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The impact of investing in gender equality and empowering women on the environment and achieving sustainable development

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Abstract

The study aims to highlight the importance of investing in gender justice and women's empowerment and its impact on achieving sustainable development and confronting environmental changes, as it is one of the major issues that requires greater attention, due to its impact on society as a whole. In addition, work to identify arguments about the importance of the role of women in addressing climate change. Through a general survey of a number of previous studies, it was found that the sustainable development goals will be achieved more quickly thanks to the mutually beneficial relationship between gender equality and environmental goals. There are also effects of climate change on women in particular, the most important of which is the impact on food security, work, and health care.

Introduction

Globally, Environmental problems include desertification, deforestation, increased water shortages, inadequate sanitation, and other infrastruc-

al problems disproportionately affect women. (Munien & Ahmed, 2012). This is particularly true in underdeveloped nations and rural areas, where women may have restricted access to natural resources, struggle to find steady employment with a steady salary, and perform an excessive amount of unpaid labor. (Yang, 2012). Evidence demonstrates that gender discrimination, unique exposure to environmental and occupational dangers, and other socioeconomic and environmental variables have differing impacts on men and women in response to environmental harm. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of how environmental conditions are strongly related to people's well-being and how systematic gender inequities can be made worse by international shocks and crises (Besnier, 2023).

We saw the global movement around environmental concerns two decades ago. At the Earth Summit in 1992, tools and systems to advance sustainable development were introduced. Twenty years later, and in the context of climate and environmental change, and catastrophe risk reduction strategies, we are urged to engage and play a leading role in attaining gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The main cause of the escalating issues with climate change, disasters, and the losses of people, communities, and nations (lives, livelihoods, and health; economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets) is the dominant development model, one of whose pillars is gender inequality (UNWomen, 2018).

Greater food security, better nutrition, and more equitable, resilient, and sustainable food systems may all be produced by achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the food systems (Njuki et al., 2022). Public leadership is essential for social transformation and is vital in altering institutional and cultural norms pertaining to gender imbalance, in addition to equitable representation. (Munive et al., 2023)"type": "article-journal", "volume": "56", "uris": ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=e6c884a5-ef4a-4fae-b47e-3fb88dd04d0a"]}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Munive et al., 2023.

In this study, we try to review the reasons for the need for women in climate action, through which it is possible to visualize the impact of investing in gender justice and empowering women on the environment and achieving sustainable development. The above represent three main pillars (see Figure 1) to achieve this investment.

In this study, a review of previous studies related to these pillars that we mentioned earlier was conducted, and from here this study relied on the review method, so that these pillars are applied in a real subsequent study, with the aim of identifying the most important problems facing the process of investing women, and trying to develop solutions aimed at achieving Sustainable development goals and the environment. This study proposes a framework that contributes significantly to achieving optimal investment for women in achieving development and environmental remedies through achieving gender justice and empowering women.

Figure 1: The gender-environment nexus



Source: (OECD, 2022)

Gender equality and women empowerment: conceptual framework

It is amazing how much gender equality is discussed in business and economic circles. Men still predominate in large numbers in positions that

make economic decisions, including those on company boards, in business management, in government financial regulation, in trade negotiations, and among central bankers across the world. Moreover, because business leaders are enmeshed in the logics of profitability, they have historically been leery of social efforts that may run counter to economic rationalities. (Prügl & True, 2014). But in the context of globalization, firms are taking on new responsibilities as a collection of technocratic and private players gain leverage over legislators. Businesses are behaving more like governments, supporting corporate nationalism, and stressing the importance of “soft issues” to society, such as gender equality, labor standards, eradicating poverty, environmental sustainability, and social welfare programs. (Onditi & Odera, 2017).

In reality, the First World Conference on Women, which took place in Mexico in 1975, had as its theme combating discrimination and empowering women. The stakes were heightened at a similar summit in Beijing in 1995 by defining 12 crucial areas for women’s rights (Onditi & Odera, 2017). The same campaign was successful in influencing Member States to create UN Women in 2011 in response to calls for a more powerful UN agency focused on women’s empowerment and gender equality. UN Women’s mission includes promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality. The preponderance of scholarly works centers on psychological empowerment, encompassing group efficacy, outcome efficacy, critical thinking skills, and participation behavior. This category includes political efficacy. (Besnier, 2023).

