

Gender Issues and Impact of Climate Change in India

Presented

at

IDRC Davos, 2008

by

Lipi Mukhopadhyay

Indian Institute of Public Administration

I.P. Estate, Ring Road,

New Delhi-110002.

E-mail: lipiiipa@yahoo.com

BACKGROUND

- In the face of extreme weather conditions, more intense and frequent extreme temperature, rainfall, cyclone, drought and desertification the attention of the governance is drawn worldwide recognizing the need to adapt to climate change vulnerability.
- It is observed in India the surface temperature has increased by 0.3° C in the last 100 years.

▪There is a growing concern about the changing pattern of some of the diseases across India that are directly influenced by the variable climate. For example, Malaria, a vector-borne disease.

▪The key risks from climate change would also increase the risk of unexpected incidence of drought and dzud.

▪It is estimated that in South Asia alone, 2.5 billion people will be affected with water scarcity by the year 2050.

- **The implications of all these are likely to affect two third of Indian population who depend on agriculture.**
- **Gender specific roles and responsibilities set foundation for environmental conservation.**
- **Women have intimate relationship with nature and natural resources due to their role and responsibility as caregivers.**



➤ **Therefore, women and men experience different vulnerabilities and cope with natural disasters differently. Frequency of natural disasters and their magnitude bring different implications for men and women.**

➤ **This paper examines the impact of climate change on crop vulnerability, Women's health and consumption pattern in the States of Maharashtra and Rajasthan.**

The Case Study:

In the light of the above mentioned features of climate variations in Western and Central regions two worst affected areas are taken for survey research, **Jhalawar** of Rajasthan and **Vidarbha** of Maharashtra. Jhalwar district is located in a semi-arid areas that receives an average of 943 mm of rainfall annually. This has the lowest adaptive capacity to protect against the climate variability.

The fallacy of raising crop yields

- **Farmers are increasingly becoming a victim of the new emerging phenomenon of Produce and perish.**
- **Not only crop failures, even bumper harvests have begun to push farmers into a vicious cycle of mounting debt and distress.**
- **Farmers have been misled to believe that diversification from staple grains to cash crops is the only way out to escape an uncertain future.**

▪Increase crop productivity to remain competitive in an era of free trade.

Rationale

▪India ranks among the top five countries having the largest area under crops such as wheat, rice, cotton, Sugarcane and vegetables.

▪In terms of productivity it is one of the lowest in the world.

▪ There are no authentic figures on the exact number of farmers suicides in Vidarbha, but the Maharashtra government accepts a figure of 1920 between January 1, 2001 to August 19, 2006.



▪Vidarbha, the worst affected region of Maharashtra for drought. About 70 per cent population is depended on agriculture.

▪Due to climatic variation crop yields are severely affected and farmers are committing suicide, **one in every eight hours.**

▪It is also reported that suicide of farmers is caused by changing rainfall and its unpredictability.

▪ Among the farmers who committed suicide in the past year, more than 50% were between 20 and 45 years of age (their most productive years), according to a study Amravati and Yavatmal.

▪ Area under Bt cotton has risen from a mere 0.4% in 2002-03 to 15% in 2005-06 in Vidarbha, according to the official statistics.

▪ Only 3% cotton land falls under assured irrigation.

Major Findings:

- ❖ In Jhalawar crop yields have been substantially reduced. About 94 per cent farmers have small or marginal landholdings lack irrigation facility.**
- ❖ Landless farmers resort to seasonal migration.**
- ❖ In Vidarbha disruption in regular rainfall cycle since 2001 reported along with long dry spells and deficient monsoon.**

❖ **There is single crop a year.**

❖ **Cotton being the dominant crop.**

❖ **Ninety three percent of land was rainfed and 98 per cent of the farmers who committed suicide had no irrigation facility. Health problems are reported as additional burden to poverty.**

Gender specific vulnerability to climate change:

- **Climate change affects men and women differently.**
- **Increase male migration due to resource shortages and unemployment increased work for women.**

➤ **Women gather fuelwood and collect water in addition to other household responsibility.**

➤ **Managing livestock and food has been extremely difficult due to water scarcity, lack of grazing pasture.**

➤ **Women are responsible for 65-70 per cent of household food production.**



Traditional food sources may become more unpredictable and scarce due to climate change.

