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### **India Matters**

#### **IPCC Report 2022- Is Climate Resilient Development the Solution to Planetary Apocalypse?**



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The 6<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was released recently. As the leading international body for the assessment of Climate Change, the IPCC is a key source of scientific information and technical guidance for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. This report is the second part of the Sixth Assessment Report that lays focus on Climate Change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities and explores options to adapt. The first part was released in August 2021 and talked about the scientific basis of climate change.

This report assesses the impacts of Climate Change, by looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities, and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to Climate Change. And most importantly, it adds a new term to the existing literature on Sustainable Development - *Climate Resilient Development*.

#### ***What are the new insights on climate impacts, vulnerability and adaptation from IPCC?***

Increasing heat and extreme weather are driving plants and animals on land and in the ocean

towards the poles, to higher altitudes, or to the deeper ocean waters. Many species are reaching limits in their ability to adapt to Climate Change, and those that cannot adjust or move fast enough are at risk of extinction. As a result, the distribution of plants and animals across the globe is changing and the timing of key biological events such as breeding or flowering is altering. These trends are affecting food webs.

Changes in temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather have increased the frequency and spread of diseases in wildlife, agriculture, and people. We see a lengthening wildfire season and increases in the area burned. Roughly half of the world's population currently experiences severe

water shortages at some point during the year. We see more and more extreme events such as flooding and droughts.

***How will Climate Change affect the lives of today's children tomorrow, if no immediate action is taken?***

According to the IPCC Report, today's young people and future generations will witness stronger negative effects of Climate Change on food production and availability. The warmer it gets, the more difficult it will become to grow or produce, transport, distribute, buy, and store food – a trend that is projected to hit poor populations the hardest. Depending on future policies and climate and adaptation actions, the number of people suffering from hunger in 2050 will range from 8 million to 80 million people, with the most severely affected populations concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Central America. Under a high vulnerability-high warming scenario, up to 183 million additional people are projected to become undernourished in low-income countries due to climate change by 2050.

***How are people adapting to the effects of Climate Change and what are the known limits to adaptation?***

The report states that current adaptation-related responses across all sectors and regions are dominated by *minor* modifications to usual practices. Whilst this may suffice in the short term, the long-term risks may require more extensive, transformative changes in our behaviour and infrastructure.

***What strategies could increase the climate resilience of people and Nature?***

The IPCC is convinced that climatic risks to people can be lowered by strengthening Nature, meaning that we invest in protecting Nature and rebuilding ecosystems to benefit both people and biodiversity. Flood risk along rivers, for instance, can be reduced by restoring wetlands and other natural habitats in flood plains, restoring the natural courses of rivers, and using trees to create shade. Cities can be cooled by parks and ponds and by greening streets and buildings' rooftops and walls. Farmers may increase their businesses' climate resilience by diversifying their crops and livestock, planting trees and bushes on the fields for shade and organic manure (agroecological farming), increasing soil health, and combining crops, livestock and natural elements.

The report highlights a solutions framework that it calls ***Climate Resilient Development***, which combines strategies to adapt to Climate Change with actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to support sustainable development for everyone.

As the leading international body for assessment of Climate Change and in suggesting responses to it, one expected much more from the IPCC. The new term, *Climate Resilient Development*, as well as its predecessors, *Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation*, or even the catch-all term, *Sustainable Development*, miss one critical acknowledgement. That all these terms have been framed within the dominant Capitalist ideology and mainstream economic theory. They all refuse to acknowledge that Capitalism is, overwhelmingly, the main driver of planetary ecological collapse.

From Climate Change to resource over-consumption to environmental degradation, Capitalism is the engine that has powered three centuries of accelerating economic development. Today, it is a roaring out-of-control locomotive mowing down continents of forests, squeezing out oceans of life, clawing out mountains of minerals, drilling and pumping out lakes of fuels, and devouring the planet's last accessible resources to turn them all into "products", all the while destroying the fragile global ecologies built up over aeons of time.

The IPCC Report is disappointing because it does not acknowledge the above reality, which is staring us in the face. Instead, it perpetuates and reaffirms questionable ethnocentric, technocentric and anthropocentric policies. It does not pay adequate attention to excessive consumption in the West and the replication of consumerist lifestyles in other parts of the world. It ignores the immense concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few, around the world.

The need of the hour is to undertake a Gandhian analysis and reformation of the ideological and foundational underpinnings of the current model of development. We need a revised and reformed project of Sustainable Development that is simultaneously concerned with well-being, equity and ecological integrity. We need an *alternative* paradigm which is symbiotic with Nature and its ecosystem, where economy, ecology and spirituality are interrelated. The application of Gandhian principles allows human beings to satisfy their basic needs, *without* harming Mother Earth. Gandhi stated: "*The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed*". This well-known dictum of Gandhi reminds us that man cannot infinitely exploit Nature to satisfy his unlimited wants.