



Dr. Moumita Mandal

The Role of Climate Change in Exacerbating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Women: A New Challenge for International Law

MPIL Agora

14 June, 2023, 15:00-16:00, Room 014

Climate change has emerged as the predominant 'world problematique'. Though entire populations are affected by climate change, women and girls suffer the most. As already seen, as a consequence of natural disasters and during Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21, women faced heightened real-life challenges specially being vulnerable to different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Women are exposed to SGBV due to weak or absence of social, economic, political security and the culture of widespread impunity to the perpetrators.

According to a report of 28 April 2022 by S&P Global, 'climate change could see 4% of global annual economic output lost by 2050'. According to different studies, the world economy may face huge economic losses due to climate change. In conditions driven by events such as pandemics, epidemics and climatic conditions, there is heightened risk of violence against women. The Deputy Executive Director of the UN Women (2016) has indicated "that the cost of violence against women could amount to around 2 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP)." Thus, it is clear that SGBV due to climate change imposes double economic burden on States. Climate change and SGBV cause economic loss for States, societies and families both individually and jointly. Both result in phenomenal economic losses.

International law does not yield any international legal instrument that deals with SGBV against women during and after climate change-induced disasters. This is more ominous when growing evidence suggests the role of climate change in exacerbating SGBV against women and girls. Even texts of the three specific climate change treaties (1992 UNFCCC, 1997 Kyoto Protocol and 2015 Paris Agreement) do not address this issue. It has been given attention only through the decisions of the Conference of the Parties in recent years. It is a new challenge for international law that needs to be duly addressed in a timely manner.



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