

Integrating Gender and Climate Change Conversations



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Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
an initiative of the
Foundation for Universal Responsibility

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Introduction

India is at a critical juncture in its growth story, where it must walk a difficult tightrope – balancing the needs of a growing population, alongside taking the responsibility to protect the earth in the midst of a climate crisis in a fair and equitable manner in global decision-making tables. Keeping in mind these competing priorities in a world that is constantly in flux, we find it incumbent that it be the duty of civil society and institutions such as ours to work in parallel with government priorities to offer through the more laborious process of research and conversations, some solutions that may help leapfrog a few problems. In this vein, WISCOMP has combined its extensive experience in promoting the voices of women and the marginalised from the global south in international policy discourse, together with Kubernein Initiative's experience in engaging with the concept of Feminist Foreign Policy, under the aegis of the IIC Diamond Jubilee Discussions on Engendering the Discourse, to bring forth this report.

Competing priorities have been most apparent in the context of climate change action on adaptation and mitigation. It also forces diverse areas of research to integrate, that have typically not been considered interconnected. Gender and climate policy is one such area. When thinking of the threat posed by climate change, in the more immediate term, women and the marginalised constitute a grouping which is already in many ways experiencing a disproportionate impact of calamities. It is well documented and researched that impacts of climate change can vary for different groups of people based on factors like socio-economic status, age, gender, caste, and so on. However, policy actions and responses (from national to local) are yet to fully integrate gender considerations. Absence of gender-responsive policies further widen the inequality gaps, marginalise women and fail to achieve climate justice.

We advocate a two-pronged approach to gender intentional climate action: greater representation of women in governance to broaden ideas and perspectives, and significant empowerment of women to push the transformative potential of adaptation mechanisms with a bottom-up, localised approach. Through this publication we underscore and analyse the need for gender integration and considerations in India's climate policy and discourses at all levels. In the use of the term gender, we take an intersectional and inclusive approach; keeping in mind the unique Indian context, to include considerations across various socio-economic groupings of women as well as more vulnerable and often marginalised communities. We present ideas from existing climate policies at the national, state and city level that could be expanded further. Our focus is on urban centres, positive experiences that exist and how they may be scaled up.

The perspectives presented herein include our extensive research and knowledge, as well as ideas shared at the collaborative conference organized at the India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, with knowledge partners Kubernein Initiative and WISCOMP, on '*Integrating Gender and Climate Change Conversations*' held in February 2023.

Overview of India's Climate Mechanisms

Commitments towards Climate Change

India's climate change policy has largely stemmed from its engagement with the UNFCCC Negotiations process. The National Climate Action Plan on Climate Change, 2008 (NAPCC), was the first policy document on India's commitments. Post ratifying the Paris Agreement, India released Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in 2015, that were updated in 2022 to include a reduction in emissions intensity of GDP by 45 percent (from 2005 levels) and target 50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030¹. The NAPCC and NDC set out India's goals and strategies in three tangible and targeted mitigation actions and some adaptation

¹ "Cabinet Approves India's Updated NDC to UNFCCC," 2022.

goals. To achieve these targets, eight missions – solar, energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, water, agriculture, forestry, Himalayan ecosystem, and strategic knowledge – have been instituted. The NAPCC and NDC determine India’s climate policy internationally at UNFCCC, nationally at the union level, sub-nationally at the state level, and locally at the city level. State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) help align sub-national level actions and goals with the national targets set out in NDC 2015.

The UNFCCC’s increasing focus on hyperlocal climate actions has seen cities in India – through programs such as the C40 cities – realign their urban plans to create city level climate action plans and commit to the Net Zero Goals of the Paris Agreement. Mumbai was the first city to have such a plan in 2021, and Chennai released a draft document for public review in late 2022. Bangalore, Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata are also in the process of drafting their climate plans. Some emerging metropolitan cities, including Tiruchirappalli, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Siliguri, and Udaipur, also have climate resilience plans under the ICLEI South Asia’s CapaCITIES Programme. Some cities are developing disaster specific response plans such as Flood Plans (Guwahati) and Heat Action Plans (Surat and Ahmedabad).

