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British Journal of Contemporary Research

BEXFORD PUBLISHING

Ecologies of Gendered Vulnerability in South Asia: Displacement, Disaster, Resource Conflict, and the Cultural Politics of Ecologies of Violence

Review Article | Volume 1 | Issue 6 | 2026 | Article Number: 050

Accepted: 28 October 2026 | Published: 10 November 2026 | ISSN: 2979-8582 (Online)

Crossref : **https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-8AW8PRIB**

Ikhlas Ahmad[1], Rabiya Khatoon[2], Mohammad Zafar Ayat[3], Mohammad Zeeshan[4], Meenakshi Singh[1]

[1]Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India,

[2]Department of Electronics & Communication, I.T.M., Gorakhpur, India,

[3]Department of Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India,

[4]Veer Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University, Uttar Pradesh, India

IA 0009-0007-8628-4014, **RK** 0009-0000-7991-665X, **MZA** 0009-0002-1539-3460, **MZ** 0009-0006-6793-3456, **MS** 0009-0003-9455-7554

Correspondence: Ikhlas Ahmad, ikhlas.edu.2022@bhu.ac.in

Abstract

Environmental disruption in South Asia is closely associated with gender inequality, displacement, livelihood insecurity, and violence. Floods, cyclones, droughts, riverbank erosion, heat stress, water scarcity, and resource extraction affect populations differently because access to land, income, mobility, social protection, and political institutions is unequal. Women and girls may face heightened risks due to gendered labor divisions, insecure property rights, care responsibilities, mobility restrictions, and exclusion from environmental decision-making. This article examines how ecological change becomes gendered through disasters, displacement, and conflicts over land, water, and natural resources. It adopts an interdisciplinary critical-review methodology, integrating environmental humanities, political ecology, gender studies, disaster studies, and migration research with evidence from scholarly literature and authoritative institutional sources. Drawing on scholarly and institutional sources, it comparatively examines Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the wider South Asian region. The analysis argues that gendered vulnerability is socially produced through interactions between environmental hazards, patriarchal institutions, socioeconomic inequalities, resource dependence, insecure livelihoods, and exclusionary governance. Displacement is conceptualized as a continuing process encompassing pre-disaster exposure, evacuation, relocation, and livelihood reconstruction. Literature and media representations may reinforce stereotypes of women as passive disaster victims, but they can also highlight women's ecological knowledge, resistance, and political agency. The article proposes an

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Ecology-Gender-Displacement-Violence Framework connecting ecological stress, resource insecurity, mobility, institutional disruption, and gender-based violence while recognizing women's adaptive capacities. It concludes that gender-responsive climate policies must extend beyond protection-oriented interventions to strengthen women's resource rights, political participation, personal safety, livelihood security, and representation in ecological governance. The study offers a conceptual synthesis rather than original field-survey findings, contributing an integrated perspective for inclusive disaster-risk reduction and environmental policymaking in South Asia.

Keywords: Climate Change, Gender-Based Violence, Displacement, Resource Conflict, Gendered Vulnerability

1. Introduction

Climate change is often described through environmental indicators—rising temperatures, changing rainfall, sea-level rise, glacier retreat, and increasingly severe extreme events. Yet ecological change is never experienced through environmental processes alone. A flood may destroy a dwelling, but its consequences extend into employment, schooling, health, family relationships, mobility, food security, and access to public institutions. A prolonged drought may reduce agricultural productivity while simultaneously increasing women's unpaid labor for collecting water, fuel, and food. Riverbank erosion may repeatedly displace households while undermining property ownership and social networks. Environmental degradation can therefore transform intimate social relations as profoundly as it transforms physical landscapes. South Asia represents a particularly important context for investigating these relationships. The region contains extensive climate-sensitive agricultural systems, densely populated river basins, long coastlines, and large urban populations exposed to climatic and environmental hazards. The IPCC identifies South Asia as a major hotspot where floods, drought, water insecurity, food insecurity, sea-level rise, and other climate risks intersect with socioeconomic inequalities. It also notes that gender, social context, power relations, and human capital strongly mediate migration and displacement.

The scale of displacement reinforces the urgency of the problem. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, disaster-related internal displacements in South Asia nearly tripled in 2024 to approximately 9.2 million, making it the second-highest regional figure in more than a decade. These figures describe movements, rather than necessarily representing distinct individuals, but they demonstrate the magnitude of environmental disruption affecting the region. However, aggregate figures conceal significant differences in experience. Gender determines who controls land, who performs unpaid care work, who has access to employment and credit, who can move independently, who receives disaster information, and who participates in decisions concerning natural resources. UN Women has consequently emphasized that climate change and disaster impacts are not gender neutral and that women's dependence on natural resources, combined with limited ownership and control over those resources, can increase vulnerability. At the same time, it cautions against representing women solely as passive recipients of humanitarian assistance.

