

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER



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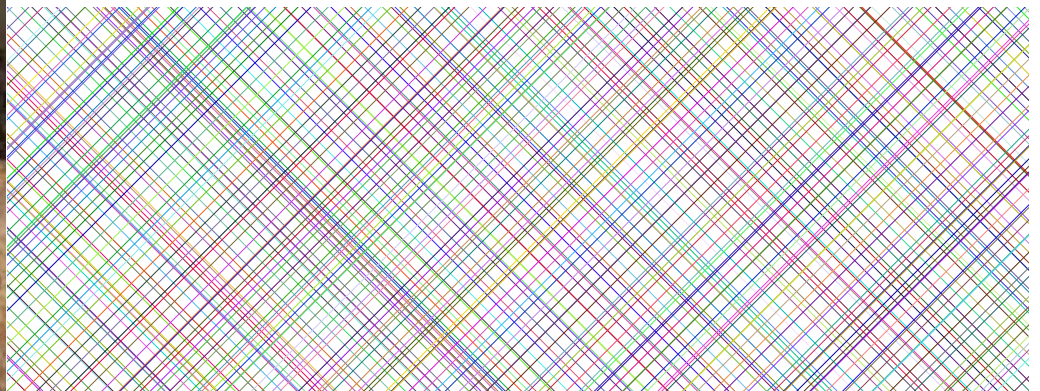


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The adverse effects of climate-induced disasters fall disproportionately on gender. Furthermore, the approaches for responding to disasters also differ in context of gender.

Gender refers to the socially constructed norms, roles and relations that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. – WHO

Understanding the context

Most societies give the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children to women and girls, and that for military service and national security to men. Gender thus shapes one's life chances and one's role in the home, in society, and in the economy (World Bank, 2000). Perceptions of gender are deeply rooted, vary widely both within and between cultures, and change over time. But in all cultures, gender determines power and resources for females and males (FAO, 2011).

COP 16 in 2010 acknowledged that climate change effect would be felt most severely by vulnerable population owing to geography, gender, age, indigenous or minority status and disability. It states that a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach should be followed in adaptation action (UNFCCC 2010).





What are the risks?

The impact of climate change is highly biased towards women because their livelihoods depend upon natural resources which are at high risk of climate change. Lack of capacity building opportunity and assets limits women's ability to fight climate change. Crop productions and harvests become unpredictable, leading to loss of income of the poor women.

Besides women, children, youth, girls, elderly women, and disabled people are also vulnerable. Although the sole responsibility of the families' survival relies upon women, they usually lack the decision making the authority of their families.

In the coastal areas, tidal surge and storm are identified as the most damaging hazards, followed by saline water intrusion. Death and destruction of dwellings and food insecurity occur as a consequence of such vulnerability. Fresh drinking water is not accessible as during disaster period; tube wells are often damaged. In such a context, women have to fetch water from long distances that lead them towards a vulnerable living condition in the post phases of cyclone hazard.

After the occurrences of Sidr, Aila, Mohasen and other cyclones in Mongla upazila still there is no source for pure drinking water. All they have is the water with excessive level of salinity which is unpalatable to drink. The water is not only unpleasant but the high level of salinity is a cause for the death of many trees. Irrigated lands lose their ability to produce crops. But among all these the deadliest problem is scarcity of pure drinking water. According to an inhabitant they have to bring their drinking water from a place near Mongla Ferry Ghat and the transportation cost of this is so high so that poor people can hardly manage.



There is some evidence that reveals that following a disaster, the possibility of women and girls suffering from domestic and sexual violence increases. This situation prevails, especially when families displace and stay in the temporary emergency shelter where they lack privacy.

Women have confessed that men, on receiving the warning first, sometimes do not transfer the information to their respective family members. As a result, women are usually unaware of the climatic hazards, and even if they become aware, they cannot quickly reach the cyclone shelters since they are the ones who have to take care of their families before they leave. Sometimes women are unwilling to go to the cyclone shelters due to the 'insecure' environment over there and instead, they prefer to stay back during the storm.

