

Rethinking vulnerability to climate change in Sri Lanka

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Climate change has been heralded as a threat to the global society. It has become a subject of intense interest to public policy decision makers internationally. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has played a pivotal role in providing factual scientific information to policy makers. Its research findings have in fact created momentum for the foundation of the United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and numerous reports identifying potential impacts from climate change and advising global actions against it.

Recently, a number of social scientists have pointed out the deficiencies in the way the climate change regime defines the problems and solutions, and transfers the same concepts uncritically onto different localities. Taking this critical approach, this paper will examine Sri Lanka as a case study. To the present, the Sri Lankan government has identified its vulnerability to climate change that agrees with the recommendation of the IPCC and the UNFCCC, and some numbers of countermeasures against vulnerability have been identified. By examining some of these measures, this paper will highlight the difficulties of formulating and implementing climate change policies. The proposed paper will discuss theoretical issues raised in my Ph.D. thesis related to the UNFCCC and IPCC's climate change discourse being interpreted and reproduced in the Sri Lankan government.

To date, there have been no significant studies conducted to understanding the issue especially in countries like Sri Lanka that fall under the IPCC category of 'vulnerable small island states'. This research therefore will make a significant contribution to 1) the ongoing debate on politics of environmental science and viability of global environmental institutions, and 2) reframing and rethinking the environmental issues in Sri Lanka.

Key words: IPCC; Vulnerability analysis; Climate change; Global society; Environmental policy