CARE for South Asia

Climate Adaptation and Resilience for South Asia Project

Volume #1 | December 2020

What is CARE for South Asia
An overview

Climate-smart and gender-sensitive approach
Sectors in focus

From innovation to impact
Scaling up technology

A partnership between ADPC, RIMES, and the World Bank to support informed decision-making for protecting development gains in South Asia

Dear Readers,

The infinite human desire to use finite natural resources has brought the planet to the verge of collapse. This is where we stand with climate change today. South Asia is home to the most vulnerable countries in the world. Adaptation is the only path for as vulnerable a region as South Asia to build people's resilience to the vagaries of weather and protect development gains.

An enabling environment at the regional and national levels is important for the adoption of climate-smart policies, planning processes, and investments in climate-sensitive sectors and beyond. The Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) for South Asia project brings data, tools, guidelines, and capacity to mainstream climate adaptive measures in the agriculture, water resources management, transport, and finance & planning sectors. It will contribute to an enabling environment for climate resilience policies and investments in climate-sensitive sectors in South Asia, initially focusing on interventions in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.

The first issue of the CARE quarterly newsletter provides readers with a set of articles about how climate-sensitive sectors are impacted by climate change and how CARE for South Asia will contribute to building institutions to adapt to climate change and achieve resilience. We believe the only way forward is working together for a climate-resilient South Asia.

Stay tuned!

Cover photo by Siriwatthana Chankawee/ Shutterstock.com

In this issue

What is CARE for South Asia

An overview of the project

By Vidya Rehman Rana

Divided by geographic boundaries, over 1.9 billion people living in South Asian countries share mountains, rivers, oceans, energy sources as well as weather and vulnerabilities associated with climate change. Therefore, cooperation across borders is critical to meeting the challenges unleashed by the vagaries of weather.

The development gains in South Asia are already in peril due to the increasing frequency and intensity of floods, cold and heat waves, droughts, wind storms, and cyclones. Approximately 17.5 million people across South Asia have been affected by monsoon flooding in 2020 amid the COVID-19 health crisis. The World Bank estimated that the region has lost US$127 billion in damages to 1,000 climate-induced disasters between 1990 and 2019.

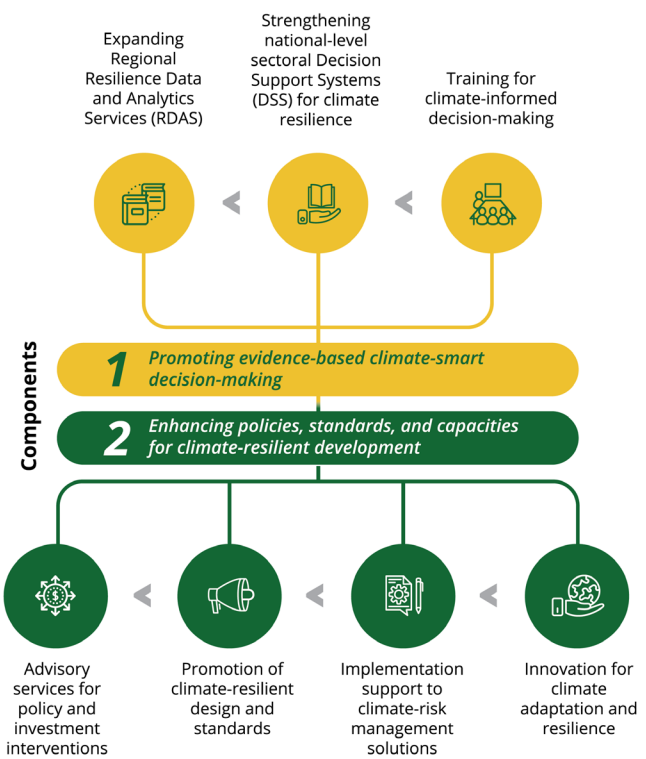
"Adaptation is the only effective option to manage the inevitable impacts of climate change that mitigation cannot reduce," an analysis of findings regarding South Asia from the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) by Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) argues. The IPCC describes adaptation as "the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects."

South Asian countries have been making great strides in developing climate change policies, national adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement, leveraging innovative solutions, and exploring climate financing. Bangladesh, for example, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), is spending US$1 billion per year for climate change adaptation, which is around 6-7% of its annual budget.