Those worried about enduring disparities and the impact of prejudice on people’s lives and livelihoods found much to be hopeful about in the normative promise of the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration declares its intention to create a “just and lasting peace” in which “equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” are respected.⁵ There are six guiding principles: liberty, equality, solidarity, tolera-

tion, reverence for the environment, and shared responsibility(Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). During the 1976–1985 United Nations Decade for Women, WID’s goals and techniques addressed mainstream development problems, such as social justice and equity for women. governing bodies, charitable institutions, and NGOs have all widely used WID into their development initiatives since the 1970s. Feminist activists, however, were increasingly critical of the WID strategy since it solely focused on integrating women into development through work(Yang, 2012). Figure 2 shows ranges of females and males for the indicators of the global gender gap index for the year 2013. In fact, these gaps began to increase significantly as a result of wars, epidemics, and others.

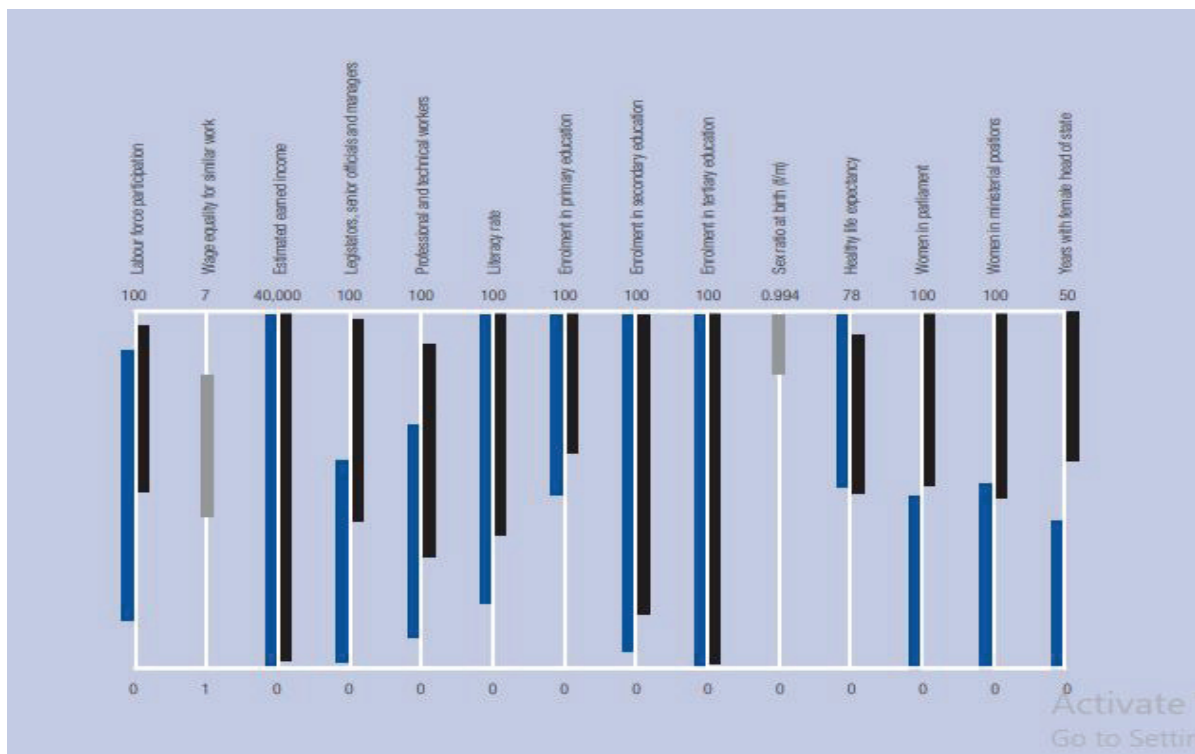


Figure (2) Female and male bands for indicators of the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index.

