



Seminar on CLIMATE CHANGE, GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen, PhD
Pro-VC, Open University

Programme Schedule

<u>Time</u>	<u>Events</u>
10.45-10.55 hrs	Arrival of the guests
10.55-11.00 hrs	Opening by Moderator: A Short Bio of the Keynote Speaker and about the topic
11.00-11.45 hrs	Paper Presentation by the Keynote Speaker
11.45-12.00 hrs	Discussion by the Panel Member-1
12.00-12.15 hrs	Discussion by the Panel Member-2
12.15-12.45 hrs	Question Answer Session (Open Forum)
12.45-12.50 hrs	Closing Remarks
12.50-12.55 hrs	Handing over Crest to the Keynote Speaker
12.55-13.00 hrs	Photo Session
13.00 hrs	Programme End


Panel Speakers


Al Jamal Mustafa Shindaini
Associate Professor
Department of Sociology

Saiful Islam
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology

Organized by

Department of Sociology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)
Bangladesh University of Professionals

 11:00 am

 22 April, 2024

 Bijoy Auditorium



Seminar on

Climate Change, Gender and Environmental Justice: Bangladesh Perspective

Introduction:

Humanity stands at a critical juncture. It has entered a new geologic era called the “Anthropocene,” in which unbridled economic activity threatens irreversible ecological harm. In the name of “development,” human beings have caused massive ecosystem destruction and species extinction, disrupted the planet’s climate, and generated vast amounts of toxic waste – exceeding the assimilative and regenerative capacity of nature. Global statistics are sobering. The world has entered a sixth wave of mass extinction where, according to some estimates, 27,000 species vanish every year (Hunter & Salzman, 2015) and about one million species currently face extinction. Climate change is accelerating more rapidly than scientists predicted, leading the World Meteorological Organization to warn that lack of aggressive mitigation measures will likely result in a catastrophic temperature increase of 3–5 degrees Celsius (5.4–9.0 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels by 2100. (Hunter & Salzman, 2015).

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, disasters and slow onset events. It faces severe adverse weather conditions such as catastrophic cyclones, flash floods, increased salinity and unprecedented heatwaves. Despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, of about 0.4%, Bangladesh is disproportionately experiencing the negative impacts of climate change. The prime reasons are its geographical location, population density and dependence on agriculture. Recognising the negative impacts of climate change, the Government of Bangladesh has issued and implemented climate change mitigation and adaptation policies and programmes. However, despite robust national policy frameworks and significant progress, gaps remain in addressing the increasingly clear link between the impacts of climate change and gender inequality. Practitioners are also challenged in assessing climate vulnerabilities in a gender-responsive manner due to the absence of disaggregated data, analysis and evidence regarding gender-related impacts. It is important to recognize that not every person or every state contributed equally to environmental destruction. Sadly, those who contributed the least to environmental degradation are disproportionately exposed to the resulting harm. In affluent and impoverished countries alike, it is the poor and vulnerable who pay the price for the consumption-driven lifestyles of national and global elites. This imbalance between those who benefit from economic activity and those who bear its adverse social and environmental impacts is one of the hallmarks of environmental injustice.

Climate Change, Gender and Intersectionality:

While climate change is often seen as an ‘Anthropocene’ or human species-induced problem, climate change affects different people differently, and certain humans are more responsible than others for causing it; some even benefit from climate change. Furthermore, some people have much greater ability to influence climate change policies than others do.

Gender inequalities, along with other social and economic inequalities, intensify vulnerability to climate change impacts. A growing body of evidence on gender and climate change identifies negative impacts across a range of economic and social outcomes for women, girls and gender-diverse people because of underlying gender inequalities and the failure to take gender issues into account in environmental policymaking. In the past 20 years, the number of climate-related disasters has nearly doubled. Women and girls are more vulnerable to disasters, in terms of both the immediate impacts as well as their capacity to recover in the aftermath, because of gender inequalities. For example, women’s lower levels of literacy and use of technology hamper their access to information about what to do in the event of a disaster; and poor design of emergency shelters can prevent women and girls from using them when weather disasters strike.

Gendered Impacts of Climate Change in Bangladesh:

The impacts of climate change are gendered. A wide range of climate-change fallouts (food insecurity, disrupted production, out-migration) are experienced differently by men and women. Women and girls, due to their restricted access to resources and decision-making processes are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters. Furthermore, their vulnerability is a result of socioeconomic and political factors that are exacerbated by climate change. Figure-1 provides a consolidated perspective of gender-differentiated vulnerabilities linked to natural hazards in Bangladesh.

