



# National Governance Symposium 2024

*Governance Innovations for Inclusive  
Development*

## Inclusive Climate Governance: Challenges and the Way Forward

SESSION  
BRIEF



## Executive Summary

Climate change is a global crisis with far-reaching impacts, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. In Nepal, susceptibility to climate change is compounded by disparities in climate governance, risking a 7% GDP reduction by 2050. Non-inclusive practices perpetuate existing inequalities and impede effective policy implementation. Inclusive climate governance is paramount for addressing global climate change. This brief focuses the urgency of understanding the social dimensions of climate change, as vulnerable communities face disproportionate burdens. The lack of inclusivity in climate governance hampers adaptation and mitigation efforts, threatening long-term growth, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability.

This policy brief emphasizes the critical need for inclusivity in climate governance, highlighting the disparities in Nepal's approach. To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed :

1. Actively involve diverse stakeholders in climate policy decisions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of unique perspectives and needs.
2. Advocate for equal representation of vulnerable nations, like Nepal, on the global stage to shape fair and effective international climate policies.
3. Prioritize funding for inclusive measures in climate policies, empowering marginalized groups and ensuring successful implementation. Opt for bilateral finances to ensure effectiveness of the climate finance use.
4. Recognize and support grassroots initiatives, allowing local communities to contribute valuable insights and align policies with their specific vulnerabilities. Prioritize local level climate action to ensure effectiveness
5. Address systemic barriers to active participation in climate governance, particularly for women and indigenous communities, fostering a more effective and just response to climate change.

## 1. CONTEXT

### 1.2 Issue that the policy brief addresses

The policy brief addresses critical issues in climate governance, including the underrepresentation of women and indigenous communities. It emphasizes the systemic barriers hindering their participation, which may lead to inadequate policies lacking diverse perspectives. The limited involvement of vulnerable nations in global climate governance is highlighted, stressing the need for advocacy to rectify imbalances and ensure fair policies. The risk of inadequate representation, exemplified by low indigenous delegate numbers in events like COP28, highlights the urgency of addressing disparities. Disproportionate climate impacts on vulnerable communities, particularly in Nepal, are discussed. The brief emphasizes the necessity for policies to recognize and address these discrepancies, preventing the perpetuation of existing inequalities. Low engagement of marginalized groups due to barriers like lack of resources is identified as a hindrance to developing inclusive climate policies. Inadequate financial resources further challenge the implementation of initiatives, with disparities in budget allocations for gender-focused programs. The brief also notes the lack of active involvement leading to policy resistance, risking challenges in implementing effective climate strategies. Lastly, insufficient attention to local-level inclusion is emphasized, highlighting the risk of top-down approaches that may not align with community realities, diminishing overall policy effectiveness.



## 2. Context and background information to understand the issue

Climate change is a burning issue globally and poses a threat to humankind and the planet. There is an urgent need to address this issue in climate change and its impacts. There are interconnections between how many societal sectors are affected by climate change. Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by climate change, which exacerbates inequality (World Development Indicators, 2014). The most vulnerable and impoverished individuals are most affected by climate change, yet they also make the least contribution to the problem. Millions of vulnerable people are facing disproportionate difficulties as a result of the growing effects of climate change, including extreme weather events, health effects, food, water, and livelihood security, forced migration and displacement, loss of cultural identity, and other associated dangers. Some social groups are more susceptible to crises than others. These include households headed by women, children, people with disabilities, migrant workers, Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities, landless tenants, displaced people, people of color in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, the elderly, and other marginalized groups in society. Their geographic locations, as well as their financial, socioeconomic, cultural, and gender status, as well as their access to resources, services, decision-making authority, and justice, are the main factors contributing to their vulnerability.

The effects of climate change may be unevenly felt even within a single nation because of systematic disparities in wealth, gender, race, and ethnicity. Because they have fewer resources available to them to adjust to sudden changes, women are more negatively impacted by the effects of climate change. Nepal is among the world's most susceptible nations to climate change. Referred to as the "water tower of Asia " or the "third pole," it confronts distinct difficulties. Long-term fluctuations in water patterns and decreased water availability are caused by retreating glaciers as well as variations in seasonal snowfall and melting. Severe floods and droughts have the potential to ruin crops, force people to relocate, kill livestock, and restrict the amount of water available for drinking and sanitation. Particularly in poor nations, people with disabilities are more vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, which can jeopardize their livelihoods, access to energy, water, and sanitation, as well as their health and food security.

Complex problems of justice are intricately tied to climate change and its impacts thus generating a growing amount of discussion in the governmental and scientific communities. Even with this increased awareness, how global warming may affect justice on different levels remains unclear. Inclusive climate governance refers to the active involvement of diverse stakeholders, including indigenous groups, marginalized communities, and youth, in decision-making processes related to climate policies. With the urgency of climate action, it is imperative to address inclusivity gaps to create effective and sustainable solutions.

