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Impact of Women's Participation in Climate Change/Environmental Protection

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ABSTRACT

Women all over the world play the essential role of primary land managers and resource users. They have proven their calibre to make relevant contributions to ecological conservation by taking numerable initiatives. Yet, they continue to experience substantial disadvantages from biodiversity loss and gender-blind conservation initiatives. Women must be equally and actively included in procedures involving conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Women, for instance, are increasingly carrying on the managerial role in small-scale agriculture in most nations. However, they do not have an effective say in land utilisation policies or equal access to key resources. Moreover, the loss of biodiversity also places an unfair cost on women by extending the time to gather essential resources. This limits the amount of time that can be devoted to other activities that help women educated better and generate more income.

Alongside fairness, supporting women's full participation in biodiversity initiatives is crucial to the long-term viability of biodiversity conservation and sustainability programs. These initiatives risk disregarding the core causes of biodiversity loss, as well as possible remedies. They may also result in the promotion of gender inequities without the participation of women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Through the years, women across the globe have proven that they are closely connected to their local and regional environments. They play a crucial role in the management of natural resources and contribute immensely to environmental protection and climate change³. While addressing issues related to rehabilitation and biodiversity conservation, women have a greater potential and are therefore significant actors⁴. Women have deep-rooted knowledge and experience with their surrounding environment because of their involvement in farming, collection of water and firewood, etc. Such experiences have helped them perform the jobs of agriculturalists, resource managers and customary scientists. Due to their heavy involvement

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³ *Ms Betty C Alvares v The State of Goa and Ors* [2014] National Green Tribunal (National Green Tribunal)

⁴ Palmer C, 'The Role, Influence And Impact Of Women In Biodiversity Conservation' <<https://www.iied.org/role-influence-impact-women-biodiversity-conservation>> accessed 26 October 2021

in environmental jobs, they are also the ones who tend to suffer from degradation directly. As compared to men, women are more involved with the natural as well as built-in environment since they are mostly responsible for domestic management. As a consequence, they tend to experience greater losses from the exploitation of households and neighbourhoods. They are also likely to bear the load that comes with poor living conditions and lack of proper medical facilities as women mostly devote their time to household activities and reside at home for most of their day⁵.

Authorities all over the world are beginning to recognise the global nature of a number of environmental issues. These include the changing climatic conditions, unsafe dumping of hazardous waste, increasing harm to biodiversity, air and water pollution⁶, etc. All this has resulted in the depletion of the ozone layer and the demolition of natural resources. The protection of the environment is, therefore, the greatest need of the hour. Women across the globe have made significant progress in resolving these issues. For instance, Indian women understood that the deterioration of fertile land had resulted in the erosion of topsoil as well as salinity and the loss of food crops due to the choking of water drainage. They leased deteriorated land in bulk and regenerated it via conventional farming methods. They are increasingly concerned about environmental conservation and ecological preservation. In three years, 700 acres of land were returned to productive use.

II. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL ROLES

Women are evidently more environmentally conscious than men are, and they are involved in activities such as waste recycling, reuse, and purchasing conscious goods that are sustainable with environmental management and development culture.⁷ Women's empowerment and participation are a large segment of the outlines of the field of organisational development programs. Women's engagement in the culture's creation and progress is an empowering process that provides possibilities for decision-making and collective reflection, enhances critical thinking skills, and once again demonstrates social fairness and collaborative action toward community objectives.

When given the opportunity, women adjust to the circumstances and external variables that

⁵ Wuyep S, 'Women Participation In Environmental Protection And Management: Lessons From Plateau State, Nigeria' <<http://pubs.sciepub.com/env/2/2/1/index.html>> accessed 3 November 2021

⁶ Almitra H. Patel & Ors. v. Union of India and Ors

⁷ Koochi E, *Women's Participation In Environmental Management And Development Promotion Culture* (researchgatenet 2014) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311533595_Women's_participation_in_environmental_management_and_development_Promotion_Culture> accessed 2 November 2021

will define their lives and families⁸. Many instances of women's participation and administration of environmental protection initiatives in regional and international organisations such as the UN, World Bank, and FAO demonstrate the critical role of women in decision-making and execution. Environmental protection initiatives recognize women as target groups and view their involvement as a function of the program's success, despite numerous difficulties, in poor nations where women have the greatest direct contact with the environment.

The UN's "Women and Environmental Policy" emphasises women's leadership role in advancing environmental ethics⁹. Women play a significant influence in the decision to select sustainable materials in order to decrease waste, save resources, and prevent excessive consumption.

III. THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

(A) Role of Women in Agricultural and Soil Conservation

Women contributed to agricultural output all around the world. More than fifty percent of the food produced worldwide is done by women. According to Adebayo et al., women produce 80 percent of essential food items in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. It has also been found that women contribute about 50-90% of the labour force for rice production in Asia. We can observe that women interact directly with the environment since, in addition to raising crops, they also raise cattle (land in particular). Women have involved themselves in soil conservation efforts as sufferers of soil deterioration. The project Agro-forest in Yatenga, Burkina Faso, is one example¹⁰. In addition to the female domain, Igbo women are now performing some of the traditional male agricultural activities.

(B) Role of Women in Forest Management and Tree Planting

Unfortunately, women's primary sources of energy (cooking fuel) are natural resources such as charcoal and kerosene. Due to poor living conditions, the use of electricity for cooking purposes is limited to wealthy households. This can result in deforestation, soil degradation, and air pollution. The intriguing aspect of the overall situation is that women are more involved

⁸ *Women And The Environment* (BCcampus 2021) <<https://opentextbc.ca/womenintheworld/chapter/chapter-11-women-and-the-environment/>> accessed 6 November 2021

⁹ Nations U, 'IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT STRESSED, AS WOMEN'S COMMISSION HOLDS SECOND EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSION' <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/WOM1325.doc.htm>> accessed 6 November 2021

¹⁰ Nations U, 'IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT STRESSED, AS WOMEN'S COMMISSION HOLDS SECOND EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSION' <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/WOM1325.doc.htm>> accessed 6 November 2021

in forest management, whether through tree planting, restoration, or preservation. Such a situation gave rise to the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. Women all over the globe are part of a growing movement for the conservation of the living world, environmental health and security, and poverty reduction. Through their varied duties and obligations, women play a critical role in the preservation of biological variety. Planting trees is one strategy to safeguard the environment and reduce hazards such as windstorms.

(C) The Chipko movement

The difference between men and women in India regarding logging and deforestation arose in the year 1956 when women hugged trees to declare their protest and prevent logging and deforestation, and Prasad Shand led the Chipko movement with the slogan "ecology is the permanent economy," and thus the first environmental movement began by women in India.

Women's involvement in the campaign may be traced back to a remote hilltop village in 1973 when a businessman was granted official permission to down 3,000 trees for a sports goods plant¹¹. The region has already been depleted to the point of danger. When the loggers were about to come, the males were persuaded to leave the hamlet on false pretences, leaving the women to do the household duties. An alert went up as soon as the woodcutters approached, and the local woman's leader, a fifty-year-old widow, assembled twenty-seven women and led them into the forest.

The ladies appealed to the loggers, referring to the forest as their "maternal home" and outlining the dangers of logging. Women were intimidated with weapons by the woodcutters, who shouted and screamed. It succeeded because women vowed to embrace the designated trees and die with them. Workers went on strike. In 1974, a group of ladies from a neighbouring town employed the same tree-hugging technique to protest the removal of their lands' woods. In 1977, women in another region strung holy ribbons around dying trees, a Hindu custom that signifies the bond between brothers and sisters.

(D) The Green Belt Movement

Professor Wangari Maathai began observing the issues that Kenyan women were encountering as a result of the country's ecological degradation in the mid-1970s. Due to environmental degradation, she witnessed water bodies drying up, woods being removed, and soil desertification increasing. When she spoke with the women in her neighbourhood, she

¹¹ Koohi E, *Women's Participation In Environmental Management And Development Promotion Culture* (researchgatenet 2014)
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311533595_Women's_participation_in_environmental_management_and_development_Promotion_Culture> accessed 2 November 2021

discovered they were having trouble meeting necessities like collecting firewood and water, leaving them with less time and energy to tend to their crops and care for their families.

Dr. Maathai started the Green Belt Movement in 1977 after recognising the relationship between a deteriorating environment and mounting difficulties for local people¹².

After a few years of battling to get the movement off the ground, the Kenyan National Council for Women provided assistance and financing (NCWK). Dr. Maathai began by planting trees to restore the soil, protect watersheds, enhance nutrition via the fruits and vegetables produced, and provide a fuel source. She started by forming small groups of women to collect rainwater and tree seeds, which she planted in whatever containers she could find, including old tins, cups, and cans.

Because the harvests would be high, she concentrated on teaching these women how to raise low-tech, healthful, and indigenous crops. The women were first met with a lot of opposition. While it appeared that planting trees was a straightforward and achievable goal, government foresters and males in their culture did not trust that illiterate women could successfully grow and care for trees. However, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods where work was a pipe dream, this became a way for these women to make a tiny income – as little as 10 cents per tree that lived. It went a long way toward giving the field personnel a sense of autonomy and control in their homes and communities.

