government.



3.1. Existing climate policies

Since 2015, inclusion for GESI has been consistent across all climate change-specific policies in Nepal. The government has revised, and updated key policies, and laws related to the environment and climate, and aligned with the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the elimination of discrimination against women, gender equality and empowerment has received high priority in administrative interventions and affirmative actions. The country has also been implementing gender-responsive budgeting for more than a decade.⁵¹

General policy documents		
Gender-blind/ neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender-transformative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) (2016 and 2022) National Climate Change Policy (2019) National Adaptation Programme for Action (2010) Climate Change Gender Action Plan (2012) National Climate Change Financing Framework (2017) 15th Five-year plan for the FY2020/21-2023/24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None

- Nationally Determined Contribution (2022):**

The second NDC seeks to achieve the following GESI targets by 2030:

- develop an action plan to integrate GESI for the achievement of NDC targets
- develop specific programmes on GESI with dedicated resources (human and financial)
- ensure equal and meaningful participation of women, children in climate policy development, planning, monitoring and implementation at various levels
- It also targets that by 2030, all 753 local governments will prepare and implement climate-resilient and gender-responsive adaptation plans

- National Climate Change Policy (2019):**

This policy directs that GESI would be included in the formulation of policies, institutional framework and implementation of programmes related to climate. Youth, children, pregnant women will be addressed in matters related to climate change. The Nepal Climate Change Policy 2019, recognizes the need to integrate GESI through its objective of mainstreaming GESI into adaptation and mitigation programmes, and as a cross-cutting thematic area in the eight sectoral strategies and working policies. However, the policy does not have an intersectional approach. It is not informed by the specific problems, challenges and opportunities faced by different groups of women and men in the context of climate change.

- National Climate Change Financing Framework (2017):**

The framework designates climate- and gender-focal persons across departments and directs planning officers, climate-focal persons and gender-focal persons of the sector ministries trained to screen develop-



ment programmes for integrating climate change. The gender-focal persons provide support in screening proposed development programmes for gender responsiveness and the climate-focal persons for tagging of climate-relevant programmes. There is no specific mention of children's needs and inclusion.

- **National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change NAPA (2010):**

Under this programme, livelihood, governance, gender and social inclusion are identified as crosscutting themes. Gender-sensitive analysis of climate change impacts on six thematic sectors (water and energy, agriculture and food security, forestry and biodiversity, urban settlement, public health, and climate induced disasters) has been conducted, but the results do not seem incorporated in the document. There is also no mention of children.

- **Climate Change Gender Action Plan (2012):**

The key objective of the action plan was to operationalize gender concerns in climate change efforts and to strengthen implementation for advancement of gender equality in Nepal. It also considers interests of children, the aged or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated.

Sector	Gender-blind/ neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender- transformative
Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025) • Nepal National REDD+ Strategy (2018) • Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (2008) • Draft Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan of Forest and Environment Sector 2020-2030 • National Forest Policy (2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidy Policy for Renewal Energy (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable (Rural) Energy Policy (2006) • Renewable Energy Subsidy Policy (2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Resources Strategy (2002) • National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (2003) • National Water Plan (2005) • National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan (2011) • Irrigation Policy (2014) • National Water Resources Policy 2077 (2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WASH Sector Development Plan (2016-2030)



Sector	Gender-blind/ neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender- transformative
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) 2015-2035 • Livestock Master Plan: 1996-2015 • Agriculture Perspective Plan: 1995 • Agriculture Mechanization Promotion Policy 2014 • Water Induced Disaster Management Policy (2016) • National Agriculture Policy: 2004 • Agricultural Extension Strategy 2005 • National Seed Vision: 2013-2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

3.2.1. Forestry

Forests cover 44.74% of the total area of Nepal. Forests in Nepal are broadly categorized as community-managed and state-managed.⁵⁴ Gender perspectives in forestry are more relevant to community-based forestry management than to state-managed forests. According to the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation, about 1.45 million households (35% of the population) are involved in community forestry management. Until now, 19,361 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) have been formed, out of which 1072 are women-only CFUGs.⁵⁵ In many places across South Asia, women and girls are the main collectors of fuelwood and non-timber forest products. They may have to walk many hours, sometimes under highly perilous conditions, especially where accessibility of resources near the home is affected by deforestation, natural disasters or conflict. The Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (2009) has impacted most of the forest sector policies to make them gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive policies, programmes and institutions.

- **Nepal National REDD+ Strategy (2018):**⁵⁶
Has three GESI specific objectives: i) improve resource tenure and ensure fair and equitable sharing of carbon and non-carbon benefits from forests among marginalized groups including Dalits, women, and indigenous peoples; ii) increase livelihood assets and diversify employment opportunities; and iii) ensure that policy and legal frameworks meet national and international standards. It seeks to enhance institutional capability and coordination; and strengthen governance, gender equality and social inclusion in the forestry sector. However, the REDD+ strategy is silent about how the social position of women and other excluded groups can be strengthened so that they can reap the benefits of REDD; there is also no mention of children.⁵⁷
- **Forest Sector Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy (2008):**
This focuses on GESI-sensitive policy and guidelines, organizational development, budget, programme, and monitoring, along with good governance and equitable access to resources, decision-making processes and benefits. However, it lacks an implementation action plan and doesn't sufficiently focus on incorporating GESI in institutional mechanisms such as budget and programmes.



- **Draft Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan of Forest and Environment Sector (2020-2030):**

The strategy addresses both gender and social inclusion issues and explains them in different chapters. The strategy has incorporated capacity-building aspects only as part of different sub-strategies and action plans. Finally, the strategy and action plan do not have clearly defined outcome indicators for tracking progress and change.

- **Forest Sector Strategy (2016-2025):**

Gender equality, social inclusion and poverty reduction is the seventh strategic pillar. The third outcome of this strategy is inclusive forest sector organizations and institutions, and focuses on increasing participation, competency and leadership of women, indigenous peoples and other poor and socially excluded groups and individuals. There is no specific mention of children.

- **National Forest Policy (2019):**

The policy does not clearly lay out a strategy for building capacity to integrate GESI in forestry, develop gender responsive budget and create a gender friendly environment. It only outlines a target of ensuring 50% women's participation in decision-making in all forestry sector institutions, and in the formulation of strategies, laws, programmes, and budget. It also has provisions for social security, inclusiveness and good governance. There is no specific mention of children.

