

Bridging The Gap: How Women Are Driving Climate Policy and Sustainable Development

Dr. Snigdharani Behera^{1*}

^{1*}Faculty, School of Women's Studies, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar

Abstract:

This review article focuses on the leadership of women in climate change policy and sustainable development from a gender perspective. As vulnerable victims of climate change, women have assumed leadership roles in climate-related decision-making processes at the community, state, and global levels. Using the examples of cases and global programs, the article also reveals how women contribute to sustainable development, gender-sensitive climate change action, and equal opportunities for addressing environmental issues. The participation of women in the environmental movements that include the Chipko, and the Greenbelt movements are also explored, as well as their increasing engagement in international climate change negotiations including the Paris Agreement. However, women are still hampered by structural factors that limit their potential as leaders in climate change because of socio-cultural practices and gender bias. The article seeks for the integration of women in climate governance arguing that gender mainstreaming is important in climate change and sustainable development. It reaffirms the fact that women's participation in climate decision-making is critical for designing fair and inclusive climate policies that will help create a more equitable climate future.

Keywords: Gender equality, Climate governance, Climate justice, Women's leadership, Sustainable development.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the climate change debate has broadened to encompass the relationship between gender and climate change. Women, who are the worst affected by the effects of climate change because of their socio-economic responsibilities and risks, are now emerging not only as passive recipients of climate shocks but as active change makers. This double-edged sword position makes women a strategic group to champion change on climate change, risk management, and sustainable development.

For a long time, women have been involved in environmentalism, especially at the grassroots level where they are most affected by environmental degradation through the natural resource base. They have a rich and valuable experience of living in rural areas of developing countries, which helps them to look at the problem of sustainable management of resources critically. For example, women in the agrarian economies are responsible for food production and water sourcing, which becomes challenging if not impossible due to climate change and resource depletion. Women have therefore gained unique knowledge on matters relating to sustainable agriculture, water management, and community preparedness for climate change hence becoming key players in combating climate change (Dankelman, 2010).

Nonetheless, women have been sidelined in the climate policy and decision-making processes for most of the time. In the national and international climate change negotiations and environmental governance, women remain underrepresented and marginalized as in other political and public spheres. This has at times resulted in the omission of gender considerations in climate policies, thus eradicating the efficiency of climate measures. Climate change can only be addressed holistically if gender-sensitive approaches that capture gender vulnerabilities and agency are applied (UNDP, 2019). According to UN Women (2020), "Women are both the worst affected by climate change and the agents of change because they are on the frontline."

There has been increasing awareness in the last few years of the importance of integrating women in the formulation of climate policies. UNFCCC, for instance, has been keen on pointing out that gender equality should be considered in climate change processes. The Gender Action Plan was adopted in 2017 at the UNFCCC and is a positive development in the fight for women's representation in climate change governance. This plan seeks to increase women's voice in climate processes and to ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed into climate processes at all levels (UNFCCC, 2017). Thus, it acknowledges that the promotion of gender equality is not only an issue of human rights but also a condition for sustainable development.

The participation of women in climate policy leadership has been on the rise in the world. Prominent leaders such as Christiana Figueres who played the role of ensuring that the Paris accord was signed in 2015 are now more common in climate leadership. As the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Figueres was able to mobilize stakeholders and make sure that the agreement was both challenging and comprehensive (UNFCCC, 2016). Likewise, the women's movements from the ground have highlighted the importance of the SDG and climate justice, especially for the oppressed and vulnerable groups (Morrow, 2020).

Furthermore, climate change hurts women, especially in the developing world since they are more dependent on natural resources for their income, and due to limited access to resources, education, and decision-making than their male counterparts. This is worsened by existing socio-economic disparities that hinder women from managing and recovering from climate-related disasters (FAO, 2018). For instance, women are more likely to be affected and displaced during

natural disasters and they have limited access to response and recovery. Consequently, there is a need to mainstream women in climate policies and programs and to develop gender-responsive climate policies and programs. In the age of climate change, the role of women in sustainable development and climate change policy has never been more important. Women are gradually being empowered to play active roles in climate change adaptation, sustainable development, and innovation in climate change management. The integration of women in climate policy is important not only because women's voices are valuable in the process, but also because the quality of climate measures will improve. This review article aims to identify the status of women in climate policy and sustainable development through an analysis of their participation at the grassroots, subnational, national, and global levels. It will examine the past participation of women in environmental movements, the present status of women in climate change policymaking, and the challenges that limit women from assuming leadership roles in sustainable development. This article seeks to explore how women are central to the achievement of sustainable development goals by providing a critical evaluation of case studies, policy frameworks, and gender-sensitive interventions in climate change.

