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Climateizing Diplomats Strategy: A Case Study of India – Maternal Women & Children Health

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Abstract

Climate change has become an urgent international issue with extensive consequences not only to the environment but also to human health and international systems of policies. This paper explores the notion of Climateizing Diplomats Strategy with a particular emphasis on India, which brings up the issue of the intersection between climate diplomacy and maternal, women and children health. The study examines the effects of climate change on health both directly and indirectly through the following pathways, which are extreme weather phenomena, food insecurity, water scarcity and spread of infectious diseases. It highlights that women and children are part of the most vulnerable groups based on socio-economic inequalities and unavailability of healthcare services. The research paper also examines how India is evolving in its climate diplomacy, where India is balancing its development agenda and its global climate commitments. It emphasizes the necessity to incorporate health issues, especially maternal and child health, into climate policies and diplomacy. Through the analysis of the climate-health nexus, the study finds that the biggest challenges are inadequate healthcare infrastructure, policy gaps and the absence of inter-sectoral coordination. The paper further suggests strategic policy recommendations such as climate resilient health systems, better nutrition security and better international cooperation. On the whole, the paper presents the argument that health as a component of climate diplomacy is necessary to attain sustainable development and safeguard vulnerable populations. It finds that India has much potential to be a leader in this field with the adoption of inclusive, equitable and health-oriented climate strategie.

Keywords

Climate Change, Climate Diplomacy, Climateizing Diplomats Strategy, Maternal Health, Women Health, Child Health, Public Health, India, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Climate change has not only become a major environmental issue in the modern international system, but also a critical factor influencing human development, international relations and



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health. The growing rate of extreme weather conditions, warming, shifts in the pattern of precipitation and environmental deterioration have far reaching consequences in the survival and well-being of human beings. Here, the term climate diplomacy has acquired a great relevance as countries strive to deal with climate-related issues collectively through negotiations, policies and strategic partnerships. But in recent years a new dimension has been added to this discourse-the integrating of health concerns into climate diplomacy strategies, in particular, of maternal, women and children health.

The traditional approach of climate diplomacy is to cut greenhouse gas emissions, to encourage sustainable development and to guarantee global cooperation to reduce the climate risks. Nevertheless, the increased awareness of the issue of climate change as a significant public health concern has broadened the range of diplomatic activity. The health risks brought about by the climate are no longer the preserve of environmental degradation but have extended to some of the crucial sectors like the health of the mother, her reproductive health, child nutrition and susceptibility to diseases. Climate variability disproportionately affects women and children, particularly in the developing world such as India due to socio-economic inequalities, limited access to healthcare and existing vulnerabilities.

As a developing country with the high population and various climatic conditions, India has its own challenges in terms of combating the intersection of climate change and public health. Climate diplomacy in the country has over the years transformed its approach to become a responsible global actor promoting climate justice, equity and sustainable development. The obligations of India in the international regimes like the Paris Agreement are indicative of its proactive attitude in dealing with climate change. Yet, it is also necessary to incorporate health aspects, especially maternal and child health, into these diplomatic options.

Climateizing Diplomats Strategy is the conceptualization of intentions to deliberately introduce climate-health linkages into diplomatic systems, policies and international negotiations. It highlights how diplomats and policymakers need to acknowledge climate change as a health crisis and prioritize vulnerable groups in climate debates. This is the way to bridge the gap between climate policies and health outcomes by making climate policies inclusive, equitable and responsive to the needs of women and children.

Climate change is especially sensitive to the health of mothers because of such factors as heat stress, malnutrition, water shortage and high exposure to infectious diseases. Extreme climatic conditions are more dangerous to pregnant women as they may cause some complications that include preterm birth, low birth weight and maternal mortality. On the same note, children are more exposed to the health related issues caused by climate change such as respiratory diseases, malnutrition, diseases caused by vectors and psychological stress. The effects of climate change on food security also contribute to the further intensification of such challenges, with long-term consequences of child development and overall health outcomes.



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The socio-economic inequality, poor healthcare infrastructure and regional disparities are added to the burden of maternal and child health problems in India. Rural regions, especially, are more susceptible to the effects of climate shock because they rely on farming and do not have access to medical services. Floods, droughts and heat waves are climate events that disrupt the healthcare delivery systems, lower access to essential services and increase the likelihood of disease outbreaks. Such difficulties indicate a dire necessity of a holistic approach that would combine climate action with health policies.