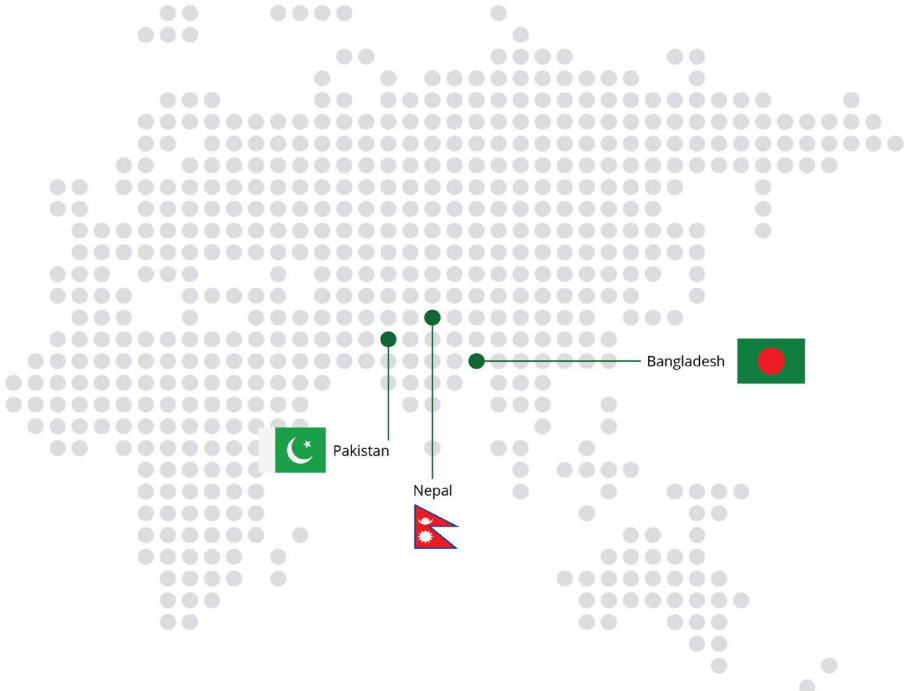
However, the adaptation finance gap as well as the lack of coherent policies, robust institutional setup and limited opportunities for exchanging regional data are some of the key challenges South Asian countries face to becoming resilient to climate change. Given the geo-political situation of the region, an enabling environment needs to be created to foster cooperation and knowledge-sharing.

The "Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) for South Asia" project is supporting the region in building resilience to climate change by improving the availability of regional data and knowledge, developing guidelines, tools, and capacities, as well as promoting climate-resilient decisions, policies and investments across key sectors. While contributing to an enabling environment for climate resilience policies, and investments in agriculture, transport, water, policy & planning, and finance sectors, the CARE for South Asia project will also promote innovation and adoption of disruptive technology by awarding grants to eligible and qualifying innovators.

The five-year initiative is being jointly implemented by Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), with support from the World Bank.

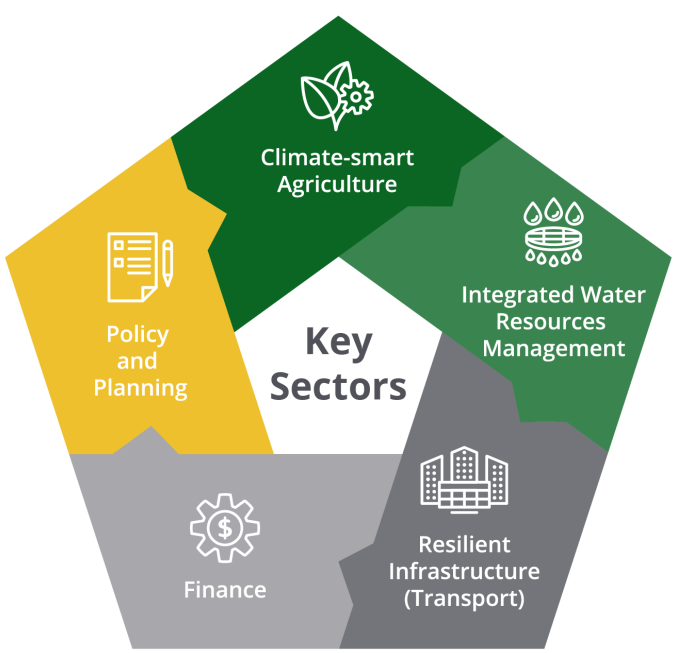


The project seeks to enhance regional collaboration and strengthen national institutions climate-smart agriculture, integrated water resources management, road infrastructure, and climate finance, policy, and planning.



The CARE for South Asia project is expected to improve the technical capacities of institutions in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan as well as support policy and investment interventions, climate-risk management solutions, and national-level sectoral Decision Support Systems (DSS) for climate resilience.

The project recognizes the need for effective adaptation planning across all sectors, including finance and planning for climate-informed macro-level analysis, modeling, and climate-informed fiscal risk management. It will also help countries access international climate finance, including support accreditation processes for national/sub-national entities to access the Green Climate Fund (GCF).



The writer is Communications Manager at ADPC.
✉ nusrat.rana@adpc.net

From Innovation to Impact: *scaling-up the use of emerging technology to address climate and disaster resilience needs in South Asia*

By Aslam Perwaiz

Climate change is a major driver of disaster losses and failed development. Climate-related disasters, including extreme weather events, have dominated the global disaster landscape in the 21st century, which has led to shaping new approaches to science and practice in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resilience building.

Over the years, science has become more accessible, acknowledging that it also needs to deal with uncertainty. Policymakers are becoming more familiar with science as more and more public policy issues call for science-based solutions. Therefore, interactions between policymakers and science are increasingly complex and nonlinear, as opposed to early conceptions.

In South Asia, the decision-making spaces are shared by science and policymakers with the local community. The shared decision space is characterized by co-learning and knowledge production. The CARE for South Asia project empowers decision-makers with tools, products, and services to act locally on climate-sensitive issues such as disaster-related public policy and planning, agriculture, water, and transport.

Leveraging advanced technologies and prioritizing a demand-driven approach to climate resilience, the CARE for South Asia project is offering a platform for using innovative approaches to help decision-makers respond better to a changing climate. The Climate Innovation Challenge (CIC) and the TechEmerge Resilience Challenge open up a new window of opportunities to mainstream technology for climate adaptation and disaster resilience for the benefit of all.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, national disaster management offices (NDMOs), public finance and planning, supply chain drivers such as water and transportation, and public health authorities in South Asian countries are facing unprecedented challenges but are also presented with unparalleled opportunities in fighting an uphill battle against ever-increasing climate and extreme weather events.