Mechanisms for Climate Action

The climate policies in India are predominantly helmed by the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) at the union level, the Departments of Environment at State level, and the Municipal Corporations at the city level. There are multiple committees involved at different stages of approval, recommendation, and implementation of the climate change goals of India. All these committees are headed under the aegis of MoEF&CC and have members from inter-ministerial departments including Finance, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Science & Technology, New & Renewable Energy, Jal Shakti, Power, Earth Sciences, Health & Family Welfare, Urban and Housing Affairs, Rural Development, External Affairs, Commerce & Industry and the NITI Aayog.

Committees at Union Level for climate governance:

1. *Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC)*: Originally constituted by the Union Government in 2007 with 26 members, the Council was reconstituted in 2015 with 18 members. It is tasked with evolving a coordinated response to climate change issues at the national level, providing oversight for formulation of action plans in assessment, adaptation, and mitigation, and to periodically monitor key policy decisions. The Council includes members from Ministries (External Affairs; Finance; Environment, Forest & Climate Change; Water Resources; Agriculture; Urban Development; Science and Technology; State of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy); Cabinet and Foreign Secretary; Secretary of MoEFCC; Chairperson of Bureau of Energy Efficiency; Principal Secretary to Prime Minister; and 3 Independent experts.
2. *Executive Committee on Climate Change (ECCC)*: Constituted by the Union Government to assist the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC). The 15-member committee consisting of members from union inter-ministerial departments, is tasked to assist PMCCC in monitoring the implementation of eight missions; advise on modifications in the objectives, strategies and structure of the missions; and coordinate with various agencies on issues relating to climate change.
3. *Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement² (AIPA)*: Constituted by the Union Government, exercising its powers construed under Section 3(3) of Environment Protection Act, 1986, consisting of 17 members from union inter-ministerial departments. Its purpose is to ensure a coordinated response on climate change matters that protects the country's interests and ensures that India is on track towards meeting its climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement (including its NDCs).

² Gazette Notification Constitution of AIPA, 2020.

4. *National Steering Committee*³ (NSC): The committee consists of 20 members from union inter-ministerial departments and is under the chairmanship of the Secretary, MoEFCC. The NSC is in place to oversee and approve the preparation/ implementation of climate change related plans/projects at state level.
5. *Climate Change Finance Unit* (CCFU)⁴: Serves as the nodal point on all climate change financing matters in the Ministry of Finance. It represents the ministry on all climate change issues in international and domestic fora. It prepares briefs, position papers, guidance notes, and inputs for the MoEFCC to feed into climate change negotiations. It also assesses and analyses various submissions on 'climate change financing' of nations and financial pledges of developed nations at UNFCCC. The unit has submitted a report of Sub-Committee for Assessment of Financial Requirements for implementing NDCs, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, GOI.

The Missing Gender in India's Climate Action at the National Level

The NAPCC and NDC 2015, both note that 'impacts of climate change will be particularly severe on women' considering their socio-economic status. In terms of considering gender, the planning around climate action in India at present, looks at women and the vulnerable only as victims. We argue these sections of society must be key stakeholders in the overall decision-making process. Gender as a lens must be integrated in all climate-related planning. Ways through which such representation may take place includes deeper engagement with organisations that work on the ground, as well as a greater diversity in representation at the various decision-making tables. The UNFCCC mandates countries to have a gender focal point to ensure gender-responsiveness of climate policies. Every ratifying nation is also urged to establish a Gender Action

³ "Reconstitution of NSC," 2011.

⁴ Climate Change Finance Unit, n.d.

Plan⁵ and integrate the work of nominated national gender & climate change focal point into relevant national policymaking and decision-making structures.⁶ So far, India does not have a gender focal point or a Gender Action Plan for Climate Change.

