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Drought Impact on Health and Livelihood of Women and Children in India: A Review



Algur Kisan (Ph.D. Scholar)

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS),
Govandi Station Road, Deonar, Mumbai-400088, Maharashtra, India



Introduction

The Indian government's national action plan on climate change states that the effects of climate change could show principally severe for women. With climate change, there would be growing shortage of water, increased threats to human health especially among women and children. Most of the studies concentrated on climate change and its effect on agricultural activities of the developing countries. Indian Meteorological Department of India (IMD) defines the drought as follow:

- ❖ **Meteorological drought:** A situation where there is a reduction in rainfall for a specific period (days, months, seasons, or year).
- ❖ **Hydrological drought:** Hydrological drought is associated with a reduction of water. A meteorological drought often leads to hydrological drought. There are two types of hydrological droughts, they are: (i) surface water drought and (ii) groundwater drought.
- ❖ **Agricultural drought:** This concerns the impact of meteorological or hydrological drought on crop yield. When soil moisture and rainfall conditions are not adequate to support a healthy crop, this leads to agricultural drought.
- ❖ **Socioeconomic drought:** This reflects the reduction in the availability of food and income loss because of crop failures, endangering food and social security of the people in the affected areas.

Methodology

- ❖ This study mainly focused on direct relationship of the drought and its significant impacts on women and children. Several studies have been conducted in developed countries, but there is paucity of this kind of research study in developing country like India, where water crisis is on alarming rise.
- ❖ A systematic search and an observational study published after the year 2000 was considered for this study and around 35 articles relevant to the study were included for review purpose.
- ❖ For the purpose searching literature, Google Scholar, Scopus, Pub-Med and JSTOR database has been used.

Results and Discussion

- ❖ Patterns of hunger indicate that young children are highly vulnerable to disruptions of food security and household livelihood security from disaster impacts.
- ❖ The high prevalence of malnutrition was found in the Cambodian population, particularly among young children during drought period.
- ❖ Harmful settings such as conflict, displacement and natural disasters lead to child marriage and preventable maternal deaths (Ethiopia Gender Snapshot, 2017).
- ❖ In 2015, UNICEF, reported that 160 million children are currently living in drought prone areas, mostly in Africa and Asia.
- ❖ Every year drought occurs in different part of Indian states mainly southern part of India and most of the study found that women and children are more vulnerable in the drought period. Due to lack of water during the drought period, women and children work burden increases and most of them face severe health issues like malnutrition, anemia etc.
- ❖ After the state government declares area as drought hit areas it submits a Memorandum, then the Ministry of Agriculture sends an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) to the concerned state for creating an assessment of the drought condition.
- ❖ This team consists of administrators from different central government Ministries/Departments, such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Food, Rural Development, Power, Drinking Water, NITI Aayog, Finance, Home. The team transmits out extended visits to drought-affected parts in the state throughout which it is expected to assess ground level situation about crop damage, drinking water, fodder shortage (NDMA, 2010).
- ❖ Then a meeting with local officials, farmers, PRI members, women's groups, etc. is done and the team then submits a report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare immediately after the conclusion of its visit. The report should provide an assessment of the drought situation regarding severity, geographical spread, and impact on agriculture, availability of water, food, and fodder (Torres Strait Island Regional Council, 2009).
- ❖ In the process of policy formation related to eradication of drought, government will put more emphasis on women and children development because it is evidence that women and children are more vulnerable group during drought years.

References

- ❖ *National Disaster Management Guidelines: Management of Drought.* A publication of the National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India. ISBN 978-93-80440-08-8, September 2010, New Delhi.
- ❖ Ethiopia Gender Snapshot. (2017), (April).
- ❖ Torres Strait Island Regional Council. (2009). Drought Management Plan, 40.
- ❖ United Nations (UN). (2005). Women and Water. *Women 2000 and Beyond*, (February), 1-28.

Drought impacts at the community level

1) Livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of fodder; lack of drinking water for cattle, for irrigation purposes, and industries ➤ Reduced crop yield and diminished quality ➤ Impaired productivity of forest land ➤ Land degradation ➤ Damage to fish farming
2) Food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loss of availability of food ➤ Loss of availability of nutritious food Health ➤ Dependence on unsafe drinking-water sources ➤ Insufficient water for hygiene purposes ➤ Stress due to loss of livelihoods and income
3) Economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Loss of income from agriculture and fishery ➤ Loss of employment ➤ Increased prices for food and fodder
4) Social impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Migration and related impact on families/communities and social structure ➤ Loss of human life ➤ Increased inequity among social groups ➤ Increased conflicts ➤ Increased mental and physical stress ➤ Increase in crime rate ➤ Reduction in school attendance ➤ Increased burden on women and children ➤ Increased burden on government and non-government organizations
5) Environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase in deforestation, partially due to forest fires ➤ Environmental pollution ➤ Extinction of rare species and loss of biodiversity

Impact of Drought	Main Causes	Possible Action
Health, nutritional, and physical problems among children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ less power for women in making decisions on how the food is distributed in the family ➤ Assumption by men that women do less burdensome work is leading to reduced food allocation for them ➤ Lack of water and knowledge about hygiene ➤ Lack of nutritious food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Offer education and awareness-generation programmes for all sections of the society ➤ Promote the culture of collective action
Increased workload on women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women do more household work and field work, and their burden rises during droughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Share workload among family members ➤ Make more water available ➤ Identify water-supply points near dwellings and piped water supply
Less participation of women in community programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women don't have the security of land tenure ➤ Women in general lack access to formal resources ➤ Women are discriminated against in employment, so they fail to gain skills ➤ Social role is restricted to household activities ➤ Lack of social recognition of their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Facilitate advocacy to change land-tenure systems and implement ➤ Increase women's participation and representation through empowerment ➤ Create opportunities for women to work through skill development and providing small credit, technical training, jobs, and market information ➤ Promote social mobilization to change attitudes towards women ➤ Increase community awareness of gender equity

Source: (Shaw et al., 2007)