For elderly and pregnant women, the situation becomes more aggravated when vehicles are often unavailable to go to the nearest cyclone shelter. Consequently, the situation becomes more difficult for them, when they have to walk along muddy rural roads under stormy conditions. On the other hand, almost no cyclone shelter has a ramp to carry the physically challenged persons and pregnant women safely. As a result, shelters are overcrowded and often caused pregnant women to occasionally miscarriages when they are in the shelter in an advanced pregnancy stage. In some areas, where cyclone shelter is inaccessible, women spend days in an unsafe condition in the nearby embankment.





Jannat, 19 years old, a young mother of a 10 months old baby boy. She said, during her first delivery, she could not go to the hospital on time and her child died in the womb. Lack of transportation and access to health care facilities are the prime reason for this heartbreaking incident. Her labour pain rose at the mid day (12 pm) and the doctor was far away in the 'Dasmona Char'. When doctor came at the evening, the child was dead. She mentioned that, my child would not have been stillborn if only the doctor would have come earlier. She said, her sister in law died as they could not go to the hospital as they did not get the trawler on time. The baby was alive, but her mother, her sister in law died.



In the post-disaster event, the financial burden of the family usually falls upon men. As a result, they have to migrate to the suburban areas in search of job leaving their families behind and are thus impacted physically and psychologically. However, some of them do not return, leaving the sole responsibility of the family upon the women (CCC, 2009).

CHALLENGES



Men in the cyclone-prone areas of Bangladesh live on fishing. They travel to the deep sea to prey fish and are often preyed by the storm/cyclone. Because of the lack of knowledge, they hardly take any precaution and so it becomes very difficult for them to escape death. As per our social norm, women, old and children are more vulnerable and are thus rescued first for which men are negatively affected. For instance, because of lack of space in the shelter, the weak people get preference as a result men are left unattended in the open space during storm/cyclone. Besides, during flood and drought, male farmers loss their crops and suffered through financial burden.




After Aila the situation of Shyamnagar Upazila, Satkhira district has been very difficult for people to survive as Aila destroyed everything, especially the Sundarbans forest and its resources. Extortion has also emerged in the locality after Aila. The Sunderbans dependent honey, fish and wood collectors now have to pay money to the robber which has not happened before Aila. Therefore, people want to migrate from their homeland to another place as they are left with no choice.



Access to safe
DRINKING
WATER
is a major
PROBLEM



- 
- MUCH OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION LACKS ACCESS TO ADEQUATE AND SAFE WATER SUPPLIES
 - WATERBORNE DISEASE AND DEATH ARE A WORLDWIDE BURDEN IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
 - MICROBIAL AGENTS (PATHOGENS) CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR PROBLEM IN DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES



