

Special Session Webinar Series on Women's Stories of Survival, Innovation, Resilience and Development

STORIES OF RESOURCE SCARCITY, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

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Due to the augmented natural hazards, intensified conflicts, and increased inflation rates, 'resource scarcity' has become a widely discussed topic within the global community. According to the UK Department for International Development (2013) resource scarcity, as it relates to natural resources, is described as a complete or relative lack of natural (or environmental) resources. Along with resource scarcity, issues related to security come into being. Security can be threatened due to climate change impacts, especially natural hazards. People not only want to be 'safe' from natural hazards but also need to feel safe. Their sense of security can be compromised by the occurrence as well as anticipation of natural hazards (Harries, 2017). The concept of 'sustainability' as such, has been introduced to provide solutions to resource scarcity and to ensure security. Sustainability means, "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs", according to the United Nations Brundtland Commission (United Nations, 2015).

The South Asia region consists of eight countries and is rich in cultural diversity as well as climatic and geographical variability due to its location associated with the Indian Ocean. The Bay of Bengal which borders this region from the East, is the cradle of most South Asian countries making it more vulnerable to natural hazards such as floods and landslides (Royal al Berglee, PhD, 2016). South Asia is one of the most highly populated regions of the world, and therefore, balancing the use of natural resources effectively has often been a challenge in these countries. As a result, South Asian countries suffer from resource scarcity coupled with increasing numbers of natural hazards and the risk of insecurities. Under such circumstances, sustainability has become a method of providing solutions for these issues.

Women are the most vulnerable group to resource scarcity and lack of security. They are susceptible to higher incidences of sexual and reproductive health challenges, and intimate partner violence during times of disasters (Alam & Rahman, 2014; Ray-Bennett *et al.*, 2018). Lack of essential sexual and reproductive health services during disasters accentuates the vulnerabilities of women further. Women are typically restricted from participating in public activities, making them less likely to get crucial information for emergency preparedness, making them even more sensitive to the negative effects of climatic unpredictability and changes.

Especially in South Asian countries, due to limited resources, poverty, cultural barriers, and less priority given to disaster relief and rehabilitation, women undergo numerous difficulties (Patel *et al.*, 2019). Despite these, South Asian women have also risen over and above their barriers and adversities to find solutions for their contextual problems, by engaging in activities related to sustainability. This Special Session webinar on the 'Stories of Resource Scarcity, Security and Sustainability of South Asian Women' brings women's testimonies to the forefront.

This Special Session webinar is organised by the Avoidable Deaths Network in conjunction with the South Asia Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes (SAADRI) - Sri Lanka Chapter, and the University of Colombo.

More concretely, the Panel speakers, Professor Deepthi Wickramasinghe, Ms.

Vihanga Amarakoon, Ms. Ashmita Thapa Magar, Ms. Debaleena Roy and Ms. Damithri Chathumani will focus on the following areas:

1. Physical and mental health challenges experienced by women during the floods of 2017 in Sri Lanka;
2. Role of women in disaster mitigation and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction in Sri Lanka;
3. Role of women empowerment in disaster risk reduction and emergency response in Nepal; and
4. Role of women throughout the journey from scarcity to sustainability in India.

Note

Description of the Special Session was written by Professor Deepthi Wickramasinghe, Ms. Vihanga Amarakoon, Ms. Ashmita Thapa Magar, Ms. Debaleena Roy, Ms. Damithri Chathumani and Dr. Nibedita Ray-Bennett. © Avoidable Deaths Network (2023). Image: © Nimisha Goswami (2017).

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Ms. Ashmita Thapa Magar, Student, Master of Disaster Management, BRAC University, Bangladesh.

Ms. Debaleena Roy, Project Associate, SAADRI, India.

Ms. Damithri Chathumani, PhD candidate, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.

Series Chairperson

Dr. Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett is the Chairperson of the Special Session webinar series 'Women's Stories of Survival, Innovation, Resilience and Development'.

More Information

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