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Climate induced displacement in South Asia: A regional challenge

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Abstract
South Asia, which holds almost a quarter of the world's population, is experiencing some of the worst effects of climate change, making it a key area where people are forced to leave their homes because of environmental changes. This study looks at the environmental, social, and political factors behind climate-related migration in countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan. The research uses a qualitative method, analyzing information from official reports, policy papers, and real-life examples to understand the main reasons people are moving, such as rising sea levels, melting glaciers, floods, droughts, and storms. The results show that climate change hits the most vulnerable communities the hardest, making existing social issues worse and pushing millions to move, often without proper legal support or government help. The paper also points out that regional organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC are not working well because of political disagreements and weak climate policies. It also criticizes the lack of global action, using the realist view of John Mearsheimer to show how political power gets in the way of effective responses. The study suggests that solving the issue of climate-related displacement in South Asia needs better cooperation between countries, policies that include everyone, and a focus on climate justice in both national and international rules about migration. Important steps like building stronger infrastructure, setting up early warning systems, and supporting local adaptation efforts are needed to reduce future displacement and provide long-term security for people in the region.

Keywords: South Asia, SAARC, BIMSTEC, climate change, displacement, migration, environmental security, climate justice, adaptation, regional cooperation, realist critique, policy response, human security

Introduction
South Asia has been a hotspot of climate disasters. South Asia is facing climate change, the region where almost all nations fall in developing categories has faced some of the worst effects of climate change in the last few years. Heat waves, cyclones and historic rains, South Asia has witnessed the most extreme climate conditions this year. Millions in south Asia are at risk of becoming climate refugees. South Asia stands at the forefront of the climate crisis (Wion, 2022) [4]. According to a World Bank report, nearly 80 million south Asians have been impacted in the last 80 years. Administrations across the world are trying to adjust to the new normal as conditions continue to take a rise in financial toll. World Bank number says that South Asian nations will incur costs of over 160 billion dollars a year because of global warming. While vulnerable nations fight for their demands for compensation, emissions are on the rise worldwide. Western nations are burning fossil fuels to minimize the energy fallout from the Ukraine war despite their previous promises of going green. New weather patterns are aggravating dire health conditions for South Asians. Ice from the Himalayas is melting at least 10 times higher than the average rate over the past centuries. Himalayas in Pakistan, Nepal and India have lost 40% of their ice over several hundred years. Melting glaciers and mountain ice have threatened irrigation patterns. El Nino and other strategic shifts are adding to the warming of sea surfaces and are intensifying weather extremes.

Climate induced displacement refers to forced movement of people due to adverse effects of climate change like rising sea levels, droughts, floods, melting of glaciers and other extreme weather events.

South Asia is defined as one of the region's most vulnerable to climate induced displacement due to its geography, population and socio-economic inequalities (IPCC, 2023) [1]. Between 2000 and 2019, the region witnessed over 11,000 heat related deaths annually. In 2022, floods in Pakistan claimed 1700 lives and left more than 12000 injured. Sri Lanka suffered from severe droughts in 2020 affecting the lives of thousands of individuals. In 2023, extreme cold weather conditions claimed hundreds of lives in Afghanistan. Cyclone Mocha has caused deaths of hundreds and displaced 80,000 others in Bangladesh and Myanmar. 15 million in Bangladesh are at risk of being displaced by sea level rise by 2050. Glacial melt in Nepal and northern India has increased the frequency of landslides leading to displacement). Regional cooperation on environmental and migration issues are hindered by deep rooted political tensions especially between India and Pakistan (Uprety, 2019) [2]. In South Asia where caste, class inequalities exist, climate displacement often worsens existing social vulnerabilities and exclusions. Climate change has wreaked havoc across South Asia which has caused immense loss of life and displacement of millions across the region. The underlying causes of catastrophic climate destruction in South Asia are urbanization, deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, inadequate disaster preparedness. Cooperative efforts between countries of the region remains an uphill task as leaders worry about sacrificing sovereignty or a domestic backlash but climate change is not a zero sum game, it is the rare international political question on which south Asian countries should be on the same side. At the climate summit this year, India came up with multiple initiatives but however it is "the absence of a South Asian initiative led by India". If nations do not mount a strenuous response against climate change, average global temperatures, which have already crossed 1 degree celsius, are likely to cross the 1.5 degree celsius mark around 2040. The window of opportunity to take action is very small and is closing fast (IPCC, 2023) [1].