The climate diplomacy of India can help solve those problems by considering health in the international and national policy framework. India has shown its interest in sustainable development through its initiatives like the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and its involvement in the global climatic forums. Nevertheless there is still no widespread incorporation of maternal and child health as part of these strategies. The idea of Climateizing Diplomats Strategy offers a scheme of filling this gap by focusing on cross-sectoral co-operation between health, environment and foreign policy sectors.

In addition, the contribution of diplomacy to climate-health issues is not limited to the process of policy formulation but to activities such as advocacy, mobilization of resources and international cooperation. Diplomats may be instrumental in putting in focus the health effects of climate change, finding financial resources to support health adaption programs and establishing collaboration with other international bodies. India can leverage her status as a global health diplomacy leader and as a contributor to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those that relate to health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5) and climate action (SDG 13).

Another important aspect of Climateizing Diplomats Strategy is the emphasis on equity and inclusivity. The marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women and children in the low-income communities, are disproportionately impacted by climate change. To solve these inequalities, special programmes, adaptive strategies in communities and inclusive policy making are necessary. By including local knowledge and grassroots involvement in climate-health approaches, their effectiveness and sustainability can be developed. This research will therefore seek to understand how the Climateizing Diplomats Strategy can be used to address the issue of climate change on the health of the maternal, women and children in India. It attempts to examine the current policies, find gaps and suggest policies that can be used to integrate health considerations into climate diplomacy. The research, using India as a case study, sheds light on the challenges and opportunities that surround climate-health integration in a developing country setting.

Climate Change and Health Nexus

The interdependence of climate change and human health has proven to be one of the most vital issues of the current global agenda. The issue of climate change has come to be a multidimensional



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issue that directly and indirectly impacts human health systems. The Climate Change and Health Nexus is the term that describes the complex and interdependent interrelations between climatic variations and their effects on physical, mental and social well-being of the populations. This nexus underscores the interaction of environmental change due to climate variability and the patterns of disease, health and healthcare system, especially in the vulnerable areas such as developing countries like India. Health is directly and indirectly impacted by climate change in both direct and indirect ways. Acts of extreme weather, like heatwaves, floods, cyclones and droughts are direct impacts that would cause injuries, mortality and displacement of populations. As an example, high temperatures lead to more heat-related illnesses like heatstroke and dehydration, which may be life-threatening unless addressed appropriately. Floods and cyclones usually cause immediate physical damage, loss of life and destruction of healthcare infrastructure, thus affecting necessary medical services. The indirect effects of climate change on health are more complex and lengthy in nature. These comprise the shift in the distribution and prevalence of infectious diseases, food insecurity, water scarcity and poor quality of air. Climate variability also impacts on the breeding patterns of disease vectors like mosquitoes, which results in a higher incidence of disease vectors, such as malaria, dengue and chikungunya. Equally, alterations in the rainfall patterns and water availability contribute to the spread of water-borne diseases like cholera and diarrheal infections, which disproportionately affect children. The influence of the climate-health nexus on nutrition and food security is one of the most important dimensions of the climate-health nexus. Climate change impacts agricultural productivity by having unpredictable weather patterns, soil erosion and water scarcity. This translates to decreased crop production and food prices thus increasing malnutrition especially to women and children. Malnutrition undermines the immune system and exposes individuals to increased susceptibility to infections and diseases and has long-term effects on child growth and cognitive development.

Another dimension that is a critical aspect of this nexus is the air quality dimension. Air pollution is a significant cause of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases caused by rising temperatures and increased emissions. Air pollution is of greater concern to children because their respiratory system is not fully developed and pregnant women who are exposed to polluted air are at a higher risk of experiencing complications, including low birth weight and preterm delivery. The synergy of the climate change and the air pollution is a significant issue of social health in the urban areas of India, where the level of industrialization and air pollution is high. Of particular interest should be the vulnerability of women and children in the climate-health nexus. Women are also more vulnerable to climate-related stressors because they are more likely to have to contend with household resources like water and food. Women are at more risk of health complication, unaffordability to access healthcare services and socio-economic marginalization during climate induced disasters. Pregnant and lactating women are especially vulnerable due to their increased nutritional and healthcare needs. Children on the other hand are more vulnerable to the change of



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climate due to their immature immune system and dependence on care givers making them very susceptible to diseases induced by climate and malnutrition.