Figure 1: Gendered vulnerability to natural disasters and plausible climate change impacts in Bangladesh

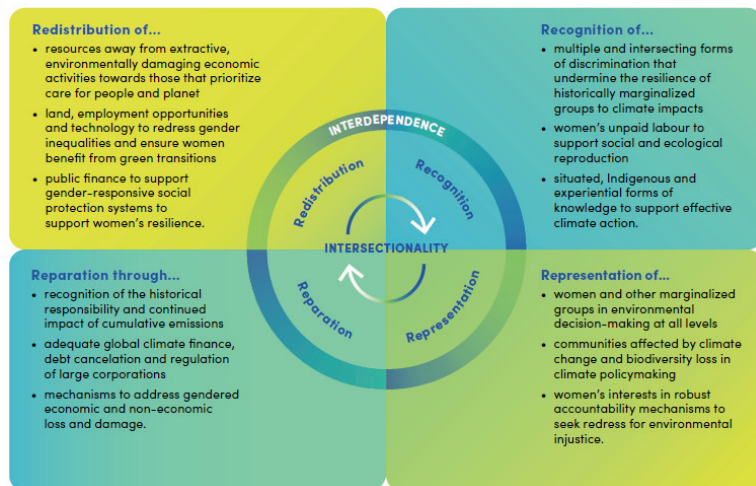
Natural disasters and hazards due to climate change	Region	Differential vulnerability based on gender (issues and responses)
Cyclone and storm surge	Coastal belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to information of early warning for disasters increases risks for women and other marginalized groups despite having cyclone shelters in place. Cyclone shelters, designed without addressing gender needs, for example privacy or security, discourage women and girls from using those facilities. Inadequate shelters result in overcrowding leading to incidents of GBV. Access to emergency health services, for example skilled midwives or doctors for pregnant women, with safe birth become challenging during any crisis. Intra-household food insecurity and lack of sanitation facilities caused by any disaster, affect women more than men.
Waterlogging	South-west, south central coastal belt, urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruption in land-based productive systems results in acute poverty; gender-biased intra-household food distribution can further aggravate food insecurity and malnutrition for women and girls. Collecting drinking water and fuel becomes extremely challenging as women, burdened with the task, become disproportionately vulnerable from spending more time and wading through unsafe waters. Maintaining menstrual hygiene becomes more challenging in waterlogged situations. Long-term waterlogging reduces accessibility to schools increasing possibility of dropping out, especially for girls, affecting their future well-being.

Natural disasters and hazards due to climate change	Region	Differential vulnerability based on gender (issues and responses)
Salinity	Coastal belt, specifically south-west coastal belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disrupted production system resulting in poverty leads to higher likelihood of food insecurity and malnutrition for women. Limited access to drinking water increases workload for women for collecting water, increases probability of suffering from different gynaecological problems in the long run. Limited access to extension services, credit facilities, and financial institutions, limited opportunities for the households, especially women to explore other livelihood opportunities. Out-migration for male members of the households seeking employment opportunities leaves female members with increased responsibilities but within limited resources, and increases chances of GBV. Long-term salinity may result in forced migration of households for survival, adjusting to a new environment with minimum resources, and increasing vulnerability of women.
Flood (riverine)	Mostly in river island areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to information of early warning for disasters increases risks for women and other marginalized groups despite having a well-established system in place. Collecting drinking water and fuel becomes extremely challenging as women, burdened with the task, become disproportionately vulnerable from spending more time and wading through unsafe waters. Emergency flood shelters, designed without addressing gender needs, for example privacy or security, increase women and girls' risk of GBV and health hazards (mostly related to disrupted sanitation facilities). Prolonged flooding causes loss of crops and property resulting in a disproportionate burden on women and girls in terms of food security. Increased poverty, food insecurity, restricted mobility and dropping out from school lead to increased rate of early marriage and higher demand for dowry. May cause temporary or permanent migration of households making women and girls more vulnerable from the disconnection from their social network.
Flash flood	North-east part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of crop results in food insecurity and increased poverty; women remain at higher risks of food insecurity and malnutrition.
Urban flood and drainage congestion	Urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water-logging at home and workplace challenges daily living and livelihoods, especially for women living in informal settlements. Maintaining menstrual hygiene becomes more challenging in waterlogged situations and without access to safe water and toilet facilities.
Riverbank erosion	Mostly in river island areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause temporary or permanent migration of households making women and girls more vulnerable from the disconnection from their social network.
Drought (predominantly agricultural)	Predominant in the western and north-western parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased food insecurity and malnutrition increase the vulnerability of women and girls to gender-based food distribution within the household. Scarcity of water increases the stress of the workload and health issues due to lack of drinking water for women and girls. Poverty, food insecurity, dropping out from school, and rupture of social networks due to temporary and permanent migration, all increase the potential of trafficking of women and girls.

Source: Climate Change Cell, Department of the Environment, 2009

Multidimensionality of Justice in Environmental Justice: Environmental justice scholars and activists have identified four aspects of environmental justice experienced by historically marginalized communities: distributive justice, procedural justice, corrective justice, and social justice. Distributive justice requires the fair allocation of the benefits and burdens of economic activity among and within nations. Procedural justice calls for transparent, informed, and inclusive environmental decision-making processes. Corrective justice requires governments to enforce environmental laws, compensate those whose rights are violated, and terminate the harm-producing conduct. Social justice emphasizes that environmental struggles are inextricably intertwined with struggles for social and economic justice. In other words, environmental injustice cannot be separated from economic exploitation, race and gender subordination, the marginalization of children, the elderly, immigrants, and persons with disabilities, the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the colonial and postcolonial domination of the Global South.