Research Questions

- What are the major climate related drivers leading to displacement in South Asia?
- Which populations and regions are most affected by climate change ?
- How have South Asian governments and regional bodies responded to climate migration?

Objectives

- To analyse the policy and institutional gaps in addressing climate related migration
- To recognise the climate displacement hotspots in South Asia
- To assess the role of respective governments and organisations in dealing with the issue
- To propose pathways for regional cooperation and climate justice

Research Methodology

The research employs a qualitative methodology, collecting a range of primary and secondary sources to analyse policies, combining case studies for eg: Bangladesh (coastal erosion, sea-level rise), Nepal (mountain ecosystem degradation, glacier retreat), India (floods in Assam, drought in Maharashtra), Pakistan (flood-displacement in Sindh, water scarcity in Balochistan). Primary sources include official statements, policy documents, expert interviews. Secondary sources encompass academic journals, media reports, reports from UNHCR, IOM, IPCC, national policies.

Limitations of the Study

Limited field work

My research study does not include interviews, surveys or direct face to face interaction with the people in the region. The personal experiences, ground realities and local voices in the region could have added more depth to my research findings.

Dependence on Secondary Sources

As my research study relies on policy reports, official documents, news articles, government statements they might carry certain biases and provide only official narratives.

Language and Translation Limitations

Important sources for example the local and regional ones which might not be available in Hindi or English which limits access to wider range of viewpoints and might also influence the diversity of perspectives in the analysis.

Literature Review

Garg *et al.* (2021) [13]-Climate-Induced Displacement and Migration in India

This detailed report looks at how climate change is causing people to move within several Indian states. It covers both sudden climate events like floods and cyclones, as well as slower, long-term issues such as drought and land erosion, which push people to relocate. The report focuses on internal migration, especially the stress and confusion that come from temporary or seasonal movements. It places India in the context of South Asia, pointing out common challenges faced by the region. The loss of livelihoods in areas like farming and fishing is a major concern. The study also points out important gaps in legal support, social safety nets, and policies for helping displaced people. Vulnerable groups, including the poor, women, and those without land, are most at risk and get the least help. The report suggests that climate resilience should be part of development and migration strategies. While it focuses on India, the trends it describes are similar to those in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. This makes it a useful resource for understanding differences within countries and how they connect to broader displacement issues in South Asia.

CANSA (N.D.)-Climate-Induced Displacement and Migration in India

This is the official release of the Garg *et al*. report by Climate Action Network South Asia. It confirms that climate change is a major threat to human safety and movement in the region. The report links Indian experiences with the broader situation in South Asia, as seen through the lens of CANSA. It highlights common issues across South Asia, such as changes in monsoon patterns, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels. CANSA presents the issue through the idea of climate justice, focusing on the rights of people who are most affected.

The report suggests policies like planning for climate adaptation, reducing disaster risks, and creating support systems for people in need. It adds to the discussion on

policies in the region, including topics that affect multiple countries. It encourages joint efforts among South Asian countries to address displacement and migration. It also links these issues to international agreements like the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement. It serves as an important tool for placing India's situation within a wider South Asian story about displacement.

Desk E (2025, October 12) [18]. India may witness a colder winter: What is La Niña? The Indian Express

His article looks at the return of La Niña conditions in late 2025 and how they might affect India's winter weather. It explains La Niña as part of the ENSO cycle, which involves cooler ocean temperatures in the Pacific and changes in weather patterns. The article connects La Niña to colder winters and more rain in parts of India, particularly in the northern regions and hill states. It also mentions the possibility of cold waves and heavy snowfall, which could impact farming, public health, and infrastructure. Though focused on India, the effects of La Niña extend across South Asia, influencing monsoons and increasing the risk of natural disasters in the region. The article shows how natural climate changes and human-driven climate change are working together, leading to more complicated and unpredictable outcomes. In the context of South Asia, it emphasizes the importance of being ready for sudden climate-related challenges.