2. Historical Context: Women's Involvement in Environmental Movements

Women have always been active in environmental conservation, especially at the grassroots level in the past. Many of them have been ecologically close to nature, and especially in the agriculturally and rurally oriented societies, they have hence accrued key ecological insights into some management of these resources, as well as practices in modern farming and conservation. However, they called the conservation and sustainable use of resources only in the twentieth century, influencing both the conservation and the subsequent attempts at sustainable development.

The first notable nonviolent civil action was the Chipko Movement in India during the seventies in which women physically restrained themselves from being cut down by hugging trees. This movement not only saved forests but also raised the issues of women and the earth together (Shiva, 1989).

According to Agarwal (1992), The Chipko Movement brought out the importance of women in the protection of the environment because as users, they bear the brunt of the impacts of environmental misuse.

The achievement of this protest resulted in much much-needed deforestation ban for fifteen years for this region thus creating awareness of the importance of women in environmentalism. Such movements prepared the path for women to bring gender perspectives into other environmental policy areas.

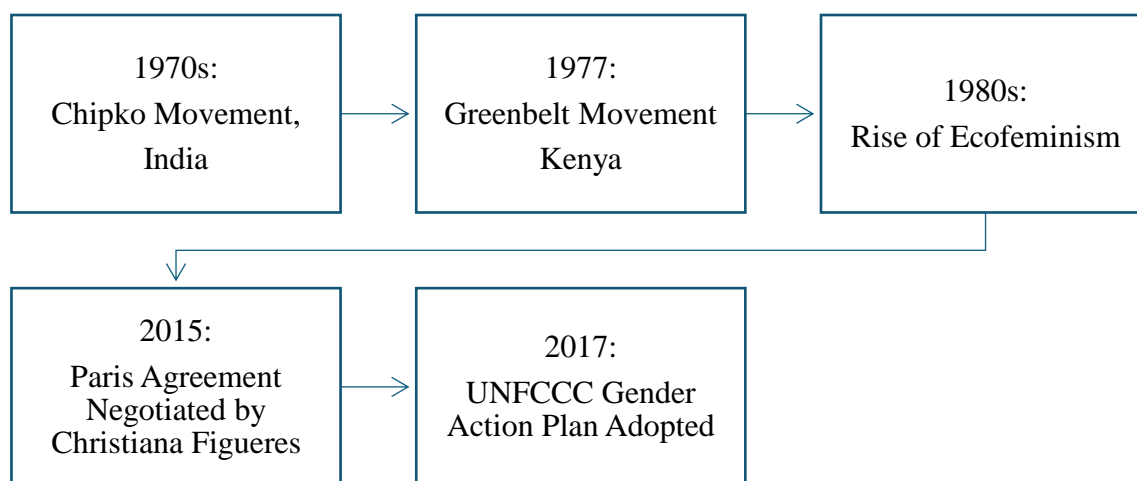


Figure 1. Key Milestones in Women's Environmental Leadership

2.1 Women and Early Climate Advocacy

The Greenbelt Movement in Kenya, which was started by Wangari Maathai in 1977, is one of the most outstanding women's environmental organizations. It also economically uplifted rural women through employment and the fight against deforestation and environmental degradation as well as facing socio-economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty.

Wangari Maathai's Greenbelt Movement had both an environmental and socio-economic impact: "Environmental and socio-economic developments were intertwined with gender issues" (Maathai, 2004).

This planted over 30 million tree shocks and transformed the environment thus giving women a chance to improve. Maathai's work is a good example of how local, women-led environmental initiatives can impact global environmental policy.

2.2 Ecofeminism and Global Environmental Advocacy

The accomplishments of these movements were behind the emergence of ecofeminism, a theory on the oppression of women and nature. According to Vandana Shiva, part of the ecofeminist school of thought, both are exploited by patriarchal structures, particularly in the third world where women depend on the natural resource base for sustenance (Shiva, 1989).

According to Shiva (1989), “ecofeminism focuses on the dual oppression of women and nature with special reference to the third world.”