Several directives, including the Paris Agreement require countries to adopt climate policies and measures that are gender-responsive and have full, meaningful, and equal participation and representation of genders in decision-making processes at national, regional, and local level. While India has taken an inter-sectoral approach to climate action, with representation from several ministries, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is conspicuously absent in the various committees. The eight national missions also do not consider the critical role of women as key resource managers and stakeholders, or their differential needs and responses, in both mitigation as well as adaptation policies. Further the representation of women in the MoEFCC remains low. (See Figure 1)



* Four Divisions were vacant (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Economic Advisor, Scientific Officer & Legal Monitoring Cell) as on 5 April 2022⁷.

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change

Figure 1. Representation of Women in MoEFC.

⁵ The Gender Action Plan, n.d.
⁶ National Gender & Climate Change Focal Points, n.d.
⁷ Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, n.d.

At the State Level, while State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCCs) of Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Kerala, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Tripura, and Gujarat offer positive examples, there is a need to move away from viewing women as victims or recipients of state largesse to inclusion in decision making. The same applies at the city level, where climate action plans, and resilience plans have the potential to be cross-cutting across sectors and nimble in planning and implementation. For example, Mumbai's Climate Action Plan 2021 (MCAP) looks at gender as a cross-cutting theme across different sectors and identifies ways to bridge the gaps.⁸

State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) that consider a gendered lens –

- Uttarakhand⁹ SAPCC looks at integrating poverty, livelihoods, gender, and equity issues and offers specific gender-responsive adaptation recommendations including creating assets, gender disaggregated data and gender budgets.
- Maharashtra¹⁰ SAPCC has foregrounded the impacts of climate change on households and gender. It recommends holistic vulnerability assessments of human, physical, social, financial, and natural capital that affect the household.
- Kerala¹¹ SAPCC includes provisions on appointing a gender-inclusion nodal person in all ministries, gender-budgets and monitoring and evaluation.
- Bihar¹² SAPCC, amongst other things, mentions in the context of agriculture efforts for collating gender disaggregated data to enable gender specific planning and interventions.

⁸ Gender in Climate Action: The Case for Inclusion in Mumbai, 2022.

⁹ Uttarakhand G. o., 2014.

¹⁰ Institute, 2014.

¹¹ Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2014.

¹² Bihar, 2015.

- Chhattisgarh¹³ SAPCC recognises that climate change could have adverse health impacts on women and prioritises women’s development.
- Tripura¹⁴ SAPCC talks about enhancing women’s resilience by strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- Gujarat¹⁵ SAPCC highlights women’s vulnerability arising from social roles, inequalities in the access to and control of resources, and their low participation in decision-making.

Tools for Adding a Gender Lens to Climate Action

As a start, recognising that women are not victims but rather crucial agents of change with the capacity to contribute to climate adaptation policy would result in gender-transformative policies.

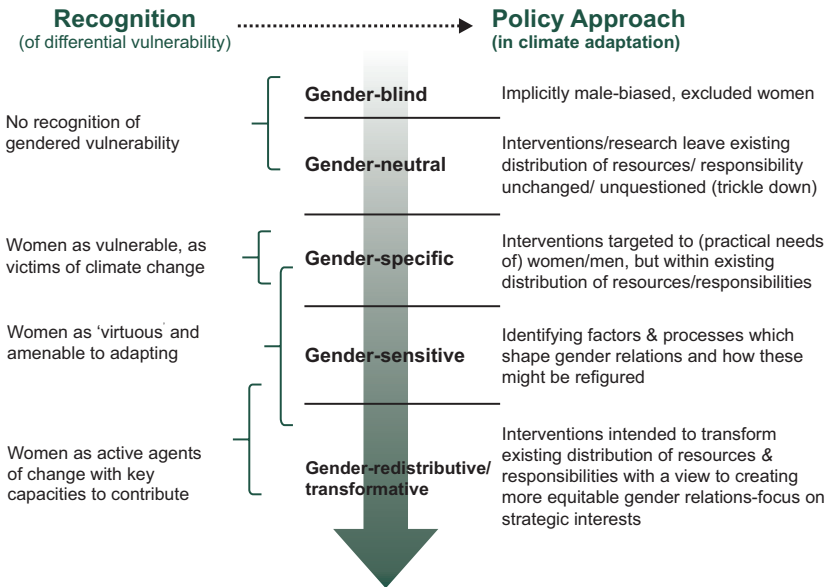


Figure 2. Different framings to recognize gendered vulnerability lead to different policy approaches.