Climate Change Drives Migration in Conflict-Ridden Afghanistan-Pete Spink *et al*. (2020)

This report looks at how climate change is causing people to move within Afghanistan, especially in rural areas that are hit hard by drought. It explains how conflict and climate problems together make communities more likely to be forced to leave their homes. The main climate factors include long periods of drought, a lack of water, and changes in how much snow falls. People are mostly moving from rural to urban areas, often ending up in unstable, informal housing. Households that rely on farming are especially affected, losing their means of support and struggling to get enough food. The report says that migration caused by climate change isn't getting enough attention in policy discussions, as it's often overshadowed by stories about conflict. Women and children are especially affected and have fewer options to adapt. Most of this migration is not voluntary it's driven by the need to survive rather than by looking for better opportunities. The report suggests that policies should combine efforts to help people adapt to climate change, support their livelihoods, and plan for conflict in a sensitive way. This situation in Afghanistan is part of a larger pattern in South Asia, where climate change and instability together push people to migrate forcibly.

Climate Change and Displacement

Climate crisis is already amplifying vulnerability and driving displacement which broadly impacts human rights including right to education, adequate standard of living and health of those displaced. Climate induced displacement is already a global reality, a reality which reflects and amplifies the deep inequalities and injustices in our world today (UNHCR, 2022) [8]. Extreme weather events such as cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense under global warming and can cause extensive flooding and infrastructure damage, which may undermine the right to an adequate standard of living. Highly climate vulnerable countries host 40% of refugees and are home to 70% of people internally displaced by conflict or violence. While these populations are often highly exposed and vulnerable to climate-related shocks, they have fewer resources and support to adapt to an increasingly hostile environment. This raises concerns about the right to equality and non-discrimination. At the same time, human mobility can protect people and their human rights. This may be through well-prepared and timely emergency evacuations, assisting communities to plan for relocation to safer settlement areas as a measure of last resort, or facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration through regular pathways to prevent displacement from occurring. The freedom and capacity to move is part of upholding human rights and can contribute to climate change adaptation (UNHCR, 2022) [8].

Some people displaced across borders in the context of disaster and climate change may be considered refugees under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which requires a "well-founded fear of persecution" based on five grounds: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion. Where disasters or slow onset events are linked to situations of armed conflict and violence, people displaced as a result may fall within the refugee criteria of the 1951 Convention, as detailed in UNHCR's legal considerations on refugee protection for people fleeing conflict and famine affected countries. For example, this includes when the collapse of governmental authority triggered by a disaster leads to violence and unrest, or when disaster or slow onset is a result of armed conflict or violence. Similarly, refugee protection under the international definition may apply when a particular ethnic, religious, national, social or political group is disproportionately affected by disaster and slow onset events as a result of acts or omissions by the state or other actors, which can effectively amount to persecution. Each year disasters force millions of people to flee their homes, displacement after disasters is not inevitable.

People remain displaced for months or even years after a disaster strikes. Around the world, destruction, repeat events upended livelihoods and lack of money left millions internally displaced and in need of long term solutions. Preparing for small scale events makes big differences. 138 countries reported small scale disaster displacement between 2020 and 2022. In 2022, weather related hazards such as floods, storms and droughts triggered 98% of disaster displacements (IDMC, 2024) [10]. Bangladesh, a nation of 160 million people, is low-lying and faces threats from natural disasters such as floods and cyclones, made worse by climate change. According to the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, about 17% of people in Bangladesh would need to be relocated over the next decade or so if global warming persists at the present rate (Swechha. (2025, August 21) [11]. The number of people displaced by disasters rose by 40 per cent in 2022 rather than 2021. The Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023 (GRID-2023), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's flagship annual report published May 11, 2023 said 32.6 million people were displaced due to disasters. Of the total disaster displacement, 98 per cent were triggered by weather-related events like floods and storms. According to GRID-2023, "6 out of 10 disaster displacements were

triggered by floods, suppressing storms for the first time since 2016" Richard Mahapatra. (2023, May 11) [16].

