



Changing Genderscapes In the Hindu Kush Himalaya, but Unchanging Institutions and Policies



About HI-AWARE

HI-AWARE aims to enhance the adaptive capacities and climate resilience of the poor and vulnerable women, men, and children living in the mountains and flood plains of the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra river basins. It seeks to do this through the development of robust evidence to inform people-centred and gender-inclusive climate change adaptation policies and practices for improving livelihoods.

The HI-AWARE consortium is led by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The other consortium members are the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), the Climate Change, Alternative Energy, and Water Resources Institute of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (CAEWRI-PARC) and Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra). For more details see www.hi-aware.org.

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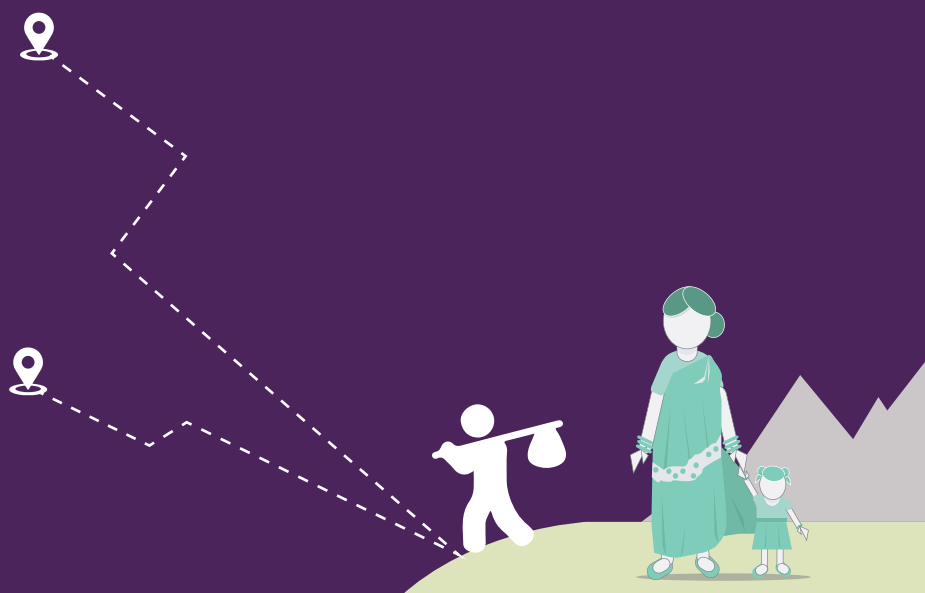
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Key Message

Climatic stressors and socio-economic changes are changing traditional genderscapes in farming communities. Changes are taking place demographically, in the roles and responsibilities of women and men, and the domains and spaces they occupy. This is mostly due to the long-term migration of men seeking alternate income sources outside their base locations. To some extent, these changes have enhanced women's capacities. However, they have also increased women's vulnerabilities due to weak implementation of existing measures or lack of sufficient policies to safeguard the increased involvement of women in public spaces.

There is an opportunity to capitalise on the improved skills of women, and their new-found confidence and capabilities through initiatives promote women as leaders.

Urgent actions are needed to bring changes in the institutional and policy domains to ensure women's security and participation by regulating markets and promoting gender friendly technologies that support resilient livelihoods.





Introduction

Studies have generated evidence to conclude that gender roles and responsibilities not only shape women's and men's differential access, ownership and control over resources, but also influence their capacities and capabilities to respond to stress caused by climatic changes. Hence, addressing gender issues in climate change related policies, practices and research is a priority. However addressing gender issues requires context-specific knowledge.

