

## GENDER EQUALITY: A KEY TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Leela Kaur

Department of Environmental Science, Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India

Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Published:</b> 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	Nature can be sustained well by achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Gender equality is one of the sustainable development goals. Women are still not getting their human rights. Gender equality could be attained through women's education and their empowerment. Reaching gender equality could play a significant role in sustainable development goals as women are considered the mirror image of nature. Their contribution is very critical for environmental sustainability. Women are raising their voices against climate change, depletion of natural resources, cleanliness and environmental deterioration. Educated and empowered women would get involved in taking nature-friendly decisions leading to sustainable planet. The present paper is about gender equality and its importance in sustainable development goals.
<b>Keywords:</b> Women; Gender equality; Environment; Sustainable Development.	

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in 1995 where 189 countries representatives agreed on a groundbreaking plan for gender equality. It is called as the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. The report defined 12 critical areas for the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality. One of them was "Women and the Environment" which remains critical.

There is a need that women are involved in environmental decision-making at all levels. Their participation is intermediated by international bodies and women's rights organizations seeking to make sure that their concerns are integrated into policies and programmes, and that the impact of development and environmental policies on women are assessed. But there is more to be done; very limited effort has been placed towards collecting sex-disaggregated data to monitor progress towards actions outlined in the Platform of Action. The Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals have taken gender equality as one of the major goals. However, the agenda of women's empowerment and gender equality is still unfinished. Women are sustainability saviours. There is a dire need to create awareness of the politics of women, environment and sustainability. There are a number of women issues that need immediate attention. The present study aims to assess and share the ideas and notions that may help in the desired direction.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were established in 2015 in order to save the future generations. These are 17 goals (Figure 1). The fifth sustainable development goal is to achieve gender equality. Although India has achieved gender parity at the primary education level and is on track to achieve parity at all education levels, as of June 2019, the proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha held by women had only reached 11% but 46% in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. India is also confronting the challenge of violence against women. As an example, a baseline study revealed that in New Delhi, 92% of women had experienced some form of sexual violence in public spaces during their lifetime. In 2016, close to a third of total crimes reported against women in India was cruelty or physical violence by her husband or his relative. The Government of India has identified ending violence against women as a key national priority, which resonates with the Sustainable Development targets of the United Nations on gender equality. The prime minister's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative aims at equal opportunity and education for girls in India. In addition, specific interventions on female employment, programmes on the empowerment of adolescent girls, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana on girl child prosperity and the Janani Suraksha Yojana for mothers' advance India's commitment to gender equality, and the targets of Goal 4.



Figure 1: Sustainable development goals.

## 2. WOMEN, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Women have unique knowledge and responsibilities in the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, and they are agents of transformational change. At the same time, women rely on healthy ecosystems to feed their families, and as such, they are heavily affected by environmental degradation and disasters like flooding, biodiversity loss and climate change. Women in rural and indigenous communities shoulder specific responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of their families such as gathering water and firewood. In many areas, non-timber forest products are the only sources of cash available to women. However, women's representation in environmental decision-making processes remains insufficient and their access to and management of land and marine resources can be severely limited.

The need to ensure women's participation in environmental decision-making is being increasingly recognized. At the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in December 2018, Parties agreed that the process to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should be gender-responsive (Decision 14/34, Decision 14/18) to help reach both gender equality and global biodiversity objectives. To help achieve this, UNEP-WCMC and UN Women have been collaborating to progress three key priority action areas for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework:

1. Equal opportunities for leadership, decision-making and effective engagement at all levels.
2. Equal access, ownership and control over biological resources.
3. Equal access to benefits from biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and from the utilization of genetic resources.

Efforts to promote inclusive sustainable development and fight climate change are inextricably linked. If we care about development, we must care about the consequences our greenhouse-gas emissions are having around the world. The implications of not providing girls with equal voices, choices, and opportunities affect not just their lives, but the future of the planet. Gender is also a cross-cutting issue in several other SDGs including climate action and clean water and sanitation. For example, SDG indicators related to land tenure (SDG 1.4.2, and 5.a.2), the share of women among owners or right-bearers of agricultural land (SDG 5.a.1), the average income of small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3.2), and access rights for small-scale fisheries (SDG 14.b.1) are also relevant.

Women are among those most vulnerable to the impacts of unsustainable practices and climate change, because they often have no independent income or land rights. In many countries, women are responsible for the provision of water and food for their families. And when the usual sources of these resources are disrupted, women are forced to travel farther and spend more time working for less return. Scarcity requires them to make difficult choices like pulling children out of school or deciding which family member can afford to skip a meal.

