

# Community Engagement to Gender Differentiated Impacts of Climate Change in Social Media

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**Abstract:** *The Social media has emerged as the most powerful tool to form public opinion on widespread issues. Presently topic on climate change and its impact on natural resources has gained significant interest in online discourse among social media users. With this shallow view on climate change, there is a possibility that its social impacts, for instance gender differentiated impacts of climate change, may become marginalized in online discourse. Besides this, other potential reasons for limited global discourse on social impacts of climate change, inter alia, are meagre role of civil society in global environmental governance, excessive media coverage on the observable destructs and prevailing gender inequalities in the society. The purpose of this research is to examine the status quo on how communities engages in an online discourse associating gender and climate change. To this end, we use keyword-based query method to extract twitter datasets and apply community engagement model to explore parameters such as demographics, geographic coverage, popular mentions, influential authors, popular hashtags and views expressed. The findings reveal varying degree of community engagement and suggests (a) the need for extensive online awareness campaigns (b) higher participation of male alongside female, mostly youths to sensitize gender issues in climate change (c) launching of official hashtags (d) exploiting organization and media outlets (e) strategies to target online campaigns in the climate vulnerable regions. This research contributed by giving future directions on generating online community engagement policies to create awareness on the social impacts of climate change, in particular, to the gender differentiated impacts.*

**Index Terms:** *Climate Change, Community Engagement, Gender differentiated impacts, Social impacts, Social Media*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The present-day transparent and democratic society is the outcome of the interconnected world made possible by the emergence of social media [1] The world has already witnessed how social media platform has empowered communities to engage in open discourse, form a public opinion and instigate a social movement such as Arab Spring [2] the wave of which has inspired many political activism and campaigns [3-4]. In recent times community interest on global challenge pertaining to climate change is also starting to surface in social media. Studies have shown key research trends viz. debates and diversity of opinions on climate change [5-6], polarities in perception to the political

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commitments and related campaigns [7-8] and the validation of communication model in opinion formation [9-11]. The majority of study on social media discourses takes a macro view on the environmental impacts of climate change. That said there is gap in existing studies that stresses the social impacts of climate change. Climate change and gender issues are intricately related. For instance, studies have reported that in societies where gender inequality is experienced strongly, climate change impacts are faced disproportionately and unevenly among men and women [12-13]. The higher mortality rates of women than men, the rise in the cases of sexual abuses, trafficking, malnourishment, poor sanitation, lack of pre and post-partum facilities during natural disasters are also indicative of women's vulnerability to climate change impacts. The hardships faced by women are even aggravated in societies where the role of women is primarily to safeguard resources such as water, food and fuel for the family [14]. Climate change has reduced their ability to secure these indispensable resources due to declining biodiversity and scarce natural water reservoirs. To meet their household needs women and girls have to walk long distances to collect wood and water which results in less time to fulfil their domestic chores, engage in recreational activity and pursue their education [15]. Hence it bears emphasizing that climate change impact magnifies the existing patterns of gender disadvantage in the society. Despite the seriousness of gender issues in climate change there are several reasons to believe that social impacts of climate change in general and gender differentiated impacts in particular have a marginal coverage in the online social discourse. First when it comes to global environmental governance, study has stressed meagre role of civil society in comparison to the major players, often the national and international caretakers [16]. This leads to knowledge gap with society divided into 'well-informed' and 'uninformed' of the many prevalent issues of climate change including gender. The ignorance on gender issues is further reinforced by the excessive coverage of media on the natural destructs of climate change. Secondly the link between climate change and gender is difficult to ideate with for the general public because it involves defying the societal and cultural norms imposed on women by the society [13]. Furthermore, most of the documented reports on hardships faced by women due to changing climate are made on subjective basis as case stories, and in many cases produced by development agencies, government bodies and scientific communities. There is a possibility that

