

## Climate Change in South Asian Communities: A Public Health Issue

A Toolkit for Education, Advocacy, and Health Equity



## Key Overview

Climate change is a growing public health crisis — and for South Asian American communities, the risks are layered. Many live in climate-vulnerable neighborhoods, work in high-exposure jobs, and face language or systemic barriers to care and resources.

This toolkit is designed to educate, engage, and activate South Asian American communities around the intersection of climate and health. Whether you're a public health professional, student, advocate, educator, faith leader, or community member, this toolkit provides the context, language, data, and strategies needed to understand climate-related health risks — and to take action through an equity and justice lens.

Use this toolkit to:

- Host community climate health education workshops
- Advocate for climate and health policy
- Share WhatsApp-friendly infographics with family and friends
- Uplift South Asian community voices in the climate justice movement
- Access data tools and environmental risk maps to inform outreach and advocacy

## Language & Definitons

- **Climate Change:** Long-term changes in weather caused by human activity, like burning gas or coal.
- **Climate Health Impacts:** Health problems caused or made worse by climate change (e.g., asthma, heatstroke).
- **Climate Resilience:** A community's ability to prepare for and recover from climate events.
- **Climate Anxiety:** Worry or fear about the future because of climate change.
- Extreme Weather: Dangerous weather events like floods, heatwaves, and storms.
- Heat Index: How hot it feels outside when humidity is added to air temperature.
- **Environmental Justice:** The right of all people to live in a clean and safe environment.
- **Environmental Equity:** Making sure vulnerable communities get support and protection from pollution.
- Air Quality: How clean or polluted the air is affects breathing and lung health.
- Water Quality: How safe the water is to drink or use at home.



## Language & Definitons

- Urban Heat Island: Cities are hotter than nearby areas because of buildings and fewer trees.
- Green Space: Parks, trees, and gardens that help cool the air and improve wellbeing.
- Flood Zone: An area more likely to flood during heavy rain or storms.
- Waste Collection Site: A place where garbage or recycling is processed may affect nearby health.
- **Composting:** Turning food and plant waste into healthy soil instead of throwing it away.
- Food Deserts: Neighborhoods where people have limited access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food options.
- **Mitigation:** Actions we take to reduce or slow down climate change (e.g., using clean energy).
- Adaptation: Changes we make to adjust to the effects of climate change (e.g., cooling centers, flood barriers).

## Understanding Climate Change Through a South Asian Lens What is climate change?

Climate change refers to the gradual shift in the Earth's climate due to human activities like burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas), deforestation, and industrial pollution. These changes are making extreme weather events like heat waves, floods, and wildfires more frequent and intense, impacting people's health, homes, and livelihoods (United Nations)



Human activities that contribute to climate change

Without culturally relevant interventions, South Asian American communities risk being left out of climate planning. Climate change is not just an environmental issue — it's a public health and equity issue.



## **Cultural Perspectives: Connections to Nature in South Asian Heritage**

South Asian cultures share deep-rooted traditions that honor nature, seasonal cycles, and environmental balance — with caring for the Earth viewed as a spiritual and moral duty. <u>(UNEP)</u>



encourages harmony with nature through reverence for rivers, trees, animals, and the five elements (Panchabhutas).



teaches that the Earth is a sacred trust (amana), and believers are called to be stewards and avoid waste (israf).



JAINISM



promotes balance with nature as a form of humility and service (seva), emphasizing respect for air, water, and land.



centers mindful living, simplicity, and nonharming toward all living beings, including the environment. upholds ahimsa (nonviolence) toward all forms of life, including plants, water, and air, as a core spiritual value. CHRISTIANITY

teaches that humans are caretakers of God's creation, with environmental protection often tied to service and justice.

# South Asian communities have long-standing cultural practices that reflect deep connections to land, food, and seasons.



**Agricultural Roots** Many families have generational ties to farming and seasonal knowledge. even in diaspora settings

**Festivals & Seasons** Celebrations like Lohri, Pongal, Baisakhi, and Onam are tied to harvests and seasonal transitions.