Sustainable Development: Theoretical review

The struggle against climate change gets more intense every year as countries pour money into meeting the Sustainable Development Goals by their deadline of 2030 (Wynn & Jones, 2022)(Roberts, 2015)financial institu-

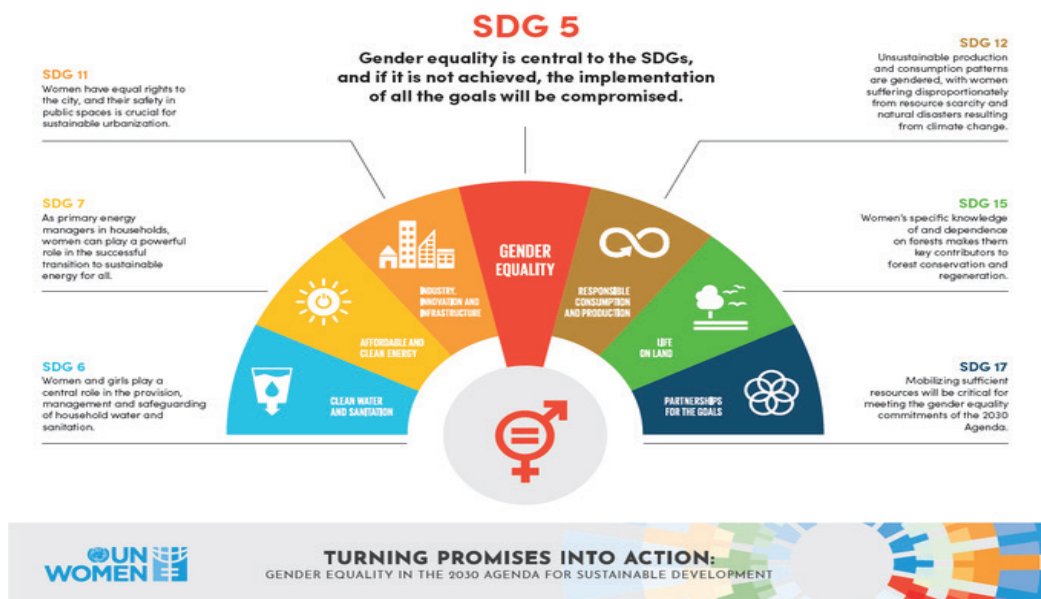
tions, the UN, corporations, NGOs and others - stresses the \"business case\" for gender equality by arguing that investments made in women can (and should. SDG 5, which calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, is one of the most important SDGs because it will help to advance other SDGs, such as those relating to quality education, eradicating poverty, using clean energy, reducing inequality, promoting well-being and achieving zero hunger, access to clean water and sanitation, decent employment opportunities, economic growth, and—most importantly—climate action.

Increases in floods, storms, and other natural catastrophes are some of the severe repercussions of climate change that we are now witnessing. Due to their socioeconomic condition and inherent vulnerability, women run the most danger in these circumstances. Women are disproportionately impacted by extreme weather events, decreased agricultural output, loss of life and property, and other climate crisis-related effects because they make up 70% of the world's poor (Wynn & Jones, 2022).

Women also possess the skills and information required to respond practically to changing environmental circumstances. However, women continue to be a largely untapped resource due to deeply rooted prejudices, which include limited property rights, restricted access to financial, technical, and educational resources, and restricted involvement in political decision-making due to underrepresentation. (Calkin, 2016). To reduce climate change in a practical and efficient way, we need to fully utilize the knowledge and abilities of women. (Hornset & de Soysa, 2022).

Long-term solutions include acknowledging the important roles that women play as experts, educators, caretakers, stakeholders, and decision-makers in many spheres of society. Greta Thunberg, Christina Figueres, and Franny Armstrong, to name a few, have already assumed a leading role in promoting long-term, sustainable solutions to the climate catastrophe. (Aluko & Okuwa, 2018).

