



Recommendations for Integrating Women's Lived Experience Into Equitable Climate Responses

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Executive Summary

Our case study addressed the exclusion of women in climate change planning and responses in peri-urban areas. We found that women often carry a double burden of work and domestic responsibilities, which is further exacerbated by climate change, as climate impacts are being experienced on a daily basis in these areas. Climate change has a deleterious impact on women's wellbeing, especially their mental and physical health.

Through interviews, ethnographic observations and participatory approaches like filmmaking and 3-D scanning, we saw stark evidence of land-use change in the Amballoor district of Kerala in India. This change was caused primarily by a move away from paddy cultivation, which has impacted women's livelihoods and driven loss of ecological knowledge and youth migration. Yet, despite the challenges being faced in this region, many women remained eager to share the progress that has been made toward a better future and hopeful for continued improvements.

As peri-urban regions rapidly expand, women's unpaid and unrecognized labour in household and community resilience (especially during relocation to safety camps during climate disasters like floods) risk being overlooked in policy.

Our findings highlight how integrating women's lived experiences of climate vulnerability and local ecological knowledge can lead to more equitable, adaptive, and sustainable climate responses globally.



Mapping of Policy Stakeholders

The project identified the following stakeholders positioned to benefit from and apply the study's findings:

1. Policymakers in disaster risk reduction and response, climate change adaptation and loss and damage
2. Policy makers involved in planning and development
3. Local governments (Panchayats) and women's self-help collectives
4. Local NGOs and educational institutions
5. Policymakers from other states of India, seeking to replicate Kerala's social development model

Our insights, findings, and recommendations—building on empirical research and highlighting examples of good practice—are aimed to ensure effective policy uptake among key stakeholders. The full project report, available online for public viewership and disseminated locally through our collaborators namely Sustera (NGO partner) and NIT Calicut University (academic partner), will offer detailed insights that can inform future gender-sensitive data collection and policy design in Kerala. Sustera's close collaboration with the local government will facilitate direct policy engagement, allowing the findings to inform community initiatives.

A concise policy brief tailored specifically for the local Panchayat will contribute to ongoing consultations for developing a new disaster risk reduction strategy, offering actionable guidance on gender inclusion. Finally, the documentary film will amplify women's everyday experiences, helping policymakers, academic institutions, women's groups, NGOs, and the wider public to better recognise the importance of integrating women's voices and lived realities into mainstream climate and development planning.





Solutions

Our research recommends gender mainstreaming in all climate-related policies and programmes at the local and state levels. This can take the form of: (a) incorporating women's perspectives in disaster risk reduction planning; (b) strengthening livelihood diversification programmes for women in peri-urban areas; and (c) designing inclusive infrastructure and welfare systems (e.g., gender-sensitive shelter management through safe and accessible toilets, ensuring supply for menstrual products, mental health and other psychosocial support during and after disasters etc.).

Across our fieldwork and stakeholder engagement, there was broad agreement that women's unpaid and invisible labour in climate resilience remains underacknowledged both within the household as well as policy. Peri-urban transitions further constrain women's agency. Collaborative discussions with partners confirmed the need for multi-level, gender-inclusive approaches in climate adaptation.

