

**Climate Change, Social Stress and Violent Conflict**  
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*Abstract*

**A psychological perspective to climate stress in coastal India**

**Ruchi Mudaliar, Parul Rishi**

*Indian Institute of Forest Management, India*

India has been identified as one amongst 27 countries which are most vulnerable to the impacts of global warming related accelerated sea level rise (UNEP, 1989). In view of the perceived potential threat to coastal India and more specifically to coastal metropolitan cities of India owing to the vast sea-side development and huge populations in the vicinity of the coast, it becomes further important that people of these cities should be thoroughly studied from a psychological perspective too besides the technical studies of potential physical impacts of changing climate.

This study is aimed at developing a conceptual framework for behavioural analysis of people of Indian coastal metropolitan cities regarding climate change and how they have behaviourally adapted to whatever climate changes they believe have occurred or are likely to occur. Current concern over global climate change stems, in part, from the predominant evidence that its causes are anthropogenic: the result of human behaviour. However, it is less widely recognized that the solutions are also rooted in human behaviour. The study is in line with article 6 of New Delhi Work Programme of UNFCCC (2007) in which special effort to foster psychological/behavioural change has been stressed through public awareness.

Indian coastal metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Chennai have been chosen as the study sites for this purpose since both of these cities are listed under vulnerable categories for sea level rise (TERI, 1996). Psychological assessment of human-climate interface, behavioural adaptation and subjective well being of people residing in Indian coastal metropolitan cities are therefore crucial topics of concern.

The central idea behind the proposed research work is to address psychological dimensions like what motivates people to have pro-environmental behaviours, what restricts their actions, what are the things that people find stressful relating to climate change, what are the cognitive-affective-conative dimensions of human climate interface, how have people reacted to climate change in the past and adapted to newly occurred changes, what is the level of preparedness of people to meet future challenges associated with climate change, what coping strategies people opt in crisis situations, etc. The coastal zones of India are highly vulnerable to the expected rise in sea levels due to climate change. Besides studying the behavioural aspects, an attempt would be made to educate the public and create awareness among the masses on climate change issues together with suggesting the possible behavioural coping strategies and intervention plan to combat the adversities of climate change.

Finally, this study is expected to not only bring out the different kinds of risk perceptions of climate change but also intends to address both overt and covert behavioural aspects such as readiness to act, to take initiatives, to learn new ways, to change lifestyles, to adjust and to negotiate solutions so that crisis situations can be better handled. It will require the depth of involvement towards the issue and the sense of social responsibility on the part of people focusing on psychosocial approach towards climate stress and related issues in coastal India.