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“Role of Women in Environmental Protection”

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Abstract:-

Women's contribution to protecting the environment is wide-ranging, encompassing advocacy, education, research, and policy-making. Their active participation shapes interventions and moulds societies. Rooted in long-standing struggles for environmental and social justice, exacting environmental degradation threatens food security, spreads diseases, and fuels refugee flows. Yet the power of change remains in their hands.

Women's perspectives on and values for the environment differ from men's. They place greater emphasis on protecting and enhancing nature's capacity, maintaining farmlands, and caring for the environment's future. Women's stake in the environment is reflected in their scrupulous care of natural resources. Historically, men treated natural resources as commercial assets, whereas women regarded the environment as fundamental to their survival—such as collecting fuelwood from storm-fallen branches. In many developing countries, where agriculture and the informal sector dominate, they remain the largest recipients of natural resource services affecting human survival. Their direct contact and frequent use afford them a considerable knowledge base. As agriculturalists, water resource managers, and traditional scientists, they cultivate a wide range of insights (Mahour, 2016) (N. Chukwu, 2014).

Keywords: Environmental Protection, Environmental Degredation, Environmental Management, Policy, Climate change, Diversity

2.Introduction

Women play a vital role in environmental protection, as discussed by (N. Chukwu, 2014) and (Mahour, 2016). Their knowledge and experiences offer a rich resource for advancing sustainability if effectively incorporated into environmental research and decision-making. Women's activism in pursuit of a clean and safe environment dates back to the eighteenth century. During periods of growth and expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women engaged in myriad forms of protest, demonstrating significant leadership within environmental movements. Various historical roots gave rise to women's engagement in environmental discourses. Women's environmental knowledge, as the primary gatherers and users of environmental resources, was central to the establishment of environmentally harmonious society before industrialization. Land degradation and forest depletion—compromising the supply of medicinal materials, fuel, and fodder—disproportionately impact women. Women are actively involved in contemporary environmental protection and participate widely in environmental movements, often along with men. Through heightened awareness, women influence policy formulation and implementation related to sustainable development. They provide strong leadership in community-based resource management, advocating for the development of equitable policies that protect environmental resources. They also function as major changemakers in climate change mitigation, proposing adaptation projects and strategies aimed at reducing community vulnerability. Multiple barriers—socio-cultural, economic, and political—constrain women's full participation in environmental protection activities. Integrating women into environmental decision-making processes and formulating gender-sensitive frameworks creates enabling environments that empower women to engage in environmental activities that generate environmental and socio-economic benefits. In a growing number of green industries, women serve both employed and entrepreneurial roles, building businesses related to sustainable agriculture and resource conservation as an extension and application of consequential environmental knowledge.



3. Historical Roots of Women's Environmental Activism

Historically, the involvement of women in environmental protection can be traced back to events such as the Solidarity movement in Poland during the 1980s and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya in the 1970s, indicating a more permanent relationship between women and the environment (Mahour, 2016) ; (N. Chukwu, 2014). Women embodied a vast knowledge system that contributed significantly to the establishment of many of the world's sustainability principles. Moreover, their knowledge had a sustained impact on the resilience of cultures and their territories, and the relationships between them. Egalitarian Indigenous populations that maintain a low environmental impact demonstrate how the traditional knowledge held by a majority of women can contribute to the long-term sustainability of territories and ecosystems. In the past, equalities between genders—specifically nature-oriented tasks—have played an important role in the agricultural systems of several societies. Although most women did not hold land titles, many mosaic small-scale agriculture systems adopted disciplinary tools that fostered the integration of human activities and nature. This integration is likely why paradoxes such as the Neolithic Revolution and the great deforestation periods have been the subject of discussion with regard to sustainability. According to copious evidence, women displayed resilience during critical stages of history; society could maintain a long-term perspective, not only at the economic level but also regarding landscape complexity and diversity. Present-day information and knowledge held by women illustrate the fundamental links between females and territories—a subject that often serves as a central point of discussion for developing sustainable measures and policies. Parallel to the rise of industrial societies and neo-liberal acclamation, female environmentalism also emerged as a symbolic entity that preserves many aspects of premodern living and growth. These tempos and rhythms connect to the very beginning and the end of life, with fertility as their primary symbol. There is profound evidence of the coevolution of women and territories, a fundamental unity that supports many of humanity's social and economic dimensions. However, the multi-dimensional debate between exploitative and sustainable relationships persist.

4. Women's Knowledge Systems and Environmental Sustainability

Women's knowledge systems play pivotal roles in sustaining ecosystems and their components (N. Chukwu, 2014). Indigenous peoples' access to land and resources, as well as control over and political autonomy in resource management, decisively influence the use and management of ecosystems. Indigenous women around the world have historically maintained and enhanced biodiversity in many parts of the world, contributing to the preservation of seeds, the multiplication of root crops, animal

breeding, and the collection and preparation of medicinal plants. They play a critical role in the management of extracted forest resources, as well as the practise of sustainable farming and community-based water purification systems, all of which are fundamental to the livelihoods of many peoples. Women's environmental knowledge is also crucial for disaster mitigation and rebuilding, and may provide valuable insights into the protection of endangered species and the restoration of devastated habitats.