The interdependence between environmental changes and health outcomes underscores the need for a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. For countries like India, where vulnerabilities are high, addressing this nexus is not only a matter of public health but also a crucial step towards sustainable development. Understanding and addressing the complex interactions within this nexus is essential for protecting the health of present and future generations, particularly women and children who are most at risk.

Image 1: Child Health & Care



Mental health is a new yet frequently unrecognized element of climate-health nexus. The events associated with climate changes like displacement, loss of livelihoods and environmental degradation are some of the causes of psychological stress, anxiety and trauma. These effects may be especially harsh on women and children, which will impact their overall well-being and quality of life. The psychological impacts of climate change in the long term are gradually becoming a major issue of public health concern. The climate-health nexus is further complicated in the Indian context by socio-economic inequalities, population density and disparities. Climate variability is more likely to affect rural populations, which largely rely on agriculture. Restrictions to healthcare infrastructures, poor sanitation and awareness contribute to the health effects of climatic changes in these regions. Urban population has not only better healthcare facilities, but also faces challenges of air pollution, heat stress and overcrowding, which are also contributing to the adverse health outcomes. The other essential aspect of climate-health nexus is the burden on the healthcare systems. Climate change puts pressure on healthcare services, as it increases the number of diseases and emergencies. Extreme weather events may harm healthcare infrastructure, interrupt supply chains and decrease the number of medical staff. This presents a scenario where the healthcare systems become overwhelmed, especially in developing nations with few resources.

An additional conceptualization of the climate-health nexus highlights the necessity of combining policy measures. To tackle the health effects of climate change, there is a need to coordinate the various sectors, such as environment, health, agriculture and urban planning. Policies should be



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aimed at mitigation measures and adaptation measures to mitigate the health risks of climate change. As an example, healthcare infrastructure, climate-resistant agriculture and overall awareness of the vulnerable population can be greatly enhanced, which will greatly decrease vulnerability. Moreover, international efforts and policies like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the need to deal with the climate-health nexus. Health, climate action and gender-related goals are interrelated and should be treated as a whole to be effectively implemented. In this regard, the need to incorporate health considerations into climate diplomacy is critical towards ensuring that the international climate policies are inclusive and equitable. To sum up, climate change and health nexus can be regarded as a burning issue that needs to be addressed as the matter of concern.

Climate Diplomacy in India

Climate diplomacy in India means the effective utilization of the foreign policy, the international negotiations and multilateral cooperation to solve the problems of climate change without violating national development priorities. In recent decades, India has become one of the most important actors in climate governance in the world, promoting such principles as equity, climate justice and the doctrine of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR). The nature of India climate diplomacy lies in the necessity to balance the environmental promises with the requirements of the economic development, reduction of poverty and energy security. Being a developing country with a huge population and a wide range of socio-economic conditions, India points at the fact that developed countries have a stronger historical responsibility in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and should provide financial and technical assistance to developing nations. India is an active participant in the global climate negotiations through the frames of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, where it has undertaken to reduce the intensity of the emissions, increase the size of the renewable energy and enhance the resiliency of the climate. At the same time, India has used climate diplomacy as a tool of soft power by launching international initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which promotes solar energy adoption among tropical countries. In India, the country balances the national policies with the diplomatic commitments such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which has renewable energy missions, sustainable agricultural missions, water conservation and climate adaptation missions. India has started to broaden its climate diplomacy to encompass wider developmental and human security goals, such as public health, in recent years. The adoption of climate issues and health issues especially on vulnerable groups like women and children is an indication of a shifting paradigm in the India diplomatic strategy. Through its connection between climate action and sustainable development goals and human well-being, India is establishing itself as a responsible and proactive leader in global climate governance. Therefore, climate diplomacy in India is not simply a concern of environmental protection but one of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development amidst climate challenges.