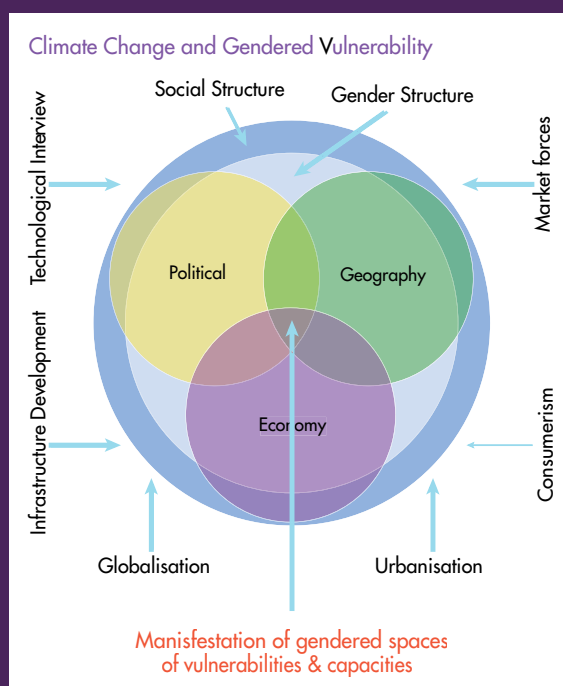
Better understanding of gender relations is necessary in the mountainous Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, where the prevalence of poverty, exclusion and gender disparity is high. People experience differential vulnerabilities shaped by an intersection of class, caste, gender, age, marital status, health and profession, among other factors. Understanding gendered vulnerabilities in the four HI-AWARE study basins – the Indus, the Upper Ganga, the Gandaki and the Teesta – provides contextual knowledge relevant to gender sensitive and responsive adaptation to climate change compounded by rapid socio-economic changes.

Using a qualitative intersectionality approach, HI-AWARE studied gender as intersecting with other key social fault lines – class, caste, ethnicity, and other dimensions of marginality based on location and political space. The gendered vulnerability studies conducted by HI-AWARE used participatory anthropological tools for data collection, with deep engagement with the communities in the twelve HI-AWARE study areas (mountains, hills and plains in the four study basins). To understand complex gender relations HI-AWARE conducted a situational situation analysis in 2015, focused on understanding socioeconomic drivers and conditions leading to vulnerabilities in 2016, and did research on gendered vulnerabilities in 2017. More than two hundred Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with homogenous groups of women and men belonging to different social groups were conducted in 2017. These data formed the basis to analyze gender roles and responsibilities, resource access and control, benefits and incentives, and of how the combined effect of these shape gender vulnerabilities and capabilities.

The HI-AWARE gender research used a conceptual lens where manifestations of gendered vulnerabilities in the context of climate change are considered as an interplay of external factors such as market forces, consumerism, urbanisation, globalisation, infrastructure development,



and technological intervention in a certain place and time. This is combined with internal geopolitical and socio-economic factors superimposed on social and gender structures. A combination of these influence the livelihood options of women and men, determining the capability to respond to risks posed by climatic and socio-economic stressors (Figure 1).



Major Findings

Changing Genderscapes: Climatic stressors and socio-economic changes have increased vulnerabilities among farming families with limited socio-economic resources. Young men are moving out of villages in search of alternative sources of income to cope with farm failure and related economic deprivations. As a result, genderscapes are changing, reflected in changes in demography, altering of gender roles with shifting spaces for women and men and transitions in gender and social relations. Women are left behind in climatically stressful environments with not only household and care responsibilities but also with the responsibilities of the farm and of dealing with “outside” work that were hitherto the domain of men.

Increased vulnerabilities of women and children: The increased migration of men has led to, at times, a

drastic increase in women’s workload, making women and children more vulnerable, especially to ill health and time poverty. There are also security issues – both due to an increased engagement of women and children in the public domain and the absence of men in families. This is specifically due to a lack of adequate measures to safeguard against violence against women and children and a lack of capacity to utilize existing measures.