This presents incredible opportunities to deploy emerging and future technologies to anticipate and mitigate the disaster and climate risk to protect the development gains and build the resilience of communities, assets, livelihoods, and systems. As technological development scales up, technologies for all aspects of disaster and climate resilience will also need to be adopted more widely.


Photo by Andrii Yalanskyi/ Shutterstock.com

Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, robotics, and others are critical to accelerating this process, making disaster and climate resilience smarter, more efficient, affordable, and accurate—from multi-hazard detection and early warning to resilient connectivity solutions to climate-smart crop management, etc. To make these elements functional, trained people with the right skillsets as well as resources for the application of technologies are a must.

With technical and financial support of US$3.5 million from the World Bank and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and implemented by ADPC under the umbrella of the CARE for South Asia project, we aim to support innovation in climate resilience building through the provision of grants to pilot-proven transformative, scalable, affordable, and accessible resilience technology solutions.

The writer is Deputy Executive Director of ADPC.
✉ aslam@adpc.net

South Asia cooperates to fight climate threats and disasters

By Haris Khan, Atishay Abbhi, Keisuke Iyadomi

The COVID-19 pandemic and the earth's changing climate are two global crises that transcend national borders and devastate economies.

For developing economies with limited resources like in South Asia, regional cooperation to combat them has become even more urgent.

As South Asian governments fight to recover their coronavirus-ravaged economies, a new regional project will help make key sectors like agriculture and transport more resilient to shocks caused by climate change, extreme weather, and disasters.

The Climate Adaptation and Resilience project or CARE will provide access to detailed weather, water, and climate data and decision-making tools to help policymakers understand and plan for the economic impact of climate-induced natural disasters.

When we started preparing a regional initiative on climate a few months ago, we didn't realize how relevant it would be in the new COVID-19 world.

While the cost of COVID-19 is still being calculated, the costs of climate-related hazards are well documented. Flooding, drought, coastal erosion, and other climate-induced disasters affected nearly 1.7 billion people and caused $127 billion in damage from 1990 to 2019, according to EM-DAT.

A World Bank report, South Asia's Hotspots, found that 800 million people in the region are at risk of declining incomes as rising temperatures and erratic rainfall cut crop yields, dry up water sources, and force people to leave their homes.

Photo by Talukdar David/ Shutterstock.com

COVID-19 and climate-induced disasters may collide in South Asia when the annual monsoon season arrives in a few weeks. The same national, state and local emergency preparedness and response agencies that have been stretched thin by COVID-19 must now get ready for flooding, landslides and other hazards often unleashed by the monsoon's torrential rain.

CARE is initially focusing on three countries that face the highest climate risk in the region – Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. But the project emphasizes the need for the entire region to work together on this common issue across the region.

A novel financing mechanism in the CARE project allows participation of two regional organizations, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES). They are ideal partners to help countries trying to tackle common regional issues in South Asia, and their participation will spare governments from spending scarce financial resources as they cope with the COVID-19 fallout.

CARE will create an open Regional Resilience and Data Analytics Platform with data from all eight countries in the region. The platform will identify data gaps and make it easier for governments to incorporate climate-friendly practices when planning development or making budget and spending decisions. CARE will also support the development of regional guidelines and national standards to design roads, and other developmental activities in a climate smart manner.

Encouraging innovation and disruptive technology is also essential. CARE includes $3.5 million in grants to promote innovation, provided by the trust fund, Program for Asia Resilience to Climate Change, which is administered by the World Bank and financed by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

While we continue to fight against the coronavirus, building resilience to flooding, droughts, and other severe weather is very much now in our hands.

In this unprecedented time of national lockdowns, social distancing, working from home, and dwindling budgets, governments in South Asia continue to operate at the frontlines to protect people from both COVID-19 and climate shocks.

Kickstarting the CARE project now shows the commitment of South Asian governments and regional partners to emerge from this pandemic with a climate-resilient future.

The writers work with the World Bank and this article was irst published on World Bank Blog.

Haris Khan
Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist
✉ hkhan1@worldbank.org

Atishay Abbhi
Disaster Risk Management Specialist
✉ aabbhi@worldbank.org

Keisuke Iyadomi
Cliamate Change Specialist
✉ kiyadomi@worldbank.org

Climate-smart and gender-sensitive approach

Sectors in focus

Promoting climate-smart agriculture in South Asia

By Lalit Kumar Dashora


Photo by Siraj Ahmad/ Shutterstock.com

Agriculture in South Asia is highly susceptible to climate change. Long-term variations in temperature and precipitation are likely to shift cropping seasons and crop cultivation, potentially causing low yields. Agriculture-based economies in South Asia, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and associated natural hazards.

Agriculture is the third largest contributing sector to Bangladesh 's economy. The country is classified into 30 Agroecological Zones (AEZs) and major crops cultivated in these AEZs are rice, jute, wheat, tea, pulses, oil-seeds, vegetables, and fruits. Farming in Bangladesh is impacted by sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion, increases in mean temperature, rainfall variability, and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Similarly, agriculture is a crucial economic sector in Nepal as well. The Terai region of Nepal is a major cropland with highly fertile soil that allows for the cultivation of key crops such as cereals, wheat, and rice. Nepal has seen decreasing trends in production mainly due to traditional farming practices that are highly dependent on weather conditions.