Maternal, Women and Children Health in India

The health of maternal, women and children in India is a key element of the Indian public health system and the overall socio-economic development of India. It covers a broad spectrum of issues such as maternal care during pregnancy and child birth, reproductive health, nutritional status of women and the physical, mental and developmental conditions of children. India has over the years come a long way in the quest to improve its key health indicators which include reduction in the maternal mortality rates and child mortality rates through the targeted government intervention and healthcare programs. Programs such as institutional delivery programs, immunization programs and nutrition programs have helped to improve the outcomes of health. Nonetheless, even with these gains, there are still significant issues especially in rural and economically disadvantaged areas where there are still limited access to quality healthcare services. The social determinants of health, including education, income, gender inequality and cultural practices have a strong relationship with the health of women in India. Most women particularly in marginalized communities experience impediments in receiving adequate nutrition, medical institutions and reproductive health service providers.

Problems including anemia, malnutrition, early marriages and ignorance, still continue to plague the overall health and well being of women. The maternal health is especially sensitive as in most cases, the complications during the pregnancy and childbirth are an issue of great concern and in most cases, it is due to the inadequate prenatal and postnatal care. Likewise, children in India are challenged by health issues associated with malnutrition, infectious diseases and poor sanitation. Poverty in eating habits, drinking contaminated water and exposure to diseases are some of the factors that contribute to high rates of stunting, wasting and susceptibility to diseases among children.

Image 2: Women's Health & Nutrition



Moreover, the environment is also affecting the health of women and children, including climate change, which increases the current vulnerabilities. These groups are disproportionately impacted



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by extreme weather conditions, food insecurity and disease outbreaks, which underscores the necessity of integrating health and environmental policies. To counter this, Indian government has instituted several initiatives including the National Health Mission (NHM), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and maternal welfare programs to enhance the accessibility of healthcare and healthcare outcomes. In spite of these attempts, the inequality within the regions and different socio-economic groups still remains problematic. Thus, to guarantee the health of maternal, women and children groups in India, it is necessary to strengthen the healthcare infrastructure, raise awareness and implement inclusive and climate-sensitive health strategies.

Policy

- **National Health Mission (NHM)**

One of the most important government-led health programs implemented in India so far is the National Health Mission (NHM), which is a significant national development initiative that has greatly benefitted the healthcare sector in India, especially to the most vulnerable and economically weaker groups. In 2013, the mission was formally launched by combining the previously National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) with the aim of making the healthcare delivery system in rural and urban areas stronger. The overall goal of NHM is to ensure universal access to equitable, affordable and quality healthcare services and reduction of maternal mortality, infant mortality and burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases. One of the primary concerns of the National Health Mission is the healthcare of mothers, women and children through comprehensive healthcare programs and institutional support. Within the scope of NHM, various programs and interventions have been implemented to achieve safe pregnancy, institutional delivery, immunization, nutritional support and accessibility of health care by the mothers and children. Programmes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) have had a great impact and contribution in increasing the number of institutional deliveries and reducing the rate of maternal and infant mortality in India. The mission also enhances antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning services and awareness on reproductive health among women. The National Health Mission focuses on the development of healthcare infrastructure, through the establishment of health and wellness centers, the improvement of primary healthcare facilities and the availability of trained healthcare professionals, medicines and diagnostic services. Special consideration is paid to rural and remote locations where healthcare facilities are usually substandard. Under NHM, the accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) are important as they link communities to healthcare services, create awareness and support maternal and child healthcare activities at the grass-root level. Within the framework of climate change and the issue of general health, NHM has been given a greater significance since issues regarding climate change like heatwaves, floods, malnutrition and outbreak of diseases disproportionately affect women and children. The mission aids climate-sensitive healthcare reactions by enhancing emergency healthcare services, disease surveillance



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systems, immunization coverage and nutrition-related interventions. It is also involved in establishment of strong healthcare systems that are capable of responding to health emergencies caused by climate.

- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is one of the biggest and most significant social welfare and child development programmes initiated by the Government of India to enhance the health, nutrition and overall development of children, expectant women and lactating mother. The programme was initiated in 1975 with the aim of alleviating malnutrition, poor health conditions and developmental challenges among children under the age of six years. ICDS is a holistic scheme of early childhood care and development through the provision of health, nutrition and educational services to support the physical, mental and social well-being of vulnerable populations. The main objective of ICDS is to decrease the rates of child malnutrition, mortality, morbidity and school dropout and promote proper psychological and physical growth of children. The programme specifically targets those children of economically weaker and socially disadvantaged layers of society where access to healthcare and nutrition is often sub-par. Under ICDS, the services are carried out primarily through Anganwadi Centres, which are community-based childcare and health support centres in rural, urban and tribal areas of India.