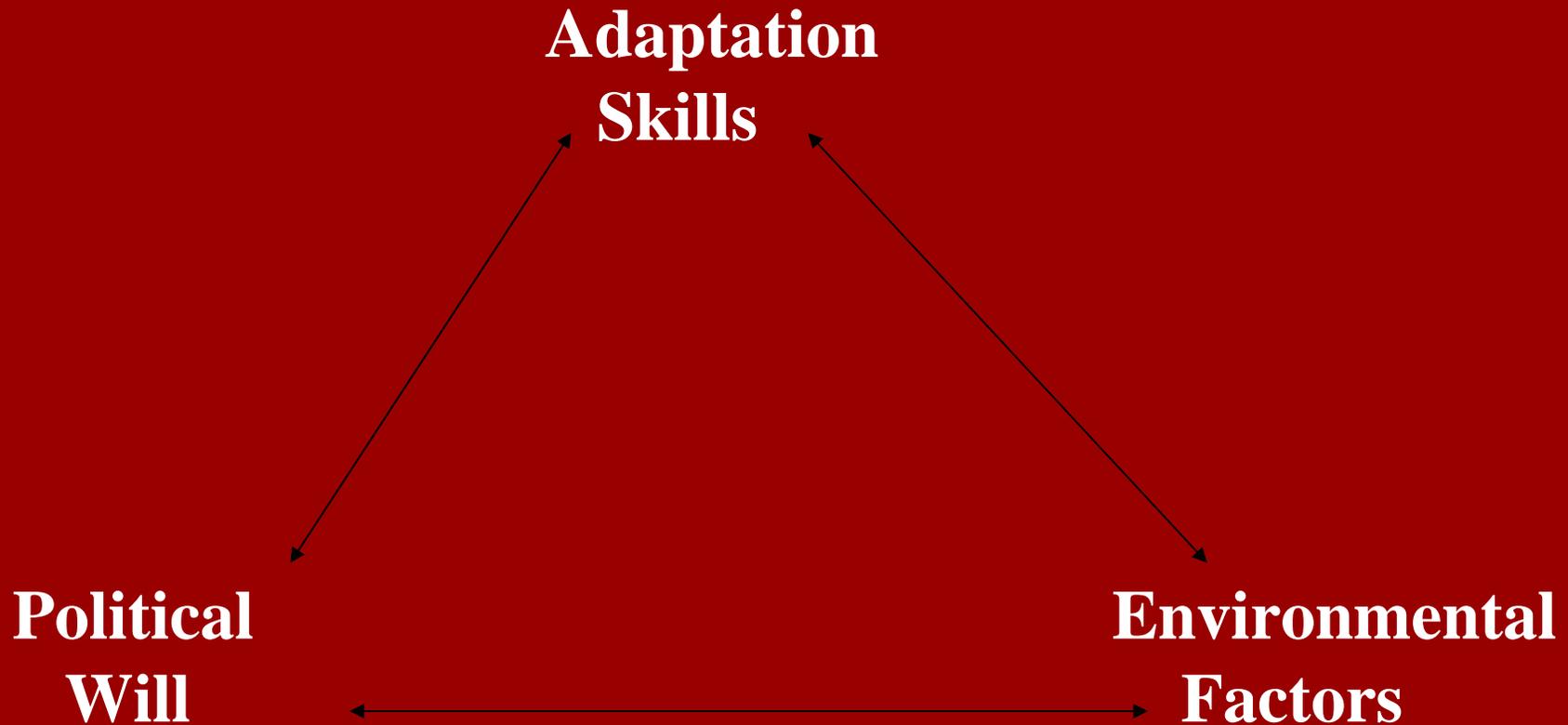
Climate change has affected human health in a variety of ways:

- ❖ Increased spread of vector-and water-borne diseases;**
- ❖ Reduced drinking water availability.**
- ❖ Food insecurity due to reduced agricultural production;**
and
- ❖ Increased cases of heat stress and respiratory illness.**
- ❖ Lack of access to medical care than men.**

❖ As primary caregivers women may see their responsibilities increase as family members suffer increased illness.

❖ Various forces that influence climate change is interlinked. Any coping interdependent nature between individual behaviour, political will for policy implementation and the environmental factors.

This is describe in figure – 1.



**Figure : 1 Model illustrating relations between determinants
In triadic reciprocal casuation.**

Conclusion:

➤ **The impacts of climate change is felt by all across the world. There is a need to take action towards mitigation fostering conservation of natural resources. Green house gas and consumption of fossil emerge need to be reduced through cooperation and investment of alternative measures whichever may be the appropriate.**

➤ **Degraded soil and poisonous gas emissions do not spare anybody from their impacts, so an integrated efforts should be made to handle this chaos before it engulfs the world with multiple hazards.**



Thank you