In Pakistan, the national agricultural production is likely to be affected by climate variability in the future. The Punjab province, which contributes the largest share to the agriculture-based economy of the country, is already facing low yields due to erratic weather.

Nevertheless, the climate change impact on agriculture will vary in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. Thus, this change requires country-specific smart interventions to sustain agricultural productivity in changing climatic conditions. The decreasing agricultural productivity and increasing food insecurity due to climate change in these countries call for broader policy-level interventions.


Photo by Teo Tarras/ Shutterstock.com

The policy-level interventions under the CARE for South Asia project will help strengthen the national policy framework to implement and practice climate-smart agriculture. These inputs will also identify critical policy actions to make the agriculture sector climate-informed in these countries.

In Bangladesh, the project is assisting in strengthening the existing climate-smart agriculture strategies and developing a monitoring framework focusing on livestock services. Agricultural policy analysis will identify critical policy actions strengthening the national policy framework to implement recently developed climate-smart agriculture investment plans by the Government of Bangladesh. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) in Bangladesh will revitalize their skills on utilizing climate and hydrometeorological data for sector reforms, policymaking, planning, monitoring, and investment design.

In Nepal, the project will provide advisory services to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD) to strengthen the policy framework as well as the Climate Smart Agriculture Investment Plans. The project will also provide support for the capacity building of agricultural extension officials' so that they could train farmers and implement climate-smart agriculture and climate risk mitigation strategies. In addition, ADPC is developing the National Framework for Climate Services for the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DHM) under the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation (MoEWRI).

In Pakistan, capacity development activities will be carried out to maximize production while minimizing climate and disaster impacts on the agriculture sector. Several other interventions have been planned for implementation in collaboration with relevant departments at the provincial level.

Regional and country-specific guidance documents are expected to help upscale agricultural productivity and provide farmers with livelihood opportunities.

The writer is Climate Resilience Specialist at ADPC.
✉ lalit.dashora@adpc.net

CAREing for the elixir of life

By Niladri Gupta

Water is quite aptly called the 'elixir of life'. It is a known fact that water is always on the move through the water cycle processes. Global warming has a significant effect on this cycle, altering the quantity, timing, distribution, and quality of available water.

Countries in South Asia face different levels of water stress. The United Nations Water Development Report 2020 suggests that snowmelt and the loss of glacial buffering in the Hindu Kush–Himalayas will affect the seasonal water supply for a significant proportion of South Asia's population.

With 23.7% of the global population, South Asia has only 4.6% of the world's renewable water resources. According to the World Bank, the key challenges on one hand are ensuring a reliable supply of water for daily life and managing the consequence of extreme hydrometeorological disaster on the other. In addition to the regional challenges in the water sector, countries have contrasting challenges and needs.

Bangladesh being the largest dynamic delta of the world, along with a large and growing population base, envisages enhanced water security and efficiency of water usage to achieve optimal and integrated use of land and water resources. Additionally, most of the rivers in Bangladesh are transboundary.

Under the CARE for South Asia project, water-sector activities are being piloted in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, which aim to improve the availability of regional data, knowledge, tools and capacities.

Photo by Twenty-nine/ Shutterstock.com

Globally, South Asia is the most extensive user of groundwater resources, with irrigation accounting for 80% of the groundwater extraction. Even though the region hosts several of the high groundwater-producing aquifers, it is running short of water.

They also aim to promote climate-resilient decisions, policies, and investments in climate-sensitive sectors. The water sector interventions will help strengthen water resources management, water governance, and long-term resilience through robust institutions.


Photo by Magsi/ Shutterstock.com

The Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 will be the guidance document for the implementation of the project's interventions. The development of Monitoring & Evaluation framework and capacity enhancement on project monitoring under Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 will contribute to the successful implementation of the plan.

In Nepal, challenges revolve around agriculture and hydropower needs. Around 85% of Nepal's annual rain fall (between 1500 and 3000 millimeters) between June and September, leading to floods. A severe shortage of water occurs during the rest of the year resulting in the drying up of springs and other natural water sources.

Retention of water can help mitigate water scarcity and supply water for multiple purposes. The CARE for South Asia project intends to assist the government in developing a water harvesting strategy in the context of Integrated Water Resources Management. It will further enhance stakeholders' capacities in mainstreaming climate information into planning, design and investments in the water sector.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is categorized as a water-scarce country. The annual water availability is less than 1,000 cubic meters per person. It is likely to drop to 860 cubic meters by 2025 as documented in the National Water Policy 2018. Climate Change is also compounding the depletion of groundwater resources of the country by disrupting the natural hydrological process of groundwater recharge combined with over-extraction.

The project will support developing a strategy for groundwater management in water-scarce areas of the country (e.g., Lower Indus Basin) and documenting water conservation best practices. CARE for South Asia project will also support stakeholders' capacity enhancement for better drought risk management in the country's drought-prone areas.

The project's water sector interventions will build the region's resilience against the effects of climate change and develop a strategy to adapt to the changes. The project plans to support public policies on climate change through national and inter-country dialogues and the development of regional guidelines unique to the challenges faced by countries in South Asia.