If women adopt a similar role in the job market as men do, the global annual GDP might rise by as much as \$28 trillion, or 26%, by 2025. This will more than make up for the financing gap on climate change, which is predicted to grow to €810 billion (\$894 billion) by 2030 and €530 billion (\$585 billion) yearly by 2020. Just by increasing the percentage of women in the work force, the global GDP will increase to the point where sustainable development can be funded.

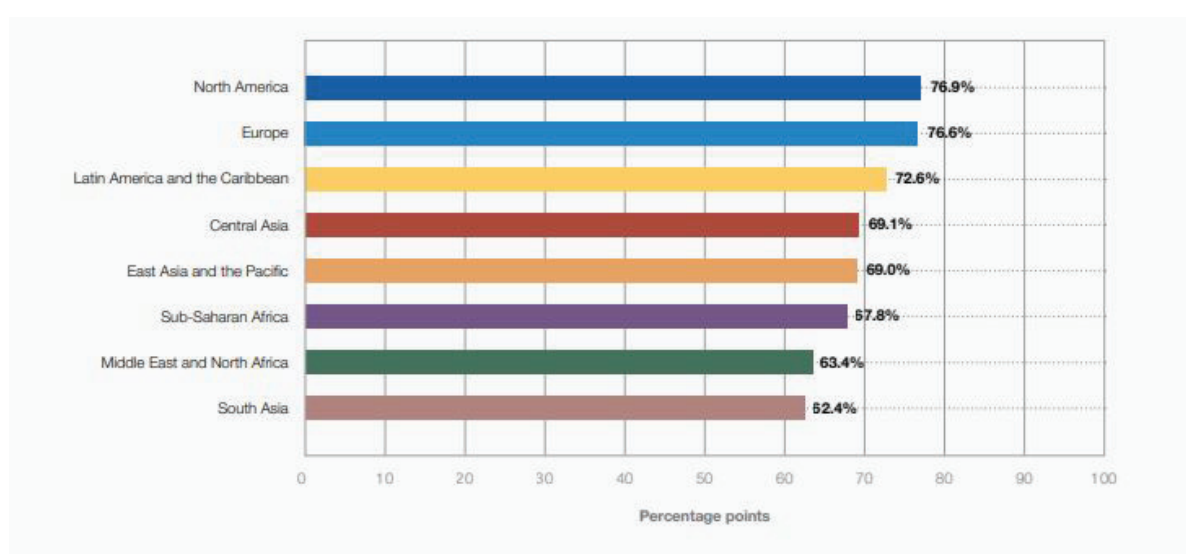


Data and discussion

The Global Gender Gap Report 2022 identifies eight regions: North America, South Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Of all the regions, North America saw the biggest reduction in the gender gap, at 76.9%. (see Figure 4).

Overall progress in Central Asia in closing the gender gap has remained constant from the previous edition at 69.1%. To bridge the deficit at this rate would take 151 years. Out of the eight areas, Central Asia scored the fourth-highest in 2022, after North America, Europe, and Latin America

and the Caribbean. The top three nations in this area are Georgia (73.1%), Belarus (75%) and Moldova (78.8%). The lowest three countries are Turkey (63.9%), Tajikistan (66.3%), and Azerbaijan (68.7%). In comparison to the previous edition, the ratings of six of the ten nations in the area have increased. The three Central Asian nations that have improved the most are Kyrgyzstan (70%, +1.9 percentage points), Moldova (78.8%, +2 percentage points), and Armenia (69.8%, +2.5 percentage points).

