

Feminist Participatory Action Research and the Climate Crisis

A LITERATURE LANDSCAPE SUMMARY

Written by *Trimita Chakma*

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) has emerged as a distinct research methodology guided by feminist principles and goals. While FPAR's origins trace back to earlier concepts like Lewin's action research (1946) and participatory action research (PAR), the explicit integration of a feminist lens developed in the 1980s and '90s. Pioneers like Patricia Maguire sought to bring a gender perspective into PAR, critiquing the overlooking of women's experiences and power relations in traditional research paradigms (Maguire, 1987). FPAR builds on PAR methodologies by centering gender justice, challenging patriarchal structures, and aiming to transform oppressive conditions faced by women and marginalized groups (Reid et al., 2006).

Recent academic literature illustrates FPAR's widespread adoption across diverse contexts and issues. For climate justice, Godden et al. (2020) show FPAR empowering Asian grassroots women to expose climate impacts and advocate for rights-based policies. In Canada, Hayhurst et al. (2015) use a postcolonial feminist FPAR approach to center indigenous young women's strategies in sport programs. Research in Peru by Távara (2019) highlights FPAR's potential as a decolonizing methodology for marginalized Andean women to construct knowledge and contest dominant discourses.

FPAR has also been used to examine urban environmental management with social movements in Argentina (Graziano et al., 2019) and women's care for the local environment in Australia (Sewell & Harris, 2016). For climate change adaptation, FPAR facilitates participatory knowledge production with women in the Global South (Tanner et al., 2021). Chakma (2016) and Butcher (2021) demonstrate FPAR strengthening feminist movements and grassroots women's participation in Asia.

Applications by Women's Rights Organisations

FPAR has been widely utilized by women's rights organizations in the Asia Pacific region to address climate justice (Women and Gender Constituency, 2016). The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) has conducted several FPAR projects in collaboration with its partners across the region since 2015 to examine impacts of climate change and disasters on marginalized women. Recent APWLD reports showcase FPAR enabling indigenous, rural, and grassroots women researchers to document local climate effects, advocate for policy change, and build resilience in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam (See APWLD reports 2015-2022). Outcomes include influencing adaptation plans, restoring environments, improving labor conditions, and resisting false solutions like large-scale

hydroelectric dams or geothermal projects. The approach equips women with skills for activism and leadership to achieve climate justice.

Plan International has used FPAR to examine climate change barriers to adolescent girls' education in Zambia and Zimbabwe (Tanner et al., 2021). The young women researchers identified gendered impacts like increased domestic workloads and early marriage, but also highlighted the potential of education to empower them as agents of climate action. The FPAR process itself built skills, confidence and solidarity. Findings prompt reframing youth beyond vulnerability to recognize their capabilities as change makers.

FPAR Guiding Principles and Practices

Across contexts, the following common FPAR practices and principles emerge:

- Co-creating knowledge, often using participatory methods
- Consciousness-raising
- Dismantling power hierarchies in the research process
- Enabling excluded groups, like grassroots women, to shape solutions grounded in lived realities and embedded knowledge

The literature affirms FPAR's role in movement building, amplifying marginalized voices, and mobilizing collectives for gender justice, and challenging power hierarchies in research. As evidenced by its expanding use, FPAR offers a transformative praxis for participatory knowledge production, consciousness-raising, and grassroots feminist activism to enable marginalized women to shape climate solutions embedded in their lived realities.

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