Key Drivers of Climate Induced Displacement in South Asia India

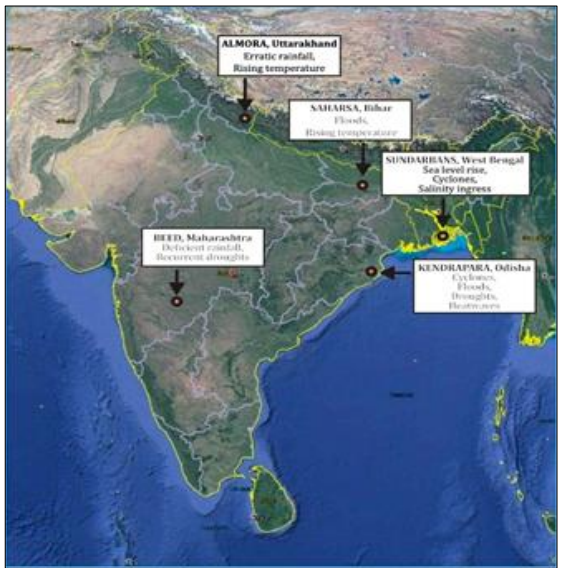
India is a large country, spread across several climatological and ecological zones, making its population particularly vulnerable to the worst impacts of climate change. 67% of India's population of 1.3 billion people live in rural areas and depend on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry for their livelihoods. Over the last two decades, recurrent droughts, extreme weather events including heat-waves, floods, cyclones, and rising sea-levels, have destroyed the agricultural sector and led to a surge in migration from climate-impacted hinterlands to urban centers of India (CANSA. (N.D.). Communities living in utmost harmony end up suffering the wrath of climate change the most (WION, 2023) [5].

India has the highest level of disaster displacement in South Asia in absolute terms and one of the worlds highest. Around 3.6 million people a year were displaced between 2008 and 2019, most during the monsoon (IDMC, 2020) [10]. The Assam floods of 2023 which displaced over 5 lakh people, several rivers including Brahmaputra River flowed above the danger mark at various places in the state. People were unfortunately asked to shift to safer places as flood waters entered their homes. Several houses, several bridges along with several roads were destroyed. Several flood affected victims took shelter on roads, highlands and some in fact also made makeshift ends. People displaced are always relied on the mercy of government aid for food and essential supplies. In the relief shelters, there have always been increasing cases of fever and skin diseases. The Sundarbans landscape is witnessing higher than the global average of sea-level rise, leading to accelerated land erosion. According to Professor Sugata Hazra, DECCMA country lead and director of Jadavpur University's School of Oceano-graphic Sciences, the sea-level rise in Sundarbans at 3.14 millimetres per year is higher than the global average. Sea-level rise also significantly impacts the erosion-deposition process that shapes the islands and subsequent land-use changes (CANSA. (N.D.). Beed district is one of the eight districts of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. The Marathwada region receives an average rainfall of less than 600 millimetres, 30% lower than the country as a whole, and, as a result, is susceptible to droughts and is generally characterized by extreme aridity, hotclimate, and acute deficiency in water availability.

Droughts are a recurrent phenomenon in the State, and therefore migration from the region is a routine (CANSA. (N.D.)

Himalayas used to act as a barrier to monsoon, the moisture laden wind was restricted to India. It will change the dynamics of climate in South Asia. As monsoons have crossed the Himalayas and hit Tibet, changes could affect water availability, agriculture and weather systems in Nepal, India, Bhutan and Tibet. Raghu Murtugudde, A climate scientist observed that when strong moist winds reach the Himalayan foothills, the air rises. Rising air expands, heats and creates cloudbursts. Almora is one of the multi-hazard-prone districts of Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is an Indian Himalayan state known for its growing frequency and intensity of natural disasters and its fragility of ecological and geological systems. Due to its geo-climatic, ecological, and socio-economic settings, Uttarakhand is one of the most disaster-prone states of the country. Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur are among the most vulnerable districts affected by cyclones and climate change in coastal Odisha. In the last few decades, the coasts of Odisha have witnessed three major devastating cyclones. The Super Cyclone, Cyclone Phailin, and Cyclone Hudhud have severely disrupted communities, livelihoods in the region (CANSA. (N.D.)

Source: Swechha. (2025, August 21) [11]



Source: CANSA. (N.D.)