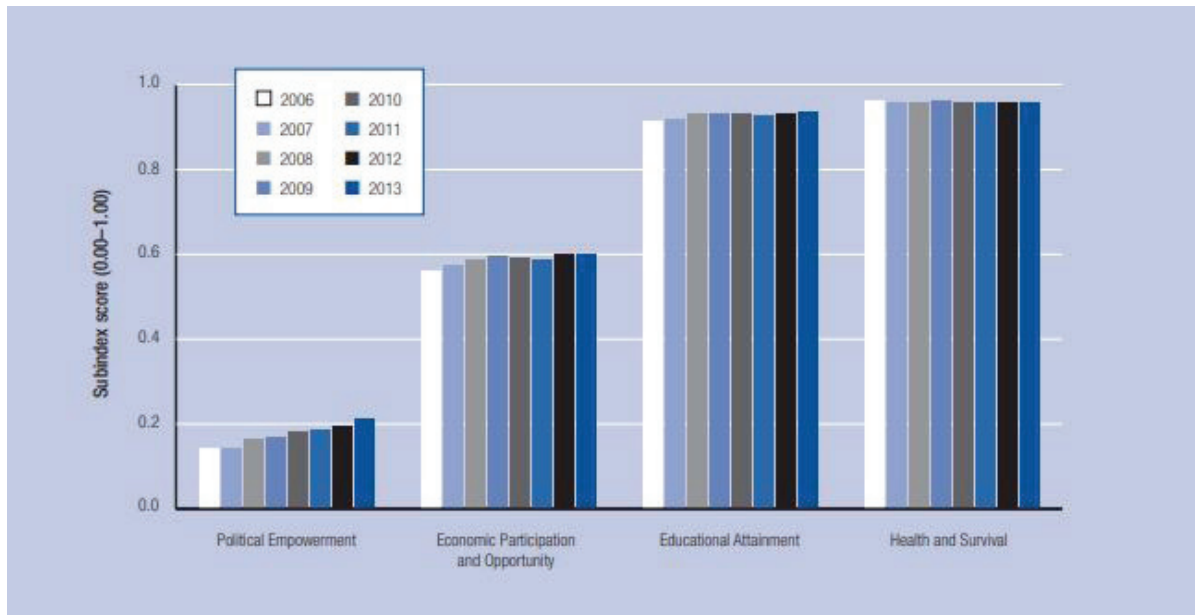


(Figure 4):Currently closed gender gaps, by area

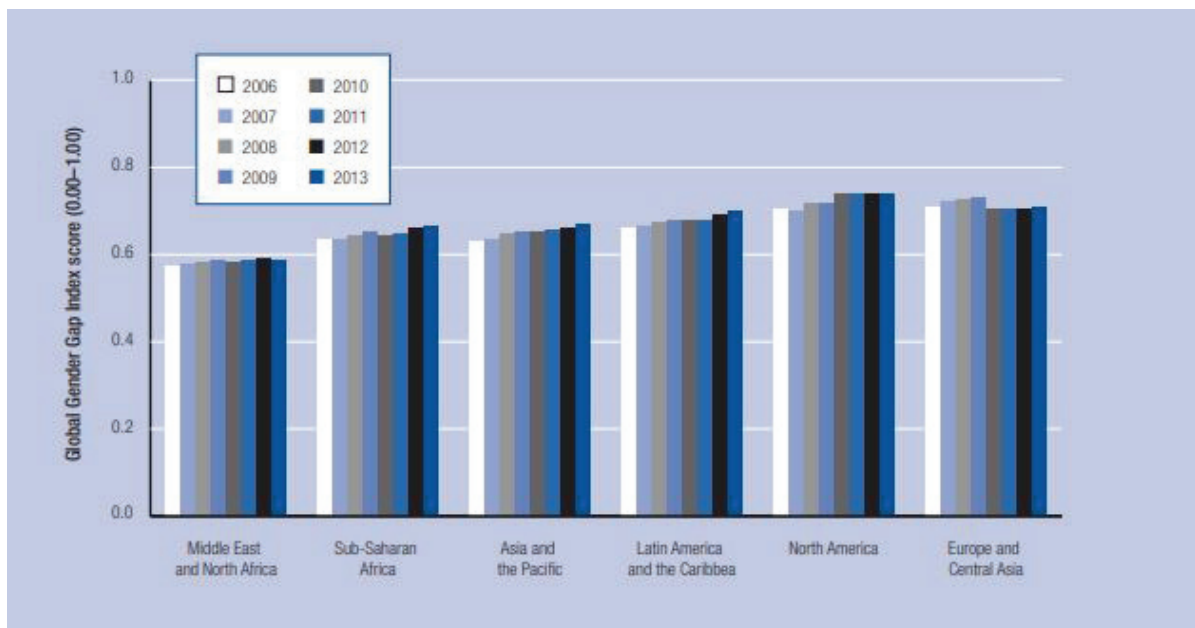
Source: (Hausmann et al., 2022)

gender gap has been closed thus far by On the other hand, the eight-year data set for the Global Gender Gap Index shows that between 2006 and 2013, improvements were made in all sub-indicators (see Figure 5), with the exception of health and survival, and in all regions (see Figure 6), with the exception of Europe and Central Asia.