Source: Chandni Singh, Divya Solomon & Nitya Rao (2021) How does climate change adaptation policy in India consider gender? An analysis of 28 state action plans, *Climate Policy*, 21:7, 958-975.

¹³ Chattisgarh, 2013.

¹⁴ Department of Science, 2012.

¹⁵ Department of Climate Change, 2014.

In India and South Asia, efforts are being made to integrate Gender in sectoral plans such as Heat Adaptation Plans (HAPs)¹⁶ in a few cities namely Surat (India), Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Rajshahi (Bangladesh). The integration of gender in sectoral resilience plans will ensure the differential impacts are addressed in the policy process from the beginning. The existing international frameworks of gender integration offer tools to mainstream gender into local and national climate policies. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) of UNFCCC offers a long-term strategy for gender-mainstreaming in the priority areas: Capacity building (strengthening), knowledge management and communication; Gender-balance, participation, and women's leadership; Coherence of all sectors; Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; and Monitoring and Reporting. Based on these tools, in the next section we propose a few recommendations for the Indian context.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Systemic change and greater access to knowledge

There is a lack of intersectional approach on understanding how climate policy will affect people and their ability to make a living. Women are often at a disadvantage to deal with and adapt to the effects of climate change due to limited access to information, resources, and participation in decision-making processes and labour markets, and societal barriers. For substantive justice to advance, these systemic impediments must be addressed and eliminated to end the destructive social reinforcement cycle of women's exclusion and socially constructed multi-dimensional inequalities.

A governance system that is inclusive, participative, and collaborative can foster the development of systemic change. To enable long-term implementation, a rights-based framework to climate change adaptation, mobilisation and legal structures within the system are central. The existing climate policies are essentially non-statutory and not legally binding, therefore the means to executing, implementing, and exercising of rights is limited. Climate change needs to be mainstreamed into

¹⁶ IRADe, 2023.

existing frameworks of city development/master plans to ensure long-term and spatial inclusion of climate concerns in city's development agenda. The city plans are best suited for harvesting diverse perspectives of all stakeholders from design to implementation to monitoring. A true contextual and inclusive systemic change can emerge from such processes.

Gender-Disaggregated Data

To develop gender-responsive policies, it is necessary to have gender-disaggregated data from all sectors to understand the differential impacts, vulnerabilities, exposure, and adaptive capacities of men and women. Further research and studies, especially evidence-based and actionable research are required to inform policy. Existing data collection methodologies need to be infused with a gender perspective so that the disaggregated data will serve to give a clearer picture of risk and impact and thus better inform policies for specific interventions.

For example, NABARD¹⁷ funded a study that looks at gendered impact in three agro-ecological situations – desert ecosystem (Rajasthan), Himalayan ecosystem (Himachal Pradesh), and cyclone as well as flood affected ecosystem (Odisha). The study analyses: gender differences in impact and vulnerability to climate change in agriculture and allied sectors; adaptive strategies to cope with the impact of climate change in agriculture; and to evaluate policies and programs on climate change and suggest suitable policy options/ interventions for farm women. There is an urgent need for more studies that further break down other ecological and economic situations, to identify gender-differentiated sectoral risks in both rural and urban areas and long-term implications and risks across contexts and geographies.

Finance and gender-budgeting

Gender budgets need to be mobilised and sanctioned to institutionalise various activities such as collection of disaggregated data on climate vulnerability and promoting women's participation in decision-making.

¹⁷ "Climate Change, Impact & Adaptation: Gender Perspective in Indian Context," n.d.