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Figure 4. Women experiencing displacement during flooding in South Asia

Source: UNHCR flood-relief documentation from Sindh, Pakistan, as identified in the supplied working manuscript. (Reuters, September 2011).

Women navigating floodwaters while carrying household belongings illustrate how environmental disasters intersect with mobility, livelihood disruption, and gendered responsibilities. The image is read here as documentary evidence of unequal exposure and responsibility, not as proof that women are inherently passive or helpless. This article starts from that conceptual tension. It recognizes gendered vulnerability while resisting a simplistic narrative in which women are inherently fragile in the face of environmental crisis. Instead, it treats vulnerability as socially produced. The central argument is that institutions, social norms, and unequal resource relations gender ecological hazards. Gender-based violence, displacement, and resource conflict therefore need to be examined within the same analytical field rather than as separate social problems.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 From natural hazards to socially produced vulnerability

Earlier disaster scholarship challenged the assumption that disasters are simply natural events. Blaikie et al. (1994) and Wisner et al. (2004) demonstrated that hazards interact with social structures to produce unequal outcomes. The same environmental event can therefore create dramatically different consequences among populations occupying different socioeconomic positions. Adger (2006) subsequently connected vulnerability with exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. Ribot (2014) further argued that vulnerability must be understood through the political and institutional processes that determine access to protection and resources. Gender analysis extends this argument. Neumayer and Plümper (2007) found that gender differences in disaster mortality are associated with socioeconomic status and women's rights rather than simply biological differences. Enarson (2012) similarly demonstrates that disasters frequently expose and intensify inequalities that already exist in everyday social life. The significance of this approach for South Asia is substantial. A woman without land ownership, formal employment, independent income, or political representation may experience the same flood differently from a woman with secure property rights, financial resources, and institutional connections.

2.2 Feminist political ecology

Feminist political ecology provides a second theoretical foundation. It examines how gender intersects

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with environmental resources, labor, property, knowledge, and power. Rocheleau et al. (1996) demonstrated that environmental relations are structured by gendered access to resources and knowledge. From this perspective, women's relationship with forests, water, and agricultural land cannot be reduced to "dependence on nature." Such relationships are embedded within labor systems and property regimes. For example, when forests become degraded, women may travel further to collect fuel. When water sources become inaccessible, the burden of household water collection may increase. When agricultural land is lost, women may lose productive roles while remaining responsible for unpaid domestic work. Gendered ecological vulnerability is consequently connected to the politics of who owns, who uses, who manages, and who decides.

2.3 Intersectionality

Gender alone does not adequately explain vulnerability. Intersectional analysis recognizes that gender interacts with class, caste, ethnicity, age, disability, livelihood, migration status, and geographical location. Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding how overlapping structures can create distinct experiences of disadvantage. In environmental research, Djoudi et al. (2016) similarly demonstrate that gender should not be separated from other axes of inequality. Recent South Asian research confirms this limitation. Choudhary et al. (2025) systematically reviewed 53 studies published between 2000 and 2024 and found that much climate-gender research in South Asia remains concentrated on agriculture, disaster, forestry, and water, while less gender-sensitive studies often overlook intra-gender differences. The present article therefore adopts an intersectional ecological vulnerability perspective.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This article uses a critical interdisciplinary literature review and conceptual synthesis design. It does not claim to present original field-survey data. Instead, it synthesizes evidence from peer-reviewed research, major international organizations, and established theoretical scholarship. The methodology was selected because the research question concerns relationships among multiple domains: environmental change, gender, displacement, resource conflict, violence, literature, and media that cannot adequately be understood through a single disciplinary approach. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and authoritative sources from the IPCC, UN Women, World Bank, UNHCR, IUCN, and IDMC.

3.2 Analytical procedure

The analysis then compared evidence from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan while using wider South Asian scholarship to identify regional patterns. Choudhary et al. (2025) identified 53 studies in a systematic review of gender vulnerability and adaptation in South Asia, while another review of gender, climate change, and disaster scholarship identified 47 studies and highlighted strong South Asian representation alongside persistent gaps in intersectional and policy-oriented research. This article responds to that gap by bringing displacement, resource conflict, and cultural representation into a single theoretical framework.

4. Review of Related Literature

The literature reveals three important patterns. First, gender-sensitive environmental research has expanded significantly. Second, South Asia is now one of the most extensively studied regions. Third, substantial gaps remain concerning intersectionality, displacement trajectories, resource conflict, and the translation of research into policy. Recent reviews reinforce this assessment: Choudhary et al. (2025) identified 53 South Asian studies and highlighted persistent problems of intersectionality and uneven treatment of adaptation,

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while Kawane et al. (2026) identified 47 studies and likewise noted strong South Asian representation alongside limited intersectional coverage and weak policy translation.