Figure 2: Dimensions and Principles of Environmental Justice from the Gender Perspective



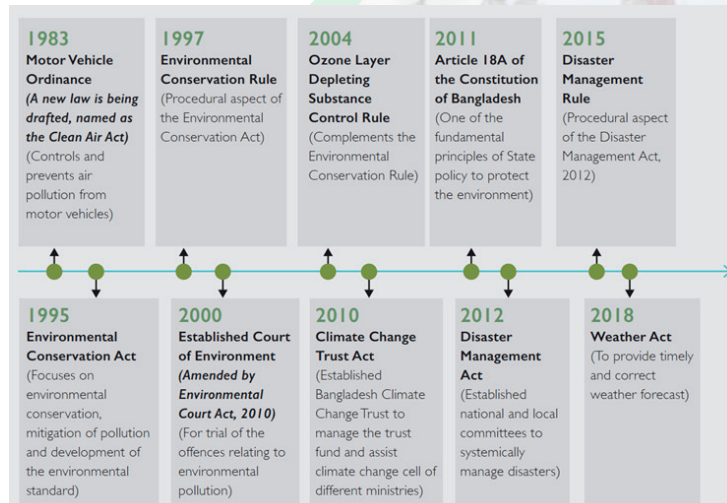
Source: Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action, 2023

Policy, Legal and Institutional Framework for Gender Equality and Climate Change in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh is a pioneer in the adoption of international multi-lateral agreements related to climate change and environmental protection. Bangladesh has adopted laws and policies and updated the national institutional responses in consonance with its international commitments. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972 was supplemented by the insertion of Article 18A in 2011.

This Article is titled "Protection and improvement of environment and biodiversity" and has become one of the fundamental principles of the state policy of Bangladesh. On the policy front, the National Environment Policy, 2018 aims to build a community capable of dealing with all types of issues related to the environment and ecosystem including climate change. It ensures the protection of women and children from disasters and provides for the active participation of women in the efficient use of resources (MoEFCC, 2018). A timeline showing some key milestones in terms of environment protection and disaster risk reduction (DRR) is given in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Timeline of climate change legal and policy frameworks in Bangladesh



Source: State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Bangladesh, 2022

Analysing these laws and policies, which do not always explicitly discuss or consider climate change, illustrates that many of them are gender-sensitive or even gender-specific, recognizing women as a target group of certain policy goals, and considering their specific needs. However, they do not: address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles and relations; consider both women's and men's specific needs; suggest any remedial actions; or address the root causes of inequality that affect access to and control over resources.

Recommendations and Conclusion:

The following recommendations are proposed to increase the gender equality–climate change interlinkages in national and sectoral climate-related policies and actions in the future:

- Sensitize and build capacity among policymakers, government agencies and stakeholders, including women's rights organizations.
- Incorporate a broader definition of gender and intersectionality from a human rights perspective.
- Develop a research and evidence base for policy advocacy and standards.
- Bring strong focus on female members of households that are dependent on natural resources.
- Develop technical guidelines for promoting gender mainstreaming in climate change policies and financing.
- Provide training and capacity-building programs to enhance women's skills and knowledge in climate-resilient practices and technologies.
- Develop a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework and establish a gender database across regions, livelihood groups and communities of diverse experiences and practices.
- Enforce environmental laws and regulations to hold accountable those responsible for environmental harm, with a focus on protecting the rights of marginalized communities.

- Incorporate gender mainstreaming principles into all climate change-related policies, ensuring that they address the specific needs and priorities of women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.
- Foster partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector to promote gender-responsive climate action and environmental justice initiatives.

By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can enhance its resilience to climate change while promoting gender equality and environmental justice. It is imperative to recognize the interconnectedness of climate change, gender, and environmental justice and adopt holistic approaches that empower marginalized communities and foster sustainable development for present and future generations.

References:

1. D. Hunter, J. Salzman, and D. Zaelke, (2015), *International Environmental Law and Policy*, 5th ed. Sunderland, UK: Foundation Press.
2. Laura Turquet, Constanza Tabbush, Silke Staab, Loui Williams and Brianna Howell. (2023), "Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action". Conceptual framework prepared for Progress of the World's Women series. New York: UN-Women.
3. MoEFCC (2018), *National Environment Policy, 2018*, Published by – Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
4. UN-Women and UNDESA, (2023), "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023."
5. UN Women, (2022), *State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Bangladesh*.

About Keynote Speaker

Professor Mahbuba Nasreen is the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) of Bangladesh Open University. She is also a Professor, former Director and Co-founder of the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies (IDMVS), University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her career started as a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the same university in 1988. She has received Commonwealth Scholarship in 1991 for pursuing her PhD Degree in New Zealand, which further developed her professional career. Her dissertation topic coping with Floods: The Experiences of Rural Women in Bangladesh (1995) is the pioneer PhD research in the areas of disaster and gender issues within South Asia and is widely used. As Professor she has served the Department of Sociology from 2005- 2012 and later was appointed as Director of IDMVS. Dr. Nasreen is involved in fundamental research on theory, gender, disasters, environment, climate change, education, social inclusion and intersectionality, humanitarian issues and other areas of social development since late eighties.