The writer is Integrated Water Resources Management Specialist at ADPC.
✉ niladri.gupta@adpc.net

Transport Resilience in the face of climate change

By Nurul Alam

In South Asia, road transport is key to enabling many aspects of economic life such as trade, public services delivery, governance, tourism, and other economic activities. Governments invest significantly in road infrastructure to provide connectivity to all economic zones primarily to reduce poverty and promote rural development. In brief, road infrastructure is a crucial catalyst of economic activity.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), resilient transport plays a critical role in the development of a country. While the transport sector can be affected by extreme climatic events, it is also one of the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Integrating economic, social and environmental aspects in transport policies, design, construction and maintenance can directly contribute to the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Temperature, wind speed and rainfall are major parameters that are significantly impacted by climate change. Decision-makers, designers and implementers are expected to enhance their knowledge about climate change impact on road infrastructure. This includes the understanding of the probability of occurrence and the planning, financing, design, construction, and maintenance of these roads in the future.

Photo by Jahangir Alam Onuchcha/ Shutterstock.com

This requires more concerted efforts towards improving the current road infrastructure, especially in the geologically fragile mountain terrain of Nepal and in the flat terrain of Bangladesh, which is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as floods, storm surges and landslides caused by heavy rain and cyclones.

The CARE for South Asia project seeks to enable the relevant authorities to include climate change-related parameters while planning new and existing rural road infrastructure policies. The outcome related to the transport sector is to create an enabling environment for climate resilience policies and investments across South Asia with a particular focus on Bangladesh and Nepal.

The project will achieve these goals by enhancing regional cooperation and knowledge exchange through the mainstreaming of resilience and adaptation in national policies, plans, and investments. An improved access to and use of regional climate information, analytics, climate-sensitive policies, plans, and guidelines will help strengthen the transport sector's resilience to climate change in Bangladesh and Nepal.

ADPC will work with the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Bangladesh and other relevant agencies to develop and operationalize climate resilience strategies that are informed by the results of hazard, vulnerability, and risk assessment for road design.

The major challenge for the resilient road sector in Bangladesh is developing stakeholders' capacity to absorb scientific information on climate change and improve construction standards. Moreover, stakeholders have expressed the need to improve existing design and construction standards for rural and strategic roads in the country.

ADPC will provide technical support to upgrade these standards and build relevant government agencies' capacities for implementing climate-risk management solutions.

In Nepal, ADPC will work with the Department of Roads (DOR) and other relevant agencies in developing evidence-based resilient policies, strategies and action/investment plans, informed by the results of hazard, vulnerability, and risk assessment. In particular, this will be achieved by integrating guidelines for resilient road networks, slope stabilization and protection designs in existing policies.

Furthermore, the project will help upgrade Nepal Roads Standards 2070 and Nepal Rural Roads Standards 2071 to make them more climate-resilient. In addition, the project will build the technical capacities of government officials on climate-resilience adaptive policy-making, design and solutions in the transport sector.

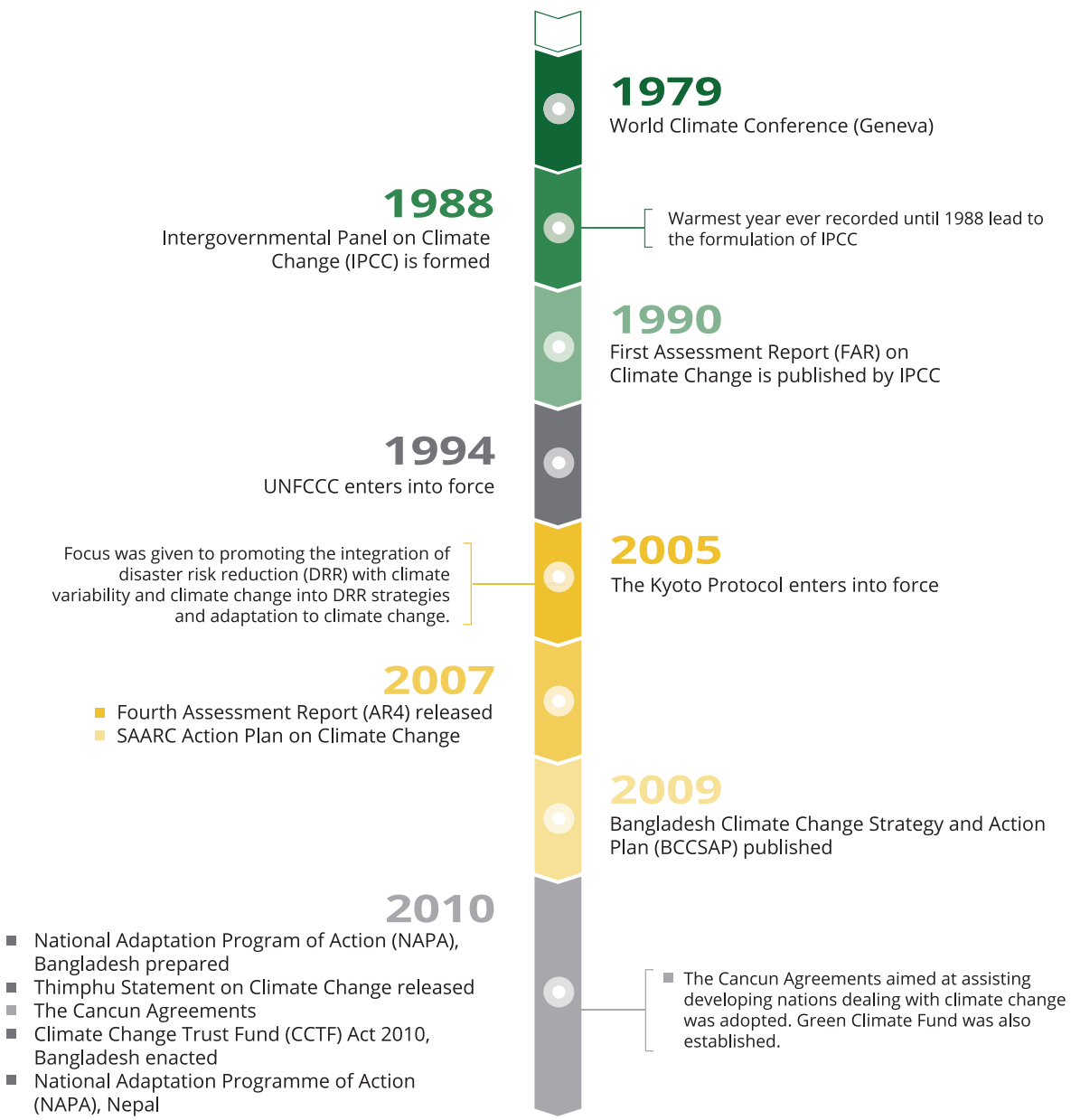
The writer is Resilient Infrastructure Specialist at ADPC.
✉ nurul.alam@adpc.net