Table 1. Selected literature and its contribution to the present study

Author/source	Context/focus	Major contribution	Relevance to present study
Adger (2006)	Vulnerability theory	Links vulnerability with adaptive capacity	Foundation for vulnerability analysis
Blaikie et al. (1994)	Disaster studies	Social production of disaster risk	Moves beyond natural-hazard explanation
Crenshaw (1989)	Intersectionality	Multiple structures of inequality,,,,,,,	Explains differentiated female vulnerability
Rocheleau et al. (1996)	Feminist political ecology	Gender, environment and resource access	Resource-conflict dimension
Neumayer & Plümper (2007)	Natural disasters	Gendered disaster mortality	Gender and disaster relationship
Enarson (2012)	Disaster and gender	Gendered social consequences,,,,,	Disaster vulnerability
Ribot (2014)	Political ecology	Vulnerability and political relations	Institutional dimension
Terry (2009)	Climate justice	Gender justice and climate change	Justice-oriented framework
Rao et al. (2019)	Asia/Africa	Gendered vulnerability	Comparative regional perspective
Sultana (2021)	Climate/gender	Feminist analysis of intersecting crises	Intersectional approach
Krishnan (2023),	Assam,,, India	Women's mobility after floods/erosion	Displacement and agency
Rajput & Jadhav (2023)	India	Natural-resource conflict and GBV	Resource-conflict pathway
UN Women (2019)	Asia	Gender and disaster-risk reduction	Policy evidence
UN Women (2020),,	Climate/security	Gender, climate and security	Violence and ecological insecurity
IPCC (2022)	Asia/South Asia	Climate migration and gender	Regional evidence
World Bank (2018)	Global/South Asia	Internal climate migration	Migration, projections
Khanom et al. (2022)	Bangladesh	Climate migration and gender	Post-migration vulnerability
Harun et al. (2025)	South Asia	Climate displacement,,,	Regional synthesis
Recent systematic review (2025)	South Asia	53 studies	Identifies methodological gaps
Kawane et al. (2026)	Global, strong South Asia coverage	47 studies	Identifies intersectional/policy gaps

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5. Ecological Change and Gendered Vulnerability in South Asia

Climate change interacts with existing environmental and socioeconomic pressures. The IPCC identifies South Asia as particularly vulnerable to climate-related changes in food production, water availability, floods, droughts, and coastal hazards. It also emphasizes that social, economic, historical, and political factors shape differential vulnerability. Women can encounter these hazards through everyday livelihood responsibilities.

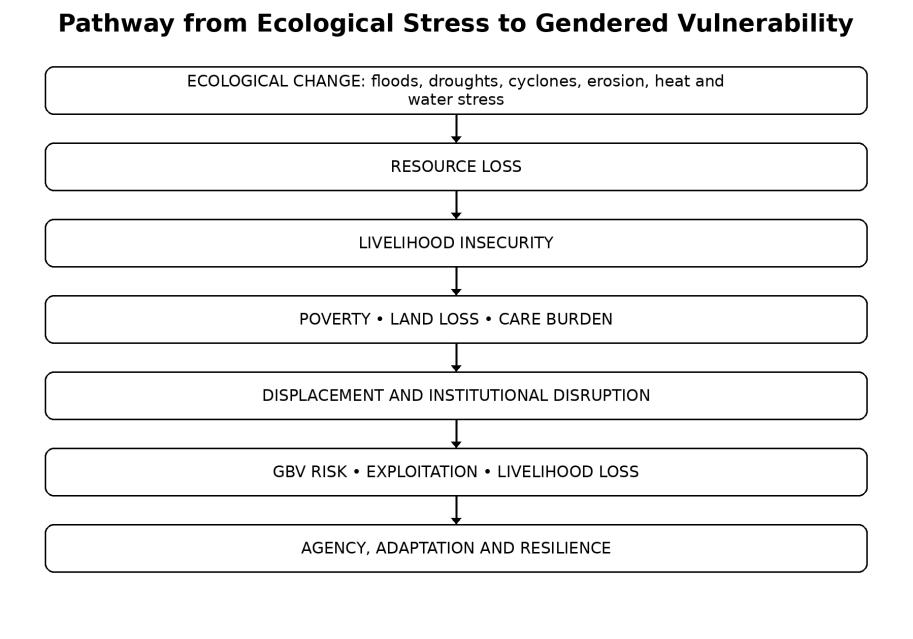


Figure 1. Pathway from ecological stress to gendered vulnerability

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on Adger (2006), Enarson (2012), IPCC (2022, 2023), UN Women (2019, 2020), and the South Asian case literature.