Thus, this policy brief is developed by looking at the current issues, existing policy and literature and focuses on the critical issue of inclusivity in climate governance, recognizing the need to address disparities and amplify local-level initiatives. The discussion emerges from insights shared during the panel discussion on "Inclusive Climate Governance: Challenges and Way Forward" held at the National Governance Symposium, 2023.



2.1. Issue Analysis:

2.2 Break down of the issue into key components

### **Underrepresentation of Women and Indigenous Communities in the Climate Governance:**

Underrepresented groups, such as women and indigenous communities, often face systemic barriers that hinder their active participation in climate governance discussions and decision-making processes. Without diverse representation, policies and strategies may not fully consider the unique perspectives, experiences, and needs of these marginalized groups, leading to inadequate or inappropriate solutions. In the energy sector women get left out of the benefit sharing process in the hydropower sector as they are underrepresented in the entire process, from stakeholder consultations, to local hiring and employment, to the process of identifying local development priorities. Women from marginalized groups (Janajatis, Dalits, ultra-poor, and disabled) are even more disadvantaged (Shrestha et al. 2016).

### **Limited participation of vulnerable Nations' in Global Climate Governance:**

Disparities exist in global climate discussions, where the voices of vulnerable nations, like Nepal, are marginalized. Global advocacy efforts need to rectify these imbalances to ensure fair and effective international climate policies. Without equal representation on the global stage, vulnerable nations may struggle to influence and shape international agreements and commitments, potentially leading to policies that do not adequately address their specific vulnerabilities. Even in COP28 only 2% of delegates were from indigenous backgrounds (Newfield, 2023).

### **Impact of Climate change in Vulnerable Communities :**

Vulnerable communities, including those in Nepal, bear a disproportionate burden of climate impacts. Policies must recognize and address these discrepancies to ensure that solutions are fair and effective. Neglecting the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities can perpetuate existing inequalities, exacerbating social and economic disparities and hindering overall resilience to climate change.



### **Low Engagement of marginalized groups in climate initiatives:**

Barriers such as lack of resources, education, and accessibility hinder the active involvement of marginalized groups in climate initiatives. Limited participation from marginalized groups hampers the development of inclusive and effective climate policies, as the lived experiences and knowledge of these communities are not adequately considered.

### **Inadequate financial resources for Inclusive Climate Policies :**

Insufficient funding results in a lack of resources for programs that could uplift and empower vulnerable groups, hindering the successful implementation of inclusive climate initiatives. The annual budget allocated to programs with a gender focus is insufficient in terms of financial resources. For instance, in 2010 the MoFSC27 budget allotted for planning, training, monitoring, and evaluation of the GESI strategy was less than 1% (FAO and RECOFTC 2015). Nonetheless, there are a few agencies that have set aside funds expressly for GESI actions; since 2017, the REDD Implementation Center (REDD IC) has done so through its Red Book budget. The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank provides funding for REDD-IC, but departments are still free to decide whether or not to give GESI initiatives priority and resources. Over the previous three years, the REDD-IC GESI budget has varied; in 2018, it received NPR 1.2 million (0.36%) out of the 28 million.

### **Lack of Active involvement leading to policy Resistance :**

Active involvement from marginalized groups may lead to resistance and hinder the political will to implement crucial climate policies. Without the active engagement of marginalized communities, there is a risk of policy resistance and lack of buy-in, making it challenging to implement effective climate strategies at both local and global levels.

### **Insufficient Attention to Local-Level Inclusion:**

Inadequate focus to grassroots initiatives and local-level inclusion hampers the development and implementation of effective climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Local communities are often more attuned to their specific vulnerabilities and needs. Ignoring or sidelining local initiatives can result in top-down approaches that may not align with the realities and priorities of the affected communities, diminishing the effectiveness of climate policies.



### 2.3 Summary of panel discussion

The panel discussion provided tangible solutions and recommendations for inclusive climate governance in Nepal. The amalgamation of local-level strategies, educational reforms, coordinated governance approaches, and a strategic, evidence-based focus sets the stage for a more robust and effective response to the complex issues posed by climate change in the region.

One prominent aspect of the discussion centered on the municipality's approach to addressing climate change at the local level. Emphasizing the significance of community-centric initiatives, the municipality outlined its strategies, including local policy discussions, awareness programs, and the integration of technology in agriculture. Despite resource constraints, these efforts aimed to foster sustainability and resilience in the face of climate challenges. Another crucial theme revolved around the need for substantial changes in education policies to address climate challenges effectively. Panelists stressed the importance of broader reforms, advocating for the integration of climate-focused courses into core curricula. This theme underscored the role of education in shaping a more informed and proactive approach to climate governance. Similarly, the discussion theme emerged, emphasizing the essential stages of climate change—Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster. Discussions delved into the challenges arising from the lack of coordination among government tiers and proposed solutions such as a clearer division of roles, transparency in climate financing, and a contextual understanding of the intersection between climate change, political power, and the economy. Likewise, the notable aspect focused on the imperative of evidence-based research and a strategic approach for prioritizing climate considerations. Panelists highlighted the necessity for support from provincial and federal levels of government to ensure effective climate action. Gender inclusion in climate initiatives also took center stage, with recommendations for workshops aimed at enhancing inclusivity.

