

# Redefining Resilience: Gendered Vulnerabilities and Intersectional Solutions to Climate Change

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## Abstract

The climate crisis is not gender-neutral; it disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly women, Indigenous people, people of colour and those in the Global South. This paper examines gendered vulnerabilities within the climate crisis while advocating for intersectional solutions that move beyond one-size-fits-all resilience strategies. Drawing on ecofeminist and intersectional feminist theories, it critiques dominant climate adaptation frameworks that overlook structural inequalities. Ecofeminism highlights the deep connections between environmental degradation and patriarchal systems, arguing that the exploitation of nature parallels the oppression of women and marginalized groups. Meanwhile, intersectionality reveals how climate change exacerbates existing inequalities based on gender, race, class, and geography. By integrating these perspectives, this study advocates for a just climate response that prioritizes inclusivity, community-led solutions, and structural transformations. It highlights community-driven, gender-responsive, and justice-oriented approaches that center the voices of those most affected. By redefining resilience through an intersectional lens, this study argues for policies and activism that address systemic oppression, ensuring a truly equitable and sustainable climate future.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Gendered Vulnerabilities, Intersectionality, Ecofeminism, Resilience, Climate Justice, Adaptation Strategies

## Introduction:

Resilience in the context of gender and climate change refers to the ability of people, groups, and systems to predict, react to, and bounce back from shocks and pressures associated with climate change while advancing justice and equity. In addition to being resilient, it also entails changing in ways that lessen vulnerabilities in the future, especially for marginalized populations. This essay focuses on the crucial role that gender—not as a binary but as a multifaceted and dynamic social construct—plays in influencing how people experience climate change. The significance of an intersectional lens is also emphasized, which acknowledges that different types of social marginalization both shape and aggravate gendered vulnerabilities. This paper argues, we must fundamentally rethink how we think about vulnerability and adaptation if we want a truly resilient future. Approaches that recognize the unique difficulties faced by people and communities based on their gender and intersecting identities are necessary. We need to abandon generalized solutions and adopt strategies that recognize the unique difficulties that people and communities have because of their gender and intersecting identities. We can create more egalitarian, effective, and ultimately more resilient solutions to the climate issue by putting the experiences and knowledge of people who are at most risk front and center.

By recognizing the ways in which gender intersects with race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and other identities to create multiple vulnerabilities, an intersectional lens enhances this understanding even more. Real resilience, then, is about advancing toward a more sustainable and equitable future rather than merely recovering to a pre-crisis state. Gender-responsive policies must be incorporated, underrepresented voices must be heard in climate decision-making, and care and solidarity institutions that assist the most vulnerable must be promoted.

### **1. Inequitable effect on Women**

Due to systemic injustices, women and marginalized populations are affected by climate change in diverse ways. For example, women make up the majority of the world's poor, which puts them at greater risk of food and water shortages brought on by floods, droughts, and other climate-related disasters. Women are frequently involved in subsistence farming in rural areas. Their livelihoods are directly threatened by climate shocks, which lower agricultural production. Women are more vulnerable to exploitation, displacement, and gender-based violence during catastrophes.

### **2. Reproductive Justice and Climate Change:**

Due to rising maternal death rates and restricted access to healthcare, climate change poses a danger to reproductive rights. Due to restricted access to prenatal and postnatal care, pregnant women in disaster-prone areas are at higher risk for health problems.

### **3. Indigenous and Marginalized Women:**

Due to environmental degradation, indigenous women—who are frequently the keepers of traditional ecological knowledge—face displacement and the loss of their cultural customs. Dalit and tribal women in South Asia are further marginalized by caste and class inequalities during climatic disasters, which restricts their access to resources for assistance.

### **Intersectional activism and ecofeminism as solutions:**

Through the integration of feminist ideals and environmental justice, ecofeminism provides a key framework for addressing gendered vulnerabilities. It makes the case that the exploitation of the natural world is comparable to the subjugation of women and other oppressed groups.

Ecofeminism highlights how patriarchal and capitalist systems exploit both women and nature, calling for holistic approaches to climate solutions. It stresses the importance of sustainable practices and caregiving ideals in fostering resilience.

Policymakers must include the perspectives of underrepresented groups in climate action initiatives in order to achieve intersectional solutions. Gender-responsive policies and participatory decision-making are examples of this. Reproductive rights must be incorporated into climate policies to safeguard women's health in times of environmental emergency. Indigenous women's ecological knowledge should be acknowledged and incorporated into climate adaption plans.

Because of pre-existing structural inequities, women, low-income communities, Indigenous peoples, and other disadvantaged groups are disproportionately affected by climate disasters. Examining particular instances, like the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina (2005), highlights the necessity for intersectional resilience measures by illuminating how gendered vulnerabilities appear in various sociopolitical situations.