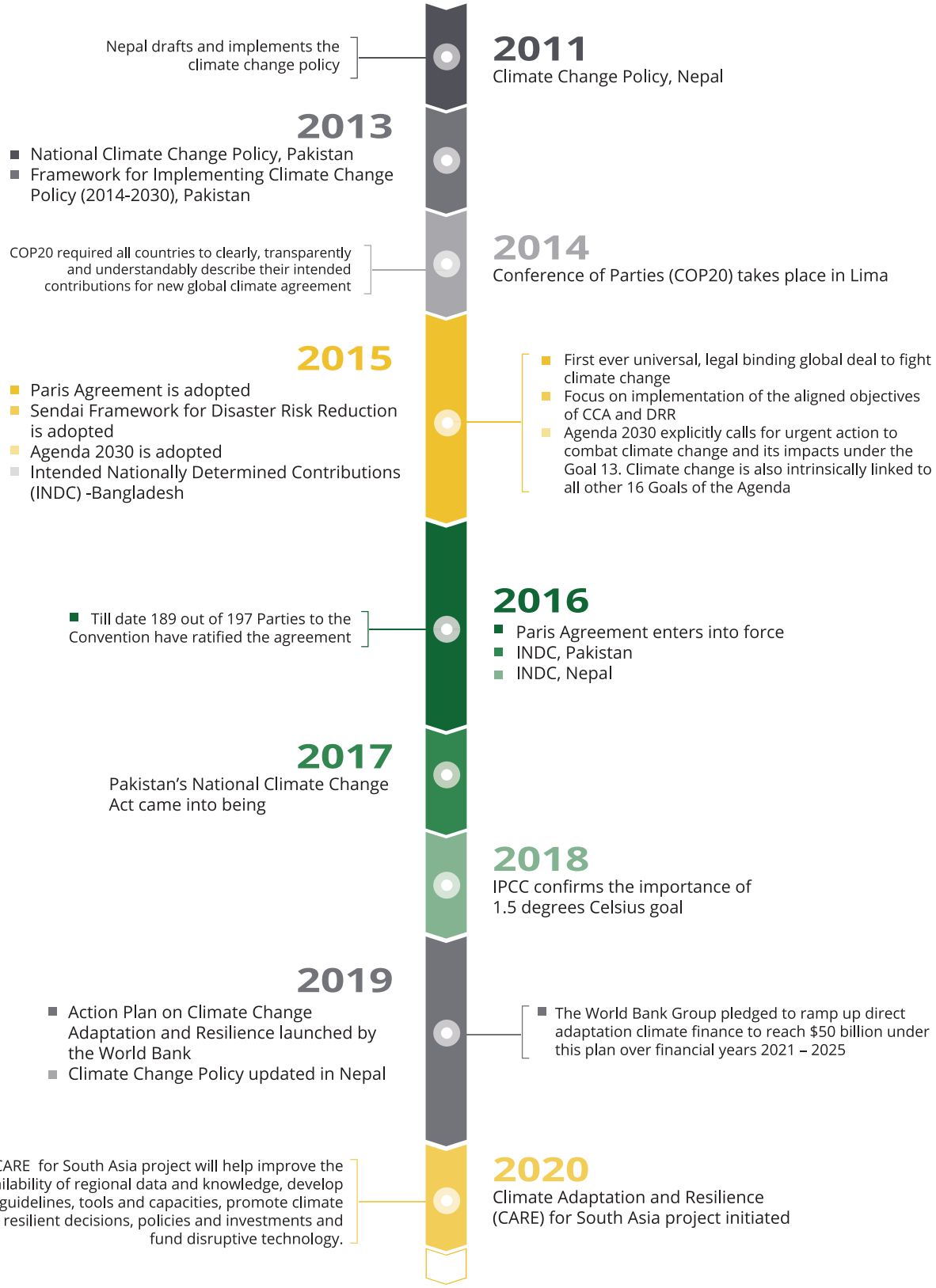
Road to Climate Adaptation and Resilience in South Asia

By Saswata Sanyal, Ph.D

Climate change is real. Adapting to climate change and building resilience is the only way forward to protect long-term development gains. Having experienced high economic growth rates in the past two decades, South Asia is also at a high risk of being impacted by climate-related hazards. South Asian countries, in particular, the project countries of the CARE for South Asia project—Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan—have taken and planned to take considerable steps towards climate-resilient development. CARE for South Asia project aims to act as a catalyst to these efforts both in project countries and in the region.