3.2.2. Energy

The primary energy sources in Nepal are biomass, hydropower and coal. Nepal has 83,000 megawatts (MW) of hydropower potential, but currently less than 2% is harnessed. It is estimated that about 6.6 million people in the country still lack access to electricity.⁵⁹ About 58% of the population is connected to grid energy, while 82% still uses solid fuels such as wood, dung cakes, rice husks, and coal for cooking.⁶⁰ At the household level, lack of energy impacts women disproportionately, as women are responsible for most work in the home that often requires energy. Moreover, in the absence of clean energy or fuel for cookstoves, many households in South Asia require using traditional open-fire stoves; these increase the risks of respiratory symptoms in children and women exposed to wood smoke.

Most energy policies still do not explicitly acknowledge the differential needs of different social groups, longstanding social inequities, diverse barriers to participation and access to benefits. Only local government policies have provisions for women's representation in decision-making at the three levels of government – federal, provincial and local – guided by Alternative Energy Promotion Centre's (AEPCC) GESI Mainstreaming Plan.

Many of the government programmes on energy such as AEPCC's Energy Sector Assistance Programme, the National Rural and Renewable Energy Programme and the Rural Energy Development Programme display a strong focus on gender and social inclusion. However, neither the ministry nor the key energy organizations under it, has women in planning and decision-making positions.⁶¹

- The Renewable Energy Policy (2006) seeks to: (a) bring electricity to rural areas (b) use electricity to conserve the environment (c) increase employment using electricity, and (d) implement community-managed projects that also address gender and inclusion. However, the policy reflects a very limited understanding of



gender and child inclusion and makes no reference to barriers faced by women, poor and excluded groups, such as their limited or lack of access to credit, inability of the poor households to pay for electricity, other constraints faced by female-headed households etc.

- **Renewable Energy Policy, a Subsidy Policy for Renewable Energy (2009)** only acknowledges exclusion based on income and overlooked other forms of discrimination for both women and children.
- **Renewable Energy Subsidy Policy (2016)** focuses on maximizing service delivery and efficiency in renewable energy technologies and promoting their use in rural areas to reduce regional disparity; creating rural employment and enhance livelihoods, particularly for single women and low-income households.

3.2.3. Water

Water remains an underdeveloped sector in Nepal. Every year the country faces the problem of either too much or too little water, and water management efforts are aimed at tackling water scarcity or water-induced disasters.⁶² As in most developing countries, in Nepal rural women shoulder the burden of collecting water for their household, a task made more difficult by Nepal's rugged, mountainous terrain. For example, women spend 70% of their time on tasks related to water management and 30% on fetching water for their household.⁶³ The key policies in the sector are as follows:

- **Water Resources Strategy (2002):**
Stresses only on the need for “balanced gender participation and social equity” in water resources management.
- **National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (2003):**
Gender is key to WASH policy, which mandates meaningful participation of women and marginalized caste and ethnic groups specifically the 30% representation of women in water user committees and local planning and budgeting.
- **National Water Plan (2005):**
Recommends women's involvement in Integrated River Basin Water Management (IRBM), such as riverbank protection, conservation activities, operation and management of irrigation systems and electricity distribution.
- **National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan (2011):**
Recognizes GESI and considers gender and differently-abled friendly technologies and site selection.
- **Irrigation Policy (2014):**
Recognizes gender biases in the irrigation sector and recommends interventions for women's empowerment, and achieving gender equality through financial incentives and subsidies for irrigation activities.
- **WASH Sector Development Plan (2016-2030):**
This builds on the earlier policy of 2003 but goes a step forward to include an Equality and Inclusion Frame-



work to address gender relations. It also ensures 50% women's representation in the executive body. It further closely considers indicators on child development from infant mortality rates, to specifically addressing WASH in schools.

- **National Water Resources Policy: 2077 (2020):**

Identifies the need for women's participation in decision-making across different levels of water resource management institutions.

There is still a gap between gender equality provisions in water policies and their implementation. The organizational culture of most water-related bodies mirrors the patriarchal attitudes and behaviour prevalent in the broader society. There is barely any specific budget allocation.

3.2.4. Agriculture

The National Living Standard Survey (2011) highlights agriculture as the main source of livelihood for women in Nepal. The agriculture sector employs about 70% women as compared to 30% men, and women's contribution to the agriculture economy is about 60.5%, i.e., much higher than that of men (39.5%). Despite GESI-positive provisions in the policies, most women still don't own land due to lack of supportive legislation and the persistence of the patriarchal mindset.⁶⁴

- **Agriculture Development Strategy (2015-2035):**

The Ten-Year Action Plan under the ADS calls for the development of a GESI strategy in agriculture. This includes recognition of female farmers, provision of adequate budget for carrying out women's empowerment related activities, such as ensuring women's access to and control over productive resources and promoting women leadership in agriculture. Recognizes women farmers as independent farmers with a goal of bringing 50% farmland under women's ownership (individual or joint ownership) by 2035. Addressing food and nutrition security for children is also a key goal of the strategy.

- **National Seed Vision (2013-2025):**

It seeks to ensure equal rights and access to information, skills and services related to seed use for all Nepalis, irrespective of gender, caste, ethnicity and geographical location.

- **National Agriculture Policy (2004):**

The policy to achieve gender equality, encourages 50% participation of women in agricultural activities.

- **Agriculture Mechanization Promotion Policy (2014):**

Encourages women's and youth groups to promote mechanized agriculture for increased productivity.

- **Water Induced Disaster Management Policy (2016):**

Ensures 33% representation of disadvantaged people in water users' associations.⁶⁵

The MoALD in 2014 established the Gender Responsive Budget Committee (GRBC) consisting of five members and chaired by the Joint Secretary of Planning. The main role of the GRBC was to build synergy among district, regional and central departments for the implementation of GESI policies, plans and programmes. However, there isn't much information available on the GESI budgeting of the Agriculture Development Strategy.



