

## CLIMATE CHANGE NEXUSES THE POVERTY OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS IN INDIA DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY

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### ABSTRACT

*Today, the idea of gender vulnerability to the effects of climate change is widely accepted. Climate change has the greatest impact on marginalized populations compared to others, especially transgender individuals, for two significant reasons: they have limited resources to recover from climate disasters such as droughts and floods, they earn very low incomes and they have limited alternative livelihood options. According to research studies, being poor doesn't mean that a person will be affected by climate shocks. Instead, it's a combination of many different things, like income, social exclusion, a lack of assets and skills, and policies that make the poor population more vulnerable during climate disasters. Most transgender people already live in poverty and frequently deal with higher levels of illness, mental stress, stigmatization, shame, and other burdens. Furthermore, climate shocks and stresses exacerbate their financial disadvantage and make it more difficult for them to escape poverty, react to outside shocks, or make long-term plans. This review sheds light on the research into the link between climate change and transgender people being poor, directly or indirectly.*

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**Keywords:** Transgender, Climate Change, Poverty, Marginalization.

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### Introduction

Climate change never seems to have a direct impact on poverty; instead, it seems to worsen their situation in underdeveloped and developing nations (Leichenko & Silva, 2014), especially those living in slum areas, who are most at risk from environmental hazards (Chatterjee, 2010), like transgender individuals. Furthermore, the impact of climate change can be seen in the destruction of infrastructure. Floods, for example, exacerbate the situation of poor households twice as much as non-poor households (Winsemius et al., 2018).

Climate catastrophes have a disproportionately negative impact on people who are chronically sick, from low-income families, or members of minority populations (Kreslake, Price & Sarfaty, 2016). Climate change has the greatest impact on marginalized populations, especially transgender individuals (Gard, 2015), compared to others, for two significant reasons: they have limited resources to recover from climate disasters such as droughts and floods, while mostly earning very low incomes, and they have limited alternative livelihood options (Leichenko & Silva, 2014).

According to research studies, being poor doesn't mean that a person will be affected by climate shocks (Kreslake et al., 2016). Instead, it's a combination of many different things, like income, social exclusion, a lack of assets and skills, and policies that make the poor population more vulnerable during climate disasters (Barnett, 2008; Terry, 2009). Most transgender people already live in poverty and frequently deal with higher levels of illness, mental stress, stigmatization, shame, and other burdens (Ganju & Saggurti, 2017).

The concerns of transgender individuals are still not addressed in the conversation on climate change (Gard, 2015). This paper sheds light on the research into the link between climate change and transgender people being poor, directly or indirectly.

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### **Climate change and Poverty**

Climate change is a major concern for the upcoming years, especially for poor households and communities due to imbalanced economic structures (Adger, 2003; Tschakert, 2013) and poor living conditions (Hallegatte et al., 2014). The poor have already faced numerous risks such as disease, mental health issues, stigmatization, and discrimination, making it impossible to plan and trap them in poverty (Leichenko & Silva, 2014).

Climate change's effects on the economy and the deterioration of infrastructure could make it harder to respond to any situation (Costello et al., 2009). Due to natural disasters, infrastructures such as buildings and roads get highly damaged, which exacerbates the situation of vulnerable groups and forces them to migrate from their places and lose their livelihoods (Denton, 2002; Hertel & Rosch, 2010, Winsemius et al., 2018), which also tends to turn non-poor households into poor households (Krishna, 2006). Furthermore, reduction in food insecurity is one of the ways that climate change is being felt, particularly by the most vulnerable individuals who already have severe malnutrition (Singh et al., 2017) and face obstacles that make it challenging to escape poverty (Hallegatte et al., 2014).

People who are socially and economically disadvantaged are especially susceptible to climate extremes and variability. This is especially true in developing nations, where there is frequently not enough infrastructure, social safety nets, and financial resources to protect vulnerable people. Vulnerability is significantly influenced by social, demographic, and institutional characteristics like gender, age, culture, education, and ethnicity in addition to its conventional link with the availability of financial assets. Intra-household disparities in gender and age result in noticeably distinct types of vulnerability, with women, small children, and the elderly more likely to have problems (Otto et al., 2017).

There are many kinds of poor people, and climate change affects some of them more than others. These effects often mix with existing patterns of inequality and social exclusion in complicated ways. Extreme weather can cause a circle of losses that can keep people in poverty or make it hard for them to get back on their feet. Repeated shocks and stresses can push people and groups into lasting poverty (Leichenko & Silva, 2014; Otto et al., 2017).