The figure conceptualizes vulnerability as a social process: ecological pressure affects resources and livelihoods, which interact with poverty, land loss, and care responsibilities before producing differentiated displacement and protection risks. The pathway also leaves room for agency, adaptation, and resilience.



Figure 5. Gendered labor and water insecurity in an environmentally stressed landscape

Source*:* Sam Panthaky, AFP / Getty Images, a woman carries water across a dry, cracked lakebed in a drought-affected region of India.

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UN Women identifies this gendered division of labor and women's limited ownership and control over natural resources as important factors contributing to vulnerability in Asia.

6. Disasters and Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence constitutes one of the most serious consequences requiring further investigation. Disaster conditions can weaken social protection systems, overcrowd shelters, disrupt policing and justice mechanisms, separate families, and increase dependence on employers or intermediaries. These conditions can create opportunities for exploitation. UN Women documents evidence that sexual and gender-based violence, child or early marriage, and trafficking may increase following disasters, while also emphasizing that the exact climate–violence relationship requires further empirical investigation. It would be methodologically inaccurate to argue that every disaster automatically produces gender-based violence. Instead, disasters interact with existing gender inequalities and institutional weaknesses.

7. Displacement as a Gendered Process

Displacement should not be treated as a single moment of physical movement. At each stage, women may encounter different forms of risk. The IPCC reports that most observed climate-related migration and displacement occurs within national borders and that flooding and tropical cyclones are among the hazards most frequently associated with displacement. It also stresses that low-agency displacement is associated with poorer socioeconomic and well-being outcomes. In South Asia, migration may be simultaneously an adaptation strategy and a source of new vulnerability. The IPCC notes that migration requires resources and that the poorest households can be immobilized by liquidity constraints. It also reports evidence that migration can increase gendered work burdens.

8. Bangladesh: Climate Migration and Gender

Bangladesh provides one of the most important examples of climate-related mobility in South Asia. The country's coastal areas face cyclones, flooding, salinity intrusion, and sea-level-related risks. Climate-induced migration can therefore involve rural-to-urban movement as well as movement within vulnerable coastal regions. Khanom et al. (2022) demonstrate that climate-induced migrants in Bangladesh may encounter gendered insecurity after migration. Their analysis is important because it shows that movement does not necessarily end vulnerability. The transition from rural livelihood to urban informal employment may create new forms of economic dependence. Women can encounter insecure housing, unstable employment, and restricted access to social protection. The broader lesson is that adaptation through migration must be evaluated according to where migrants move, under what conditions, with what resources and with what institutional protection.

9. India: Floods, Riverbank Erosion and Women's Mobility

Assam offers an important Indian case because recurring floods and riverbank erosion produce repeated displacement. Krishnan (2023) demonstrates that women's mobility after floods and erosion is shaped by household structures, male migration, social expectations, and adaptive capacities. The study complicates the assumption that women are simply left behind as passive dependents. In some circumstances, women's responsibilities increase after male migration. Yet increased responsibility can also generate new forms of decision-making and livelihood agency. The distinction is crucial because policies based only on vulnerability may overlook women's capacities to reorganize households, sustain livelihoods, and build social networks.

10. Pakistan: Disaster, Migration, and Gendered Insecurity

Pakistan demonstrates another dimension of the relationship between climate disasters and gender. The

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country is highly exposed to floods, drought, heat, and water stress. The 2022 floods demonstrated the scale at which climatic and socioeconomic vulnerabilities can converge. Climate-induced migration can expose women to insecure housing, reduced livelihood opportunities, inadequate sanitation, and weakened social protection. The literature indicates that gender norms can shape both migration decisions and post-migration vulnerability. This reinforces the need to distinguish between physical exposure and social exposure. A household may escape a flood physically while entering a settlement where women face insecurity, harassment, poor sanitation, and livelihood exclusion.

11. Resource Conflict and Gender-Based Violence

Natural resources are not merely ecological assets. They are also economic and political resources. Land, water, and forests are connected to property, livelihood, identity, and authority. Competition over them can therefore become a source of social conflict. IUCN's research on gender-based violence and environmental linkages identifies the relationship between gender-based violence and natural-resource governance as an important field of analysis. A particularly useful empirical contribution comes from Rajput and Jadhav (2023), who examine conflicts over natural resources and gender-based violence among Gujjar women in India. Their study illustrates how women's everyday activities involving firewood, water, and grazing resources can expose them to violence.

