

WOMEN'S ROLE IN ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION AND ITS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Involving women in protecting the environment would help societies to develop the sense of responsibility and needed to maintain a good balance between humans and the Earth's resources. We all agree that progress in achieving sustainable development goals has been abysmally slow. In the 21st century, we are confronted with economic, environmental and social crises on a global scale. Advances in attaining capital needed to pay for progress. Building up the economic and social pillars of ecological sustainability while neglecting the environment degrades the natural capital needed for growth. Focusing on geo-ecology and the environment without gender equality has been equally sluggish. From the general studied area it has come out on the basis of primary questionnaire data, the majority of the women (79.2%) are involved in farming and contributed significantly to land/soil conservation. (78.4%) of them have planted tree or flowers in the last five years while (79.2%) indicated clearing their surroundings daily in terms of sweeping, clearing drainages and refuse disposal. Problems which are faced by the women include lack of waste disposal equipment, poor drainage systems and lack of awareness among the general public. Appropriate recommendations were proffered to enhance women involvement in ecological protection and sustainable development.

Keywords: environmental, degradation, conservation, disposal, women



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Women in Domestic Environment

A study of household behaviour shows that women are more likely than men to buy recyclable, eco-labelled and energy-efficient products. Women now account for some 80 percent of household purchases in developed countries, so the question is why this eco-consciousness hasn't translated into more sustainable consumer choices. Unfortunately, sustainable production is not following directly from higher levels of sustainable consumption by women. A number of global studies highlight that women spend more time than men seeking information on sustainable consumption and lifestyle alternatives. Females in many countries recycle more and eat organic foods and purchase green goods at higher rates. Men, on the other hand, make fewer but more expensive purchases of electronics and automobiles. In many countries, when it comes to cars, women far outnumber men in

supporting reductions in vehicle use and increased options for sustainable transportation. Another recent study found that Japanese women are also more concerned than men about the Ecology is willing to pay more for sustainable products. In North America women consumers consider clean energy and recycling important to their purchasing decisions. Women in developing countries like India are starting to realize the financial advantages of eco-markets.

A lot of studies on women and ecology have shown that women are significant actors in sustainable development of ecological resources and they are major contributors to ecological rehabilitation and conservation. In addressing some key ecological problems women play a major role. Women through their roles as farmers and as collectors of water and firewood have a close connection with their local environment and often suffer most directly from ecological problems. Women direct contact with ecology has produced their deep-knowledge about the environment. Thus, women have served as agriculturalists, water resources managers and traditional scientists among others. Women are not only Knowledgeable about the environment, they are also protective and caring (shettima, 1996). Women being primarily responsible for domestic and household management interact more intensively with both the natural and built environment more than men. Consequently, they are more likely to suffer from a degraded home, neighbourhood and city environment and to shoulder more of the burden that go with living in poor housing and communities with inadequate residential and health infrastructure since they spend more time at home and its immediate vicinity (Etta, 1999).

According to the survey, I found that women are increasingly behind the organization of cooperatives producing artisanal goods as well as agricultural products from coffee to chocolate in the quest to enhance their livelihoods, their communities and local ecology. It is far from proven that women are more ecologically conscientious than men as a rule. But women are more likely than men to be affected by ecological problems because of their social roles and more impoverished status in many countries. Coping with the effects of climate change and damage from extreme weather events such as storms, floods, and cyclones tends to fall on women who hold together families and households. Women in many parts of India who supply water and fuel for families find this increasingly difficult as ecological changes negatively affect resource supply and infrastructure. Even in developed countries, women are vulnerable because of their lesser access to finance and reduced ability to adapt to climate change impacts.

After Hurricane Katrina, those with the least ability to recover were women who are still the majority of the poor in the United States. In the 1991 cyclone disasters in Bangladesh, 90 percent of the victims were women. In the 2004 Asian tsunami, more than 70 percent of all deaths were women. But in many cases, women are also the key to managing the aftermath of disaster. In India in the wake of the tsunami, a network of women's self-help groups provided for the practical needs of the local population including water and sanitation, health care and credit.

Women have recorded successes in solving ecological problems all over the world. In India, the women realized that degradation of productive land has led to the erosion of top soil; the choking of water drainage was causing salinity and loss of food crops. They collectively leased degraded land and revived them through traditional farming. In three years 700 acres of land were restored to productive use (Ress,1992) they are more concerned about environmental protection and ecological preservation.

Women Activities and Ecological Improvement

The roles of women are being expressed at present:-

- i) As leaders or controllers of the ecology.
- ii) Sustainable developers of the ecological resources.
- iii) As inventors in the use of perfect techniques in the creation of new ecology.

It has been observed that women play a major role in managing their natural surroundings and adopt several mechanisms to deal with the kinds of ecological crisis. Therefore, there is the need to understand the various ways women have actively participated in ecological protection and sustainable development with a view to integrate them into ecological managerial programme.