**Cultural Foods & Sustainability** Traditional diets are often plant-based and seasonal with preservation methods that support resilience

Storytelling & Folklore Folk tales and proverbs often depict nature as source of wisdom, identity, and spirituality

These cultural elements help bridge generations and build climate resilience from within the community.



## Climate Change in the U.S.: How It Affects South Asian American Communities

South Asian Americans (SAA)—many of whom live in high-density urban enclaves —face compounded climate risks due to where they live, work, and seek care. These risks intersect with chronic health conditions, systemic inequities, and language or cultural barriers.

#### **Geographic Vulnerability** Many SAAs live in dense urban areas. These areas experience:

- Urban heat island effect = higher temperatures
- industrial zones/highways = air pollution
- Aging infrastructure = flooding zones

#### **Occupational Exposure**

Overrepresentation in rideshare, delivery, warehouse, construction, caregiving, and small business roles—all vulnerable to heat, poor ventilation, and air pollution. Many lack benefits like paid leave or employer-provided health care.

#### Language, Trust & Access Barriers

Limited English proficiency, digital access gaps, and fear of institutions mean many miss emergency alerts or don't engage in climate preparedness. Recent immigrants may also lack trust due to past trauma or immigration status.

#### II Pause + Reflect

How does your family or community already care for one another during hard times — and how might those traditions help us respond to climate change?



## **Diaspora Dynamics and Community Resiliance**

## Transnational Realities

South Asian Americans face climate impacts shaped by both U.S. realities and cross-border ties. Many support family abroad, migrate due to environmental pressures, and are emotionally and financially <u>impacted by disasters in South</u>

<u>Asia.</u>

## Health Vulnerabilities



### Chronic Conditions & Climate Sensitivity

- Elevated risk for heart disease, diabetes, asthma
- Heat, air pollution, and stress worsen symptoms



## Genetics & Environmental Exposure

- <u>Consanguinity-linked</u> <u>conditions</u> (e.g., congenital heart defects)
- Smog sensitivity from cumulative exposure in U.S. and abroad



## **Barriers to Care**

- Limited access to screening or culturally competent healthcare
- Low health literacy among new immigrants

## **Diaspora Dynamics**

South Asian Americans often support family abroad, send remittances, or migrate due to climate pressures like floods and droughts. When disasters strike in South Asia, U.S.-based families are affected emotionally and financially especially those with strong cross-border ties.

## **Cross-Generational Impact**

Climate stress affects elders and youth differently. Elders may experience trauma tied to displacement and language isolation, while youth face anxiety, caregiving pressure, and uncertainty about the future.

## Community Strengths & Solutions

- Faith-based response networks (e.g. Gurdwaras, temples & mosques during the CA wildfires)
- Community-centered food systems (e.g. langars)
- Mutual-aid networks
- Ethnic media & youth leadership



## **Climate Related Health Impacts**

Climate change worsens existing health disparities in South Asian communities — from poor air quality to heatrelated illness. This page highlights major climate-health intersections specific to South Asians, including chronic disease, housing conditions, labor, and access barriers.

#### **Air Pollution & Respiratory Illness**



High rates of asthma and COPD in South Asian-<u>heavy areas</u> due to traffic, industrial proximity, indoor gas stove cooking, and <u>incense</u>use.

#### **Climate Disasters & Mental Health**



Displacement, floods, and wildfires cause <u>trauma</u> and lead to increased climate anxiety, especially among elders and youth.

#### **Food Access & Cultural Nutrition**





Floods and <u>droughts</u> affect availability and cost of staple foods like rice and lentils. Food deserts and inflation limit access to affordable, culturally familiar foods.

#### **Extreme Heat & Cardiovascular Risk**



<u>High CVD risk + extreme heat</u> = worsens outcomes. The elderly, pregnant individuals, people with <u>Long COVID</u>, and menopause can also have increased heat sensitivity

#### Occupational Hazards & Infrastructure





South Asian Americans often work in jobs exposed to heat, pollution, and <u>unsafe condition</u>s, while also living in neighborhoods with poor infrastructure, limited green space, and high flood risk, limiting access to emergency care during climate diasasters.

#### Water Quality, Flooding & Infectious Disease



Aging pipes, basement flooding, and contaminated water put South Asian families at higher risk for infections, mold-related illness, and unsafe drinking water — especially in crowded urban neighborhoods.