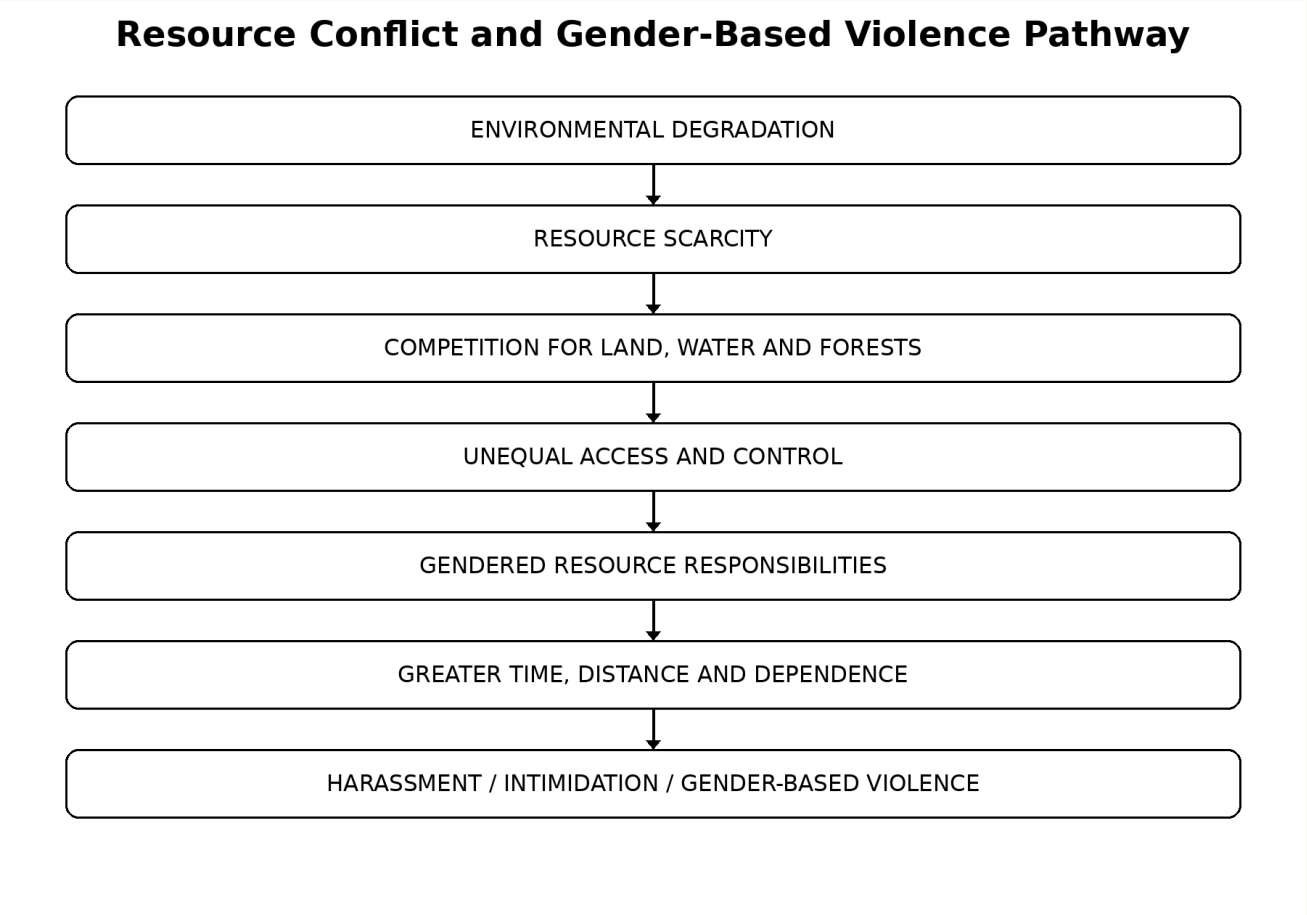


Figure 2. Resource conflict and gender-based violence pathway

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis based on IUCN (2020), Rajput and Jadhav (2023), and feminist political-ecology scholarship.

The pathway shows how environmental degradation can become gendered through scarcity, unequal access, and the responsibilities attached to resource collection. Increased time, distance, and dependence may create additional exposure to harassment, intimidation, and violence.

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Figure 6. Women's environmental resistance and resource politics

Source: Photograph supplied in the working manuscript. (News *Today Network*, 30 Mar. 2022)

Women's collective participation in environmental action demonstrates that ecological vulnerability does not imply political passivity. Women may experience resource insecurity while simultaneously organizing to defend land, forests, water, and community rights. It may occur through everyday struggles over access, movement, and control.