### **Transgender Individuals' Condition in India**

According to estimates, 4.88 million Indian adults identify as transgender (Pandya & Redcay, 2020). Intersex, cross dressers, emasculated men, transvestites, and transsexuals are all members of the Hijra group; they are all sexually incapable in some way (Lal, 1999). Depending on their identities and local cultural traditions, they were referred to as Hijras, Aravanis, Kothis, Jogappas, and Shiv Shaktis in various regions of the country (Chakrapani, 2010). These women have been historically considered as a "third gender." As they held positions of authority in the Mughal courts and were mentioned in Hindu scriptures and ancient tales as possessing extraordinary abilities, these women were given religious and cultural authority (Jayadeva, 2017). They primarily depend on begging, prostitution, and participation in various Indian rituals for their livelihood (Nanda, 1986).

A few of them favor making certain life adjustments in order to integrate into society (Pandya & Redcay, 2020). They exhibit female behavior while dressing like women, for example, by wearing sarees and suits. (Nanda, 1986). While a few transgender individuals prefer to undergo sex reassignment surgery and take hormone therapy to convert their bodies to the opposite sex (Pandya & Redcay, 2020).

At a very young age, they leave their small towns for large cities and join the Hijra community (Setia et al. 2006). They were harassed for their gender identity by classmates and teachers. They leave school because of other students' and the administration's imposed rigid gender norms (Bhattacharya, 2014). Due to their incomplete education, most of them are illiterate (Nanda, 1986). They are, as a result, striving for basic human rights and living in poverty. They always reside on the outskirts of remote locales, where they live in dread and seclusion (Goel, 2016). Due to their gender identity, they consistently experience violence and discrimination from the community at large (Ganju & Saggurti, 2017).

In India, they are seen as a third gender that is neither male nor female (Kalra, 2012). According to Sharma (2018), trans women still struggle to maintain their identity and find acceptance in society despite being considered a third gender. The survey also highlighted the challenges and discrimination that transgender people face while trying to get an education, get a job, and have their identity accepted by society. The transgender community, on the other hand, does not have the same legal safeguards as regular people, and as a result, they have been victimized.

### **The Impact of Climate Change on the Poverty of Transgender People**

Dominey-Howes et al. (2014) claim that their study concentrated on the effects of natural catastrophes on LBTQ populations. This study explores the lack of knowledge among policymakers about the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in catastrophe policies. Using these minorities' vulnerabilities, needs, and resilience capacities as a basis, this study seeks to identify some approaches to incorporating them.

The research report by Fontanez (2019) claims that prior studies largely disregarded the needs and experiences of transgender people during disasters. The experiences of transgender people in shelters during a natural disaster in 2018 were examined in this study. The researcher asked 12 transgender people who were questioned for data collection about their experiences in shelters. In conclusion, the study discovered that the majority of those who sought sanctuary felt threatened from within and stayed with other people. Additionally, personnel gave transgender people subpar services since they did not comprehend their needs.

According to a Hindustan Times article from 2019, the Assam floods damaged 13 transgender gharanas and taken the lives of almost 70 trans individuals. According to the All Assam Transgender Association (AATA), trans individuals were most negatively impacted and had limited access to government assistance resources. Most transsexual women slept in tents for several days next to the road without eating.

Sen and Naqvi's article titled "Transgender activists highlight the impacts of climate change and environmental issues on the community" from 2023 highlighted the difficulties faced by the transgender community, including losing their source of income and having trouble obtaining food during natural disasters. Additionally, the article highlighted the negative effects of air and water pollution on transgender individuals who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy. The majority of transsexual people reside in remote, underdeveloped areas and slums. Extreme weather conditions wipe away their homes and businesses. Finally, they rely on begging and prostitution to survive.

The Times of India article (2022) claims that the majority of transsexual people work in prostitution and beg. However, few transsexual people make an effort to live dignified lives. For instance, a transwoman in Chennai opened a tea shop as a means of subsistence. She had to live on the edge of poverty after the water destroyed her stall. This style of illustration insists that transgender people are included in climate change strategies by policymakers.

The COVID-19 outbreak, according to Dasgupta et al.'s research paper from 2021, made it more difficult for the transgender population to survive and worsened its state. They were forced to live on the edge of poverty because of a lack of resources and healthcare issues. The report recommended creating forums for discussing transgender issues and implementing activities for their wellbeing.

### **Conclusion**

The most vulnerable group includes transgender people, who in India are even referred to as the third gender. Human society has always been greatly impacted by climate change, particularly socially and economically disadvantaged groups, including women, LGBTQ individuals, migrant workers, and laborers. One of the most marginalized groups in our society is the transgender population, which lacks any human rights. Most of them rely on prostitution or begging for a living and reside in densely populated areas and slums. Some of them create their own businesses in an effort to live honorably. They were put in the worst situations—financial hardship, health issues, and a lack of housing—as a result of floods, droughts, or the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult for them to escape poverty.

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