3.3. Budget Allocations

The Government of Nepal has allocated separate budgets for gender equality and climate action over the years, showing its commitment to acting on these fronts. While it is not clear how much has been allocated for gender under the climate change policies, following is the allocation specific to gender and climate change as part of the SDGs.⁶⁶

(in USD Million)

SDG	2016/17	%	2017/18	%	2018/19	%	2019/20	%
5: Gender	16.7	0.2	15.0	0.2	23.7	0.3	36.6	0.3
13: Climate Action	21.0	0.3	28.6	0.3	22.1	0.2	39.2	0.3

Sector	Budgetary Allocations
Energy	The budget allocated for GESI actions by the ministry and its departments is minimal. Out of the 409 activities in AEPC's annual work plan in 2013/2014, only 55 (13.44%) were GESI-related. ⁶⁷
Water	Monitoring and evaluation in the MoEWRI is carried out by the Programme, Budget and Monitoring Division, which has a separate Monitoring and Evaluation Section. However, it seems only water projects supported by foreign aid or development partners are required to include GESI M&E in the project cycle. Moreover, such practices do not continue beyond the project period. ⁶⁸
Forest	The financial requirements for the activities identified under the REDD+ strategy will come from multiple sources, including the government's budget, the additional readiness grant from FCPF (USD 5 million), Forest Investment Program (USD 28.5 million) and other bilateral and multilateral grants. ⁶⁹ The annual budget for gender-focused programmes under forestry is inadequate.
Agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD) GESI Section is responsible implementing a GESI-responsive budget. There is no specific budget and time allocation. ⁷⁰



Teacher and students at a school in Faridpur, Bangladesh.

Credit: Shailendra Yashwant

Bangladesh is a pioneer in the adoption of international multilateral agreements related to gender in climate change and environmental protection.⁷¹ The Government of Bangladesh has issued and implemented multiple climate change mitigation and adaptation policies and programmes.⁷² However, despite robust national policy frameworks and significant progress, gaps seem to have remained in addressing the link between the impacts of climate change and gender inequality. Bangladesh has strong stand-alone policies in both climate change and gender equality. Its government has made efforts to mainstream gender equality into climate actions through the Bangladesh Climate Change and Gender Action Plan, 2013 (BCCGAP). Bangladesh has also adopted a unique approach to integrate its NDC and NAP under a joint governance structure, connecting with key national processes such as the Five-Year Plan and the implementation of the SDGs, and with strategic documents like the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP). While these initiatives provide an enabling environment for NDC implementation, there remains a gap with regards to the interlinking of gender equality and climate change.⁷³



4.1. Existing climate policies

General policy documents		
Gender-blind/neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender-transformative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Sustainable Development Strategy (2010) NAPA, 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), 2021 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2021) Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2021) National Plan for Disaster Management (2016-2020) Perspective Plan, 2021-2041 BCCGAP (2013) BCCSAP (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023-2050) Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020 Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPPE) (Draft), 2021

- **National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023-2050):⁷⁴**

It considers specific differences between women's vulnerability and children's vulnerability to climate change, as compared to that of men due to various factors, including reduced access to and control over resources. There are specific budget allocations for these as follows:

- Carry out initiatives to improve the well-being of children and youth and reduce the effects of climate stress: 138 billion BDT with 5% private sector investment
- Halt child abuse, early marriage and domestic violence triggered by climate-induced disasters: 7 billion BDT with 7% private sector investment
- Reform local government institutes towards the inclusion of community-based organizations, women, people with disabilities and youth in the implementation of locally led adaptation: 34.3 billion BDT with 2% private sector investment
- Development of e-commerce and engagement of women, people with disabilities and youth for e-commerce-based entrepreneurship: 11 billion BDT with 10% private sector investment

- **Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), 2021:**

The plan briefly exhorts for considering in its planning process and domestic institutional arrangements, engagement with local communities and indigenous peoples, in a gender-responsive manner. However, there is no mention of children.

- **Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020:**

The Eighth Five-Year Plan is ahead of its counterparts, as it has targets on attaining SDG targets and coping with the impact of LDC graduation, and aims for a sustainable development pathway that is resilient to disaster and climate change. It also includes specific gender- and child-inclusion strategies.

- **Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPPE) (Draft), 2021:**

It is based on the Eighth Five-Year Plan and is a response to the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) member



countries and Vulnerable (V20) investment plan. Highlights gender equality through a transformative approach to ensure women and children benefit from climate actions including through women-only training, special financing, and programme opportunities.

- **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2021):**

Translates measures set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Recommends inclusion and recognition of women's existing active role in biodiversity conservation to offer them equal opportunity. Aims to build the capacity of rural women to enable them to engage actively in biodiversity conservation at both household and community levels.

- **Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2021):**

This is a plan with a long-term vision for “achieving safe, climate-resilient and prosperous delta.” Gender reference is minimal in this planning document. It mentions women/ children as “vulnerable” but does not portray them as potential change agents in the process towards building climate- and disaster-resilient development. There are no specific strategies or plans that directly relate to gender equality.

- **National Plan for Disaster Management (2016-2020):**

DRR and emergency management are integrated in the disaster management policies. The plan provides a directive to integrate gender in all its plans and actions. However, gender mainstreaming in DRR remains broad as it lacks specific gender and child references and gender- and child-responsive strategies.

- **National Sustainable Development Strategy (2010):**

Focuses on the constitutional obligations of Bangladesh to have a people-centric approach with a vision for sustainable development. However, no provision for gender-equality or child-rights integration is highlighted.

- **Perspective Plan, 2021-2041:**

Considers both gender and environment as important perspectives for development by addressing those in separate chapters. The PP2041, under its targets for human development, includes child-specific indicators from Infant Mortality Rate, underweight children, school enrolment, etc.

- **National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), 2009:**

Suggests specific strategies for adaptation and recommends 15 projects to strengthen the immediate and urgent adaptation activities to address the current and anticipated adverse effects of climate change, including extreme events. NAPA was the first attempt to guide the coordination and implementation of adaptation initiatives in the country. However, differentiated gender impacts were not recognized.

- **BCCGAP (2013) / BCCSAP (2009):**

Prepared with an aim to ensure the integration of gender equality into climate change-related policies, strategies, and interventions. The BCCGAP integrates gender considerations into four of the six main pillars in the BCCSAP: (i) food security, social protection, and health; (ii) comprehensive disaster management; (iii) infrastructure; and (iv) mitigation and low-carbon development. It is in the process of being updated in light of the revised BCCSAP.⁷⁵



4.2. Sector-specific policy documents

Sector	Gender-blind/ neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender-transformative
Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Forestry Policy, 1994 Social Forestry Rules, 2004 Wildlife Conservation and Security Act, 2012 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016 National Forestry Policy (Draft), 2016 Bangladesh Forestry Master Plan (Draft), 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Energy Policy, 2004 Renewable Energy Policy, 2008 Guidelines for the Solar Power Development Program, 2013 The Guidelines for the Solar Power Development Program (2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangladesh Environment, Forestry and Climate Change Country Investment Plan, 2017 Third NATCOM 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Water Management Plan, 2004 Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2018) Coastal Zone Policy, 2005 Bangladesh Water Act, 2013 National Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Women Development Policy, 2011 National Agriculture Policy, 2018 National Agricultural Extension Policy, 2020