12. The Cultural Politics of the "Disaster Woman"

Disasters are represented through stories and images. These representations shape public understanding of who is vulnerable and whose suffering deserves attention. Visual media frequently presents women as mothers carrying children, displaced people waiting for relief, or victims standing beside destroyed homes. Such representations can generate humanitarian sympathy, but they may also remove the political causes of vulnerability from view. The image of the "disaster woman" can consequently become depoliticized. Amitav Ghosh (2016), in The Great Derangement, argues that modern literary and cultural forms have struggled to represent the scale and implications of climate change. His argument is especially relevant to South Asia, where ecological disruption is increasingly intertwined with everyday social experience.

13. Literature as Resistance

Literature does not simply represent vulnerability; it can challenge it. South Asian writers have increasingly connected ecological degradation with questions of development, inequality and political power. Arundhati Roy's political and environmental writing, for example, encourages readers to question the distributional consequences of large infrastructure projects and development policies. Cultural texts can complicate the binary between "victim" and "survivor." Women may appear simultaneously as subjects of suffering, caregivers, workers, political actors, and environmental witnesses. The literary representation of ecological displacement therefore has a methodological value: it allows researchers to understand the affective and cultural dimensions of environmental change.

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14. Women as Agents of Ecological Resilience

A major danger in gender-and-climate research is reproducing the stereotype that women are naturally vulnerable. UN Women explicitly calls for moving beyond traditional representations of women as inherently vulnerable and passive recipients of assistance. It emphasizes women's knowledge and contributions to individual and community resilience. The concept of agency therefore needs to accompany vulnerability.

15. Proposed Ecology–Gender–Displacement–Violence Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, this study proposes an original Ecology–Gender–Displacement–Violence (EGDV) Framework.

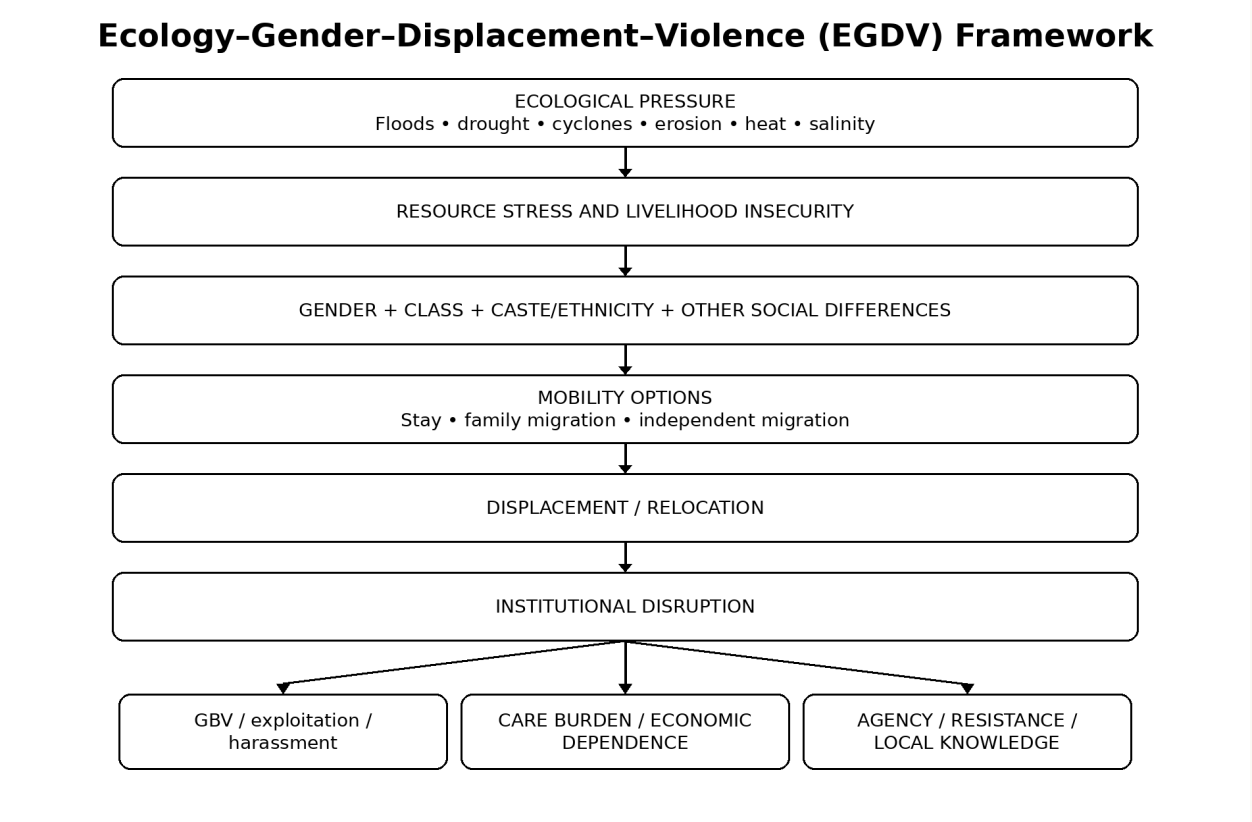


Figure 3. Ecology–Gender–Displacement–Violence (EGDV) framework

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis developed from the interdisciplinary literature reviewed in this article.