## Ecological Framework: Risk & Protective Factors for Climate Health Among South Asian Americans

#### **Policy/Societal Level**

Risk factors: lack of disaggregated data, immigration-related exclusion from safety Protective factors: Community organizing and civic engagement; coalitions with BIPOC and faith-based climate orgs

#### **Institutional Level**

Risk factors: limited culturally competent care; exclusion from worker protections; inaccessible climate warnings Protective factors: Ethnic media outreach; schools, clinics, and CBOs as entry points for education

#### **Community Level**

Risk factors: Flood-prone or heat-exposed housing; occupational exposures; food deserts and lack of green space.

Protective factors: Faith-based institutions as central hubs; mutual aid and informal support systems

#### **Interpersonal Level**

Risk factors: Language barriers; intergenerational disconnects; caregiving burden on youth Protective factors: Strong family and caregiving networks; youth as cultural and digital navigators

#### **Individual Level**

Risk factors: Prevalence of CVD, diabetes, asthma; Climate anxiety, mental health stigma; additional health factors put individuals at higher risk Protective factors: Cultural values of conservation; Familiarity with plant-based, seasonal diets; Healthseeking behaviors among youth



# Mapping Environmental Risks in South Asian Enclaves WHY THIS MATTERS

South Asian American (SAA) communities across the U.S. often live in densely populated ethnic enclaves—places rich in culture, but underserved when it comes to environmental health. Climate change is a social determinant of health, and South Asians already face higher risks of chronic conditions such as heart disease, asthma, and diabetes. Yet the environmental factors driving these health disparities often go unrecognized and unaddressed. This report card series highlights environmental health indicators in five South

Asian-heavy neighborhoods: Jackson Heights, NY • Edison, NJ • Artesia, CA • Sugar Land, TX • West Ridge, IL

#### HOW TO READ THIS REPORT CARD

Each report card includes data on: <u>Demographics</u>: Who lives in the community and how that shapes risk. <u>Health Status</u>: Community health trends and disparities. <u>Air Quality</u>: Current pollution levels, sources, and future risks. <u>Water Quality</u>: Contaminants, health risks, and long-term concerns.

#### What You Can Do

Learn: Understand how climate and environment affect your health.

**Share:** Use this data to raise awareness with family, neighbors, and local leaders.

Advocate: Demand better monitoring, cleaner environments, and policies that protect your neighborhood.

Act Together: Join local groups to promote green spaces, safe water, and clean air for all.





## **REPORT CARD OF: JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY**

Jackson Heights is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in NYC, with an estimated population of 162,686. Most of the residents are foreign-born (64%). The neighborhood houses several enclaves like little India, little Bangladesh, and little Columbia.





Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year file; OSC analysis





- 28% of residents lack health insurance
- Teen pregnancy rate is 45% higher than citywide
- Childhood obesity is above citywide average
- New HIV diagnoses are onethird higher than citywide rate
- New hepatitis C reports are half the citywide rate



- Air quality is moderate
- Particulate matter concentrations are twice WHO standards
- Air quality is poorer than 75% of NYC neighborhoods
- Lower respiratory diseases are the fourth most common cause of death.

# WED 29 MAY 4

#### WATER QUALITY

- Water contains high levels of cancer causing chemicals taht can also damage liver and kidneys.
- Byproducts formed during water cleaning can lead to cancer and birth problems.
- PFAS ("forever chemicals") and microplastics, which can harm growth and hormones, are found in the water but not always tested.
- Water contains industrial waste from factories that can cause cancer and problems during pregnancy.





## REPORT CARD OF: EDISON, NJ

Edison, New Jersey, specifically the 1.5 mile stretch of Oak Tree Road has one of the largest concentrations of South Asians in the US. In 2020, 50% of Edison's population was ethnically Asian, with 28.3% identifying as Indian American.