4.2.1 Forestry

Forest conservation is a top priority in combatting climate change for both adaptation and mitigation in Bangladesh, and strategic forest management is effective in climate change adaptation. Increasing emphasis has been placed, over the last two decades, on social forestry, which provides a new dimension of small-scale, participatory forest management, leveraging local understanding and knowledge for the utilization, protection and maintenance of forest ecosystems while ensuring stronger participation of women. Policies related to forestry attempt to increase women's participation. Following are key policies and measures in Bangladesh to achieve gender equality in forestry while addressing climate change.⁷⁶

- **Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020:**
Mentions gender equality in the section on the forestry sector; however, gender-equality or child-rights integration is not visible.
- **BCCSAP, 2009:**
Mentions gender equality; nevertheless, justification of interventions related to the forestry sector is not strong from a gender or child perspective.
- **BCCGAP, 2013:**
Emphasizes the mainstreaming of gender considerations in coastal and social forestry programmes and initiatives through interventions such as expanding the coastal green belt, including mangroves, through women's participation, expands social forestry and plantations on river and coastal embankments through women's involvement, and supports women in establishing nurseries for mangrove saplings.
- **National Forestry Policy, 1994:**
Encourages participation of women in homestead and farm forestry as well as participatory afforestation programmes.
- **Social Forestry Rules, 2004:**
Indicates that the benefits should focus on the poor, particularly women, and mandates the inclusion of women in social forest management committees. They are given priority when selecting the beneficiaries of social forestry.
- **Wildlife Conservation and Security Act, 2012:**
No provision for gender equality or integration is mentioned in the Act although it does observe that climate change will impact on wildlife due to loss of forestry resources.
- **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2016:**
Emphasizes the importance of ensuring women's participation in biodiversity conservation, including roadside plantations, agro-forestry, kitchen gardening, etc.
- **National Forestry Policy (Draft), 2016:**
Mentions women's engagement in some areas, but not in leadership position for mitigation. Commits to establishing a climate financing mechanism that will help the country to take advantage of new and emerging climate financing mechanisms and support from other governmental allocations and other local sources.



- **Bangladesh Forestry Master Plan (Draft), 2017:**

Encourages women's involvement in forestry activities such as homestead afforestation, rural tree farming and participatory forestry. Emphasizes promoting and facilitating alternative off-forest income-generating activities to forest-dependent communities, especially women and children engaged in fuelwood collection, and improving their knowledge of climate change mitigation issues.

Analysing these policies, it is evident that, despite their attempts to integrate gender into climate change policies in forestry, they need to be further updated to increase the direct and indirect involvement of rural women in forest resource dependency. Climate change issues are better addressed in the latest National Forestry Policy since it included a recognition of the emergence of environmental and socioeconomic changes due to climate change and the loss of forests. However, the role and leadership of women in mitigating climate change impacts through forestry are not visible in the policy.

Despite gender integration in these climate change policies, more action-oriented gender-specific activities will be needed to ensure the direct and indirect involvement of women in forest resource management. Most of the policies are gender-sensitive, recognizing women as specific group of beneficiaries. However, the efforts to achieve effective changes will need to identify the root causes arising from social norms, and to better understand the power relationships between men and women and specific budgeting to make them gender-transformative.

4.2.2. Energy

The approaches of gender mainstreaming into renewable energy sector policies in Asia and the Pacific, including Bangladesh, are limited. Several countries have specific green growth or renewable energy policies, roadmaps and strategies, while others include renewable energy within broader energy and power policy documents. Following is a list of energy-related policies in Bangladesh and their respective references to gender equality:⁷⁷

- **Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020:**

Highlights that women's access to energy (power, fuel and green) is to be increased to reduce their drudgery and save time for productive employment. It highlights the need to increase their access to information and ensure their expanded access to renewable energy. Directs that climate change effects and gender needs be considered in all infrastructure planning (transport, energy, water, sanitation, market, and service centres).

- **NDC, 2021:**

No provision for gender equality or integration is mentioned in terms of the renewable energy sector. NDC, 2015 sets out several mitigation actions that will help limit the country's GHG emissions. It highlights several mitigation programmes from the BCCSAP, including improved energy efficiency in production and consumption, to ensure secured energy and low-carbon development in the economy as well as the development of renewables to lower GHG emissions and ensure energy security.

- **BCCSAP, 2009:**

Highlights gender integration in the promotion of renewable energy. Recognizes the male dominance in planning, decision-making, and implementation in the energy sector. Recognizes women's lack of access to



modern energy or technology despite their comparatively higher motivations to change behaviour to save energy and buy low carbon products.

- **BCCGAP, 2013:**

Identified two action plans to promote women's integration into mitigation and low carbon development efforts through ensuring that: 1) gender considerations are addressed in the process of reviewing energy and technology policies; and 2) gender-responsive programmes are developed to reduce GHG emissions at the household level while ensuring women's access to energy and power technologies.

- **Bangladesh Environment, Forestry and Climate Change Country Investment Plan, 2017:**

Highlights gender equality as a major issue, includes gender as a specific programme, and emphasizes gender mainstreaming in its other programmes by strengthening rural women's capacity to better engage in environmental management by raising awareness of their rights and providing training in leadership. Also promotes the provision of cleaner technologies and renewable energy that can create jobs while reducing GHG emissions.

- **Third National Communication of Bangladesh Submitted to UNFCCC, 2008:**

Highlights the country's opportunities in several areas, including: power generation, transmission, and distribution; transport by road, rail, water and aviation; energy-intensive industries; and renewable energy.

Most, if not all, policies in the renewable energy sector in Bangladesh can be considered gender-blind. This is because of the focus within energy policies on economic performance and production, as well as the technical and male-dominated nature of the energy sector. Mitigation actions, including the transition to clean energy, are primarily focused on technology.

4.2.3. Water

There are several laws, policies, and plans at the national level to deal with water resource management in Bangladesh. The following list illustrates the policies and measures to achieve gender equality in water resource management while addressing climate change:⁷⁸

- **Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2018):**

Although women's engagement is mentioned in the Plan in terms of the role and leadership of women in water resource management, the main strategy document and abridged version of the paper do not pay significant attention to gender aspects.

- **BCCSAP, 2009:**

Although gender equality is mentioned, the justification of interventions related to water resource management is not strong from a gender equality perspective. The Plan showcases the linkages between climate change and gender that have been brought into focus. However, the link between water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), climate change, and gender is still not explored adequately.