Shiva also supports indigenous knowledge systems arguing that women’s role in conservation and sustainable practice is key to social and ecological health.

2.3 Women in Global Environmental Policy

Although grassroots movements have been critical, women have not had a strong role in the formal environmental policy processes. But people like Christiana Figueres have changed this kind of thinking. As the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC from 2010 to 2016, a woman from Costa Rica crossword Figueres was instrumental in securing the Paris Agreement, describing the climate change negotiations as being for all.

‘The Paris Agreement is a broad, inclusive global agreement that has been made possible by Christiana Figueres’s leadership, according to the UNFCCC (2016).

New activities in the last few years like the UNFCCC GAP adopted in 2017 seek to increase women’s engagement in climate policymaking and ensure that climate policies are gender-sensitive an essential advance towards gender equity in the management of environmental resources globally.

3. Women in Climate Policy: Present Contributions

In the last few years, women have emerged as key leaders in climate policy at the global, national, and subnational levels. The people are no longer considered as passive recipients of climate change impacts but as active players in change. There are instances such as the Paris Agreement in 2015 that were led by women such as Christiana Figueres, who has ensured that climate policies are gender sensitive. It is under her leadership that women’s participation was brought into the very heart of the climate change regime (UNFCCC, 2016).

Some of the nations such as Bangladesh and Costa Rica have benefitted from women's leadership in pushing for progressive climate agendas. Andrea Meza of Costa Rica fought for women’s rights in climate change policies while Bangladeshi local women’s groups led on adaptation at the community level in the most affected areas (Dankelman, 2010). In Sweden, politicians such as Isabella Lövin advocated for gender-sensitive climate policies, thereby setting high goals regarding decarbonization and gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

3.1 Gender and Climate Finance: A Condensed Paper

Women have also played a crucial role in making sure that climate finance interventions are friendly to women. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), for example, developed a policy on gender that made it mandatory for projects to consider gender issues while developing and implementing the projects. These gender-sensitive strategies make a positive impact on women, increase food availability, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, and increase biological diversity (GCF, 2018). However, some issues hinder the realization of gender equality in climate finance, especially in developing countries where women are still restrained from leadership and other resources. There is a continuous need to improve the mainstreaming of gender in climate finance (UN Women, 2020).

Table 1. Key Contributions of Women in Climate Policy and Finance

Area	Key Contributions	Impact
Women in Climate Policy	Christiana Figueres led the successful Paris Agreement negotiations in 2015, ensuring gender inclusivity.	Increased participation of women in international climate negotiations and decision-making.
Women in Climate Finance	Women's leadership in the Green Climate Fund ensures gender-responsive finance strategies.	Gender-responsive projects enhance women's roles in climate resilience and equitable climate action.

This table highlights the key areas where women have made significant contributions to climate policy and finance, along with the impacts of their involvement.

4. Women at the Local Level: Community Leadership and Grassroots Movements

The study also confirms that women are involved in environmental management and disaster risk reduction at the grassroots level particularly in the developing world. Even though climate change involves almost everybody, some people have heavier roles to play that include food production, sourcing of water, and childcare hence are central in responding to the emerging climate change challenges. In Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, women are at the helm of managing sustainable agriculture and water resources. For instance, women generate up to 80 percent of food in many African countries, and they use climate-smart approaches such as crop interchanging and growing trees for food production (FAO, 2018).

“Women are not only the main family caregivers but also the managers of natural resources in rural areas and they have important roles in the adaptation of their communities to climate change” (Dankelman, 2010).

Moreover, women from Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are involved in furthering interventions specific to water conservation; the construction of farming irrigation systems, and rainwater supply structures taking into account the altered rainfall calendar (UNDP, 2019). In managing disasters, women take charge of timely warning, training, and plans to reduce the effects of natural disasters on societies (United Nations ESCAP, 2020).

4.1 Case Study: Women’s Leadership in the Pacific Islands

Women from the Pacific Islands have thus emerged as important stakeholders in local climate change mitigation processes. In the female-headed households of Tuvalu and Kiribati, these women are involved in planting mangroves and raising seawalls against sea encroachment. On the other hand, women in Fiji collect rainwater to supplement the scarce fresh water, and women groups in Vanuatu advocating for climate-smart crops such as taro and sweet potatoes for food security (UN Women, 2019).

