

PAKISTAN



**GHOTKI,
SINDH**

**CLIMATE JUSTICE
FEMINIST
PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH
2017-18**

COUNTRY PROFILE

Pakistan's agriculture sector (its primary economic sector) is under tremendous threat from climate change. In rural areas and along the coast, floods, droughts, depleting water sources and rising temperatures have been playing havoc with the lives of poor people. Unregulated industrialisation, deforestation and excessive use of chemicals in agriculture are affecting the agriculture sector irrevocably.¹

In the aftermath of the devastating flood in 2010, the government of Pakistan established the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) as emergency response and relief agencies. In 2013, the Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change articulated the National Climate Change Policy law, under which gender and women policy framework is touched upon. In 2016 and 2017 respectively, the National Assembly of Pakistan and the Senate of Pakistan finally passed the Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017, which aims to secure global funding to mitigate the impacts of climate change on various socio-economic sectors.²

Building a local women's movement to restore forests and address flood and erosion through government programmes

Roshni Tariqiyati Tanzeem, a civil society organisation committed to promoting principles of socio-economic justice across the country and expand participatory human development, conducted the Climate Justice FPAR along with the local women in five villages in Ghotki district.

Surrounded by oil and gas companies, sugar and rice mills, fertiliser and cotton factories, Ghotki has been facing severe deforestation, floods and erosion. This Climate Justice FPAR worked to mobilise the local women to address the issues behind deforestation and to build a movement for reforestation and to protect their land and livelihoods.



CLIMATE ISSUES IN GHOTKI

Pakistani society is mired in patriarchy, religious fundamentalism, tribal laws, feudalism and corruption. The oppressive patriarchal society deprives its women of basic education, health care, public and community spaces, and participation in decision-making, both at home and in governance processes. Environmental degradation coupled with women's unpaid or unfairly-paid labour, work burdens, and lack of property rights, make women extremely vulnerable to climate change. As their work increases, health suffers, and yet, they are unable to articulate their needs; the policies and programmes of the governments have a gaping hole in place of gender inclusivity.



The presence of the tribal feudal system ensures that only a few people own all the land. These handful of landowners make crucial decisions about the land, such as setting up of industries, cutting down forests, etc. The resultant unregulated industrialisation, deforestation and the sand casting due to rising flood waters have led to a high level of land, water and air pollution in the area.

Increasing floods and heat waves: In 2010, Pakistan witnessed a massive flood caused by heavy rain. Ghotki was one of the provinces severely affected by the flood. Since then, the area has been facing recurring flood.

The annual summer heat wave, which earlier used to last for about four months, now lasts for more than seven months.

Loss of land: The peasant community in the area work in their field surrounded by forests. However, due to massive deforestation, the poor people have been losing shelter from heat, heavy rain and their land is now exposed to flood, erosion and wind.

Decreasing agricultural production: The long heat waves and erratic rainfall have resulted in decreasing agricultural production. Communities have also witnessed new diseases in crops.

Livelihoods: With erratic weather, women now have to spend more time working in the fields in harsh heat. Earlier, along with agriculture, women in the research area used to make hand-stitched and hand-crafted clothing. These would provide the women with additional income they could call their own. However, nowadays the women do not find the time to do this additional income-generating work.

Health and diseases: Women shared that earlier people had healthier lives, and never heard about diseases like Tuberculosis, Hepatitis, Malaria or Diabetes. These are now common, and nearly everyone suffers from them.

Diminishing decision-making power of women: The Climate Justice FPAR has shown a clear connection between protection of the environment, women's economic independence and their decision-making powers within the community. Women expressed clearly that when they earn more, they are able to say and demand more within their families. As their livelihoods dwindle due to impacts of degrading environment, the women feel they have less say in matters of home and community now.

The women in the research area work in the agricultural fields as unpaid or low-paid workers, systemically exploited by the landowners. Although they are uneducated and do not participate in community meetings, etc, the women are responsible for providing the family with food, water and firewood. Due to the loss of land to relentless flooding, women have been losing their meagre earnings as agricultural labourers. Additionally, women have also been losing their supplementary income source from handicrafts as they cannot spare any time to do these anymore. The pollution has also introduced numerous health problems, particularly for pregnant women and children.

Mobilising women, breaking barriers: This Climate Justice FPAR is working to organise women in the villages, build their capacity to understand climate change and gender justice, and take collective action for planting trees and speaking against deforestation in order to protect their livelihoods. Restricted by strong patriarchal norms and practices, it is trying to break barriers as it strives towards achieving its goal.

Collective action for restoring forests: Realising the connection between deforestation and its effect on their lives, land and livelihoods, the women from the research community have started planting trees in their areas. Within the communities, they have started talking to village elders and young people on the need to plant trees.

Getting government support: The women expressed that the government forest department does not do anything to stop deforestation or restore forests. However, they understand that to be able to reverse its impacts, reforestation has to happen at a massive scale, supported by the government. The women have started a campaign along with Roshni demanding the government to start large scale and immediate restoration of forests.

WOMEN-LED ACTIONS

Roshni and the women from the peasant community, under these very restrictive conditions, have been mobilising the women from the community and helping them make the connections between environmental destruction, climate change, and their health and social positions.



The women plan to work along with their communities, the community leaders and the government departments to restore forests in their area. Their plans include increased awareness programmes with different groups in the community, more meetings with women to encourage them to participate in community affairs and more interactions with the government. The women plan to initiate a massive tree plantation drive along with the Department of Forest in the near future.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE ACTIONS

- Government must initiate strict policies for the protection of forest and restoration of forest in the area.
- The Government agencies like the district government office, women welfare department, other vigilance committee must function effectively to not only listen to people's grievances but also take timely and strict action against the violation of laws.
- Engagement with community leaders is needed to promote sustainable agriculture, restoration of forests and climate change.
- Community discussions and mobilisation is needed to talk about issues of gender discriminations, barriers and role of women in sustainable development.
- Roshni and the women from the research communities will continue to mobilise communities and women for people to understand issues of climate change and prevent destruction of the environment.
- Discussions and mobilisations will be done to gender discrimination issues like education for girl child and women's participation in decision making.
- Roshni will engage with the government departments at the district, province and national level to initiate actions on deforestations and land protection.

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1369425>

² Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/357876/climate-change-profile-pakistan.pdf>



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON WOMEN,
LAW AND DEVELOPMENT

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