Currently, the union budget allocations for National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) are very low with the preliminary estimate being USD 206 million for financing adaptation actions (forestry, water, agriculture, fishery, and ecosystems) apart from disaster management, indicating a low priority for climate adaptation financing. The union budget for NAFCC was set up in 2016 with an initial budget of INR 350 crores (USD 42 million) and an additional INR 60 crores (USD 7 million) in 2022-23 budget. However, in the recently announced 2023-24 union budget there is no additional allocation under this fund.

Urban centres of India, whose actions and inactions will be defining for India's climate trajectory, have little to inadequate funding and incentives to choose and lead a climate-led development paradigm. Only 70% of the 18 functions/mandates of the Urban Local Bodies are financed and climate change is not among them. There is a critical need for a more blended finance approach for climate adaptation with a strong gender lens applied to deployment of the funds.¹⁸ It is also imperative that financing for climate related projects have dedicated gender budgets attached to them to ensure that at least 50 percent of monies spent address inequalities faced by women and other vulnerable groups.

Bottom-up approach – Integrating active citizens and community-led initiatives

Several instances exist of women leading the change in South Asia ensuring dual benefits of gender justice and climate justice. The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is compiling some of the good practices in climate action that employ a gender lens. A platform for documenting and showcasing best practices and providing space for peer-to-peer learning will help build resilience from the ground through community led initiatives. NIUA's 'Good Practices in Climate Action'¹⁹ report, provides a good starting point on how to mainstream a gender lens in urban climate policy, especially in key sectors like Urban Planning, Green Cover and Biodiversity, Energy and Green Buildings, Mobility and Air Quality,

¹⁸ Mookherjee, 2023.

¹⁹ Affairs, 2023.

Water Management and Waste Management. It also highlights examples of gender mainstreaming practices from the Global South and South Asia that can be adopted in the Indian context.

A few examples of community led initiatives:

- In coastal districts of Odisha in India's east, the effects of climate change are already disproportionately affecting women.²⁰ To tackle this, the Regional Centre for Development Cooperation formed a local committee²¹ consisting of men and women in equal numbers, ensuring that the centre can hear the voices of women in community-based management and decision-making and implement their ideas.²²
- Mumbai is the first city in India to launch a Women4Climate Mentorship programme in 2021. The aim of the programme is to support 25 emerging women leaders to become expert influencers while mobilising others in their efforts to accelerate climate action.²³
- Swayam Shikshan Prayog,²⁴ an Indian NGO, trains rural women in entrepreneurship and builds their capacities for marketing clean-energy projects in their communities. Currently, an active network of 1,100 women entrepreneurs is working across 8 districts in India. Since 2009, Swayam Shikshan Prayog has enabled more than 60,000 rural women entrepreneurs to start businesses in high-social-impact sectors such as clean energy, sustainable agriculture, health and nutrition and safe water and sanitation at the grassroots level.²⁵
- A project, led by an Indian NGO Mahila Housing Sewa Trust (MHT), is on a mission to organise and empower women in low-

²⁰ "Women as climate action ambassadors in coastal districts of India's Odisha State," 2019.

²¹ Climate Justice, n.d.

²² Agha, 2022.

²³ Women4Climate Mumbai 2021, n.d.

²⁴ "Rural Community Leaders Combating Climate Change – India," n.d.

²⁵ "Rural Community Leaders Combating Climate Change – India, n.d.

income households to increase their resilience to impacts of climate change by organising 114 Community Action Groups. MHT's initiatives have helped 25,000 low-income families across seven cities in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Over 1,500 women have been trained as climate-saathis, responsible for communicating the issue of climate change within their community in their local language. The initiative is low-cost, contextually appropriate and participatory in nature, which will have spill over effects in other cities.²⁶

- As global warming changes the region's natural systems, through a Spring revival project in Uttarakhand, a group of women (led by Vimla Bisht) are developing a novel method of recharge to deal with the growing water scarcity.²⁷ The method developed by Vimla Bisht's community to rejuvenate adjacent springs has been successfully tested by the organisation's CHIRAG-CEDAR in more than 400 Himalayan springs. This method relies largely on community engagement.
- Radhikaben from Ahmedabad with support from MHT (Mahila Housing Sewa Trust), devised a prototype monsoon flood alarm system as a flash flooding solution for her Vrundavan Park Society.²⁸
- The Jal Sahelis of Bundelkhand²⁹ – a group of women known as the women water warriors are fighting to reverse the water shortages brought on by unpredictable weather, by creating their own ponds and recharge zones.
- Women's self-help groups (SHGs) in Bhadrak, Orissa,³⁰ have collaborated to find ways to secure clean drinking water in the

²⁶ "Women's Action Towards Climate Resilience for Urban Poor in South Asia - Bangladesh, India, Nepal," n.d.