To grasp the road to CARE for South Asia project, we are going back in time to understand the progress and milstones achived for climate adaptation and resilience in the following infographic.





The writer is Project Officer at ADPC.
✉ saswata.s@adpc.net

Embedding climate adaptation in policy, planning and finance

By Israel P. Jegillos

Photo by Lightspring/ Shutterstock.com

Climate change policies are crucial for countries to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts in order to protect and enhance the well-being of citizens. Policy makers have recognized the need to develop climate change policies for achieving resilience. It is evident that countries in South Asia have formulated climate change policies and put in efforts to translate them into actions.

Under the Paris Agreement, each country has developed the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs), which are national climate plans highlighting climate actions including policies, measures, and targets. NDCs are required to be submitted every five years to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to show the progress and to enhance the commitments made to achieve the ambitions provided by the Paris Agreement.

Countries in South Asia have also developed their respective National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), or the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), which are critical tools to identify immediate, and medium- to long-term adaptation actions. An effective implementation of adaptation options under the NDCs, NAPAs, and NAPs needs to have an approach which integrates investments and policies into the planning and decision-making procedures.

Climate finance is critical in terms of supporting national adaptation and mitigation actions. Governments in South Asia are continuing to mobilize climate finance from various sources and channels such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and especially under public funds in order to meet the needs and priorities towards climate-resilient development.

The World Bank's Policy Note on Moving Towards Climate Budgeting indicates that "Governments need to make a conscious effort to mainstream climate

change into long-term budget planning in order to ensure the availability of domestic public resources and to continue participating in the evolving international climate change architecture for national policy".

The CARE for South Asia project supports the region focusing on Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan in translating climate change policies into adaptation actions by enhancing the climate financing, budgeting, planning, and decision-making through the provision of policy and knowledge interventions.

The project will help strengthen national and local adaptation actions and investment plans, development of guidelines and advisory services on climate resilient design and standards to harmonize the mainstreaming of climate risk in the policy, planning, and investment process. It will also provide technical support and capacity building to support ministries, and local governments to integrate resilience into investment planning, design, and implementation.

To ensure that these objectives are achieved, the CARE for South Asia project has a mix of regional and country-specific activities. The regional focus will look to develop an action plan for climate and disaster risk-informed investments which is supplemented by a national appraisal and approval framework and a Country Action for climate-related fiscal risk mitigation measures in Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The project will also develop regional climate finance and planning guidelines in South Asia which will extend to the agriculture, water, and transport sectors.

Furthermore, technical support will be provided for the Ministries of Finance and Planning for climate-informed macro-level analysis, modelling, and climate-informed fiscal risk management, and provision of technical support for countries to gain access to international climate finance including the support accreditation process for national and sub-national entities to access the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Activities in Nepal include support for the formulation of the 2019 LAPA Framework, development of an implementation plan to roll out the climate change financing framework at the sub-national level, adapting climate change budgeting and planning guidelines developed by the Ministry of Forest and Environment for priority sectors, and providing training for local governments on climate change adaptation, expenditures, budgeting, and resilience in support of the federalization process.

In Pakistan, The CARE for South Asia project will focus on supporting the development of a climate change financing framework implementation plan in addition to formulating climate indicators that can be incorporated in the planning and policy documents. The project will also support Pakistan through technical support and capacity building for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of adaptation activities in the NDCs and the NAP.

In Bangladesh, the CARE for South Asia project will support the development and enhancement of the Bangladesh Climate Fiscal Framework, and will provide capacity building to budget officers to prioritize investment and determine tax incentives and subsidies with additional investments for climate resilience.

The writer is Policy and Planning Specialist at ADPC.
✉ israel.j@adpc.net

Mainstreaming gender equality in climate adaptation and resilience

By Bhawana Upadhyay

An unexpected shift in weather patterns is likely to limit women's role in agriculture. One of the studies of disaster-prone areas in Sindh, Pakistan, highlights how climate variability affects women's livelihoods. In the Dadu district of rural Sindh, women used to engage in fishing, net-weaving, and similar fishing-related activities. However, a sudden change in weather patterns has led to a decline in the fish populations, considerably affecting women's earning opportunities and giving rise to food insecurities at the household level.


Photo by Salvacampillo/ Shutterstock.com

The disproportionate burden of climate variability on women is primarily due to persistent gender inequalities interconnected with climate risks and vulnerabilities. Gender disparity in terms of access to and control over resources like land, capital, information, innovation, technology, and decisions make women more vulnerable to climate change and susceptible to psychological stress and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and COVID-19. For example, women in rural settings have to walk for miles to fetch water from distant sources—often contaminated. Unsafe drinking water exposes the entire family to the risk of water-borne diseases.

Addressing the gender gaps in climate change response is one of the most effective mechanisms for building climate-resilient communities and nations. It is also an opportunity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal or SDGs (SDG -5-gender equality) and to contribute to signs of progress on SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SGD 13 (climate action).