“Pacific Island women are therefore not passive in the face of climate change impacts, but are actively engaging in the use of community-based adaptation strategies to enhance the sustainability of their livelihoods” (UNDP, 2019).

These efforts show that male-female differential impacts exist in climate variability and durability. The case of women leadership in the Pacific Islands shows that, through community-based interventions, the effects of climate change can be addressed.

4.2 Opportunities and Barriers to Women’s Participation in Local Climate Governance

However, women have challenges when it comes to leadership in local climate change. Lack of resources, cultural barriers, and social exclusion reduce their capacity to effectively lead in climate adaptation. Most women do not own land or have access to credit markets to enable them to purchase sustainable farming technologies (FAO, 2018).

Nevertheless, there are possibilities as to how these drawbacks could be overcome. Women should be empowered with technical know-how, capital, and leadership training, mentoring and development are essential. The implementation of Climate policies at the national as well as at the international level should consider women because they are inevitable while seeking solutions for a sustainable climate (UNDP, 2019). When these barriers have been well addressed, the world will have ensured that women are leading in charting the course of a more resilient future.

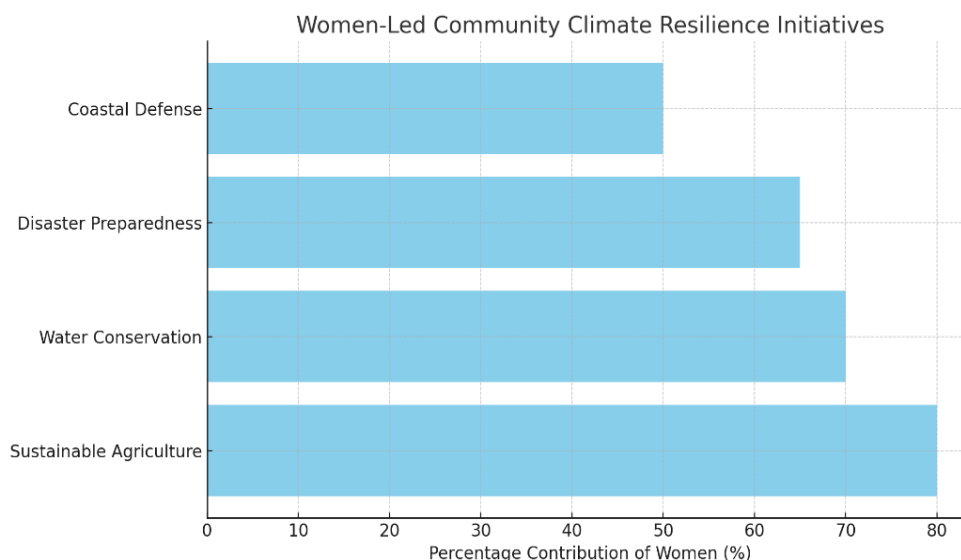


Figure 2. Women-Led Community Climate Resilience Initiatives

The bar chart above showcases the significant contributions of women in different areas of community climate resilience, including sustainable agriculture, water conservation, disaster preparedness, and coastal defense. Women’s leadership in these areas is vital to strengthening climate adaptation efforts globally

5. Barriers to Women's Full Participation in Climate Governance

Women are still hampered by factors that deny them equal opportunity to engage in climate governance at all levels. These barriers are structural, socio-cultural, and resource-based. It is crucial to meet these challenges to develop climate policies that would be as inclusive as possible.