²⁷ Singh, 2021.

²⁸ "Flash Flooding Solutions: The Story of Vrundavan Park Society, Ahmedabad," 2019.

²⁹ "WION Climate Tracker- Jal Saheli: India's women water warriors bring social change," 2022.

³⁰ Namratha Rao, 2019.

face of rising sea water levels and declining monsoons. SHGs allow women to discuss floods and related issues like menstrual privacy and sanitation.

- One thousand women from the Rann of Kutch region are undergoing training at Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)³¹ and Renew Power facilities in Gujarat to become solar panel and solar pump technicians. As a joint effort between the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), "Renew Power", SEWA, State of Gujarat, this project aims to equip women with the knowledge and experience necessary to pursue a career in the renewable energy sector.

³¹ "Women building a sustainable future: India's rural energy pioneers," 2022.

Conclusion

The starting point for India to make gender-responsive climate policies and understanding the roots of inequality that manifest women's vulnerability and marginalisation could be to build capacities within existing mechanisms. We recommend that the Ministry of Women & Child Development develop a better understanding of intersections between their work and climate change related work, and be an active part of relevant committees, to effectively represent issues and co-design policies. This could lead to the establishment of a gender and climate change focal point representing India at UNFCCC and ensuring integration of gender perspectives both globally and locally. The climate policies in India are largely compartmentalised into sector specific actions and the relevant departments and ministries come together to address their own sector specific concerns – the focus is primarily on mitigation. Adaptation has lesser priority as can be seen in India's updated NDC as well. We do not have a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in place although a National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change³² (NAFCC) is established with specific requirements for gender considerations. It is also time we paid more attention to diverse viewpoints and ensure that inherently biased regulations do not get adopted.

On the local side, states and cities will play a key role in helping India reach its 2030 climate targets. Currently, the SAPCCs are being revised which gives states the opportunity to delve deeper into the gender differentiated impacts of climate change. States are also in the best position to initiate the mapping of vulnerabilities to climate change that are often hugely disparate within states. With mega cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad determining their own city level climate action plans in line with the country's targets and Paris Agreement mandates, more effective change is possible that keeps at its heart both spatial needs as well as our social and societal responsibilities. It will also ensure that the economic and growth needs are more effectively balanced with ecological and

³² "Implementation guidelines for NAFCC," n.d.

environmental safeguards. Bringing a gender and inclusion lens, in determining the vast range of policies that will aid us in reaching our climate related targets by 2030, will enable us to integrate India's demographic advantage in the growth trajectory.

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About Kubernein Initiative

Kubernein Initiative is an independent, female led, geopolitical advisory firm based in Mumbai (India) working to mainstream issues that need greater intellectual capacity and focus. Our vision is to build an organisation that considers critical questions with a perspective that balances traditionally 'western' thought in the field of international relations and diplomacy with new and emerging ideas from the global south. Kubernein Initiative is co-founded by Ambika Vishwanath and Priyanka Bhide, who bring their combined skills of research, analysis and strategic communications to successfully execute projects relating to security, governance, sustainability and development.

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About WISCOMP

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) began in 1999 as an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility. It works to facilitate the leadership of women in the development of an inclusive, people oriented discourse on issues of security. WISCOMP seeks to nurture non-violent action and a culture of coexistence within and between countries of the South Asian Region. With a portfolio that includes over 300 publications, WISCOMP is recognized as the leading think tank on Women Peace and Security in South Asia.

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