The wide range of services that ICDS provides include supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, referral services, preschool non-formal education and nutrition and health education. Supplementary nutrition is designed to address malnutrition in children, pregnant women and lactating mothers through the provision of nutritional food and dietary support. Immunization services are used to protect children and mothers against preventable diseases and regular health check-ups help to detect and treat health issues early. There are also referral services where severe medical conditions are offered specialized healthcare services. One of the important aspects of ICDS is that it would facilitate maternal and child health. The pregnant women are guided on prenatal care, nutrition, safe delivery practices and breast feeding that helps in decreasing the rate of maternal and infant mortality. The lactating mothers receive nutritional support and health awareness to promote healthy growth and development of infants. The early childhood education, through preschool activities, also contributes to cognitive, emotional and social development of children before they start attending school. ICDS is becoming more and more significant in terms of climate change and the health of people due to the disproportionately high number of children and women who are victims of climate-related factors. Malnutrition can be exacerbated by climate change, which also increases the susceptibility to infectious diseases and disrupts food supply systems, thus adversely affecting the development of children. ICDS is a protective mechanism which offers nutritional support, access to healthcare and support on the community level to vulnerable populations in the case of environmental and health emergencies.



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- **POSHAN Abhiyaan**

The National Nutrition Mission, abbreviated as POSHAN Abhiyaan or simply known as the POSHAN in short is a flagship initiative of the Government of India launched in 2018 with the aim of enhancing the nutritional status of children, pregnant women, lactating mothers and adolescent girls nationwide. The name, POSHAN can be translated as the Prime Ministers Overarching Scheme of Holistic Nourishment; this reflects the governments commitment to the elimination of the malnutrition phenomenon and the need to promote health and well-being through a coordinated and technology driven approach. The programme was initiated to fight the menace of stunting, undernutrition, anemia and low birth weight that are still prevalent among a large percentage of the Indian population especially amongst the women and children. The main objective of POSHAN Abhiyaan is to achieve a malnutrition-free India by ensuring the convergence of various ministries and departments that deal with nutrition, health, sanitation, drinking water and women and child development. The programme employs a multi-sectoral approach that acknowledges nutrition as not only a health concern, but as a developmental issue that is intertwined with poverty, food security and education, sanitation and the environment. By coordinated actions, POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to decrease the rates of stunting, wasting, anemia and low birth weight and improve the overall nutritional and health outcomes of vulnerable populations.

The main characteristic of POSHAN Abhiyaan is the emphasis on the maternal and child health as the proper nutrition at the time of pregnancy and at the early childhood is the key to physical growth, cognitive evolution and resistance to diseases. The pregnant women and lactating mothers receive nutritional advice, health monitoring and awareness on balanced diets, breastfeeding practices and maternal care. In like manner, children are observed to grow and develop to diagnose malnutrition at a tender age and implement interventions accordingly. The programme is based on the value of the first 1,000 days of the life of a child as this is the critical time period in the lives of children and adults in terms of long-term health and development. The use of technology and digital monitoring systems to enhance service delivery and transparency are also encouraged by POSHAN Abhiyaan. The government also launched digital tools and mobile-based applications that could be used by the Anganwadi workers to monitor nutritional indicators, monitor beneficiaries and also ensure effective implementation of the nutrition related services. Another huger element of the programme, which promotes awareness of healthy eating habits, hygiene, sanitation and child care practices at the grassroots level is community participation and behavioral change communication. Positively, POSHAN Abhiyaan is highly relevant to the issues of climate change and the health of the population members since climate variability has direct impact on food production, food availability, water resources and the health condition of the population members. Food insecurity and malnutrition may be heightened by extreme weather conditions, drought, flood and rising temperatures that affects the weaker economically challenged



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populations. The effects are particularly very harmful to women and children because of low access to healthy food and health services. Through enhancing the nutritional support systems and encouraging community-based interventions, POSHAN Abhiyaan will help build resilience against health risks posed by climatic conditions.