#### 2.4 Causes and consequences of the issue.

The literature review reveals significant challenges in Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) within Nepal's climate change plans, policies, and action plans (Shrestha & Gurung, 2022). While existing policies, including affirmative action, have increased women's representation, achieving meaningful participation remains elusive. Gender imbalances persist, with only 26.8% of government ministers overseeing environment and climate change policies being women, compared to 73.2% men in the EU (Decision-making in Environment and Climate Change, 2023). Despite institutional mechanisms, there is a lack of practical implementation guidelines, particularly evident in the formation of committees related to GESI, forestry, and climate change.

The impact of climate change and the federal system transition has exacerbated women's "time poverty," limiting mobility, community participation, and access to information. Existing literature underscores the frequent oversight of women in climate change discussions, considering factors like caste, ethnicity, geography, age, and disability (Gurung 2014, Gurung 2020, WOCAN 2017). Historical discrimination, combined with situational vulnerabilities, has distinct effects on men and women (Nightingale 2016, Goodrich et al 2019, Gurung and Bisht 2014).

Gender-based prejudices contribute to the escalation of social marginalization and gender inequality induced by climate change. Unpaid caregiving responsibilities intensify women's challenges, leading to time poverty, disempowerment, limited resource access, and reduced participation in decision-making. Younger men migrating for alternative income sources leave women to manage increased workloads, impacting health and perpetuating time poverty. Safety concerns and gender-based violence surge in the absence of protective measures for women and children.

The 2020 research by Gurung identifies opportunities and challenges for women's leadership amid climate change and the federal system shift. While women have assumed leadership roles, limitations such as a decline in committed human resources, a one-door policy, and the lack of organized platforms impede their influence. The reduction in the number of key members in the new federal system exacerbates the lack of involvement and voice for marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Challenges also arise from behavioral change issues, where less supportive influences dominate decision-makers and staff, hindering the promotion of GESI policies.

Non-inclusive practices in climate governance pose several challenges. Unfair policies may disproportionately impact marginalized groups, as seen in the potential effects of public transportation or carbon pricing policies on lower-income households. Inefficiencies arise when policies ignore underlying social and economic issues that fuel emissions. Additionally, resistance to climate policy may emerge among marginalized groups excluded from decision-making processes, leading to a lack of political will and exacerbating the impacts of climate change.

### 3. Policy Milestone:

The following shows the policy milestone that the Nepal government has adopted. These plans and policies are implemented to tackle climate change.

Current Plans and Policies	Key Picture
National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)	National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) provide a process for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to identify priority activities that respond to their immediate needs to adapt to climate change, ultimately leading to the implementation of projects aimed at reducing the economic and social costs of climate change.
Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA)	Local Adaptation Plans of Actions aims to mainstream climate change adaptation right from the local level planning process.
Nepal Climate Change Policy, 2076 (2019)	Nepal Climate Change Policy, 2076 (2019) aims to contribute to the socio-economic prosperity of the nation by building a climate resilient society.
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) aims to protect the ecosystems, species, and genetic resources, as well as the integration of biodiversity considerations into various sectors to promote sustainable development.
Hydroelectricity Development Policy (2001)	Hydroelectricity Development Policy (2001) aims to generate electricity at low cost by utilizing the water resources available in the country.

#### 3.1 Policy alternatives that could address the problem

- Nepal should consider bilateral climate financing to support its efforts.
- Establish a clear framework for collaboration between stakeholder, civil society and government.
- Enhance Education to promote local-level action plans for climate action.
- The adoption of principles such as coordination, coexistence, and cooperation is essential for effective climate governance.
- Proper climate governance should be prioritized over climate finance.
- Inclusivity must go beyond gender, and gender workshops should be provided to both males and females to bring about a change in mindset.



## 4. Recommendation

- Actively engage a diverse range of stakeholders in shaping climate policies, fostering a comprehensive understanding of varied perspectives and needs.
- Advocate for equitable representation of vulnerable nations, such as Nepal, in global forums to influence fair and impactful international climate policies.
- Prioritize funding for inclusive measures within climate policies, empowering marginalized groups and ensuring the effective utilization of climate finance through bilateral channels.
- Acknowledge and support grassroots initiatives, enabling local communities to provide valuable insights and align policies with their specific vulnerabilities. Emphasize local-level climate action for enhanced effectiveness.
- Address systemic barriers to active participation in climate governance, especially for women and indigenous communities, promoting a more just and responsive approach to climate change.

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