When addressing climate change at scale, the paradigm shift in gender-responsive climate actions is commendable. From the deep-rooted perception of women as victims of climate change to women as powerful agents of change, there is a broader

realization of the value of gender-responsive climate policies and practices globally.

Women play a vital role as primary natural resource managers and as key actors in building community resilience. As a common coping and adaptation strategy, women often sell or mortgage their jewelry to meet their households' financial needs. As a part of their post-disaster recovery strategy, they play an active role in rebuilding houses, re-stocking livestock, securing incomes, and restoring other aspects of life, such as children's education.

Two-pronged approaches can address the unequal burden of climate change on women. Firstly, by acknowledging women as the key actors of change and strengthening their capacity. The second approach includes integrating gender perspectives systematically in policy and planning processes at national, provincial, and local levels.

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have acknowledged the need to mainstream gender into climate negotiations. More importantly, the Paris Agreement provides a strong basis to adopt gender-responsive approaches to climate adaptation and resilience.

Global Climate Risk Index 20202 shows South Asia as one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. Countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal are ranked fifth, seventh, and ninth, respectively, as the most affected countries by climate change from 1999 to 2018. These nations' levels of vulnerability are further perpetuated by inherent gender inequality, poverty, and other socio-cultural variables.

For example, a recent policy review and analysis of more than a dozen current agriculture and climate change policies in Nepal highlights policy gaps and suggests a set of recommendations for improving gender responsiveness at the policy level. The Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management in Agriculture policy and the National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA) recognize women's role in agriculture and their vulnerability, respectively.

However, the extent of gender integration remains merely limited to recognizing women as a vulnerable group. It does not specify any policy measures or action plans to address the climate change vulnerability of women. The Climate Change Policy, on the other hand, adopts a gender-neutral approach to climate-smart agriculture interventions, despite being one of the key documents guiding overall climate change-related interventions in Nepal.

The CARE project recognizes women's right to be meaningfully involved in the decision-making process in order to have a gender-transformative environment that will enable women to use their important knowledge and skills to mitigate climate risk.

The writer is Gender and Inclusion Specialist at ADPC.
✉ bhawana.upadhyay@adpc.net

CARE Updates

Calendar of events

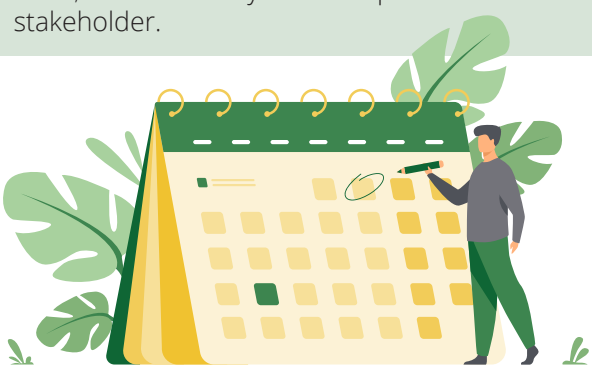
Stakeholders's meetings officially kick-start project implementation in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan

ADPC, RIMES and the World Bank organized a series of online meetings from September 8 to 17 to introduce CARE for South Asia to stakeholders and to officially mark the beginning of the project's implementation in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. About 20 meetings were held throughout the month and attended by local government agencies working for agriculture, water resources, transport, finance and planning.

On September 8-9, meetings were organized with government agencies in Nepal, namely the Ministry of Finance, the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, the Ministry of Forests and Environment, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, the Department of Roads, the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, the National Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. Similarly, meetings were held on September 14-15 with stakeholders—the Punjab Agriculture Department, the Ministry of Climate Change, the Sindh Irrigation Department, and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

Lastly, on September 16-17, meetings were arranged with project stakeholders in Bangladesh, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the Local Government Engineering Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Water Resources, and the Planning Commission.

The discussions at the meetings were focused on the support to be provided for the project activities, designating country focal points and identification of resources needed for project implementation. After the conclusion of the online meetings, ADPC and RIMES held follow-up consultations with the stakeholders to confirm the project's work plan for 2020-2021, and to identify the focal points from each stakeholder.



Source: Freepik.com

On October 10-11, Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (MoPDSI) hosted a two-day consultation meeting in Islamabad to identify the country's priorities for climate-sensitive sectors to be addressed through the CARE for South Asia project.

The meeting brought together government officials from the finance, planning, agriculture, water, climate change, and disaster risk reduction sectors. The discussions were focused on the country's climate change and development policies, key climate change adaptation priorities, and ongoing programs whose work CARE for South Asia can complement.

The consultation meeting served as a follow-up event to a series of meetings held back in September to discuss the support to be provided by ADPC, RIMES, and the World Bank for the project's activities.

Implemented By

Suported By

Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
SM Tower, 24th Floor 979/66-70 Pahonyothin Road
Phayathai, Bangkok 10400 Thailand
Tel: +66 2 298 0681-92
Fax: +66 2 298 0012
E-mail: adpc@adpc.net
www.adpc.net

Regional Intergrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)
2nd Fl. Outreach Bldg., AIT Campus, P.O. Box 4
Klong Luang, Pathumthani 12120, Thailand
Tel: +662 516 5900 to 01
Fax: +662 516 5902
E-mail: rimes@rimes.int
www.rimes.int