The proposed framework places ecological pressure, resource stress, social inequality, and mobility options in a connected sequence. It highlights institutional disruption and multiple forms of gendered harm while retaining agency, local knowledge, and collective resistance as pathways toward just adaptation and resilience.

16. Comparative South Asian Analysis

Table 2. Comparative ecological-gender vulnerability matrix

Country/context	Major ecological pressure	Displacement pathway	Gendered vulnerability	Agency/resilience
Bangladesh	Cyclones, floods, salinity	Rural–urban and internal migration	Livelihood insecurity, unsafe settlements, care burden	Community networks and adaptation

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Country/context	Major ecological pressure	Displacement pathway	Gendered vulnerability	Agency/resilience
Assam, India	Floods, riverbank erosion	Repeated household displacement	Property/livelihood loss, male outmigration	Women's adaptive mobility and household decision-making
Pakistan	Floods, heat, drought,	Internal displacement	Shelter insecurity, livelihood disruption, GBV risks	Community support and local adaptation
Himalayan region	Landslides, water stress, glacier change	Rural–urban migration	Water and livelihood burdens	Local ecological knowledge,
Coastal South Asia	Sea-level rise, cyclones	Planned and unplanned relocation	Loss of land and social networks	Women's participation in resilience planning

17. Major Findings

1. **Socially Produced Ecological Vulnerability**: Environmental hazards affect populations differently, as gender relations and socioeconomic and institutional inequalities shape exposure, resource access, and recovery.
2. **Multidimensional Displacement:** Displacement extends beyond physical relocation to include losses of livelihoods, land, social networks, cultural identity, and access to essential services.
3. **Dual Dimensions of Migration:** Migration may improve safety and livelihood opportunities while exposing women to exploitation, insecure housing, harassment, and inadequate social protection.
4. **Gendered Resource Conflicts:** Competition over land, water, and forests disproportionately affects women through increased workloads, restricted mobility, and heightened exposure to insecurity and violence.
5. **Women's Agency and Resilience:** Women actively contribute to adaptation through ecological knowledge, community organization, collective action, and informal support networks, despite structural inequalities.
6. **Need for an Integrated Framework:** Gender-neutral and victim-centered approaches overlook intersecting inequalities and women's agency. An integrated perspective connecting ecological change, social inequality, displacement, resource conflict, and gender-based violence is essential for developing inclusive, gender-responsive policies.

17. Discussion

A regional reading of the evidence suggests that vulnerability should be understood not simply in terms of who is exposed to an environmental hazard, but also in terms of **who can recover, how quickly, and with what resources**. Bangladesh, Assam and Pakistan differ in their ecological conditions, political histories, and patterns of population movement, yet the reviewed literature reveals a recurring pattern: environmental disruption produces unequal consequences because households do not possess the same capacity to protect livelihoods or rebuild them afterwards. Recovery often depends on access to land and housing, financial resources, identity documents, social networks, information, employment opportunities and public institutions. These resources are themselves shaped by gender relations. Women may have less control over household assets, fewer opportunities for independent mobility and greater responsibility for children,

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older family members and domestic work. Consequently, two households exposed to a similar flood, drought or resource crisis may experience very different pathways of recovery. The evidence also indicates that **displacement should not be equated with physical movement alone**. Environmental stress can transform livelihoods and family responsibilities even when people remain in their place of origin. When male household members migrate in search of employment, women may remain behind with increased responsibility for agriculture, household management, children and dependent relatives. Conversely, women who move with their families may reach locations where housing, sanitation, education, and employment are insecure. Independent migration can sometimes provide greater control over income and decision-making, but it may also expose women to harassment, insecure work and social isolation. Migration therefore has no uniform outcome. Its effects depend on the conditions under which movement takes place, the resources available to migrants and the extent to which destination institutions recognize them as rights-bearing members of society.

This perspective also changes how disaster is represented in cultural and public discourse. Images of women standing in floodwater, carrying water over long distances or waiting for relief often make environmental suffering visible, but they can obscure the institutional and social processes that produce unequal outcomes. A more critical reading asks what happens beyond the visible moment: who lost land, who could claim compensation, who had access to documentation, who was able to move safely, and whose labor sustained the household during crisis? Such questions move analysis beyond portraying women simply as victims. They draw attention to women as workers, caregivers, community organizers, holders of local ecological knowledge and participants in struggles over resources. In this sense, unequal recovery is not only an economic or institutional issue; it is also a question of representation, recognition and power.