- **BCCGAP, 2013:**

Emphasizes on ensuring women's involvement in efficient water management through interventions such as consolidating women's associations to create a movement for keeping water bodies (rivers, canals, lakes



and wetlands) usable. Highlights the water sector as one of the most neglected sectors in analysing the gender–climate change linkages.

- **National Water Management Plan, 2004:**

Recognizes the need to develop water resource management knowledge and capacity-building, including gender equality. The plan also recognized the knowledge gap regarding the implications of climate change.

- **Coastal Zone Policy, 2005:**

Women's development and gender equality are integrated by proposing a gender-sensitive and participatory approach, prioritizing women's education, training and employment, and providing special support for broadening their coping capacity.

- **Bangladesh Water Act, 2013:**

Incorporates the participation of women in the various infrastructure maintenance-related activities of the water sector and provides specific guidelines for the inclusion of women to make up one-third of water-management groups. Creates provision to include two female members in the executive committee of water-management groups out of six members to ensure adequate maintenance of earthwork in various projects.

- **National Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2014:**

Strategy highlights full involvement of women and men in the water supply and sanitation sector and proposes interventions such as the involvement of women in planning, implementing and operating and maintenance of WASH services, as well as increasing women's representation in community-based organizations.

There is a considerable gap in implementing policy actions on the ground, particularly with regard to addressing the differentiated needs of men and women. While the gendered context in this sector is a multidimensional phenomenon, large gaps have been observed in women's empowerment and decision-making at the household level. However, the Eighth Five-Year Plan and newer policies show an intent to empower women for a transformative change but there is need for more rigorous actions on ground and support of enabling resources, both human and financial, to translate the policy into actions.

4.2.4. Agriculture

Bangladesh has several policies and strategies to promote gender equality in agricultural development addressing climate change. The government recognizes the importance of having both women and men equally involved in adapting to climate change and other environmental challenges. However, despite affirmation from the government of its intention to mainstream gender in national and climate change policies, such efforts remain inconsistently applied.

- **Eighth Five-Year Plan, 2020-2025:**

Acknowledges the role of women in the food and nutrition security of Bangladesh and focuses on removing barriers to productive participation of women in agricultural employment by addressing the following issues, amongst others:



- 1) Socioeconomic constraints that women endure in a male-dominated society;
 - 2) Wage differences between males and females in agriculture;
 - 3) Women's barriers to, and limited access to, institutions and facilities including extension and credit services and linkages with other services such as health and nutrition;
 - 4) Women's barriers to, and limited access to, markets and high value-added agriculture..
- **National Women Development Policy, 2011:**
Highlights the inclusive growth and participation of women in all spheres of national life and ensure that farming women have equal opportunity in obtaining agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, seed, farmer's card and credit facilities and puts special emphasis on the health of women alongside food during post-disaster emergencies.
 - **National Agriculture Policy, 2018:**
Recognizes the direct and indirect contribution of women in different stages of production. The main strategies towards enhanced women's participation in the agriculture sector are envisaged as the following:
 - 1) Recognition of women's labour and participation to ensure their social dignity and safety
 - 2) Elimination of the wage differential between men and women labour in agriculture and ensuring equal pay for men and women
 - 3) Homestead gardening and promotion of cash payment
 - 4) Agricultural education and research
 - 5) Encouraging women to participate in the formal economic sphere by providing support to their involvement in agricultural product-based small and cottage industries
 - 6) Training on families' nutritional security, agricultural production, storage, marketing, agricultural businesses and industries to build enhanced capacities
 - 7) Participation of women in food security-related planning, decision-making, supervision and distribution activities
 - 8) Adoption of specific extension activities for women farmers.
 - **National Agricultural Extension Policy, 2020:**
Addresses the conditions that hinder the recognition and effective participation of women in decision-making spaces by engendering those spaces, forming women farmer groups, encouraging women-led SME development in agri-business, developing their confidence in raising their voice through grassroots-level women farmers' organizations, and creating gender awareness in both women and male farmers. The Policy also puts emphasis on homestead gardening as a means to women's economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, and food and nutritional security.

4.3. Budget Allocations

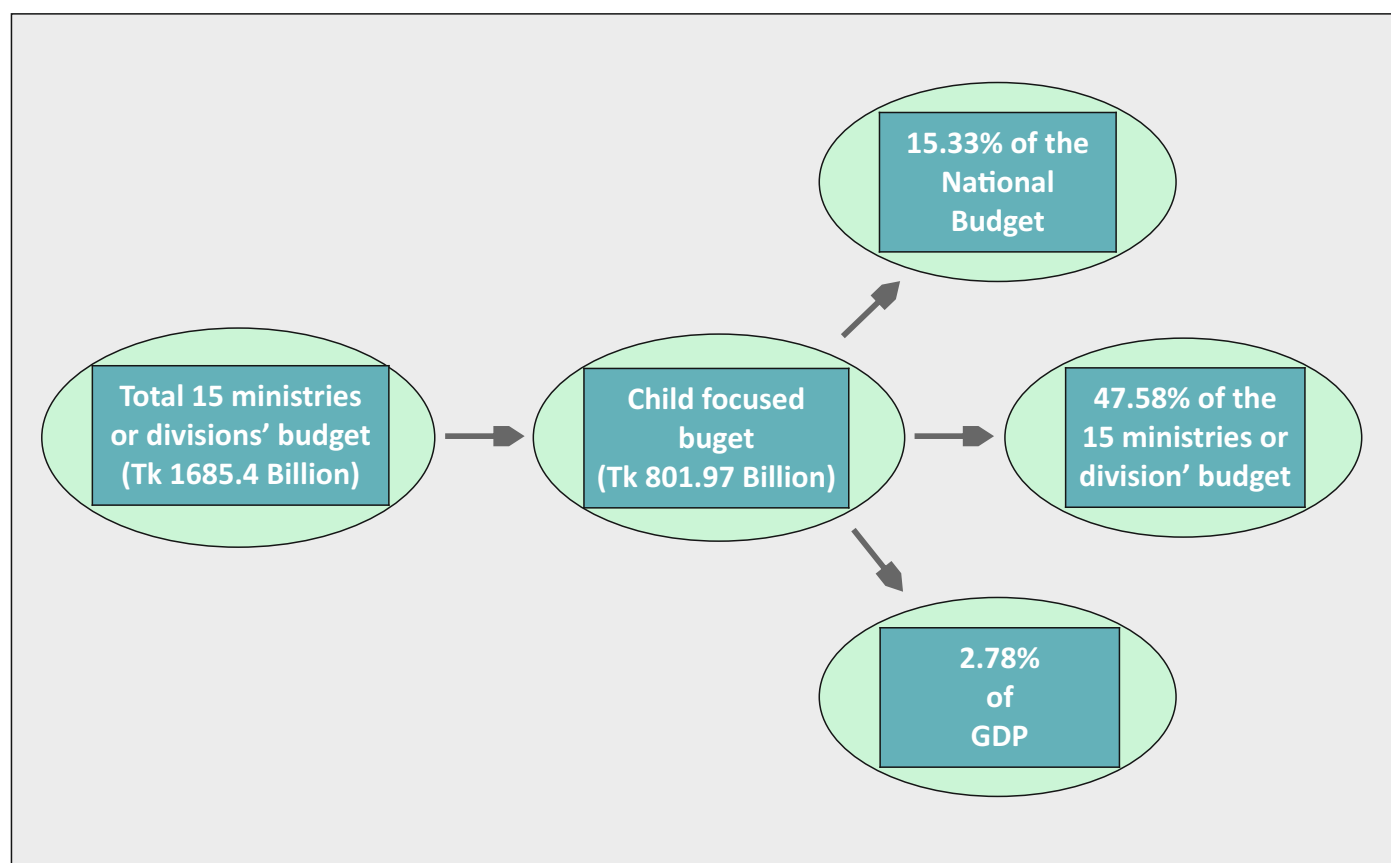
The Country Investment Plan for Environment, Forestry and Climate Change (CIP-EFCC) for Bangladesh is a cross-sectoral and whole-of-government investment framework for mobilizing and delivering effective, coordinated, sustainable and country-driven investment programmes in environmental protection; sustainable forest management; climate-change adaptation and mitigation; and environmental governance.