In many homes around the world, women are at the heart of the household's nexus of water, food, and energy – and thus often know firsthand about the challenges and potential solutions in these areas.

However, if their ideas are applied, they could facilitate change. Women are the most convincing advocates for the solutions that they need, so they should be at the forefront of decision-making on sustainable development and climate-change mitigation.

### 3. GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Gender equality aims to give equal rights to women while the motto of sustainable development is to give equal rights to future generations as well as the present generations. Gender equality could be accomplished by women empowerment which is the need of the hour to save the planet Earth and the human survival too. Similarly, we need to make development more sustainable with systematic policy reforms with the involvement of government, business and society. So, women are integral part of both gender equality and sustainable development. Women are considered good manager and they work on the ground level of any issue. So, they must be part of decision-making bodies. Many women as leaders worked on sustainability and wellbeing of future generations. Wangari Maathai is one of the exemplars of such leaders who initiated Green Belt movement for environmental conservation and women's rights. However, there is a dire need to involve more women in politics. Women leaders put efforts on sustainable development, gender equality and education. Strengthening of women in every aspect would increase the number of women participants in policy making and/or politics which would definitely help in to achieve sustainable development targets as women tend to be more environment friendly.

### 4. PIPLANTRI VILLAGE

Piplantri village is an example setter of gender equality and sustainable development. It is in the Rajsamand district of Rajasthan (Figure 2). When Shyam Sunder Paliwal (former sarpanch) lost his 17-year-old daughter in 2007, he planted a tree in her memory near the entrance of the village. He went on to channel his grief into a mission by plantation of 111 trees every time a girl child is born and this set the start of the gender-equality drive. Not only does this beautiful tradition foster a deep appreciation for females in the village, but it also instills a remarkable sense of environmental stewardship. Once the trees are planted, women take care of its maintenance from time to time under Kiran Nidhi NGO. The campaign has also involved building check dams on the pastures on nearby hills to recharge the groundwater level under Paliwal's leadership and turned Rajsamand into an oasis full of trees. Once a completely barren village in the desert state of Rajasthan, Piplantri now has over 300,000 trees, which has not only ensured better air quality and attracted biodiversity. Plants grown so far including Neem, Sheesham, Mango, Amla among others. Around 1,800 check dams that have been constructed on the pasture lands over the mountains in the last 11 years to recharge the groundwater level. Dam constructed are 5, water projects are more than 65 and Water tank constructed are 12. In last 10 years, water level is increased to 50 feet from 500 feet. Girls are educated (more than 5000) and they get employment too (more than 2000 girls). With funding from the village panchayat, women are also making eco-friendly sanitary pads. The village panchayat is working towards eco-tourism development.



Figure 2: Piplantri Village in India.



Figure 3: The man of the mission (center) and change of barren land of village into a lush green forest.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

More women need to be included and empowered to make decisions that impact them and their communities in their relationship with the environment. We can achieve all 17 sustainable development goals only by achieving gender equality. Henceforth, gender equality should be the prime objective of sustainable development.

## REFERENCES

1. [https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?utm\\_source=EN&utm\\_medium=GSR&utm\\_content=US\\_UNDP\\_PaidSearch\\_Brand\\_English&utm\\_campaign=CENTRAL&c\\_src=CENTRAL&c\\_src2=GSR&gclid=Cj0KQCQiA3rKQBhCNARIsACUEW\\_YMThqk-q-X4tlUzskFpI9t2oIeospPzhFOM5HAC1NhlAobqA\\_3FR4aAj8OEALw\\_wcB](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&c_src=CENTRAL&c_src2=GSR&gclid=Cj0KQCQiA3rKQBhCNARIsACUEW_YMThqk-q-X4tlUzskFpI9t2oIeospPzhFOM5HAC1NhlAobqA_3FR4aAj8OEALw_wcB)
2. <https://www.unep-wcmc.org/news/women-and-the-environment--25-years-on>
3. <https://www.kirannidhi.org/>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/11/my-daughters-memory-indian-village-where-every-girls-life-is-celebrated-trees-planted-piplantri-rajasthan>
5. <https://www.sahapedia.org/green-revolution-save-girl-child-eco-feminism-piplantri>
6. <https://ca.movies.yahoo.com/eco-feminist-village-in-rajasthan-promoting-gender-equality-and-environment-conservation-030017422.html>
7. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/03/why-gender-equality-is-integral-to-sustainable-development/>