Pakistan

Pakistan is listed among the most vulnerable countries that are experiencing both slow and fast-onset climate change events. The effects of climate change are now well evident in Pakistan. Long spells of droughts and frequent floods have led to a decline in farm productivity, increased livestock mortality, and large-scale unemployment. Climate-induced displacement and migration influence society's socio-economic dynamics causing greater inequalities. Women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities are at even greater risk. This study established the link between peoples' Migration forced by Climate change (CANSA. (N.D.) Because of rising sea levels and stronger cyclones and storms, Pakistan's coastal regions, including

the once heavily populated capital city of Karachi and the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, are facing a high risk of flooding, saltwater getting into fresh water sources, and serious damage to infrastructure. Flooding has already hurt the agriculture sector, and climate change is making it harder to predict when crops will grow. Saltwater intrusion is also reducing the amount of land that can be used for farming. It is estimated that by 2040, about 8 to 10% of Pakistan's agricultural output could drop because of these climate changes. Also, dangerous heat waves are expected to happen more often in the future, and they could be especially bad for 56% of Pakistan's urban population who live in crowded, poorly planned settlements without proper access to basic needs like water and electricity (Othering & Belonging Institute. (N.D.). Women are highly exposed to climate-induced natural disasters in Pakistan. The 2022 floods in Pakistan washed away their homes and villages. People from rural areas mostly moved to urban parts of Tharparkar to escape hunger, lack of water, and unemployment caused by long and repeated droughts in their villages. During droughts, farming and raising animals became too hard to make a living, and they used up their little money, especially for those who didn't own land and worked as sharecroppers. This situation made them borrow more money from landlords and local lenders. The growing debt and agreements to work on landlords' farms added more stress on landless farmers and other lower groups like artisans, farm workers, and non-farm families, making their social problems and suffering even worse. Moreover, climate-induced migration is likely to undermine women's well-being. Health is the most significant issue, for a migrating woman, due to floods or drought. The access to health facilities, social safety nets, and public support programmes was limited for women during and after the migration in the areas of destinations.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a unique landscape. Located on the Bay of Bengal, its geography makes it especially at risk from extreme weather events like floods, cyclones, and rising sea levels. This vulnerability comes from both natural and social factors. Naturally, the country faces frequent riverbank erosion, and climate change is now making this problem worse. It's speeding up the cycle of land gaining and losing soil, which causes people to be displaced every year. This leads to serious damage to farmland, homes, and even affects people's ability to make their own decisions. In Bangladesh, disasters caused more than 4 million new displacements in 2019, mostly because people were evacuated ahead of cyclones Fani and Bulbul hitting the land. These figures don't include those who had to leave their homes or move in search of work due to slow climate changes, like droughts, river erosion, rising sea levels, and saltwater intrusion. Climate-related disasters make women more vulnerable in several ways, including health issues, lack of enough food, extra work at home, and difficulties in daily life. These challenges are also influenced by social traditions and religious beliefs. When extreme events like droughts, floods, or other climate problems happen, women often face more risks and stress. This is partly because of unfair treatment based on gender, which means women usually suffer more from the effects of these disasters. Migration due to climate induced disasters is a complex scenario because a wide range of social, economic and political factors play a vital role in leading the victims individually or in groups to make the decision to migrate. In 2019, disasters caused nearly 4 million new displacements, mostly because people were evacuated before cyclones Fani and Bulbul hitland. According to the Needs Assessment Working Group of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), between 19 and 23 March, at least 1.14 million people were displaced in 8 districts due to pre-emptive evacuations and those caused by Tropical Cyclone Amphan.

Nepal

Nepal is bordered by the Himalayas to the north and the Indian Gangetic plains to the south.

This geographical location makes the country extremely ecologically diverse, but it also makes Nepal one of the most vulnerable places in the world when it comes to natural Disasters. The major risks Nepal faces include earthquakes, floods, landslides, drought, cold waves, forest fires, and glacial lake outburst floods. According to the German watch Global