#### AIR QUALITY

- Air quality monitoring has been ongoing since pre-1990
- While improvements have been made, concerns about air pollution remain

#### Main Pollution Sources Vehicle Emissions

#### venicle Emissions

- High vehicle emission levels in the area
- 10.8% of vehicles fail initial inspections
- 2.7% fail subsequent inspections Industrial Pollution
- 23 local industrial and business sources contribute to pollution
- These are located near the residential and business areas, posing risks

#### WATER QUALITY

- Water is sourced from surface waters like the Millstone River, Raritan River, and Delaware & Raritan Canal.
- The current water quality meets monitoring standards.
- While major violations were noted, but residents are encouraged to be aware of the potential risk from household plumbing systems.
- Low levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are detected, but within allowable limits. PFAS chemicals can pose long-term health risks if not managed and as they are persistent chmeicals, steps need to be taken to minimize exposure.

#### COMMUNITY IMPACT

#### **Health Risks**

- Potential health risks due to prolonged exposure to pollutants:
- Respiratory issues
- Increased risk of asthma and lung diseases

#### **Solutions & Advocacy**

- Support air quality monitoring efforts
- Advocate for stricter vehicle emission standards
- Call for industrial pollution regulation



## **REPORT CARD OF: ARTESIA, CA**

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

- Artesia has a population of approximately 16,000, with 42% identifying as Asian, and a significant portion being South Asian.
- 48.6% of Artesia residents are foreign-born, higher than the national average of 13.6%.
- The largest industry in Artesia is manufacturing, which can be a source of local air and water pollution.



#### HEALTH STATUS

- Artesia residents experience elevated environmental health risks due to industrial exposure and poor air quality.
- Vulnerable groups—including children, the elderly, and people with chronic conditions —face greater risk on poor air quality days.
- Community members express concern about limited time and awareness to address climatehealth impacts.

#### AIR QUALITY

- PM2.5 concentration in Artesia is 1.6 times higher than WHO guidelines.
- Expected to have 7 days with an Air Quality Index (AQI) over 100 this year, increasing to 9 days in 30 years.
- Artesia has better air quality than only 11% of California cities.
- Air pollution is driven by proximity to wildfires, industrial sources, and vehicle emissions.

#### WATER QUALITY

- Artesia's drinking water is supplied by Golden State Water Company (GSWC) and originates from groundwater sources.
- Possible contaminants include:
  - Lindane
  - Carbon tetrachloride
  - Chlorodifluoromethane
  - Acetone
- Water hardness levels are abnormally high.
- Minimal rainfall and frequent droughts impact water availability, an issue likely to worsen with climate change.





## **REPORT CARD OF: SUGARLAND, TX**

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

- Sugar Land is home to a rapidly growing Asian American population, with 38.6% identifying as Asian as of the 2020 Census.
- The area is widely referred to as "Desitown, USA" due to its large and vibrant South Asian community.
- Located in Fort Bend County, which has the highest proportion of Asian residents in Texas (22.2%).
- Most residents are U.S. citizens, but housing affordability has pushed many toward unincorporated areas nearby like Katy, Fulshear, and Richmond.

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS RUREALI/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Sugar Land,

Missouri City growth ations in Fort Bend County have increased in the past decade. ibute the growth to new construction and good schools. Asian population growth from 2010-20

#### HEALTH STATUS

- Sugar Land has transitioned from a workingclass town to a more affluent suburb, displacing many of its historically lowerincome residents.
- Despite increased prosperity, environmental and infrastructure risks persist and disproportionately affect older or lowerincome South Asian residents.
- Community awareness about climate-health connections remains low, and culturally relevant outreach is lacking.

#### WATER QUALITY

- Sugar Land sits atop three major aquifers: Chicot, Evangeline, and Jasper.
- Chicot and Evangeline provide drinking water.

Missouri City 24.6%

- Jasper Aquifer is not used for municipal water but is at risk due to urban expansion.
- Aquifer replenishment is decreasing due to rapid suburban development.
- EWG tap water reports show:
- 17 of 39 contaminants exceed health guidelines
- Detected contaminants include "forever chemicals" (PFAS) and known carcinogens.
- Although water meets federal legal standards, many limits have not been updated in 20 years, and legal ≠ safe.