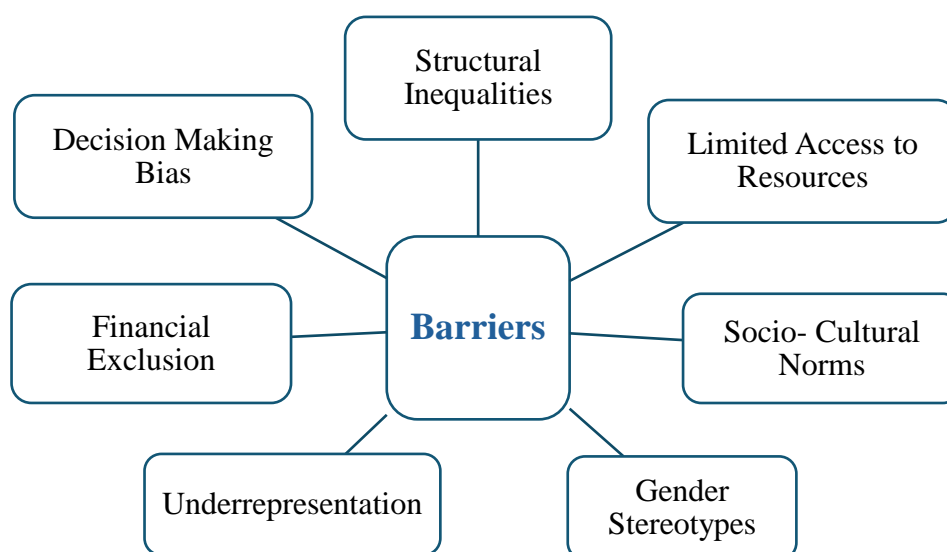


Figure 3. Barriers to Women's Full Participation in Climate Governance

5.1 Structural Inequalities in Education and Employment

One of the most important challenges for women to engage in climate governance is the low literacy and employment rates in the climate sector. Currently, the female illiteracy rate is close to two-thirds of the global illiteracy rate, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (UNESCO, 2020). This reduces their participation in decision-making processes related to technical aspects of climate policy.

Also, women are scarce in areas of environmental science and engineering, which limits them even more in the environmental management spheres. If they do not have a seat at the table in these sectors, then their concerns are overlooked in policymaking (UN Women, 2020).

“The structural barriers that exist in education and employment make it difficult for women to engage effectively in climate governance” (Norgaard, 2011).

5.2 Social Culture and Gender Roles

Socio-cultural factors limit women’s mobility and their chances of assuming leadership roles. Patriarchal norms keep many women in domestic spheres as carers and restrict their engagement in public and climate politics. When women are involved in governance, they are usually relegated to the background with little authority to make decisions (FAO, 2018). In rural settings, women’s work in climate change mitigation is not recognized, and instead, technical solutions that mainly involve men are prioritized (UNDP, 2019).

Norgaard (2011) says that socio-cultural barriers that limit women’s engagement in the public sphere are some of the biggest barriers to gender equity in climate management.

5.3 Lack of Representation in Decision Making Structures

Women continue to be excluded from the decision-making structures at the national and international levels. As of 2019, only 12% of the environment ministers were women, and women made up less than 30% of the participants in international climate negotiations (UN Women, 2019). This underrepresentation reduces climate governance by restricting the input of a range of voices in decision-making (UNEP, 2018).

Norgaard (2011) has stated that ‘The lack of women in climate policy is not surprising given that climate policy is a political sphere, and women remain underrepresented in political domains’.

5.4: Lack of resources and finance

Women in developing nations are locked out of the formal financial system to makes it difficult for them to invest in climate-resilient technologies and sustainable practices. Most climate finance schemes have exclusion factors that lock out women, including land ownership (FAO, 2018). This limits their ability to engage in and gain from climate answers. Attempts to ensure that climate finance is gender-sensitive, such as the Green Climate Fund Gender Policy, go some way towards addressing the problem, but there are still issues regarding the accessibility of funds for marginalized women (GCF, 2018).

5.5 Overcoming Barriers: Policy Recommendations

To address these barriers, a multi-faceted approach is necessary:

1. **Education and Capacity Building:** Governments must fund women's education, particularly in the STEM area, and offer necessary capacity development programs to make women technically ready for leadership in climate management (UNESCO, 2020).
2. **Gender-Responsive Policies:** Quotas in climate talks and guarantee policies that cater to women's climate needs (UNFCCC, 2017).
3. **Access to Climate Finance:** Ensure the climatic financial structures of the global are friendly to women and that require minimal hurdles such as land ownership to access the funds (GCF, 2018).
4. **Challenging Socio-Cultural Norms:** Mainstream gender in climate change by encouraging men and boys to support women's leadership in climate change governance (UN Women, 2020).

In this way, society can work on eliminating the mentioned barriers and develop better climate governance systems for the whole world.

6. The Role of International Agreements in Promoting Gender Equality in Climate Policy

Both parties emphasize that international conventions are instrumental in the advancement of the global female agenda on climate control across the world. For instance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan (GAP) offer critical frameworks to advance the application of gender lenses to climate policies across multiple tiers of government. These agreements also acknowledge that climate change is not gender neutral and call for keeping in consideration gender considerations while dealing with both the mitigation of greenhouse gases and adaptation to climate change impacts.