Climate Risk Index 2020, Nepal ranks 20th among countries affected by weather-related loss events in 2018 and is in 9th place for such events between 1999 and 2018. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reported that in 2019, there were 121,000 new displacements caused by disasters in Nepal, with 29,000 people living as internally displaced persons that year. It is well known that unemployment, dissatisfaction with politics among young people, poor education quality, and better pay abroad are key reasons why people leave Nepal. However, climate change is not often seen as a major factor pushing people to migrate in South Asia, even though there are signs that it is actually contributing to migration. International labour migration has increased a lot in recent years, and right now, almost half of all households in Nepal have a family member living abroad or someone who has returned from overseas. The main destinations for this migration are the Gulf countries like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, as well as countries in East and Southeast Asia such as Malaysia. There have been very few studies in Nepal that explore the connection between climate change, environmental issues, and migration. However, some studies on climate change and disasters have noted cases of labour migration. Also, it has been observed that rural people from Nepal are moving to India and urban areas within Nepal as seasonal workers, often during times when there is less work, such as between planting and harvesting seasons. Migration is often the only way people can make enough money to cover their household costs. However, when floods happen, the absence of men in the area makes it harder for women, children, and the elderly to get to safety. Some older women who don't have men in their family to help them found it especially difficult to escape the floodwaters. Other women said they struggled when family members had left to work but didn't send any money back home. The lack of men in the community has added more pressure on women, as they are left to take care of the children, the elderly, and the farmland that's been left untended. Even so, when floods strike, they are the ones who have to deal with the damage and losses to the household on their own. The drought-affected areas of Ramechap and Udaypur have not received much support to tackle the effects of climate change. The community started a goat farming group on their own, where they saved money

together to create a revolving fund. This fund helps members get loans to buy goats. Goat farming is more stable during droughts and is done to meet the demand for meat in nearby markets. It helps small farmers earn a steady income. A local government project set up drinking water taps for each home. Also, an agriculture knowledge center gave people support on how to plant vegetable and maize seeds. In Belaka municipality, there was no specific action taken to address climate change. However, there were efforts to support the marginalized Mushar community through income-generation programs under contract lease farming for vegetable production, with the help of the local government. Belaka Municipality also carried out a stock take of land use, houses, and natural resources in the district.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's position and physical features make it vulnerable to natural disasters and weather-related problems. In the 21st century, the country has seen a lot of people moving, such as leaving the country, coming back from abroad, and moving within the country because of crises. In Khalyan, floods that destroyed property and cut down agricultural output have pushed many men to move to cities looking for jobs. Some have stayed within Afghanistan, but others have traveled to Iran. The women stay behind to take care of the family and either wait for money to be sent back or find work in the village. Rural Afghanistan is traditional, and women usually don't go outside without a male relative with them. When the men are away, the women have to go out to buy food and look for work.

Afghanistan has several policies related to migration, disaster response, and the environment. However, the connection between climate change and migration is not clearly defined.

Displacement is mostly seen as a result of instability and violence. The 2020 Global Report on Internal Displacement shows that Afghanistan is one of the countries showing more political commitment, with displacement included in development plans. The 2019

Comprehensive Migration Policy includes a part on migration and climate-related displacement, along with some policy actions to deal with the effects of climate change, migration, and displacement. This is a good move, and these policies offer chances to include climate-induced migration more in national priorities, provided there is enough political support to follow through.

SAARC & BIMSTEC Regional Role South Asia is extremely vulnerable to a range of climate impacts, ranging from shrinking glaciers and water scarcity to floods and rising sea levels. Shifting monsoon patterns and heat waves place noticeable stress on South Asian countries, whose primary employment sector remains agriculture. Floods and droughts have not only become more regular, but also more severe (Is SAARC Prepared to Combat Climate Change and Its Security Risks?, 2018).

SAARC has mentioned worries about environmental issues, including climate change, in several statements. However, it wasn't until 2005, after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, that SAARC members came together to take clear steps against natural disasters. Even though the tsunami wasn't linked to climate change, the plans made by member countries after that event covered both natural and climate-related disasters. The Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management (2006-15) was made in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action(2005-15) by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). One part of this framework led to the creation of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) in October 2006, which helps with policy advice and training. In 2008, SAARC agreed to the Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism, guided by the SDMC, to handle natural disasters in a more organized way. In November 2016, the SDMC combined the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre, the SAARC Forestry Centre, and the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre. In the 2007 Declaration from the 14th SAARC Summit, climate-related security risks, apart from natural disasters, were highlighted (Is SAARC Prepared to Combat Climate Change and Its Security Risks?, 2018). In South Asia, there are specific ways countries work together, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). These groups aim to address issues like climate change, disaster response, and environmental care by bringing nations together. SAARC has created plans like the SAARC Climate Change Action Plan and a fast-response system for natural disasters. These efforts are meant to help countries deal with common challenges and work as a team. However, political issues between countries, especially between India and Pakistan, have made it hard for SAARC to function well. Because of this, progress on climate actions through SAARC has been slow and not very coordinated (Kaif & Sidique, 2025) [20]. BIMSTEC, which covers a smaller area and has a clearer plan of action, is better at helping countries cooperate on energy matters, particularly in renewable energy and building infrastructure that can handle climate challenges. Nevertheless, the absence of strict agreements and proper funding still holds back the level of cooperation among the region's countries (Kaif & Sidique, 2025) [20].