Water scarcity faced by the people



Women are going to collect water during flood



Children using boat to collect water



School going children in times of disaster

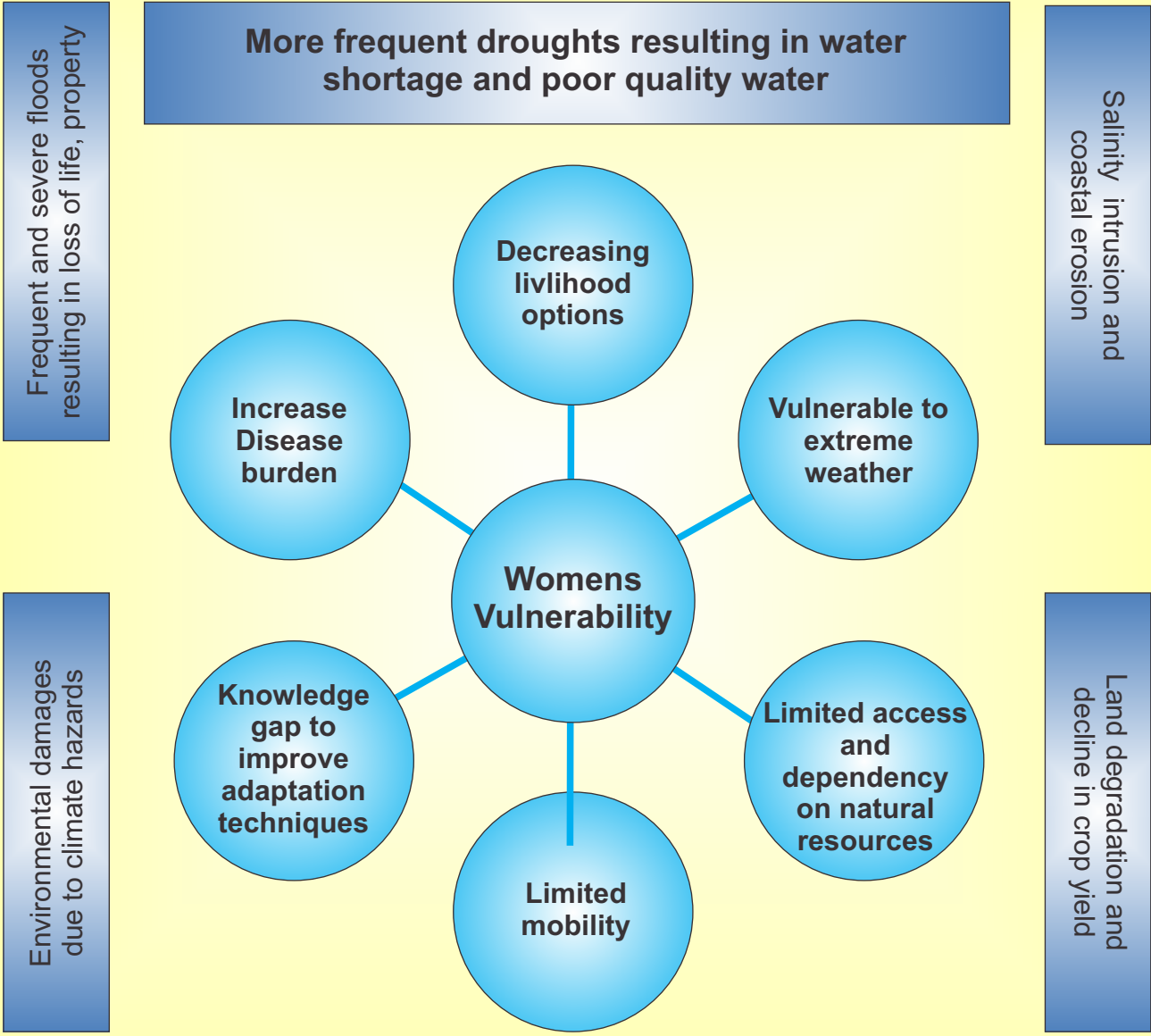
Adaptation Practices



In Bangladesh, some strategies are adopted by women to survive in disasters. During inundation, often mother goes to sleep by tying her child with the body and sometimes remain awake to abstain from drowning causalities of the children. Sometimes, families take shelter on the rooftop. Women tie plastic bottles in the body of infants and young children. This mechanism is used so that they do not slip into the water. In rural areas, to cope with a flood, women generally build houses with bamboo, wood so that water can easily pass through the house. Dry food (Cheera, Muri) rice, pulse salt, sugar, match stick, candle, kerosene, quilt, seeds, etc are preserved by women during periods of flood.



Escalation of house plinth is another option for them to save themselves which is done mainly by women. Some of the households escalate tubewells and kancha latrine too. In the time of disaster, women used to send their children into the main land from char areas. People use boats to take their crop to the markets. As livestock are very important to them, so women arrange the place for their animals within the house to protect them during severe inundation. Also to protect the crops especially chili from fog they cover them since fog hampers the pollination. Moreover, women save money and store dry foods for the emergency situation. In case of acute crisis, women sell their assets such as jewelry and use their saving money to cope with the situation.





In Kutubdia upazila, the Cyclone KOMEN devastated their lives badly. These unions are already consisting ultra poor women and they were not prepared that much since they did not face any major hazard for last 20 years. However, they have some local adaptation knowledge learned through experience and also by training provided by BRAC. For example they kept their belongings under the ground to protect them. Again the dried fish that were damped, they grind them with salt to make fish feed. Also people cover their roof with heavy fish net to protect them from getting thrown away by wind. Even agriculture became cumbersome here due to increased salinity. So, many of the inhabitants, even the women are eager to do salt farming as it can incur more money.