For effective implementation of CIP, it has been estimated that a total of USD 9554 million is required during 2016-21 meaning that USD 1911 million is required annually.⁷⁹ Under the Pillar 4: Environmental governance, gender, and human and institutional capacity-development, for improved stakeholder participation and gender equality in Environment, Forestry and Climate Change sectors, the following has been the indicative budget:

	Required 2016-21	Allocation in FY2021-22	Allocation in FY2020-21	Allocation in FY2019-20	Allocation in FY2018-19
Improved stakeholder participation and gender equity in EFCC sectors	340.7	362.1	338.7	333	320.4

In addition to law on National Plan of Action for Implementing the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010; elimination of child marriages through enforcement of Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017, an important development under the Eighth Five-Year Plan was the consolidation of the Child Budget under aegis of Ministry of Finance. Participations of various ministries in the Child Budget have increased during the Seventh Plan. As of FY 2019-20, as many as 15 ministries are involved in the implementation of the Child Budget.



Child-focused Budget in 2019–20

Source: MoF



There are some specialized ministries that oversee and provide specific services to support women's empowerment, social and child inclusion and social and child protection. These are: Ministry of Social Welfare; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Ministry of Food, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, and Ministry of Liberation Affairs). The financial allocation for these ministries is as follows: ⁸⁰

Eighth Plan ADP Allocations for Social Protection (USD Million)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Ministry of Social Welfare	26.3	33.1	38.0	43.8	52.6
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	39.9	49.7	57.5	66.2	79.9
Ministry of Food	59.4	73.0	84.7	98.4	118.8
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	547.3	629.1	673.0	785.9	870.7
Ministry of Liberation Affairs	32.1	39.0	44.8	52.6	63.3
Total	868.7	823.9	897.9	1047.9	1185.2



Sri Lankan mother and child
Credit: Shailendra Yashwant

In Sri Lanka, the Women's Charter adopted in 1993 is a key policy document that outlines rights in a range of areas and the commitments of the state to secure those rights. In addition to political and civil rights, the charter addresses rights to education and training, economic activity and benefits, health care and nutrition, protection from social discrimination, and protection against gender-based violence.⁸¹ A National Plan of Action to give effect to Women's Charter was developed with the participation of government and non-government actors. This plan has been updated over the years but has never been formally approved and posted as an official document. Another rights document is the National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, 2011-2016.⁸²

While the Government of Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), several government commitments related to the most important instruments of CEDAW have not been implemented such as there is no Women's Rights Bill, and the Women's Charter, adopted in 1993, has yet to be incorporated into legislation.⁸³

According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Sri Lanka possesses a greater degree of gender equality compared to other South Asian countries. Sri Lanka's Human Development Index (HDI) in 2021 was 0.782. In the same year the country's Gender Inequality Index (GII) – which measures gender inequality based on reproductive health, empowerment (political participation and education), and labour market participation –



was 0.383, this includes a female HDI value for Sri Lanka of 0.755 in contrast with 0.795 for males. The GII value of 0.383, ranks it 92 out of 170 countries in 2021. This score denotes that inequality between women and men across those three broad social aspects is relatively low in Sri Lanka.

5.1. Existing climate policies

General policy documents		
Gender-blind/neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender-transformative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Climate Policy, 2012 Technology Needs Assessment and Technology Action Plans for Climate Change Mitigation (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second NDC, 2021 National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Sri Lanka (2011 to 2016) 2010 National Adaptation Plan (2016) National Action Plan for Haritha Lanka (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None

- National Climate Policy, 2011:**
No mention of 'gender', 'child' and 'women' or any terms related to social inclusion in the document.
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Sri Lanka (2011 to 2016) 2010:**
Interventions and indicators target women and different vulnerable groups such as farmers, fisherfolk, and the poor.
- National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change Impacts in Sri Lanka (2016- 2025) 2016:**
Identifies nine priority sectors and suggested priority actions in these sectors. Presents action areas under the cross-cutting needs of adaptation. However, no clear policy measures or actions have been found on gender equality and social inclusion in any of the sectors and cross-cutting areas.
- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 2021:**
Mainstreaming gender and social inclusion (women, young children, people living with disabilities and elderly) into adaptation priorities is considered as an important strategy. Gender-responsive strategies are planned to consider the differentiated needs of men, women and children within the sectors and to explore ways to improve access to knowledge, technology, and finance in a way that creates enabling conditions for adaptation.
- National Action Plan for Haritha Lanka (2009):**
Includes only gender reference specifically suggested more participation.