#### AIR QUALITY

- Sugar Land has a minor risk from air quality now, but this is expected to worsen significantly over the next 30 years.
- Sugar Land has worse air quality than 87% of cities in Texas.
- The EPA currently designates the region as not meeting federal ozone standards.
- High ozone levels are linked to asthma, cardiovascular harm, and respiratory issues.
- ChampionX LLC is identified as the city's highest industrial polluter, ranking in the top 25% of emissions across the region.

South Asians face higher heart disease risk—and Sugar Land's poor air quality (PM2.5) makes it worse. A toxic plume in west Houston went undetected for years due to lack of air monitors. Without local data, communities stay unprotected and unheard.

#### AIR QUALITY



2015 PM<sub>2-5</sub> concentrations (μg/m³). Current PM2.5 monitors are represented by the blue dots. (Source: <u>Toxic</u> <u>air – Houston in on the front lines</u>)





## **REPORT CARD OF: WEST RIDGE, IL**

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

- West Ridge, a neighborhood in Chicago, is home to "Little India" along Devon Avenue —one of the most culturally diverse corridors in the U.S.
- The area includes large Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, and other South Asian communities.
- South Asian Americans represent over 36% of Illinois' Asian American population, with concentrations in West Ridge and DuPage County.
- About 25% of the local South Asian population has limited English proficiency, creating barriers to services and civic engagement.



#### HEALTH STATUS

- West Ridge reflects the largest wealth gap among Asian ethnic groups in Illinois.
- Socioeconomic disparities exist within the South Asian community, challenging the "model minority" myth.
- South Asians in the area face unmet needs related to housing, healthcare, and language access.
- Community feedback highlights isolation, profiling, and lack of culturally appropriate services.

#### AIR QUALITY

- PM2.5 levels in West Ridge are 1.5x higher than WHO guidelines.
- West Ridge is expected to see increasing poor air quality days (AQI > 100) in the next 30 years.
- Current air quality is worse than 68% of neighborhoods in Illinois.
- Warmer, drier conditions are contributing to ozone formation and wildfire smoke exposure, both harmful to respiratory health.

#### WATER QUALITY

- Drinking water is provided by the City of Chicago, but 17 contaminants have been found to exceed <u>EWG</u> health guidelines.
- Detected pollutants include PFAS, disinfection byproducts, and heavy metals.
- Although the water meets federal legal standards, health guidelines recommend stricter limits for long-term safety.
- Legal ≠ safe many federal limits have not been updated in decades.

#### **Contaminants Detected**



- Legal does not necessarily equal safe. Getting a passing grade from the federal government does not mean the water meets the latest health guidelines.
- Legal limits for contaminants in tap water have not been updated in almost 20 years.
- The best way to ensure clean tap water is to keep pollution out of source water in the first place.



## **Report Card References**

#### 🔁 References & Data Sources

Environmental Working Group (EWG) Tap Water Database https://www.ewg.org/tapwater/ **IQAir Air Quality Index Reports** https://www.igair.com/ First Street Foundation - Climate Risk Modeling https://firststreet.org/ Weather Underground - Local Weather and Air Quality Reports https://www.wunderground.com/ City Health Dashboard - Public Health and Demographics https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/ AAPIdata.com - South Asian American Demographic Data https://aapidata.com/data/demographics/ SAAPRI - Making Data Count (2013) https://www.advancingjustice-chicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SAAPRI-2013-Making-Data-Count.pdf Environmental Defense Fund / Air Alliance Houston "Toxic Air - Houston is on the Front Lines" (May 2020) https://www.airalliancehouston.org/ U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 https://data.census.gov/ Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Annual Monitoring Plans https://www.tceq.texas.gov/ Chicago Environmental Reports - City of Chicago Water Quality and Air Monitoring Data https://www.chicago.gov/ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene - Community Health Profiles https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-gn3.pdf New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - Air and Water Quality Monitoring

https://www.nj.gov/dep/



## Resources

## Environmental Health & Mapping Tools

Understanding your local environmental risks — from pollution to green space access — is key to building climate resilience. The tools below can help South Asian American communities identify environmental hazards, monitor air and water quality, and advocate for safer, healthier neighborhoods.

