

**Panel Discussion on  
Environment and Disaster: Gender  
Mainstreaming for Reaching SDGs**

**Under the C20 Working Group**

**Gender Equality and Disability -  
Sub-theme group on Gender, the  
Environment, and Disasters**

**Organised by**

**IBRAD (Indian Institute of Bio  
Social Research and Development)**

**On 26.2.2023 at IBRAD Campus,  
Kolkata**

A Panel Discussion on Environment and Disaster: Gender Mainstreaming for Reaching SDGs was organised on 26.2.2023 at IBRAD Campus, IBRAD Road, Kestopur, VIP Road, Kolkata 700101 under the Gender Equality and Disability Working Group – Sub Theme Group on Gender, the Environment and Disasters of C20. The program was organised by IBRAD (Indian Institute of Bio Social Research and Development). in a hybrid mode between 3.00 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.

**Participants**

The session was attended by 115 participants physically. The participants were academics, NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), government functionaries, panchayat members and community members involved in natural resource conservation-based activities. Representatives were from Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal (Please find enclosed the list of participants). Besides, about 55 participants have joined online. It was also broadcasted on Facebook Live.

**The Panelists**

Professor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Sister Nivedita University, chaired the session.

Professor Deepak K Behera, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, a Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, had the opening remark. He had joined online.

Prof S.B. Roy, Chairman of IBRAD, shared the concept of Environment and Disaster: Gender Mainstreaming for Reaching the SDGs.

Professor Srividya from Amrita University shared on Setting the Context of the Panel



*Introducing the concept by Professor S. B. Roy, Chairman, IBRAD*



under G20 C20, the vision and plan of the Working Group. She also joined online.

Dr Raktima Mukhopadhyay, Executive Director of IBRAD, focused on Gender as a cross-cutting issue of SDGs and the need for gender mainstreaming to reach the SDGs in the context of climate change.

Professor Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, Jharkhand Central University, shared the issues of Gender as a social construct and the challenges.

Dr B.K. Mahapatra, Former Principal Scientist of CIFE ICAR, highlighted the need for Gender Mainstreaming in the fishery sector to reach the SDGs

Mitali Palodhi, Former Demonstration

Officer, Food and Nutrition Board, Government of India, emphasised women's role in conserving indigenous crops and food and nutrition security in the context of climate change.

Besides participants from different states have also provided their insights and suggestions.

### **The issues, policy needs and recommendations**

#### *Gender as a social construct*

Gender is a social construct and is neither universal nor fixed. It varies from place to place and culture to culture and changes over time. As a social construct, it assigns different roles and responsibilities to



*Professor Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri highlighting the importance of women PRI members as social change agents*



women and men in the family and society. Across the culture, it generally and traditionally limits the role of women in reproductive functions. Women are marginalised from having access and control over resources and strategic and decision-making positions. Their production functions as family labour or caregivers must be recognised or under-represented. The marginalisation of women, half of the population, from the development spirals and Labor Force Participation hinders the overall development of any nation.

***Environmental degradation, climate change and increasing risks and vulnerabilities of the rural population, particularly the women***

Women, particularly in the rural areas of the developing and least developed countries, are becoming more vulnerable, risk-prone and marginalised due to the degradation of natural ecosystems and climate change. Women are responsible for collecting water, fuel, fodder, fruits, fibres, medicinal plants, leaves, and other Non-Timber Forest Produces etc., from wild sources to meet the sustenance need of the family and add disposable income. They are also responsible for agriculture and allied activities' production, harvest and post-

harvest management. Women are the worst sufferers due to the degradation of forests, increased soil erosion, depletion of groundwater, erratic rainfall, increasing climate-related disasters like drought, floods, increasing cyclone incidences and untimely rain due to depressions etc. These degradation and climate-related risks and disasters are causing an extra burden on women, increasing their drudgery and stress and reducing their livelihood opportunities.

***Gender Mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme for reaching all the SDGs***

None of the 17 SDGs can be reached without addressing the need for gender equality and integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes, projects and development interventions. However, with the concerted effort of the entire population, it is possible to reach the targets and goals under the SDG.

Women and men have different needs and unequal access to and control over power, resources, human rights and institutions, and the justice system. Gender mainstreaming aims to consider these differences when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects so that they benefit both women



*Professor D. K. Behera focusing on the need for involving women in all development initiatives*

and men and do not increase inequality but enhance gender equality.

**Keeping these in mind, the Panelists and the participants have highlighted the following issues, needs for policy interventions and strategic actions for gender mainstreaming to reach the SDGs**

- **Changing the social construct demands social change - the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions**

Changing the social construct demands a paradigm change of the belief systems, perceptions and stereotypes towards women and men and the social change.

*It has emerged that the PRI members, particularly women, can lead in facilitating social change.* Many states like Jharkhand are providing more and more seats to women members beyond the scope of reservations in the PRI system. *A comprehensive capacity-building strategy has to be made to sensitise the PRI members/local self-government members on Gender issues and integrate gender mainstreaming at all levels for social transformation and, ultimately, social change.*

- **Creating synergy among the men and women to create an enabling environment**

The speakers also emphasised that there should be a synergy between women and men by appreciating their counterparts' problems and helping them grow.