Vegetation conservation and Afforestation by Women

The need to protect biological diversity (vegetation) has been realized. This is because vegetation plays a vital role in protecting the soils, water sheds and climatic stability. They are also rich sources of products-ranging from fruits, pharmaceuticals and latex to timber. Apart from that the loss of the species and the forests is something that cannot come back again, extinction is forever, whereas water pollution, air pollution, ozone depletion and desertification could all be controlled or minimized. Unfortunately, the main sources of energy (cooking fuel) for women are from natural resources viz; charcoal, firewood and kerosene, intensive use of which can lead to deforestation, soil degradation and air pollution. Only few women use gas or electric cookers as a whole. The interesting part of the whole

dilemma is that we have greater women participation in conservation of vegetation through afforestation and sustainable use of its product. In addition, women participated in providing seedlings in nursery and flowers to beauty the ecology. It is now very clear that women globally are playing a key role in the protection of the ecology.

Women now, worldwide are part of a growing movement for the protection of the living world, environment health and security, justice and the alleviation of poverty. One of the ways of protecting the environment and reducing hazard such as wind storms is by planting trees. Women play a major part in the protection of biological diversity through their many roles and responsibilities.

Women in Farming and Soil Protection

In many countries, women contributed to farming and agricultural production. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, women produce eighty percent of basic food stuffs, in Asia they provide fifty to ninety percent of the labour force for rice cultivation. Women roles in agriculture as listed by Levingo (1987) include; production and distribution, planting and cultivation, weeding, hoeing, harvesting and storage. These women apart from growing crops also engage in livestock production (e.g. sheep, goat and poultry) we can see that women interact closely with the ecology (land in particular). As victims of soil degradation, women have participated actively in soil conservation projects now-a-days. Women are now also undertaking some of the conventional male agricultural tasks.

Solid Waste and Water Resource Management

In large cities the amount of solid waste are increasing faster than the growth of population. Women because they are closer to the environment, engage in environmental management by cleaning the environment and keeping it clean especially in terms of garbage disposal. Due to the health hazard of garbage, women seem to its regular disposal at the community level by doing it themselves. On the other hand women are always in charge of the control and management of communal tap or water points. At times, they lock up the taps to prevent children from damaging the water pipes. At the household level, the burden of fetching water for cooking, washing and other domestic use etc. falls on the women and girls. Where women do not have access to the tap water, they make use of streams, rain water, well, rivers etc. Women provide water for their various domestic activities in rural area and the search for and carriage of water is solely women responsibility.

The main hurdles that are faced by women in ecological balance in the study area are

1. Lack of ecological awareness.

2. Lack of waste disposal equipment
3. Lack in knowledge of water management.
4. Lack in sustainable use of fuel products.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, it has been noticed that both married and single women were involved in ecological protection. However, the bulk of the women involved in ecological protection are married women (76.8% of them). This high proportion of married women in the study area suggest that they are likely to be more responsible in protecting and keeping the environment clean because of their roles as home keepers. As indicated by both theory and evidence, the lack of progress on gender equality may be at the heart of the failure to advance on sustainable development. If women were in more productive and decision-making roles, we could be moving faster and more assuredly towards sustainability in the economic, social and ecological sense. Sustainable development is a political concept because it is about good governance, which will be hard to achieve until we get closer to gender parity. Research is needed to test the hypothesis that women are more risk-averse than men and that women leader would be more apt to follow sustainable development pathways. To enhance women participation in sustainable development of ecological resources:

1. Women should be encouraged to participate in committees on ecological protection, programmes and policies to address gender disparity in decision making.
2. Women access to land and other resources should be ensured and not undermined.
3. The government will have to come in to ensure gender equity in regards access to and control of resources.
4. Environmental education is required for the generality of Indian women for the sustainable development of ecological resources. It will produce changes in attitude of the public as well as impart specific knowledge on the generality of Indian women.
5. Incinerators should be placed at strategic places to be used by the public.
6. Separation of plastics from municipal solid wastes and recycling of plastics will help to reduce the contribution of plastics to the solid waste problem as well as eliminate the unsightly littering.
7. Biodegradable plastics' could also be used and will eventually decompose.
8. Women education and access to education for girls should be seen as a policy priority.
9. Educated women will contribute more significantly to bringing the gap between ecology and development.

10. Empowerment of women in sustainable human development and in relation to the protection of the ecology must be recognized and sustained.

Thus, this paper has discussed the various ways women have participated actively in ecological protection of resources and its sustainable development. In addition to this women should be allowed to participate at the local, regional, national and international levels on ecological issues. To make a significant impact on decision making, women should be present in equal numbers to men (or at least on a 40: 60 proportional split of genders). As resource managers, women should be consulted and supported in what they are already doing to protect the ecology specifically, more women should be involved in decision making with regards to policies, programmes or funding of environment.

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