18. Research Gap

Despite growing research on climate change, disasters, displacement, and gender vulnerability in South Asia, these issues are often examined separately. An important gap is the limited application of intersectionality, particularly regarding caste, class, ethnicity, age, disability, and migration status. Disaster research and gender-based violence studies also remain insufficiently integrated, limiting understanding of violence during environmental crises. Furthermore, resource conflicts over land, water, and forests receive inadequate attention to their gendered consequences, including restricted mobility, harassment, and violence. Cultural representations of displaced women in literature, media, and visual narratives are similarly underexplored. Finally, research findings are not consistently translated into gender-transformative policies. This article addresses these gaps by integrating ecological, social, political, gender, and cultural perspectives to examine vulnerability as an interconnected process.

19. Policy Implications

1. Disaster-management plans should integrate gender-based violence prevention, safe shelters, adequate lighting, private sanitation facilities, accessible complaint mechanisms, and gender-sensitive evacuation arrangements.
2. Women's land ownership and secure access to housing and productive resources should be strengthened through climate adaptation, rehabilitation, and resilience policies.
3. Climate-related migration policies should ensure women's access to documentation, safe employment, secure housing, transportation, childcare, social protection, and safe migration pathways.
4. Women should have meaningful representation in disaster-management committees, climate-adaptation bodies, local government, and relocation planning, ensuring genuine

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participation in decision-making.

5. National disaster and climate databases should systematically record sex, age, disability, migration status, and socioeconomic characteristics to identify gendered vulnerabilities and develop targeted interventions.
6. Universities should promote interdisciplinary education connecting gender studies, environmental humanities, disaster studies, and migration, examining how social structures distribute disaster risks and shape recovery.

20. Educational Significance

The educational dimension is especially important for a seminar concerned with literature, culture, and media. Environmental education frequently emphasizes scientific knowledge temperature, rainfall, carbon emissions, and ecosystem change. Gender studies, by contrast, often concentrates on social institutions and violence. An interdisciplinary curriculum can connect these domains. Such pedagogical approaches help students understand that the environmental crisis is not only a scientific problem. It is also a question of ethics, justice, representation, and power.

21. Limitation and suggestion for future research

This study's reliance on secondary literature, uneven geographical coverage, binary gender classifications, challenges in establishing causality, and limitations in displacement statistics constrain its findings. Future research should adopt mixed-method, intersectional, and longitudinal approaches to examine evolving patterns of gender-based violence, environmental vulnerability, displacement, resilience, and recovery across diverse social groups and geographical contexts.

22. Conclusion

Ecological disruption in South Asia is not gender neutral. Floods, cyclones, droughts, erosion, heat, water scarcity, and resource degradation interact with social institutions to distribute environmental risk unequally. Women can experience heightened exposure because they frequently carry disproportionate responsibility for household care and resource collection while possessing less control over land, income, and institutional decision-making. Displacement can further weaken social protection and livelihood security, while resource conflicts can transform everyday activities such as collecting water, fuel, or forest products into sites of harassment and violence. Vulnerability should not become a synonym for powerlessness. Women are knowledge holders, caregivers, workers, farmers, migrants, community organizers, environmental defenders, and political actors. Their agency is essential to understanding adaptation. The central theoretical contribution of this article is therefore the Ecology–Gender–Displacement Violence Framework, which conceptualizes gender-based vulnerability as the outcome of interaction among ecological stress, resource insecurity, social inequality, mobility constraints, and institutional disruption. The cultural dimension is equally important. Literature, film, photography, and media can reproduce the passive image of the "disaster woman," but they can also challenge that representation by documenting memory, resistance, ecological knowledge, and political agency. For South Asia, climate justice therefore requires gender justice. The appropriate policy response is not simply to protect women from disasters. It is to transform the institutions that distribute environmental risk, guarantee women's rights to resources, make displacement safer, prevent gender-based violence, recognize women's knowledge and give women meaningful authority in environmental governance. This perspective provides a more robust foundation for environmental humanities, gender studies, disaster research, and climate-policy scholarship and offers a productive interdisciplinary direction for future South Asian research.

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Declarations

Funding: No external funding was used for preparation of this review.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data availability: This article synthesizes published and publicly available secondary sources; no primary participant dataset was generated.

Ethics statement: Ethical approval was not required because the article uses publicly available secondary literature and institutional reports.

AI-use statement: The authors declare that Grammarly and Consensus AI were used during the preparation of this manuscript. These tools were used to support language refinement and literature organization; the author remains responsible for the interpretation, analysis, and final content of the manuscript.

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