(Forum, 2013)



(Figure5): Global Gender Gap Index by subindex, 2006-2013
(Forum, 2013)



(Figure 6): Global Gender Gap Index by region, 2006–2013
(Forum, 2013)

Injustice and marginalization brought on by gender, ethnicity, low income, and other social and economic issues make people more vulnerable to climate change. Climate change solutions work better when these realities are taken into account. Of sure, women may aid here. Here are five strong

arguments for why women are vital to addressing climate change:

1- All people must take action to combat climate change: Despite making up over half of the global population, women and girls are routinely left out of conversations on climate change. However, we will require everyone's help in order to achieve the Paris Agreement's aim of keeping the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This demands that more women and girls be involved and empowered. We need women, in all their variety, active at all levels - from boardrooms to forests and fields to climate discussions - especially in sectors and places where the consequences of climate change have had a significant influence. Particularly indigenous women have been at the forefront of environmental conservation and possess priceless knowledge and experience that may contribute to resilience building and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We can build a more equal and sustainable future for everyone if we involve more women in climate action..

2- nations, Despite making up over half of the global population, women and girls are routinely left out of conversations on climate change. To accomplish the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius, however, we will need everyone's support. This demands that more women and girls be involved and empowered. In fact, studies suggest that nations with strong levels of female parliamentary representation ratify international environmental treaties more frequently.

3- Women are essential to enhancing community resilience to climate change: Involving women is crucial to building community resilience to climate change. In fact, according to the UN, planning with women in mind makes it easier for communities to successfully undertake resilience and capacity-building initiatives. Women also often spearhead initiatives to lower the risk of catastrophes, act as first responders in local reactions to natural disasters, and support post-di-

safter recovery by taking care of their families' immediate needs and promoting a sense of community. Women's participation in disaster response and community planning can help us create stronger, more resilient communities that are better prepared to handle the problems presented by climate change.

4- Not everyone will be affected equally by climate change: Although not everyone is equally touched by climate change, everyone is nonetheless affected. It is well recognized that, regardless of whether they reside in developed or developing countries, the most vulnerable individuals on the planet are more severely affected by climate change, which exacerbates already-existing inequality. Due to their societal duties, commitments, and poverty, women are often the ones who bear the brunt of the risks and expenses associated with climate change.

5- Country recognition of the significance of gender in climate planning is reason number five. The good news is that more women and girls are in a position to influence and benefit from climate action.

Climate change may have varied effects on males, women, and non-binary people as a result of systemic inequities. The majority of the poorest people on earth are women, and they frequently rely heavily on natural resources for both their primary source of food and income. They are therefore more prone to experience the negative effects of environmental deterioration. However, women are change-makers with distinctive views and skills. Programs supporting women's empowerment were responsible for 55% of the increase in food security in developing nations during the past two decades. A rights-based, gender-responsive strategy places a strong emphasis on ensuring the meaningful involvement of women from a range of backgrounds in pertinent decision-making processes. This inclusive strategy will increase the effectiveness of climate action in addition to being a moral, legal, and ethical need. In particular, climate change affects women

through the following:

- 1- Food Security: The production, accessibility, and availability of food are all negatively impacted by climate change. Many smallholder farmers are women, whose means of subsistence and supplies of food are threatened by climate change. Due to their distinct nutritional requirements during pregnancy and breastfeeding, women are more vulnerable to food insecurity than males and it may have different effects on them. property ownership is frequently governed by male-dominated systems, making it difficult for women to obtain productive property.
- 2- Health: Women are more likely to die in catastrophes than males. Due to the fact that they utilize polluting fuels for heating and cooking, women also experience greater indoor air pollution problems. Extreme weather conditions, a rise in vector-borne illnesses like malaria, and uneven care responsibilities can put disproportionate strain on women to provide for their families. Women, who are frequently responsible for collecting water, are under more stress as a result of water shortage. Exclusion from decision-making can make coping with climate change even more stressful. The loss of vital infrastructure may result in a reduction in the standard, quantity, and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services, which may increase the risk of teen pregnancy and maternal death. Salinization of drinking water and high temperatures can have an effect on maternal and child health.
- 3- Gender-based violence: There are direct connections between sexual and gender-based violence and poverty, which climate change exacerbates. Forcible and child marriages are dangerous coping mechanisms used by people under economic stress connected to climate change. Disasters may force female survivors into evacuation centers, where they risk being abused. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-

gender, and intersex individuals may have difficulty finding emergency shelters that meet their needs. Following catastrophes, law enforcement may be less effective, and women might not report assault. Human trafficking may rise as a result of climate change's economic effects. Beyond the immediate suffering, gender-based violence can also spread STDs, hinder economic growth, and worsen poverty, all of which can exacerbate the consequences of natural disasters.

4- Decent Work: Climate change may exacerbate the barriers that women currently face in the workplace. Women's exclusion from climate action can make these problems worse. Some women may be more vulnerable due to intersecting factors, such as their indigenous or handicap status, especially when there are insufficient social safety structures in place. For women, a decrease in income or worsening working circumstances can have particularly detrimental effects. After a natural catastrophe, women would be expected to handle heightened household obligations and be denied the time and chances needed to reenter the workforce, which would limit their ability to earn money.

Women who fight for environmental justice say that climate change makes it more dangerous for animals, the environment, and human livelihoods. Women frequently suffer a tremendous price when safeguarding ecosystems, lands, resources, and territories. Women suffer hazards similar to those faced by other human rights advocates, including as assassination, prosecution, intimidation, and abuse against women, and sexual violence. (Maboudian & Rezaie, 2017)

Conclusion

Development studies literature has frequently noted the methods of "Women in Development (WID)" and "Gender and Development (GAD)" throughout the past few decades. With a primary focus on women as a

distinct group, the WID method sought to elevate women's status by addressing their lack of access to resources and enhancing their earning potential. During the 1976–1985 United Nations Decade for Women, social justice and equity for women were mainstream development concerns that were addressed through WID goals and strategies. Governments, donor organizations, and NGOs have all widely used WID into their development initiatives since the 1970s. Feminist activists, however, were increasingly critical of the WID strategy since it solely focused on integrating women into development through work.

They contended that tackling women's subordination ought to be at the center of the WID approach as this did not address the underlying institutions, ideologies, and behaviors that create and maintain gender differences. But the essence of women's subjugation has received little analysis. One of the best ways to increase women's effectiveness in reducing climate change is through the use of renewable energy. It may help alter women's lives by enhancing their health, giving them greater chances for a living, enhancing their educational opportunities, and more. In reality, it gives women a wealth of business opportunities for expanding the use of renewable energy, which reduces carbon emissions (Aluko & Okuwa, 2018).

The SDGs will be accomplished more quickly thanks to the mutually beneficial relationship between gender equality and environmental goals. Recognizing and tackling the gender-environment nexus might lead to more coherent policymaking, a stronger emphasis on wellbeing, and help foster inclusive and green growth. It is critical to address the severe lack of gender-disaggregated data in order to align the environmental sustainability and gender objectives.

Women have important roles in environmental activism, while being underrepresented in environmental decision-making. Ensuring equal participation of women in leadership positions in the public and private sectors is

essential to achieving better integrated environmental and economic goals. A “just transition” to low-carbon economies has the potential to increase economic outcomes, strengthen society, and increase productivity. By giving them access to high-skilled jobs, increasing the proportion of women engaged in green innovation can boost female output. Creating an integrated policy framework that considers trade-offs and synergies at the local, national, and international levels while striking a balance between gender and sustainability objectives is imperative. The gender environment nexus should be taken into consideration by all relevant international standards.

Resource

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