#### 

- EPA Superfund Site Search → <u>Search by zip code</u> to find hazardous waste sites in your area.
- EPA Cleanups in My Community → <u>Interactive map</u> of Superfund, Brownfields, and underground tank cleanups.

#### 🛗 Toxic Releases

- EPA TRI Explorer  $\rightarrow$  <u>Search facilities</u> that release toxic chemicals into air, water, or land.
- GoodGuide Scorecard (archived) → <u>Check historical polluters</u> by zip code (note: no longer updated).

#### 🔗 Air Quality & Environmental Justice

- EPA EJScreen  $\rightarrow$  <u>Map overlays</u> for pollution, race, income, diesel PM, and proximity to hazards.
- AirNow  $\rightarrow$  <u>Track real-time air quality</u> and historical pollution levels in your area.

#### Water Quality

- EWG Tap Water Database  $\rightarrow$  <u>Check your water supply</u> by zip code or utility.
- EPA National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA)  $\rightarrow$  <u>Model health risks</u> from long-term pollutant exposure.

#### Green Space & Park Access

- Trust for Public Land ParkScore  $\mathbb{R} \rightarrow \underline{City \ park \ rankings}$  and equity mapping.
- Google Maps (Satellite View) → Manually measure green space in your neighborhood.
- USGS NLCD  $\rightarrow$  <u>Land cover data</u> (requires GIS tools).
- Local Open Data Portals → Find shapefiles and data on parks, gardens, and public land.
  - Example: <u>DC Open Data</u>

#### 🖬 Metrics You Can Track

- Park acreage per 1,000 residents
- % of land covered by green space
- % of population within a 10-minute walk to a park
- Park access equity across income levels



## Resources

## Mational Healthy Housing Checklists

These tools help assess and improve home safety, air quality, and climate resilience—particularly vital for South Asian American families living in high-risk environments.

#### General Healthy Home Assessments

1. **Healthy Home Checklist (HHS)** - A room-by-room guide addressing smoke detectors, lead paint, mold, and ventilation. - Download PDF

2. **EPA Home Environment Checklist**- Focuses on reducing asthma triggers like dust, pests, and mold through simple, low-cost actions. - E <u>Download PDFBuilding Performance Institute,</u> <u>Inc.</u>

3. **Healthy Homes Maintenance Checklist (NCHH)-** Seasonal maintenance tips to prevent allergens, injuries, and structural issues. - E <u>Download PDF</u>

#### <u>Climate-Specific Thermal Control</u>

1. **Extreme Heat Checklist (NCHH)-** Guidance on maintaining cool indoor temperatures and preventing heat-related health risks.- 🖺 <u>Download PDF</u>

2. **Extreme Cold Checklist (NCHH)-** Steps to insulate homes and protect against cold-related hazards. - **Download PDF** 

#### 👳 Aging in Place & Mobility

1. **Safe at Home Checklist (AOTA)**- Evaluates home safety for older adults, focusing on fall prevention and accessibility. - Evaluates home safety for older adults, focusing on fall prevention and accessibility.

#### **<u> Meighborhood & Outdoor Environment</u>**

**1. Active Neighborhood Checklist (PRC-STL)** - Assesses walkability, bike access, and green space availability to promote physical activity. - **Download PDF** 

#### <u>**†** Action & Policy Tools</u>

- 1. <u>CEJST Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool</u>
- 2. Mental Health x Climate Advocacy Briefs (GMHAN)
- 3. Climate Health Education Resources

#### Emergency + Health Tools

- 1. <u>AirNow App</u> Real-time air quality
- 2. EPA EJScreen Environmental justice mapping
- 3. <u>Ready.gov</u> Emergency planning tips

These resources are invaluable for community health workers, families, and advocates aiming to enhance home safety and climate resilience.



## Advocacy & Action

## 📢 How to Advocate for Climate & Health Justice

- Start Local Call for green infrastructure like cooling centers, trees, and safe sidewalks in your community.
- Know Your Rights Push for language access, safe housing, clean air, and emergency protections.
- Demand Data Equity Advocate for data disaggregation so South Asian communities are counted in environmental health policy.