- **Ensuring Land Titles to access the benefits and improve productivity**

Though the Acts like FRA 2006 mention that the land titles should be accorded in the names of both spouses, it still needs to be implemented. The mindsets of the officials and staff who consider it optional to include the name of women hinder the process to a large extent. As many schemes require land titles to access the benefits/subsidies, the women get marginalised. *It involves the orientation of government functionaries and the community to ensure land titles.*

- **Recognition and retention of the traditional knowledge system of women for climate change adaptation**



*Ms Mitali Palodhi emphasized upon the need of reviving millets for food and nutrition security in the context of climate change*

Women are the holders of traditional knowledge and practices and pass them on to the next generations. But with increased mechanisation in the natural resource-based production functions, they are marginalised, and the traditional knowledge system is eroded. ***On the other hand, this traditional knowledge promotes biodiversity conservation and other natural resources and can play a vital role in climate change adaptation.*** Hence, proper documentation of the traditional knowledge system and the involvement of the women in their revival will contribute significantly to developing local, regional, national and global solutions for climate change adaptation.

- **Conservation and promotion of cultivars and landraces for food and nutrition security in the context of climate change and increasing climate resilience**

India has a rich traditional food system with diversity. Traditional food like millet is not only very rich in nutrient content but can grow in adverse climatic conditions, are resistant to pests, can grow in local conditions naturally with fertiliser and irrigation, particularly in a dry region and poor soil conditions, helps in increasing immunity against diseases and have a long

shelf life. ***Women, particularly indigenous women, traditionally are engaged in producing these crops. These crops must be revived in the climate change context to ensure food and nutrition security.***

But with the advent of modern agriculture, these crops are replaced by more water-intensive crops like paddy and wheat, which also are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change. So again, India is taking the lead, and with her request, 2023 is declared the International Year of Millet.

There is an opportunity for value addition and diversification of millet-based products. ***Furthermore, a cluster-based approach for women SHGs/Women Producer Organisations for capacity building*** will strengthen the livelihood and women labour force participation.

- **Life Cycle Approach to address the issue of women's health**

SDG 1 aims at zero hunger, and SDG 3 for good health, which cannot be achieved without Food and Nutrition Security. India enacted the Food Security Act in 2013, but about 36% of the population is still food insecure, and more than 50% of women suffer from Anaemia. Here again, the



*Dr B.K. Mahapatra focused on the need of selecting appropriate trainees from among the women to make them effective*



gender stereotype of intra-household distribution of food among women, men, and male and female children is the main driver. Providing IFA tablets alone without promoting proper nutrition will create a hurdle to achieving Anaemia Mukht Bharat's goal. ***A Life Cycle Approach must be adopted to ensure proper food and nutrition from birth.*** Orientation of the ICDS workers, teachers, and the community in a comprehensive manner is needed.

➤ **Access to training and capacity building to the appropriate persons**

In most cases, the trainees identified for the training conducted by different departments are men. Women are involved mainly in harvesting and post-harvest management of agriculture/horticulture activities, post-harvest management of fisheries activities, and livestock rearing. But they need to get access to first-hand information through training, which would improve training effectiveness, and the training needs can be captured correctly.

***It is crucial to conduct training with appropriate participants based on Training Need Assessment.***

➤ **Gender-appropriate technologies to reduce climate risks and disasters and increase resilience**

There is a ***need to promote gender-appropriate technologies to address the needs of women to reduce the climate risks and disasters like flood/drought etc.*** These need to be devised at the local level, technologically feasible, economically viable and socially acceptable. For example, promoting small nurseries in a raised platform of locally available resources helps in higher germination and yield even in water-logged conditions. Likewise, technologies for small-scale rainwater harvesting structures help women establish nutrition gardens. Furthermore, skills for developing seed banks for indigenous seeds, production of organic manures, fertilisers and biopesticides, integrated farming systems and strengthening agroecological processes increases their resilience and diversify livelihood options.



*Sharing by the participants from different states who have highlighted the issues of environmental degradation and climate change and the need to apply traditional knowledge, particularly of the remotely located indigenous communities, to conserve rare and endangered biodiversity.*



*Professor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay summing up the recommendations at the end of the session*

➤ **Gender mainstreaming at all levels to strengthen climate-induced disaster preparedness**

Gender Mainstreaming must be adopted at all levels, community-based disaster preparedness, response and recovery from disaster.

**Main Recommendations of the Panel**

*While modern facilities and exposure are unavoidable, care must be taken to identify, document and preserve the indigenous knowledge of the remotely located indigenous communities, women in particular, to conserve rare, endemic and endangered species for sustainable development.*

**Way Forward**

Beyond the scope of the Panel Discussion, the participants volunteered to conduct such Sessions to identify the issues related to

Gender, Environment and Disaster, will prepare action plans to overcome the challenges and create an enabling environment for gender transformation and social change.



*Participants volunteering for local actions to facilitate gender transformations for sustainable development*