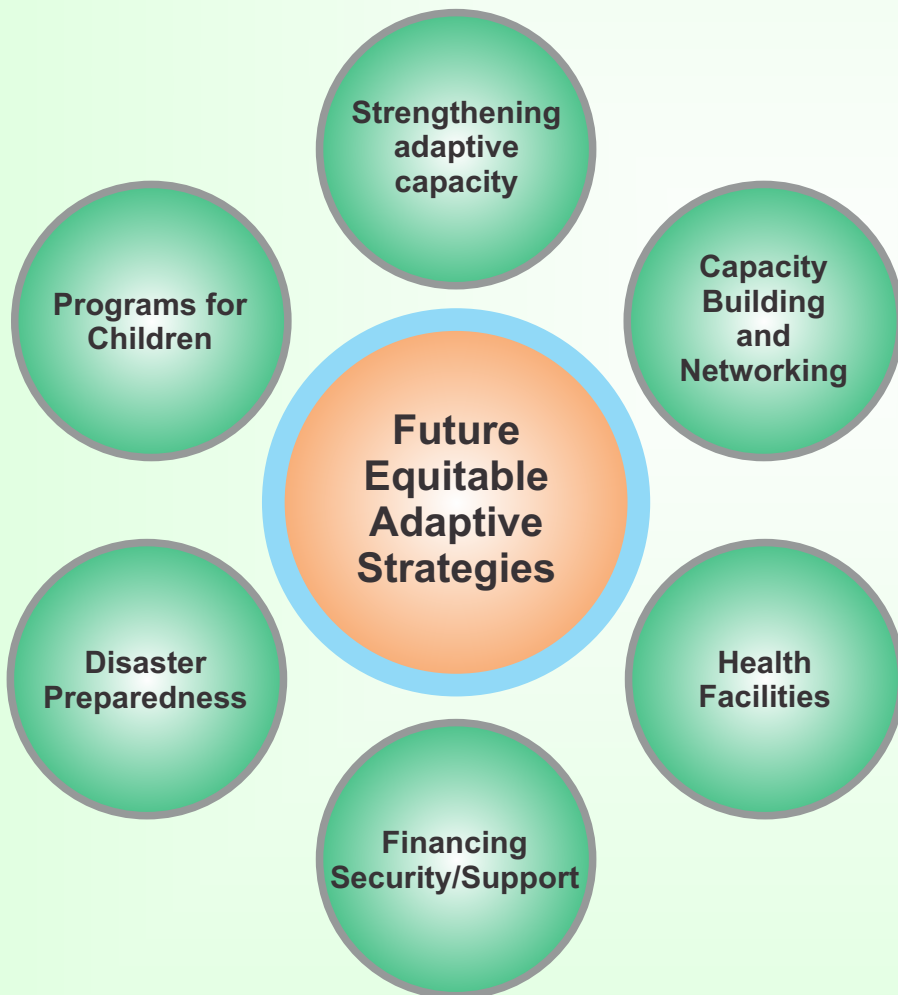
Men adapt to climate change in a similar way to women in many contexts. For instance, they repair their houses; raise the level of dwelling areas, collect and store fuel wood and dry food, etc. However, men have better access to mobility than women and hence are better adaptable during a disaster. Men often get the privilege to migrate from the place of origin for alternative livelihood, where the disaster takes place. Most of the time men do not come back towards his place of origin. Signals, weather forecast, and information about



cyclone/flood are usually disseminated through community gatherings or at village mosque where men are more visible. Thus, the responsibility to circulate the news relies upon them. During flood or cyclone, they assist women, old and children in traveling to shelter/embankments and carrying the necessary and bulky items with them. Some people shift to alternative livelihoods during or after a disaster from farming/fishing to daily labor and so on. In the post-disaster period, men contact the Union Parishad and other local NGOs for relief. In some places, men are now collecting water for far places instead of women.

Future Strategies

Adaptation strategies need to bolster women's capacities, power, and social resilience. Moreover, there is a need for engagement of both women and men from a gender perspective in the development and implementation of climate change related development projects.



Gender-sensitive research is needed to understand the impacts of climate change in general and extreme events in particular for the vulnerable groups. An urgent need is there to collect, analyze and report relevant data disaggregated by age and sex; depending on the context should be included to enable thorough gender analysis. To gain a clearer understanding of the social, economic and cultural reasons behind particular impacts and to identify solutions that will benefit women and men along with elderly people and children experiencing these impacts, far more detailed qualitative work is needed.