5.2. Sector-specific policy documents

Sector	Gender-blind/ neutral	Gender-sensitive/responsive	Gender-transformative
Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Forestry Policy (1995) Forestry Sector Master Plan (1995-2020) National REDD+ Strategy (2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Energy Policy and Strategies of Sri Lanka (2008) Sri Lanka Energy Sector Development Plan for a Knowledge-Based Economy, 2015-2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Energy Policy and Strategies in Sri Lanka 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Water Resource Policy and Institutional Arrangements (2000) National Drinking Water Policy 2001 National Policy for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (2001), Urban Water Supply Policy (2002) The Water Services Reform Bill (2003). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Livestock Breeding Policy for Sri Lanka (2010) Public Investment Programme 2017-2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Production National Programme 2016-2018 National Agriculture Policy 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overarching Agricultural Policy (2020–2025) 2019

5.2.1. Forestry

In Sri Lanka, the first Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP) was introduced in the 1980s but was criticized for failing to get all key stakeholders involved in the planning process. To address this shortcoming, the government conducted an environmental review in 1989 and based on the recommendations of the review, developed the current Forestry Sector Master Plan (1995-2020).⁸⁴



- **National Forestry Policy (1995):**

Enhances the contribution of forestry to the welfare of the rural population, while balancing economic development. This policy recognizes the traditional rights, cultural values, and religious beliefs of those living in and around forest areas without acknowledging women as stakeholders with different rights, interests, priorities, and capabilities

- **Forestry Sector Master Plan (1995-2020):**

Emphasizes the empowerment of people and rural communities to manage and protect forests for multiple uses, but gender differences in rights and responsibilities and a benefit sharing mechanism are not stated. Furthermore, there is no gender strategy in the Forest Department to facilitate the inclusion of women's concerns in forestry plans and interventions.

- **National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan, 2017:**

Considers capacity-building on the importance of and how to mainstream gender among the REDD+ implementers, coordination bodies, and stakeholder forums/networks.

- The assessment suggests that they are less progressive in integrating gender or child perspectives in their forest policies which are considered gender-/child-blind. In the absence of a gender- and child-sensitive forest policy and strategy, mainstreaming gender and child rights into its new Forest Master Plan is imperative.

5.2.2. Energy

In 2019, the dominance of petroleum continued in the primary energy supply, with a share of 44%, followed by biomass with a share of 33%. Coal accounts for 12%, while hydro power accounts for 7% and new renewable energy accounts for 4%. The total amount of electricity generated during 2019 was 16,762.3 GWh out of which 66% was from thermal plants. The NRE generation was 9% in 2019.⁸⁵ The contribution from micro power producers (solar rooftop systems) was 2%, while the three schemes, net-metering, net plus and net accounting, cumulatively generated approximately 397.8 GWh in 2019. The relatively high share of renewable energy (RE) in Sri Lanka's primary energy portfolio is bound to progressively reduce because the major portion of hydropower potential has already been tapped. With the shifting of household energy use toward fossil fuels, the growing demand for all forms of energy is increasingly being met with fossil fuels.

- **National Energy Policy and Strategies in Sri Lanka 2019:**

Aims to provide affordable energy services to support socially equitable development of the citizens. It refers to gender and social inclusion when it states that new productive uses for electricity in agriculture, rural and primary industries will be encouraged with an emphasis on 'empowerment of women and youth' and 'energy efficiency and conservation' as a central theme will be launched to empower women

- **Energy Empowered Nation: Sri Lanka Energy Sector Development Plan for a Knowledge-Based Economy, 2015-2025:**

Makes no mention of gender or children.⁸⁶

- **National Energy Policy and Strategies of Sri Lanka (2008):**

Makes no mention of gender or children⁸⁷



The energy sector policy documents do not make specific mention of gender in relation to energy needs or access, or to cooking fuels and technologies. However, the policies put emphasis on universal access to affordable and reliable energy, which provides a conducive context for consideration of gender-related issues and women's needs. However, they may still be considered gender-blind.

5.2.3. Water

Many national policy documents address water and gender concerns, but only the key national initiatives that drive other policies in terms of GESI and child-rights integration have a larger impact on the development of water resources at a national scale. There have been significant efforts carried out to mainstream gender within the water sector. However, there have been several gaps in the policy provisions and implementation on the ground.

- **National Water Resource Policy and Institutional Arrangements (2000):**
Based on the principles of IWRM, it ignores the historical and cultural aspects of water resources and primarily focuses on safeguarding the private sector's investments in water resources.
- **National Drinking Water Policy 2001:**
Ensures access to drinking water as a human right. It does not mandate the participation of women or youth/children in local institutions.
- **Participatory Irrigation Management Policy (1988):**
Encourages farmers, water users' associations (WUAs) to handle the operations, and maintenance of irrigation systems. Although there have been significant institutional reforms to establish the Water Resources Council (WRC) and Water Resources Secretariat (WRS) for effective management of water resources, these reforms have done little to promote gender equality in water resource management.
- There are other policies on sanitation that broadly mention gender, but do not mention children – **National Policy for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (2001), Urban Water Supply Policy (2002), and the Water Services Reform Bill (2003).**

5.2.4. Agriculture

The national agricultural policies recognise the vital role of women in the sector; however, most of the policies are silent about the persistent pay gap between men and women in the agricultural sector throughout the region. The reviewed policies are mostly silent about the issue of women's lack of, or limited access to and control over, resources necessary for agriculture, except for the Overarching Agricultural Policy (2020–2025) of Sri Lanka. Even the policies that recognise this do not have any provisions to address the issue.⁸⁸

- **National Agriculture Policy 2021:**
The Policy seeks to empower women and youth through technical capacity-building and mechanisation and modernisation of the agriculture sector.
- **Overarching Agricultural Policy (2020–2025) 2019:**
The document acknowledges high engagement of women and youth in the agriculture sector and gender inequalities in access to and control over land. It prioritises engaging women in the commercial activities in the sector.



- **Food Production National Programme 2016-2018:**

Gender has not been mainstreamed into the plan. Only one section of the Programme deals with increasing participation of youth and women, mainly in the area of small-scale entrepreneurship and home gardening. Women are not viewed as major players in food production.

- **Overarching Agricultural Policy (2020–2025) 2019:**

The document acknowledges high engagement of women and youth in the agriculture sector and gender inequalities in access to and control over land. It prioritises engaging women in the commercial activities in the sector.

- **National Livestock Breeding Policy for Sri Lanka (2010):**

Outlines the national breeding policy guidelines for cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs both on private and the state farms. Despite multiple experiences showing that there is a great potential to involve women in the livestock sector, the policy makes no reference to gender mainstreaming and does not include any actions that specifically target women.