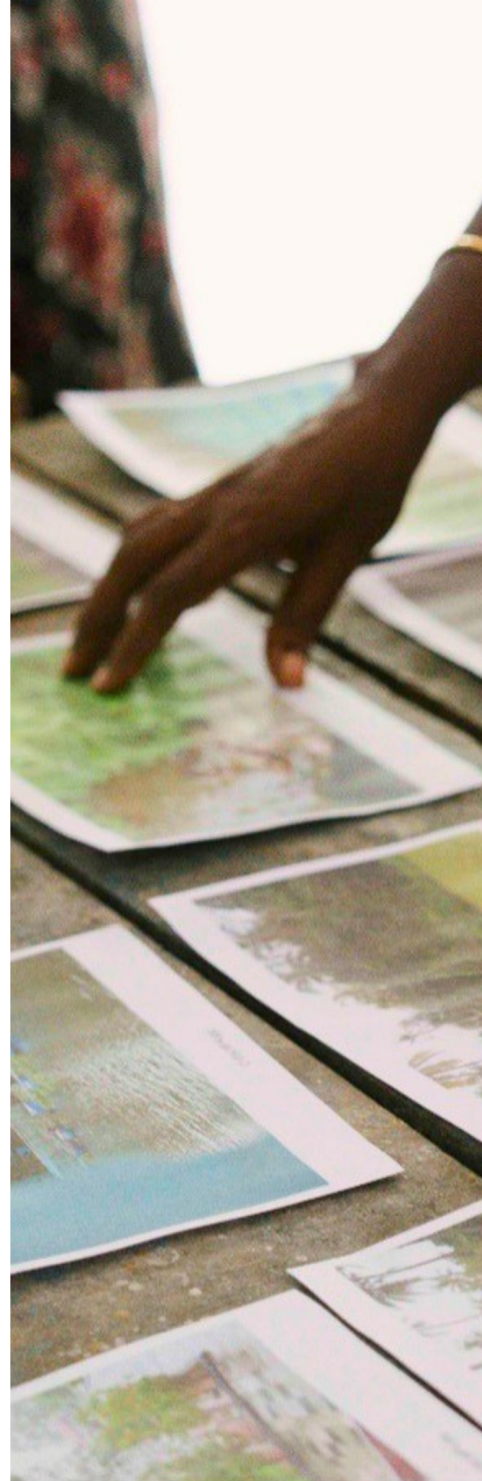
While our data from Amballoor revealed clear gendered climate impacts and resilience strategies, significant gaps remain in the broader evidence base. First, there is limited national-level data on gendered climate impacts specific to peri-urban contexts, which constrains the ability to compare and upscale locally grounded findings to other regions in India. Second, there is a need to better understand the mechanisms through which women's local ecological knowledge can be effectively translated into formal planning, governance, and adaptation systems. Addressing these gaps will be crucial for ensuring that gender-responsive climate policies are both evidence-based and contextually grounded.

Recommendations Deep Dive

The recommendations align with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), both of which advocate for gender-responsive climate governance. Embedding gender considerations in the existing policy frameworks enhances compliance and improves the overall efficacy of local adaptation measures.

Local governments (Panchayats) and state-level disaster management authorities can adopt these recommendations in the form of gender-inclusive climate governance and policies. This would necessitate addressing capacity gaps such as lack of gender-sensitive data collection, limited women's representation in climate committees, and minimal cross-sector coordination. Addressing these through training for local officials and inclusive budgeting can ensure operational success. While gender mainstreaming into policy may require minimal additional funding, targeted allocations are necessary for supporting: (a) capacity-building workshops for local officials; (b) women's livelihood programmes; and (c) welfare measures such as menstrual product availability in refuge shelters during floods. Funding may be sourced from state disaster management budgets, CSR initiatives, and climate adaptation funds (e.g., Green Climate Fund [GCF], NABARD Climate Fund).

Women and community-based organisations in Kerala and other Indian states stand to benefit directly from more inclusive policy frameworks. Potential resistance such as entrenched institutional norms and male-dominated decision-making can be mitigated through regular stakeholder workshops promoting dialogue, peer learning, and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organisations, with increased participation of women-led groups.