5.The Gendered Impact of Environmental Degradation

In many regions of the world, environmental degradation poses an escalating threat to human well-being (N. Chukwu, 2014). Environmental harm does not affect men and women equally; rural women are disproportionately impacted by processes such as deforestation, overexploitation of resources, and desertification. Men generally have higher mobility than rural women, enabling them to respond more easily to a degradation of local resources. Consequently, women often carry the heaviest burdens when the local resource base diminishes.

6.Women in Environmental Movements and Policy Advocacy

Women have historically been the main agents of change in environmental protection activities (N. Chukwu, 2014). They continually reassert the need for the preservation of the environment to meet their own production requirements and those of others, engaging in several direct and indirect initiatives to this effect. Knowledge systems and use practices contributing to sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation remain largely embedded in women's collective memory. The resulting insights, however, remain exacerbated by the disproportionate impact which environmental change effects on women. Accordingly, they enter the fray through direct and indirect activities, while engaging in local-, national-, and international-level

advocacy. Women take a central part in water resource management at the community and household levels. They monitor the effective operation of communal water points, preventing vandalism and carting water over long distances whenever taps are vandalized or water supply interrupted. They also take care of water bodies within their influence, actively preventing pollution. Women's involvement in environmental protection extends to agricultural activities, drainage management, waste disposal, flood control, and water resource development. Several studies corroborate the notion that there is considerable scope for enhancing women's involvement in resource management and environmental protection by engaging them in the formulation and implementation of policies relevant to natural-resource management and environmental protection. The interconnections linking women with the environment indicate how their exposure to environmental hazards adds considerable force to their demands for environmental compliance (Mahour, 2016). Ecological awareness increases women's sense of obligation, introducing additional constraints in household budgeting. The accumulation of knowledge regarding the impact of toxic substances on biological reproduction makes women treat with apprehension the impact of exposure in its various forms, including direct contact in its field of activity and indirect contact through the food chain. Consequently, societies are witnessing an increasing presence of women among front-line activists in the defence and protection of the environment. Women have played a decisive role in a number of environmental protection projects and campaigns, occupying central positions and helping to shape the orientation of Internet resources addressing environmental issues and hosting on-line conferences on these themes. Women concerted pressure to uphold environmental protection is associated with strategies for sustainable development at the local level. The participation of women in environmental protection moves beyond the sphere of direct protection activities. The successful campaign for the extension of the three National Parks of South Sinai illustrates the involvement of women in political dialogue with national and international institutions. Women also hold large numbers of posts concerned with environmental protection, including places in Standing Committees of the Parliament, and participate in technical design and implementation of environmental policy. Such a recipe, if implemented in situations of environmental degradation marked by national, social or political emergency, opens the way to the possibility of a wider range of success and effectiveness bypassing the doctrinal and ideological debates which often affect similar initiatives.



7. Community-Based Resource Management and Women's Leadership

Community-based resource management refers to decentralised institutions that permit communities to manage environmental resources. The approaches function at a small-scale, local level and often serve as the middle-ground between state control and the traditional management of natural resources. This mode of management is widely regarded as important to sustainable forms of development, being promoted by both environmentalists and development practitioners (Joeke et al., 1996).

Women everywhere tend to have the responsibility for natural resource management at the local level, such as household water, fuel and fodder, and often possess detailed knowledge about the resource and environment. Carrying the major burden of household management, women appear to have a different perspective on the environment compared with men. With their comprehensive, local environmental knowledge and varied interests, women are thus undoubtedly 'crucial players in the sustainable management of tropical forests' (N. Chukwu, 2014). In recognition of this contribution, the balance of power in this form of management increasingly involves the full participation of women.

8. Women and Climate Change Mitigation

Women play a central role in climate change mitigation. Their activities and perspectives provide important entry points for addressing climate impacts and reducing emissions. The diverse forms of climate mitigation include the use of less carbon-intensive energy sources, improved energy efficiency, protected land conservation and afforestation, and reduced consumption and wastes. The impacts of changes in both mitigation and adaptation often have gender-differentiated effects on social relations and local-level livelihoods (K Masiko et al., 2019).

The agriculture sector provides one avenue for examining gender perspectives in mitigation. Agriculture both accounts for about 30 per cent of global carbon emissions and has enormous potential for carbon sequestration (Huyer, 2016). Gender norms

shape the extent and character of mitigation activities in agriculture. Women can influence input use, choice of crops, livestock management, afforestation, land management, rotational grazing, agroforestry, tree planting and more. Improved cook stoves and low-tillage practices are among the favourable mitigation activities that women could help promote in many developing countries.

