



GENDER CONVERSATIONS: CLIMATE, ECONOMY AND GEOPOLITICS

16 October 2025 | 6pm Onwards
Academy of Fine Arts and Literature,
Siri Fort Institutional Area, New Delhi



The Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) hosted a thought-provoking dialogue titled “Climate Futures Through a Gender Lens” at the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, New Delhi on 16th October 2025. The session brought together leading voices from research and advocacy to explore how gender-responsive frameworks can reshape India’s climate and energy policies. The dialogue underscores that gender equality is not a peripheral concern but a central determinant of climate resilience, justice, and sustainable development. India stands at a pivotal juncture in its environmental and socio-economic transformation, where gender-informed climate policies have become indispensable to building equitable and inclusive climate futures. Speaking at this event were two veterans in the field who have been actively advocating for transformative change. Mrs Kalyani Raj, President of the All India Women’s Conference, has long worked with women at the grassroots, investigating the implementation of policies and bridging the gap between design and practice. Dr Mini Govindan, Senior Fellow at TERI, has extensively examined women’s issues, structural

inequalities, and gender justice through her research and publications. The session was moderated by Mr. Shishir Priyadarshi, President, CRF, who guided a nuanced discussion that sought to reimagine India’s climate governance frameworks through a gender lens, advancing the understanding that climate justice and gender justice are inseparable and must be embedded across planning, budgeting, implementation, and follow-up processes. He further reiterated that India’s energy transition and climate adaptation and mitigation practices must go beyond metrics of investment and technocratic flavor of conversations. These discussions must include all stakeholders of society, especially women who are primary managers of local, ground-level change through plentiful social, political, economic and psychological machinery.

Discussions throughout the session highlighted that the impacts of climate change in India are profoundly gendered. Women, particularly those from rural, tribal, and marginalised communities, face disproportionate burdens due to their dependence



on natural resources, limited access to assets such as land, credit, and finance, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Research presented at the dialogue revealed that women often experience “double and triple burdens”: restricted access to productive resources, heavy care and subsistence workloads, and limited voice within institutional structures. These systemic inequalities exacerbate their vulnerability to environmental stresses such as droughts and floods. At the same time, women possess invaluable experiential and ecological knowledge, derived from generations of passed-down learning through their roles in managing resources, maintaining community health and ecosystems, positioning them as crucial agents and drivers of adaptation and resilience.

Speakers underscored that climate justice will only be possible when we start contextualising empowerment to aim for transformative changes by challenging hegemonic structures. True empowerment, they argued, must transcend inclusionary rhetoric and focus on structural transformation; dismantling the deeply entrenched social, political, economic, cultural, and epistemic hierarchies that shape gendered realities. Despite paeans of empowerment stories, women continue to face multiple, regressive and interlocking barriers that are structural and systemic in nature. In addition to the aforementioned roadblocks, bureaucratic inertia also impedes gender mainstreaming, highlighting the epistemic marginalisation which undervalues women’s knowledge systems. The entrenched public-private dichotomy, within which men and women are normatively assigned to specific roles, further limits women’s visibility in climate policy spaces, confining their contributions to the domestic or informal sphere and reinforcing gendered divisions of labour.

Against this backdrop, the speakers argued that gender must move from the margins to the mainstream of India’s climate and energy transition discourse. This requires participatory and inclusive frameworks that institutionalise gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and accountability mechanisms, moving decisively beyond tokenistic or “checkbox” approaches. They emphasised that sustainable and just transition demands more than technological

or economic interventions; they necessitate social transformation that recognises women’s leadership, agency, autonomy, and knowledge as central to building adaptive capacities and ensuring that climate action does not reproduce existing hierarchies.

While India’s policy frameworks, such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change and state-level missions, acknowledge gender in principle, implementation remains uneven and inconsistent. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, signed by 189 countries, also notes that the final stretch of the plan till 2030 requires all countries to accelerate on all transformative measures laid out across 12 critical areas, serving as a foundation for the SDGs and gender equity. Participants agreed that gender-responsive policies not only advance equity but also strengthen climate effectiveness by improving community resilience, food security, and adaptive agricultural systems. Bridging the gap between principle and practice, therefore, requires embedding gender perspectives within every mechanism of climate policy.

The dialogue comes in light of several compelling examples of women-led climate resilience in India. Initiatives like the Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) in urban India have supported women leaders in informal settlements to spearhead local adaptation through innovations such as cool roofs, solar lighting, and energy efficiency programmes. By linking community-based initiatives with governmental and corporate partnerships, MHT illustrates how women’s agency can transform local resilience into institutional change. As Mrs Raj pointed out, the All India Women’s Conference participates in similar capacity-building and community-led projects. Other organisations like SEWA are also working alongside national and international groups to make energy resources accessible to women and make them more financially sustainable. These examples collectively demonstrate that recognising women as innovators and decision-makers, rather than passive beneficiaries, has transformative potential for climate governance.

Building upon these insights, the dialogue concluded that a gender-just climate future requires systemic



transformation rather than symbolic inclusion. Participants advocated for the integration of gender budgeting within national and state climate plans, the empowerment of women's leadership in adaptation and mitigation projects, and the expansion of education, finance, and institutional participation for women across climate sectors. They further highlighted the need to invest in gender-disaggregated data, design equitable climate finance mechanisms that directly support women-led initiatives and embed social inclusion and community resilience at the core of climate-economic models. Such measures, it was argued, are not merely moral imperatives but strategic interventions that enhance institutional performance and resource efficiency, leading to sustainable outcomes.

As participants reiterated, "Gender must move from the margins to the mainstream of climate policy". The climate crisis is not gender-neutral; it deepens pre-existing inequalities and disproportionately affects women. Addressing these inequities demands embedding gender equity into every layer of climate governance and finance. Ultimately, achieving climate justice is inseparable from achieving gender justice. India as a leading agent of "good" and "just" growth

in Global South should take a frontier approach in welcoming non-hegemonistic discourses for gender mainstreaming, as expressed in affirmation by Dr. Govindan.

CRF remains deeply committed to facilitating such intersections — between policy and practice, research and implementation, to gender and governance. •



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1st Floor, Bharti Crescent Building, 1 Nelson Mandela Marg,
Vasant Kunj Phase II, New Delhi - 110070



info@crfindia.org



+91 9311630957, +91 6358871398



www.crfindia.org