(E) Role of women in water resources management

Women are always at the forefront of communal water resource management and household water needs. According to a survey performed on income settlements in Lagos, women are always in charge of the monitoring and administration of community taps or water points. They sometimes lock the taps to prevent children from causing damage to the water lines.

In rural areas, women provide water for their different household chores, and they are primarily responsible for finding and transporting water. Rural women go many km to obtain water for their different home duties.

(F) Role of women in the solid waste disposal

This poses a number of issues, particularly in major cities where the amount of solid trash generated is outpacing the population increase. Solid trash is disposed of at a landfill or on undeveloped land. Women participate in environmental management by cleaning and

¹² <http://www.cstraight.com> C, 'The Green Belt Movement' ([Greenbeltmovement.org](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org), 2021) <<http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>> accessed 3 November 2021

maintaining the environment, particularly in terms of rubbish disposal, because they are closest to it. Given the health risks associated with rubbish, women ensure that it is properly disposed of at the community level by doing it themselves¹³.

(G) Role of women in drainage management

On the basis of their participation in environmental management and issues, women are more likely to actively assist in maintaining drainages around them clean and free of rubbish and sand. According to a research project undertaken by Kwagala in Kampala, Uganda, the ladies clean the drains on a regular basis or pay to have them cleaned¹⁴.

IV. EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S POTENTIAL

The immense capability of women to make contributions to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development has yet to be completely recognised. It particularly holds relevance for tribal and rural women who are frequently excluded from the decision-making roles. Women's distinct roles and responsibilities as homemakers and in the communities contribute to the development of specific biodiversity knowledge moulded by their demands and goals¹⁵. As a result, they are in a remarkable position to deliver new ideas and views for bearing on the ongoing issues.

Women's participation in forest and fisheries management groups has improved resource governance and conservation outcomes.¹⁶ Land tenure changes in Rwanda (East Africa) have resulted in a considerable rise in soil conservation investment by women-led families, reducing gender barriers to land ownership. Nonetheless, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles involving environment-related and sustainable development concerns continues across the globe. Women of developing as well as developed nations, lag behind males in obtaining paid jobs in natural resource management industries.

In addition, according to the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (2014), laws, regulations, and customary norms of more than a hundred nations still, prohibit access to land for women.¹⁷ Women's opportunities and abilities to actively participate in biodiversity conservation are severely constrained without equitable access to land and other critical

¹³ Wuyep S, 'Women Participation In Environmental Protection And Management: Lessons From Plateau State, Nigeria' <<http://pubs.sciepub.com/env/2/2/1/index.html>> accessed 3 November 2021

¹⁴ <http://pubs.sciepub.com/env/2/2/1/index.html>

¹⁵ Wuyep S, 'Women Participation In Environmental Protection And Management: Lessons From Plateau State, Nigeria' <<http://pubs.sciepub.com/env/2/2/1/index.html>> accessed 3 November 2021

¹⁶ Palmer C, 'The Role, Influence And Impact Of Women In Biodiversity Conservation' <<https://www.iied.org/role-influence-impact-women-biodiversity-conservation>> accessed 26 October 2021

¹⁷ *ibid*

resources.

V. CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR CHANGE

To promote women's engagement in biodiversity conservation activities, changes are required at all levels. Steps must be taken to expand women's involvement in decision-making positions connected to biodiversity and environmental management. To empower women to speak their needs, expertise, objectives, and resolutions on an equal footing with men, we must address both cultural and practical impediments. The most crucial requirement for women worldwide is equal rights and access to land ownership and control, as the Sustainable Development Goals indicate (targets 1.4, 2.3, 5. a)¹⁸. We must focus our efforts and resources at the regional level to ensure that the initiatives incorporate gender-related problems.

Women need to be made aware of planned biodiversity and sustainability-related activities that impact them, as well as their rights and opportunities for participating in the design of such efforts.

To promote the empowered participation of women, we must also stimulate complete engagement and support from men. To guarantee that women's empowerment initiatives are accepted in the community, it is vital that the whole society understands and supports them. By raising awareness and encouraging long-term constructive action, an inclusive strategy would also help to address the core causes of disparities.

While the international community works to establish a post-COVID-19 global biodiversity strategy, there is a chance for nations to increase women's awareness and involvement. The devotion of endeavour towards raising awareness of women's empowerment and promoting it as a cross-cutting component of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's fulfilment. Equal representation in environmental conservation would require sustainable work and extended support from all the strata of society. Fortunately, legislatures and national as well as international stakeholders have now identified this and are therefore lobbying for further consideration regarding gender considerations.

¹⁸ Koohi E, *Women's Participation In Environmental Management And Development Promotion Culture* (researchgatenet 2014)
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311533595_Women's_participation_in_environmental_management_and_development_Promotion_Culture> accessed 2 November 2021