Protecting such practices as a way of addressing climate change has appeal for many women, including many who do not see themselves as activists. Some masculinist orthodoxies regard mitigation as an impediment to economic growth, but women leaders often embrace low-emissions development strategies as an avenue for promoting equality, well-being, peace, development and climate resilience. The inequitable distribution of resources and benefits constrains women in many ways, but their agency and leadership remain positive influences in several relevant sectors, such as the transformation of domestic energy systems, the management of water supplies, forest governance, agroforestry and tree-planting.

9.Barriers to Women's Participation in Environmental Protection

Population movements and shifts in landownership patterns have affected the sustainable use of natural resources, compelling women to alter time allocations. Social and cultural myths, alongside formal limitations, often prevent women from accessing land. Environmental degradation confines women to local areas for food, water, and fuel collection (Mahour, 2016).

Rapid urbanization and population growth, combined with persistent undervaluing of natural resources, have intensified detrimental effects. In rural communities where women serve as primary resource managers, environmental degradation hurts women more because they make the principal demands on and are the main users of natural resources.

Across developing countries, gender-based divisions ensure that responsibilities related to food, fuel, and fodder collecting fall disproportionately on women and girls. Consequently, environmental decline alters women's time allocation, forcing them to bear the largest burden (N. Chukwu, 2014).

10.Integrating Gender Perspectives into Environmental Policies

The increasing attention to environmental sustainability marks a fundamental shift in development paradigm that calls for exploration of new policy priorities and mechanisms for effective implementation. Integrating gender concerns into policy formulation and implementation promotes a more efficient policy approach to sustainable development (N. Chukwu, 2014). The strategic goal of gender-sensitive environmental interventions is to protect or improve women's access to and control over resources, thereby

strengthening their bargaining position within households and communities. Women must be ensured command over new resources introduced by projects, and active measures are necessary to prevent an absolute or relative loss of control to men. The full range of resource redistributive effects—including access, control, and decision-making—must be considered. An understanding of property rights is crucial, especially when rights are ill-defined or certain socio-economic groups lack them, as environmental interventions can impact property regimes. Women's property rights need to be comprehended and carefully monitored throughout such projects (Joeques et al., 1996). It is equally important to recognize that men's and women's interests and incentives in the management of environmental resources often diverge. Employing a 'land user approach' enables the identification of resource users, analysis of their incentives and constraints, and an appreciation of their environmental knowledge. Furthermore, examining perceptions of environmental degradation and sustainable development among men and women can reveal differing viewpoints, thereby informing more effective interventions.

11. Entrepreneurship in Green Industries

The extraordinary renaissance in green technology continues, requiring considerable capital investment and technical knowledge to overcome the complexity of transitioning toward a green economy. Technological and economic challenges of this kind tend not to fall equally across the population. Across the globe, women experience greater rates of poverty, less access to education and employment, and a persistent gap in access to capital. Yet women remain essential leaders in sustainable development processes and their engagement participation and leadership in green industrialisation can deliver significant benefits for workers, existing entrepreneurs, policy-makers, local communities and economies in transition.

Women's associate entrepreneur activity in green enterprises continues to grow at a faster rate than for men (Braun, 2009). Women's green entrepreneurial activity continues to be concentrated in employment-intensive sectors, which benefit from ongoing innovation in the natural economy. Energy efficiency and retrofitting, renewable energy and extraction, the natural economy, waste management and recycling, agriculture and forestry have remained the sectors at the heart of women's green enterprise.

12. Conclusion

Historically, women have actively resisted environmental degradation since the 18th century. Their resistance took the form of protests, demonstrations, and the advocacy—and in some cases enforcement—of environmental legislation. They cultivated extensive

knowledge systems enabling sustainable natural-resource use and guided the growth of movements providing alternative development paths. Today, women are engaged in formal and informal environmental protection activities that directly affect local and global ecosystems.

Because women manage the farms, forests, fisheries, and water systems upon which families and communities rely, environmental degradation—including climate change—disproportionately affects their well-being. They participate in national and local movements, helping to define policy priorities aligned with these experiences. Women lead in community-based natural-resource management, pushing for equitable forms that foster cooperation, enact safeguards, and provide stability.

Climate change intersects with the burden of environmental degradation, amplifying concerns over sustainability, livelihoods, and human survival. Women have contributed to mitigation strategies, as exemplified by their roles in decision-making bodies negotiating protocols to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Nevertheless, social, economic, and political obstacles restrict their access to certain policy and governance arenas and define the boundaries of their influence. Integrating gender considerations into frameworks guiding environmental governance can empower women further. Since many of those challenges also impede women's participation in environmental entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and the green economy, a gender perspective is essential to unlocking their full potential and sustaining natural and social systems (Mahour, 2016) (N. Chukwu, 2014).

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