## Coalition Building

South Asian-Led Orgs:

- DRUM Desis Rising Up & Moving
- ASATA Alliance of South Asians Taking Action
- <u>Sikh Environmental Network</u>

BIPOC & Climate Justice Orgs:

- APEN Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- <u>Sunrise Movement</u>
- OneUpAction
- Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE)

## 📅 Fellowship Opportunity

• Climate & Health Equity Fellowship

## South Asians in the Climate Movement - Voices to Follow:

- Kevin J. Patel LA-based climate justice activist and founder of OneUpAction, empowering frontline youth. <a><u>imkevinjpatel.com</u></a>
- Aditi Mayer Climate justice storyteller, photojournalist, and sustainable fashion advocate. <u>aditimayer.com</u>
- Nadia Nazar Artist, activist, and co-founder of Zero Hour, mobilizing youth for climate action through art. <u>nadianazar.com</u>
- Varshini Prakash Executive Director of Sunrise Movement, building political power for young people to stop climate change. sunrisemovement.org



## 🔚 Read | Listen | Watch

📖 Books

- Enviromedics: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health by Jay Lemery, MD & Paul Auerbach, MD – How extreme weather affects our bodies and the healthcare system.
- <u>Parable of the Sower</u> by Octavia E. Butler A powerful climate fiction novel about survival, migration, and building hope in a collapsing world.
- <u>The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg</u> Essays from over 100 experts and activists on the science, justice, and urgency of climate action.

🕼 Podcasts

- <u>Code Green</u> Explores climate and health through patient cases and med school curriculum.
- **<u>Drilled</u>** Investigative series on fossil fuel disinformation.
- **Brown Girl Green** BIPOC-centered environmental storytelling

A Recommended Viewing

- **Railway Men** A dramatized retelling of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, spotlighting industrial negligence and public health fallout.
- Water & Power: A California Heist A documentary uncovering how corporate interests manipulate access to water in drought-prone California.
- **Before the Flood** Leonardo DiCaprio travels globally to expose the devastating effects of climate change and explore policy solutions.
- The Human Element A powerful film connecting the four classical elements (earth, air, fire, water) with human vulnerability in a changing climate.
- <u>AAPI Climate Justice Panel (NCAPA)</u> AAPI leaders, including Thoin Begum, SAPHA's Climate Health Taskforce lead, share culturally rooted climate advocacy strategies and lived experiences from the frontlines.

## Y Closing Thoughts

Climate change affects us all — but for South Asian American communities, the risks, strengths, and stories are deeply personal. Whether you're sharing this with family, organizing in your neighborhood, or speaking up in a room where decisions are made, know that your voice matters. Let this toolkit be a starting point — a way to educate, connect, and build toward a future where our communities are not just protected, but empowered to thrive.

> Keflect & Reimagine How can we honor our roots while building a climate-resilient future? What does a just and healthy environment look like for our communities — and how can we get there, together?

"Climate change is intrinsically linked to public health, food and water security, migration, peace, and security. It is a moral issue. It is an issue of social justice, human rights and fundamental ethics. We have a profound responsibility to the fragile web of life on this Earth, and to this generation and those that will follow." – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon





The South Asian Public Health Association (SAPHA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of South Asian communities in the United States through advocacy, collaboration, and communication. We strive to address the unique health challenges faced by individuals of South Asian descent through education, advocacy, research, and community engagement. Established in 1999, SAPHA gained formal recognition in 2001 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and has marked many milestones in promoting the health and well-being of South Asians throughout the years, including the groundbreaking report, "A Brown Paper: The Health of South Asians in the US," in 2002, the publication of "The Health of South Asians in the US - An Evidencebased Guide for Policy and Program Development" in 2017, many successful webinars, publications and invitations to conferences and events, along with White House recognition. SAPHA operates with a dedicated team of volunteer Board members representing diverse expertise in public health, health disparities, mental health, clinical care, health policy, and disease control and prevention.

#### Acknowledgements:

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#### Visit our website for more information on how to stay involved and reach out for partnership opportunities:



www.sapha.org admin@sapha.org @saphainfo

This toolkit is a living resource. We invite South Asian health and climate advocates to share additional content, feedback, or community case studies for future editions. Please share any new resources, suggestions and comments by emailing: admin@sapha.org