- **Public Investment Programme 2017-2020:**

This policy document, which is the only one that integrates all ministries whose work is connected to agriculture (Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and Rural Economy, Plantations Industries, Primary Industries and Lands and Parliamentary Reforms) has two main objectives: supporting food security by finding potential substitutes for imports; and promoting the export of agricultural products and increasing the country's competitiveness in international markets. There are no references to women/ gender or children in the chapter dedicated to agriculture and no sex-disaggregated data is presented.

5.3. Budget Allocations

Under the National Adaptation Plan for Climate Change in Sri Lanka (2016) there is a time plan and budget for food security, water resources, coastal and marine sector, health, human settlements and infrastructure, ecosystems and biodiversity, tourism and recreation, export agriculture sector, industry, energy and transportation, cross-cutting needs of adaptation. However, none of them consider or include any child rights or GESI component. This is nearly similar across all national climate change policies.



Woman and young boy selling
flowers in the market.
Credit: Rohan Dewangen, Pexels

The role of women and youth/children as agents of change and the need for more inclusive governance is required. This can be improved by better integrating women, youth/children and marginalized groups into decision-making at all levels. The IPCC Assessment Report 6 (AR6) notes indigenous women as being key to designing climate-resilient policies. In order to preserve and apply traditional and indigenous knowledge, such groups must be empowered to share their knowledge through culturally respectful and inclusive approaches. The IPCC AR6 also recommends that climate-resilient policies and sustainability initiatives be aimed at achieving equality and inclusivity in governance bodies and actions.

It is imperative that gender, social and children's issues and concerns are integrated into all climate actions and policy documents – from policy design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This is crucial for building resilience, ensuring sustainable natural resource management, and achieving gender equality and social inclusion. Extensive review of the policies, programmes, strategies, and initiatives has revealed that while many of these policies and programmes across the three countries have integrated child- and GESI-related measures to some extent, sufficient steps have not been taken to effectively implement them. Specific budgets have not yet been aligned so that synergies are developed between climate-resilient policies that have a positive impact on social equity, including gender equality.



6.1. Recommendations

Based on these findings, key recommendations for all three countries – Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – to improve integration of child-rights perspectives and gender concerns in climate change programmes are as follows:

- **Participation and inclusion:**

Increased participation in local associations, decision-making and policy formation can provide an enhanced social status giving women and children access to governmental and non-governmental initiatives, though barriers such as difficulty in securing land ownership may still prevent women from fully benefiting from them. It is important that policies across the three countries, ensure that voices of women and children and their leadership are part of the decisions that impact their countries and communities when it comes to climate change, including during the development of national climate adaptation plans. This could also be done through including women and girls acting as change agents and stewards of nature where they take on a more proactive role at the community level to spread awareness on climate change and motivate/mobilize communities to restore and protect fragile ecosystems.

- **Policy review and updation:**

Conducting regular evaluations of gender-, child-responsive and climate policy implementation, this should also consider gender- and child-responsive budgeting and audits of climate policies. These will help identify best practices, comprehend gaps and failures, and extract lessons learned to increase the impact of climate policies and action for women, children and socially marginalised communities, refine national policy, and ensure greater sharing at the regional level. It is important to develop and invest in newer climate-sensitive policies that consider and prioritise girls and young women, especially indigenous girls, girls with disabilities, and those living in rural areas.

- **Awareness and capacity-building:**

Investing in women and child awareness-generation and capacity-building programmes across sectors will help empower them to be active players in decision-making at all levels. It is also important to include training and awareness among government officials involved in the water, forestry, energy and agriculture sector to understand the implications of climate change for children and women (i.e. how climate change impinges on the rights of children across the spectrum, i.e., child survival, child development, child protection, child participation).

- **Information-sharing, knowledge capture and dissemination:**

Making information more accessible to women and youth can increase their resilience and adaptive capacity in many contexts. For example, if information on weather patterns were disseminated more equally among potential beneficiaries it would benefit households in their daily activities, with positive implications for food and water security. As such, more inclusive information systems would reduce disaster risk for all individuals while empowering women to take decisive action, thus benefiting social equality generally. Knowledge-sharing can also reinforce cooperation among individuals. With women and some marginalized groups being custodians of traditional and indigenous knowledge, initiatives aimed at better integrating these groups into decision-making would lead to the creation of more effective climate-resilient policies. Putting these groups at the heart of knowledge-sharing and empowerment initiatives would benefit them by enabling their perspectives to be integrated into climate decision-making, while also benefiting children by giving them access to the knowledge.



- **National gender, child and climate focal points:**

Implementing a framework for sharing good practices and information via national gender-, child-responsive and climate change focal points would promote implementation of coherent analyses at different levels while allowing national governments to gain more accurate understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and children and the role of women and children as agents of change in specific contexts. In turn, this could facilitate inclusive climate-resilient policymaking and promote creation of effective policies and opportunities for women, as noted in the AR6.

- **Advocacy:**

Reducing the socioeconomic vulnerability of children is critical to enhancing their resilience to climate change. Hence, interventions to ensure basic needs such as water, sanitation, food and nutrition, access to education, healthcare, and social security measures, as well as child-centric disaster preparedness, response and recovery need to be undertaken under the existing or newer policies across South Asia. These require advocacy to improve existing and newer policies to include:

- strengthening the implementation of existing childcare, GESI and welfare schemes
- leveraging youth/children and female frontline workers towards building climate resilience
- child- and gender-sensitive alignment of national policies and strategies, and plans for disasters and resilience.
- Allocation of adequate budget for translation of policy into action on ground for mainstreaming voices of children, youth, women and the marginalised communities in the climate action programming.

- **Child-centric policy and adaptation:**

Setting up of child-centric relief and rehabilitation spaces needs to be proposed as an adaptation strategy across all sectors to specifically address the issues faced by children in the three countries due to the impact of climate change. One key intervention could be as follows:

- Establishing and managing child-friendly spaces (CFSs): Provide children with protected environments in which they participate in organized activities to play, socialize, learn, and express themselves as they rebuild their lives. These interventions are to protect children from physical harm and psychosocial distress and to help them continue learning and developing both during and immediately after an emergency.

- **Undertaking a child- and gender-centred approach in climate programming:**

This would mean advocating for gender dis-segregated data to understand the differential risk patterns for women and children during a climate catastrophe and further working with children and women's collectives to understand their vulnerabilities and develop informed solutions. In designing DRM and adaptation policies, South Asian decision-makers must provide appropriate spaces for girls and boys to contribute to the identification of risks and the development of action plans for a climate-compatible future that takes the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable children into account.

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