



A 2025 Webinar Series on Climate Action in Afghanistan

Session 3: Climate Change, Women, Youth and Children - 18 November 2025

Five Key Takeaways

1. Women, youth, and children in Afghanistan face the **harshest climate change impacts**, yet they hold immense untapped potential as changemakers and leaders in climate action.
2. Afghan women bear a **disproportionate burden** of climate change impacts through intensified economic hardship, food insecurity, and protection risks coupled with limited decision making power and access to information. Yet, they remain active and eager to advance adaptation and resilience activities.
3. Afghan youth are **driving climate awareness, advocacy, innovation, and local initiatives**, even while facing resource and capacity constraints and exclusion from most regional and global climate change mechanisms.
4. Children in Afghanistan are among the world's most climate-vulnerable, particularly to the multidimensional impacts of water scarcity on their **health, access to education, and daily lives**, underscoring the urgent need for child-inclusive climate policies and programmes.
5. Locally led, gender and youth-responsive climate action, integrating women and youth into programming, financing, and monitoring is not only feasible with existing lessons learned from local actors, but is also **essential for effective, context-driven resilience in Afghanistan**.

Opening Remarks

Marwa Alam Safa, Founder of CEYI and Climate Adaptation Officer at Agha Khan Foundation opened with context on the tangible, heartwrenching daily impacts of climate change on women, youth and children in Afghanistan - from children losing access to education to support their families or collect water, young people struggling to build a future, and women who carry the heaviest burden with the least resources. Ms. Alam stressed that these groups should not only be seen as vulnerable, stating they have the strongest potential for resilience. She called for women, youth and children to be viewed as partners and leaders in climate action in Afghanistan.



"Being vulnerable does not mean being powerless. Being a young person in Afghanistan does not mean being voiceless, and being a woman does not mean being silent." - Marwa Alam Safa

Lightning Presentations: Key Insights

1. Ezatullah Sediqiq, Co-Founder and Deputy Executive Director, REHA shared the findings of a UN Women supported assessment exploring how climate change is reshaping women's lives in Western Afghanistan. Surveys, focus groups, and consultations showed women face rising economic pressure, food insecurity, and emotional stress as livelihoods collapse. With men migrating for work, women shoulder greater household responsibility and vulnerability but lack decision-making power and information access. Climate impacts have strained families, increased risks of early marriage and violence, and weakened community cohesion. Despite limited formal mechanisms, most women express willingness to participate in local climate and water management efforts.



"Women bear the brunt of food security and emotional stress resulting from the climate induced economic pressures among the households." - Ezatullah Sediqiq



2. **Sayed Muhammad Sulimankhil, Youth Climate Activist, ALCOY** shared the outcomes of Afghanistan's August 2025 national youth climate conference under the YOUNGO umbrella, bringing young people together in person for the first time since 2021 to discuss climate action, sustainable development, leadership, and advocacy. Despite Afghanistan's exclusion from UNFCCC processes and climate finance, he highlighted youth are driving awareness, innovation, and local initiatives. The 2025 ALCOY highlighted five youth priorities for climate action: i) climate education; ii) youth financing; iii) global participation (COP/COY); iv) national inclusion in decision-making; and v) stronger government support.



"Afghanistan has been excluded from UNFCCC, COP meetings, climate finance, and diplomacy - but youth like us are stepping up to do awareness, implement local initiatives, and bring innovation to mitigate climate impacts." - Sayed Muhammad Sulimankhil

Panel Discussion: Key Messages

1. **Andrea James, Deputy Representative, UNICEF** discussed climate change impacts in Afghanistan from a child's eye, stressing it as a daily reality affecting their health, education, and safety. UNICEF's risk index places Afghan children among the world's most climate-vulnerable, with water scarcity the most urgent issue fueling malnutrition and waterborne disease. Ms. James highlighted the essential nature of investing in solar-powered WASH systems, climate-sensitive health services, resilient education platforms, and early-warning systems, as well as the need to advocate for climate financing, child-inclusive national policies and plans, and youth-led initiatives.



"Children and youth unanimously emphasized the need for youth-led environmental initiatives - 100% of youth surveyed said UNICEF should support youth-led environmental initiatives." - Andrea James

2. **Sameera Noori, Director General, COAR** emphasised that localisation is essential for effective climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resilience programming in Afghanistan. Drawing on COAR's more than 35 years of experience working with Afghan communities, she highlighted the importance of placing community voices, local actors, and context-specific realities at the center of programme design and implementation. She shared practical examples from COAR's work, including community radio programming and dialogue platforms on climate and environmental awareness, as well as COAR's leadership of the Afghanistan Localization Lab, which brings together Afghan NGOs, women-led organizations, and grassroots actors to share expertise and co-shape locally led approaches.



"Our mission is not just to deliver services, but to strengthen local resilience and empower Afghan communities, particularly women and youth - as central actors in climate action and disaster preparedness." - Sameera Noori

3. **Anum Aftab, Programme Specialist, UN Women** reflected on women's inclusion in climate action in the current operational environment following the 2021 Taliban takeover. She noted that engaging women and girls is increasingly difficult under growing restrictions, yet support continues through 230 women-led organisations reaching the most vulnerable. Ms. Aftab stressed that climate change offers a critical but delicate entry





point - with the de facto authorities' recognition of women's climate vulnerability and delicate space for their inclusion, and an interest from women themselves to participate. She cautioned, however, it has to be carefully expanded in a principled manner.

"There is space and it is an entry point [women's vulnerability to and inclusion in climate change]. The response and how we expand this entry point needs to be very carefully calibrated." - Anum Aftab

4. **Farida Razaqi, Energy Finance and Climate Analyst, UNDP** Sustainable Energy Hub discussed opportunities to better integrate women and youth into climate-related programming and financing. She argued that, despite Afghanistan's exclusion from formal climate finance since 2021, women and youth-responsive climate actions can still be operationalized through existing post-2021 funding channels, including ARTF, STFA, humanitarian-nexus programming, and vertical-fund projects. The core opportunity lies in treating these mechanisms as de facto climate-finance delivery vehicles that link livelihoods, clean energy, and humanitarian response to climate outcomes, while ensuring that women and youth are visible across the programme cycle and positioned not only as beneficiaries but also as active agents of climate resilience and adaptation.



"A key opportunity is to integrate women and youth within existing programmatic envelopes rather than create parallel initiatives." - Farida Razaqi

This summary overviews the shared insights from a **webinar convened by Samuel Hall and UNAMA as part of the 2025 Climate Action in Afghanistan Series**. It brings together humanitarian, development, and technical perspectives to clarify what earlier, more coordinated, and more community-driven climate action must look like in practice. The session brought together:

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