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is a global intergovernmental organization that was started by India and France in 2015 during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) held in Paris. The major aim of the alliance is to facilitate the extensive use of solar energy and make the transition toward sustainable and clean energy systems across the globe. The program was initiated with the aim of lowering reliance on fossil fuels, addressing climate change, improving energy security and promoting sustainable development, especially in developing countries and tropical countries which receive plenty of sunlight all year round. International Solar Alliance is engaged in the development of a cooperative platform between nations that are located partially or wholly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, although now membership extends worldwide. The aim of the alliance is to mobilize investments, create technological cooperation, promote research and innovation and support capacity building in the sphere of solar energy. In its bid to make solar energy affordable, accessible and reliable, especially to the developing countries that are facing the issues of energy poverty and environmental degradation, ISA seeks to apply international cooperation. In its overall climate diplomacy and global environmental leadership policy, India has led the way in establishing and promoting ISA. Through the initiation of ISA, India was able to position itself as a proactive participant in global climate governance as well as demonstrate its commitment to sustainable energy development and climate action. The alliance is an indication of India diplomatic strategy of integrating environmental concern with developmental concerns, hence, increasing its soft power internationally and its impact on the global environment.

A significant objective of ISA is to cut down on the emission of greenhouse gases by motivating nations to abandon their old fashioned fossil fuel based energy systems and embrace renewable solar energy. Solar power is viewed as one of the clean and most sustainable sources of power as it helps to reduce carbon emission, air pollution as well as contribute to economic growth that is environmentally friendly. The alliance also facilitates access to energy in rural and underserved areas where the electricity infrastructure is weak or absent. By using solar-powered systems countries can enhance healthcare facilities, water supply, education and communication facilities in remote communities. The International Solar Alliance has an indirect, yet, significant impact on the health of maternal, women and children. Climate change leads to pollution of the environment, heat waves, food insecurity and outbreaks of diseases, all which disproportionately impact vulnerable populations.



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- **National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH)**

One of the important initiatives undertaken by the Government of India under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to curb the increasing effects of climate change on the health of the people is the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH). The programme was formulated as being part of the greater commitment of India towards climate adaptation and sustainable development given that climate change has become a major menace to the human health, health care as well as socio-economic stability. NPCCHH seeks to enhance the response capabilities of the healthcare sector in response to climate-sensitive health conditions, environmental hazards and health emergencies that may occur due to changing climatic conditions. The programme is aimed at understanding and managing the direct and indirect health effects of climate change, including heatwaves, floods, droughts, air pollution and vectors, water-borne diseases and malnutrition. Climate variability has also augmented the occurrence and intensity of environmental disasters that have significant impacts on the vulnerable population, especially women, children, the elderly and the economically weaker groups. NPCCHH was established to establish a climate-resistant healthcare system capable of defending the health of the population against these new challenges. Increasing awareness and knowledge about the correlation between climate change and human health is one of the key goals of NPCCHH among the policymakers, health professionals, researchers and the general population. The programme encourages research, surveillance and data collection of climate sensitive diseases and environmental health risks. The programme assists in the formulation of effective strategies to enhance health adaptation at the national, state and local levels by improving science and evidence-based policymaking.

One of the key elements of NPCCHH is the empowerment of healthcare infrastructure and emergency preparedness. Disasters caused by climate tend to undermine healthcare delivery, destroy medical facilities and enhance the spread of diseases. Thus, the programme focuses on the creation of climate resilient hospitals, disease surveillance systems, early warning systems and emergency response systems. It also promotes the incorporation of climate concerns in the public health planning and healthcare delivery systems. The programme is of particular importance to the health of maternal, women and children since these groups of people are among the most vulnerable to health risks caused by climate. At extremes of climate, pregnant women are more vulnerable to heat stress, malnutrition, dehydration and infectious diseases, which may lead to complications such as preterm birth, low birth weight, dehydration and infectious diseases. The developing immune system and nutritional requirements make children highly vulnerable to malnutrition, respiratory infections, vector-borne diseases and water-borne diseases. NPCCHH aims at alleviating these weaknesses by offering enhanced healthcare access, nutrition support, immunization systems and disease prevention strategies. NPCCHH also encourages inter-sectoral coordination among ministries and departments concerned with health, environment, water resources, agriculture, disaster management and urban development.