UN Initiatives

Refugees, internally displaced and stateless people are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. UNHCR is working to protect them and strengthen their resilience to its current and future impacts, while also reducing our own environmental footprint (UN refugee agency (N.d.)).

UNHCR is working to improve understanding of the rights people have when they are forced to leave their homes because of climate change or natural disasters. They are also helping governments and other organizations build the skills they need to handle asylum requests from people affected by these situations. This helps reduce confusion and frustration among displaced people. UNHCR is helping countries protect their own citizens who are displaced within their borders, and they are supporting the creation of laws and policies that address internal displacement, especially in the context of climate change. Countries that host refugees are making a significant contribution to global society, but they are also facing greater financial and responsibility burdens because of climate change. There is an urgent need to increase funding and support that will help displaced people and host communities find local solutions to the major climate challenges they face. At the second Global Refugee Forum, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders came together and made a shared promise. They agreed to share successful approaches and pool resources to improve access to climate-related actions and funding for refugee and host

communities. In 2022, a third of Pakistan was flooded, displacing 8 million people, including thousands of Afghan refugees.

The Pakistani government took action and asked for international help. UNHCR provided thousands of tents and other essential supplies like plastic tarps, hygiene products, cooking stoves, blankets, solar lamps, and sleeping mats to both refugees and the local communities that are hosting them.

Climate Change and Displacement in Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island

Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island looks at how climate change affects things through a South Asian viewpoint, mixing myths, migration, and environmental problems into a bigger picture that's relevant worldwide. The story takes place partly in the Sundarbans, a region in India and Bangladesh that's facing big challenges from rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion, and storms.

These issues are making life harder for people there, forcing them to leave their homes because their livelihoods are being destroyed. Characters like Tipu and Rafi show how more and more South Asians are moving because of environmental damage. Ghosh links these local struggles to global events, like floods in Venice or wildfires in California, to show they're all part of the same big environmental crisis. He uses a new version of a Bengali myth about the Gun Merchant and the snake goddess Manasa Devi to suggest that old stories can teach us about living in balance with nature. The novel also shows how animals, storms, and the sea play active roles in the environment, pushing back against human dominance. In the end, Gun Island shows that climate change in South Asia is not just a scientific or political Problem-it's also a cultural and deeply personal issue, connecting the lives of people in the Global South to the future of the whole world.

John Mearsheimer's Realist Critique

John Mearsheimer's realist critique in The False Promise of International Institutions gives us a clear way to understand why international institutions aren't working well to deal with climate-induced displacement in South Asia. Mearsheimer says that institutions are influenced by the interests of powerful countries and don't have real authority to make countries cooperate if it goes against their own national interests. This is clearly seen in the case of climate displacement, especially in countries like Bangladesh, which is facing serious threats from rising sea levels and river flooding that could force tens of millions of people to leave in the coming years. Even though there are institutions like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the responses to climate displacement have been scattered and underfunded. For example, the Copenhagen Accord (2009) promised $100 billion a year in climate financing for developing countries by 2020, but this goal hasn't been met. What money has been given often comes as loans, not grants, putting extra pressure on already vulnerable countries. Also, international refugee law, based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, doesn't include climate migrants as refugees. This leaves millions of people without legal protection a gap that institutions have not addressed, despite repeated calls from countries in the Global South. Mearsheimer's realist view explains this lack of action: powerful nations like the United States and EU countries resist changing legal definitions or frameworks that would require them to take in more migrants or provide more aid. Regionally, cooperation is also weak. For example, India has built border fences and increased military presence along the Bangladesh-India border, preparing for possible future climate-related migration. This shows a focus on national security over helping neighbors.