### **Case Studies: The Effects of Climate Change on Gender and Intersections**

One of the deadliest disasters in American history, Hurricane Katrina, disproportionately affected low-

income neighborhoods, older people, and Black women in New Orleans. Inequalities in evacuation, aid distribution, and long-term recovery that were deeply rooted in race, gender, and class were brought to light by the disaster. Due to a lack of access to transportation, personal vehicles, or financial resources, many Black women, especially single moms, were unable to evacuate. People who have caregiving responsibilities were not taken into consideration by policies. After the disaster, the majority of people living in public housing—who were predominantly Black women—were forcibly evicted, and the government provided minimal aid for relocation. The absence of secure areas for women and children, inadequate security, and overcrowding in FEMA shelters led to an upsurge in reports of sexual abuse. Women of color, who already experienced wage disparities and financial instability, were disproportionately affected by the loss of low-paying jobs and cheap housing.

Hurricane Katrina is a prime example of how racial, gender, and economic intersections with climatic disasters increase vulnerability. Black women's leadership and knowledge were not prioritized in recovery initiatives, which served to further entrench structural injustices. Planning for climate resilience requires intersectional catastrophe policies to address gender-based violence, housing rights, and economic precarity.

The 2004 Indian ocean tsunami is also a case study which shows women vulnerabilities and survival disparities. Over 230,000 people were killed by the Indian Ocean tsunami, which ravaged coastal areas in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia. According to studies, women died at a disproportionately greater rate, exposing long-standing gender disparities in disaster planning, mobility, and resource access.

Women accounted for 70–80% of deaths in several affected areas. Cultural constraints frequently limited women's dress and swimming skills, making it more difficult for them to flee rising floods. The caregiving burdens increased the danger of death for many women who stayed behind to save children, old family members, or disabled relatives. As a result of displacement, women and girls were left defenseless in refugee camps, leading to a spike in rates of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. Recovery aid and financial assistance, which gave preference to households led by men, frequently excluded women from coastal fishing villages, despite their playing important roles in fish processing and market trade.

Gender norms have a profound impact on survival and recovery after a disaster, as the tsunami demonstrated. To provide fair access to resources, economic recovery programs, and protection from violence, climate adaptation measures must incorporate women-led organizations and feminist disaster relief strategies.

One of the worst storms to strike the Bay of Bengal in more than ten years, Cyclone Amphan, devastated sections of Bangladesh and India (West Bengal and Odisha) when it made landfall on May 20, 2020. It killed over 100 people, displaced millions, and left vast swaths of land without communication or light, causing immense devastation. In particular, the Sundarbans region—which is home to vulnerable rural and Indigenous communities—was affected by the cyclone.

The cyclone disproportionately affected women and marginalized groups due to pre-existing social and economic inequalities. Due to the loss of farmland and aquaculture, women in the Sundarbans region—who mostly depend on agriculture, small-scale fishing, and forest products for their livelihood—saw a major decline in their income. Many women, who were already struggling financially, were further pushed into financial instability when they were unable to access their main sources of income. The cyclone further disenfranchised Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh. In these camps,

women experienced increased risks of sexual abuse, poor sanitation, and food insecurity. Refugee women were especially susceptible to exploitation because they lacked access to resources for relief.

### Redefining Resilience via an Intersectional Perspective: A Conclusion

In order to build climate resilience, gendered vulnerabilities must be addressed while taking into account intersecting characteristics such as sexual orientation, race, class, and disability. Inequalities in decision-making, recovery efforts, and resource access are reinforced by the frequent neglect of these complexity in traditional disaster response and climate adaptation measures. Efforts to promote resilience are guaranteed to be inclusive, equitable, and transformative when an intersectional approach is used.

Redefining climate resilience through an intersectional and gender-inclusive perspective is necessary for its effectiveness. Bridging theory and practice involves:

**Intersectional Data gathering:** To draw attention to disparities in climate vulnerability and response, gender-disaggregated data gathering is crucial.

**Legal and Policy Reforms:** Increasing the protections provided by the law against discrimination and gender-based violence in times of climate emergency.

Building the ability for intersectional and feminist advocacy at the local, national, and international levels is the goal of feminist advocacy and education.

True climate resilience requires more than just technical fixes. We need to tackle the social and political inequalities that make certain groups more vulnerable to climate change. By using frameworks like feminism, ecofeminism, and intersectionality, we can create fair and lasting strategies. This means putting the voices of marginalized people first and building their experiences and needs into climate policies. This inclusive approach is the only way to achieve real climate justice.

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