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Case Study

• **Heatwave Impact on Pregnant Women and Children in India**

An important real-life example that can be related to your research topic is the growing influence of extreme heatwaves on maternal and child health in India. The recent research and reports have revealed that climate change has significantly raised the number of dangerous heat-at-risk days of pregnant women in India. The climate change analysis report indicated that due to the climate change, the number of extremely hot days that affected pregnant women in most regions doubled, thereby exposing the newborns to increased risks of preterm births, maternal complications, dehydration and low birth weight. States like Kerala, Goa, Maharashtra and Sikkim reported a dramatic increase of heat-risk exposures to pregnant women. The situation was especially problematic during the period of severe Indian heatwaves, when hospitals and healthcare centers have reported a rise in the cases of heat-related illnesses among pregnant women and children. Higher temperatures influenced the accessibility of healthcare services, nutrition and access to water, in an economically weaker community and in rural communities. Our children experienced dehydration, respiratory infections, malnutrition and heat stress and healthcare systems were under additional pressure, as the number of patients increased.

Strategies and Policy Recommendations

The complexity of interlinkages between climate change and maternal, women and children health in India requires a multi-sectoral and policy-based approach that incorporates the environmental sustainability and the public health priorities. The mainstreaming of climate-health considerations into national and state level policies is one of the leading strategies ensuring that the health risks related to climate change are integrated into planning frameworks, including climate action plans and health missions. Enhancing healthcare infrastructure is also crucial, especially in rural areas and in climate-prone regions by creating climate-resilient health systems that can withstand extreme weather conditions and ensure continuous delivery of maternal and child healthcare services. This encompasses enhancing early warning mechanisms, emergency preparedness and provision of necessary medical supplies in the disasters occasioned by the climate. The other important policy direction is to increase nutritional security and food system resiliency given that the problem of climate change is a significant factor in influencing agricultural productivity and food availability. Policies must also encourage agriculture that is climate resilient, crop and community based nutrition program targeting pregnant women, lactating mothers and children. Also, access to clean water, sanitation and air quality should be considered the top priority areas, as these environmental determinants directly affect the health outcome. Implementation of renewable energy sources in healthcare centres can also facilitate the provision of sustainable and reliable service delivery in remote locations.

In terms of governance, inter-sectoral coordination between ministries of health, environment, agriculture and external affairs is essential in order to effectively implement climate-health



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strategies. Diplomats and policymakers should also work to ensure that health concerns are included in international climate negotiation and hence mobilise financial and technical support to vulnerable populations. Community level capacity building and awareness programs are also essential, enabling women with knowledge and resources to be able to adapt to climate-related challenges. Moreover, research and surveillance systems can be used to monitor the effects of health and design evidence-based interventions by leveraging the power of data-driven technologies. Equity and inclusivity should be at the core of all strategies and, in turn, marginalized groups, especially women and children, should be supported specifically. Gender disparities need to be tackled through policies aimed at enhancing access to reproductive health services as well as strengthening of social protection mechanisms to diminish vulnerability. In summary the holistic approach that combines robust policy frameworks, institutional cooperation, community involvement and international cooperation play a crucial role in reducing the health effects of climate change and in establishing sustainable development in India.

Conclusion

In sum, the research highlights that climate change is not only an environmental problem but a holistic issue that has a significant impact on human health, especially maternal, women and children health. The Climateizing Diplomats Strategy is a concept that offers a critical tool in the attempts to integrate health considerations in the aspects of climate diplomacy, to ensure that the vulnerable populations are prioritized in the policies and decision making processes. The analysis demonstrates that the effects of climate change on health follow multiple different pathways, which include extreme weather events, food and water insecurity and the spread of diseases, thus adding to the burden on already strained healthcare systems.

The process of developing India into a responsible and active actor in responding to climate challenges has seen a significant transformation in the role of India in global climate diplomacy. Nevertheless, the need to integrate health, in particular, maternal and child health, into climate policies is underrepresented and needs to be addressed urgently. The paper emphasizes the need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach that integrates environmental policies and health strategies, enhances healthcare facilities and promotes equal access to resources. Moreover, the study states that there is a need to increase the integration of national and international stakeholders, such as policymakers, healthcare professionals and diplomats, to effectively tackle the complex climate-health nexus. Community engagement, awareness and data-driven interventions are also necessary to enable vulnerable populations to be resilient. In the end, a paradigm shift in policy thinking, in which health is seen as a key element of climate action, is necessary to achieve sustainable development under the circumstances of climate change. India can not only promote better health outcomes in the country, but also play a significant role in the global quest to achieve a resilient and sustainable future by prioritizing the maternal health, women and children health within its climate diplomacy framework.



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