Organizations like SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), which could help coordinate efforts, are stuck in political gridlock, which supports Mearsheimer's argument that cooperation is unlikely when there are bigger strategic rivalries, like between India and Pakistan. In short, the climate displacement crisis in South Asia clearly shows Mearsheimer's main idea: International institutions don't effectively solve global problems when they challenge the interests of powerful countries. The difference between what these institutions say they will do and what actually happens like unmet climate funding, legal inaction, and secured borders shows how power politics continue to take priority over humanitarian needs in the region.

LA NINA and its impact on Climate Migration in South Asia

La Nina is the cooling phase of the El Nino south oscillation centre. La Nina can lead to stronger monsoons in India. Due to El Nino, the sea surface temperature increases and the trade winds in the region become weak. La Nina can lead to stronger monsoons in India, increased rains in Southeast Asia, more hurricanes in the Atlantic, drier conditions in South America. Cold air intrusions into South Asia will result in cold surges and harsh North Indian winters. In the South Asia region, 12.5 million disaster displacements were recorded in 2022.

This is double the annual average of 6.3 million (past decade average) for the region. "The increase was mostly the result of the severe and widespread flooding that occurred in Pakistan during the monsoon season". On the other hand, displacement due to conflict and violence recorded a 95 per cent drop over the 2021 level. Floods accounted for 90 per cent of the region's total disaster displacements. Pakistan, India and Bangladesh were the most affected. Pakistan's flood last year was exceptional and termed the severest in a century.

Richard Mahapatra. (2023, May 11) [16]. The Copernicus Climate Change Service report states that the global average surface air temperature during January 2025 was the hottest on record (0.79°C warmer than the 1991-2020) despite the development of La Niña conditions.

However, the average temperature in the Indian region was the second highest since 1901 (0.98 °C warmer than 1991-2020). The main reason for higher temperatures is global warming, which is closely linked to climate change. Global warming refers to the long-term increase in Earth's average surface temperature due to human activities, primarily burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas. This process releases greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which trap heat and cause the planet to warm up (Press Release, PIB, (2025)). La Niña may lead to a colder winter in several parts of India, especially in the northern region. It

may result in cold waves and increased snowfall in hilly regions. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) last month said that despite the return of La Niña, global average temperatures would remain above normal. "Typically, La Niña brings climate impacts that are the opposite of El Niño, especially in tropical regions. However, naturally occurring climate events such as La Niña and El Niño are taking place in the broader context of human-induced climate change, which is increasing global temperatures, exacerbating extreme weather, and impacting seasonal rainfall and temperature patterns," the WMO said Desk, E. (2025, October 12) [18].

Conclusion

Asia's climate is at crossroads, warming twice as fast with cascading effects on health, livelihoods and environments. Climate reports convey a clear message that climate risk management in South Asia must evolve from reactive proactive through robust data systems, resilient infrastructure, sustainable policies and inclusive finance. Mitigation and adaptation measures like strengthening early warning and meteorological services like upgrading natural weather forecasting systems, ensuring timely disaster preparedness protocols, investing in climate resilient infrastructure like building sea walls, flood channels and agriculture systems, restoring natural buffers like mangroves, and coral reefs to protect coastal zones, reforestation, adopting sustainable farming and improving irrigation, enhancing glacier monitoring and glacial flood warnings, rapidly transitioning to renewables and energy efficiency, implementing carbon pricing, promoting regional coordination and finance for eg sharing data and resources via Asia pacific climate platforms, allocating more funds for climate adaptation especially for poor and coastal communities. The vast scale of climate displacement, coupled with the lack of legal framework, calls for innovative techniques to mitigate the plight of climate migrants. India and Bangladesh need to adopt a regional approach to combat climate change, manage migration and analyse conflict dynamics. At a policy level, a participatory approach to address the wide-reaching impacts of climate change is the need of the hour. Integrating diplomatic, development, humanitarian, and security tools in a multivector approach with investment in climate mitigation would be crucial. This would be the first step in building the capacities needed to effectively address the myriad risks that climate change poses (Swechha (2025, August 21) [11].

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