Enhanced capacity of women: Being exposed to new roles, domains and spaces, women’s skills and capacities have increased. Women are taking up roles and responsibilities in all spheres and in all domains (private and public) and have gradually gained the capacities and skills needed to negotiate in public spaces. This provides a huge opportunity whereby institutions could step in and provide an enabling environment with gender sensitive institutional practices and policies to support women as leaders and not just beneficiaries. This would add to resilience building.

Unchanging institutions and policies: Though women’s new roles in economic and public domains have strongly increased with their engagement in microenterprises, marketing, saving and credit groups, as well as dealing with disasters, their involvement in decision making bodies remains minimal. HI-AWARE research findings suggest that institutions curtail women’s agency as institutional structures and processes remain patriarchal and largely male-dominated and oriented. This strongly suggests that the continued negation of women’s agency is an institutional outcome.

Policy Action

Gender issues are complex. Identities are multiple and layered, and intersect with internal and external factors that shape vulnerabilities and capacities. A simplification of 'gender' will lead to a disregard of multidimensional impacts and implications. Contextual gender information is crucial and must be taken into account when designing plans and policies on gender and adaptation.

While addressing gender concerns in adaptation policy at different scales, overlaying gender issues with intersecting socioeconomic and geographical fault lines of class, caste, age, ethnicity, location, and political and religious affiliations is crucial.

Proactive policy measures need to be framed and implemented to regulate access and ensure safety of women in markets, financial transactions, and in public spaces.

Women friendly technologies like rain water harvesting for drinking purpose in flood prone areas and in the mountains need to be promoted. Such technologies will increase the ability of women to respond to farming and drinking water needs in disaster situations such as droughts.

Policies on resource allocation and decision making processes with regard to natural resources should increase women's opportunity to access and manage natural resources.

This brief is based on the following HI-AWARE publications:

Goodrich, C.G, Udas, P.B., Prakash, A (eds) (Forthcoming 2018) Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Gendered Vulnerabilities to Climate Variability in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region, Special Issue, Environment and Development, Elsevier

Udas, P. B., Prakash, A., & Goodrich, C. G. (2018). Gendered Vulnerabilities in Diaras. Economic & Political Weekly, 53(17), 47.

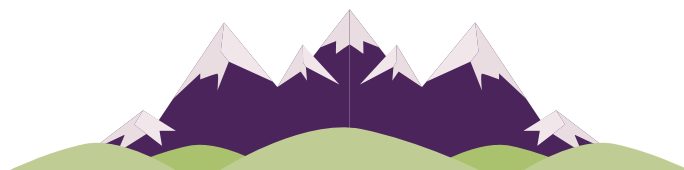
Goodrich, C. G., & Namchu, C. V. (Forthcoming 2018). Implications of local political dynamics on gender vulnerabilities in the face of climate change In A. Hans, N. Rao, A. Prakash & A. Patel (Eds.), EnGendering Climate Change: Learnings from South Asia Routledge

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Zakia Naznin, Jannatul Ferdous, Musharrat Mehejabeen and Dwijen Mallick (Forthcoming, 2018): Gendered Vulnerability to Climate Change in Teesta Floodplains in Bangladesh: The Role of Social Drivers In A. Hans, N. Rao, A. Prakash & A. Patel (Eds.), EnGendering Climate Change: Learnings from South Asia Routledge

Saqib Shakeel Abbasi, Nusrat Habib, Muhammad Zubair Anwar (Forthcoming, 2018): Climate Change Vulnerabilities and Role of Women towards Resilience in Indus In A. Hans, N. Rao, A. Prakash & A. Patel (Eds.), EnGendering Climate Change: Learnings from South Asia Routledge

Deepak DT and Udas, PB (Forthcoming, 2018): Gender vulnerability and resilience in High Mountain in changing climate context- a case of Upper Rasuwa in Gandaki River Basin in Hindu Kush Himalaya In A. Hans, N. Rao, A. Prakash & A. Patel (Eds.), EnGendering Climate Change: Learnings from South Asia Routledge



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