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This booklet is based on the study report which was carried out by C3ER

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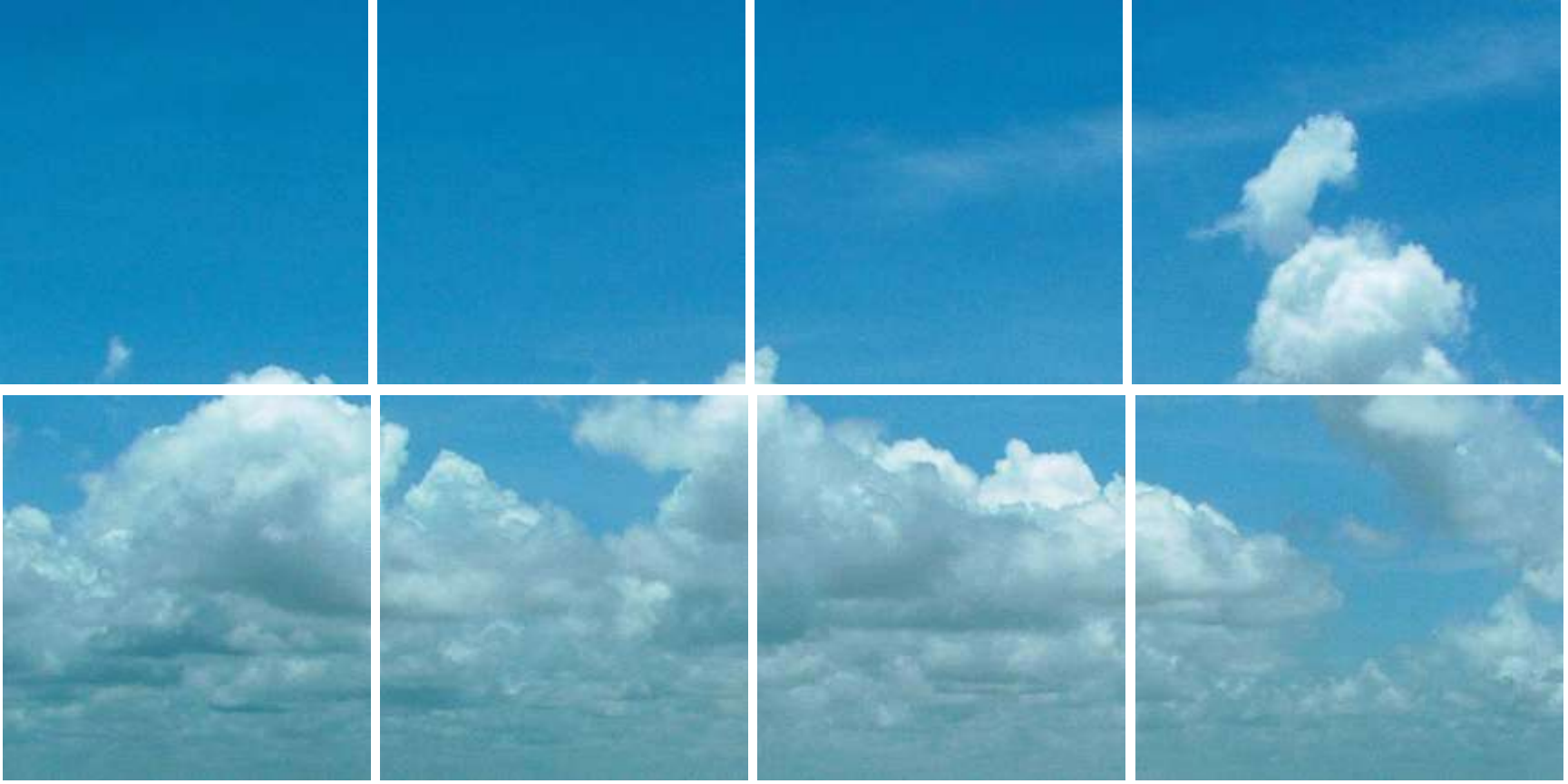
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