Prioritization and Technical Assistance for Implementation

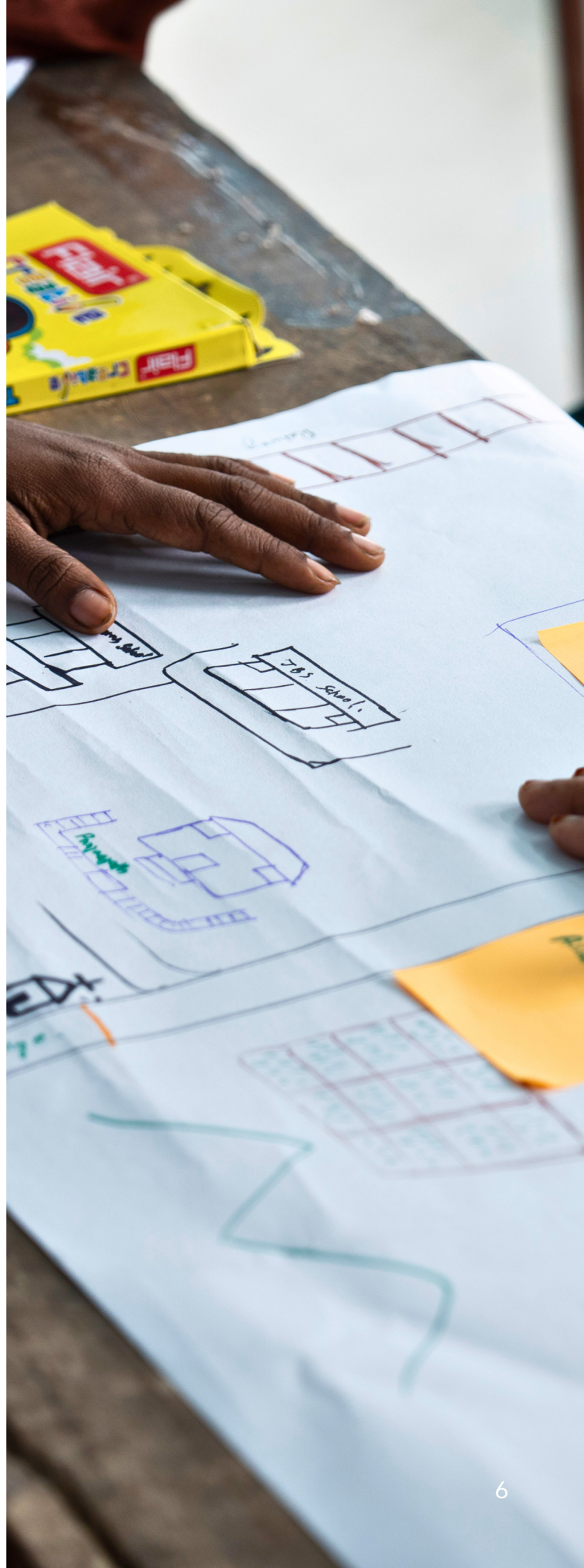
To implement these recommendations effectively, several priorities must be addressed.

First, integrating gender-sensitive indicators into local climate action plans is essential to ensure that women's experiences and contributions are systematically recognized and measured.

Strengthening institutional partnerships between local governments, women's collectives, and NGOs will help create locally grounded networks capable of sustaining inclusive climate action.

Equally important is the development of training modules on gender and climate governance for local officials, enabling them to incorporate gender perspectives in planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.

Technical assistance pertaining to establishing robust gender data systems for climate policy evaluation, supporting participatory monitoring frameworks that centre women's voices, and facilitating collaboration between academic and policy institutions will be needed to lay the groundwork for evidence-based, scalable, and inclusive climate adaptation strategies.



Conclusion

The Amballoor research demonstrates that climate vulnerability in peri-urban regions is deeply shaped by gendered social relations, livelihood transitions and changing ecological conditions. While Kerala has made significant progress in advancing women's empowerment through strong social development programmes and grassroots institutions, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate burden of care, household management, and climate adaptation. These responsibilities become far more pronounced during climate disasters like floods.

Our findings underscore the importance of moving beyond viewing women solely as vulnerable populations and recognizing them as knowledge holders, community leaders, and key actors in building climate resilience. Integrating women's lived experiences, local ecological knowledge and everyday adaptation strategies into planning processes can strengthen the effectiveness, equity and sustainability of climate action.

As climate risks intensify and peri-urban regions continue to expand, gender-responsive governance must become a core component of climate and development policy rather than a standalone consideration. By mainstreaming gender across adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development planning, policymakers have an opportunity to build more inclusive and resilient futures for peri-urban communities in Kerala and beyond.





This work builds on the 2024-25 Reach research report, "[Blind Spots: Enabling Gender-Inclusive Climate Action in Peri-Urban Regions in India](#)," by Harriet Brown, Anando Ghosh, Richard Müller, Megha Zavar, Pushpa Arabindoo, Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, and all the impactful partners, community members, and mentors involved in the research.

As part of the "Pathways from Evidence to Action" series, inspired by the African Center for Equitable Development (ACED), the Reach Alliance challenged researchers to identify connections, address gaps, and develop recommendations grounded in their findings. The series comprises thirteen briefing notes developing solutions for urgent climate, public health, and economic challenges and engages practitioners and policymakers in advancing pathways to implementation.

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