The SDGs have been established as a framework of reference for diagnostics, targeting, and monitoring of the major challenges of socio-economic, environmental, and governance nature that was approved in 2015 as a part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For instance, SDG 5 aims for the successful implementation of gender equality as well as women and girls, while SDG 13 addresses the global climate change issue. These two goals are mutually integrated where gender equality has been established as both a human rights issue and an essential ingredient for the realization of sustainable development, a notion already integrated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015) framework. Allowing women to be involved in governance on the climate issues is important for them to be considered hence coming up with adequate, all-encompassing solutions on the climate change issues.

This paper therefore subscribes to the United Nations sustainable development goals which state that "Gender equality is a human right and a precondition for social justice, peace and sustainable development" (UN SDGs, 2015).

The UN's SDGs recognize climate change as affecting women more than men especially women in vulnerable groups and call for women's participation in governance structures. These goals prompt countries to act to increase women's engagement in climate policy, as well as to remove socio-economic factors that make it difficult for women to become leaders., specifically envisage SDG 13 within the context of gender equality to focus and direct efforts to enhance climate governance based on gender mainstreaming with encompassing international frameworks for environmental sustainability and mainstreaming gender.

6.1 Progress in the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan

An important achievement in international climate regulation is the GAP adopted by the UNFCCC in 2017. The Gender Action Plan is designed to mainstream gender in climate policy including climate finance, capacity, building, and technology transfer as well as mitigation and adaptation. The GAP calls for women to fully and equally engage in climate change decision-making as a way of seeking to tackle the climate change impacts that affect women differently through gender-responsive policies in the country and at the international level (UNFCCC, 2017).

"The Gender Action Plan is a positive development for acknowledging the participation of women in climate decision-making, but it is still patchy in practice among nations" (UNFCCC, 2018).

The UNFCCC Gender Action Plan is built on five priority areas:

1. **Capacity Building, Knowledge Sharing, and Communication:** This area deals with raising the level of understanding of the relation between gender and climate change, knowledge sharing and transfer of gender-sensitive experiences and practices, and the mainstreaming of gender aspects into climate change learning and capacity-building initiatives.
2. **Gender Balance, Participation, and Women's Leadership:** This priority will seek to increase women's participation in climate decision-making forums at the international level, national level climate bodies, and subnational climate action initiatives.
3. **Coherence:** The GAP aims at ensuring policy coherence between gender equality and climate change at the international, regional, and national levels. It supports the mainstreaming of gender into NDCs, national adaptation policies, and climate finance systems.
4. **Gender-Responsive Implementation and Means of Implementation:** This area stresses the need to mainstream gender in climate change actions with special regard to the impacts of mitigation and adaptation measures on women. It also includes demands for women's climate finance and gender-sensitive climate budgeting.

5. Monitoring and Reporting: The GAP calls for an enhanced monitoring and reporting system to measure progress on gender mainstreaming in climate change policy and to increase the level of accountability in the delivery of gender-sensitive interventions (UNFCCC, 2017).

Since the adoption of the Gender Action Plan, awareness of the issues of gender in climate has been increased and women's participation in climate negotiations has been enhanced. For instance, though the percentage of women in delegations at the UNFCCC's COP25 in 2019 was 47% – a rise compared to previous years – it is still not enough (UNFCCC, 2019). This progress is a positive step towards the goal of getting women involved in climate decision-making.

Nevertheless, the Gender Action Plan has been poorly adopted by the countries, many of which have failed to mainstream gender into their climate policies. Some countries like Sweden Costa Rica and Fiji have embraced policies for responding to climate change challenges but others have been faced with some challenges like limited resources, political will, and institutional capacity (UN Women, 2020). For instance, in many developing countries, socio-cultural factors and structural factors still hinder women from participating in climate governance even though the GAP has provided frameworks for their participation.

The Gender Action Plan has been facing a major problem of inadequate funding for gender-responsive climate measures. Currently, the GCF and other climate finance instruments have formulated gender policies that ensure that women-led projects receive funding, but many countries have not provided adequate funds for gender-related programs. This financial deficit hampers the capacity of women especially poor and rural women to access the equipment and technologies for climate change mitigation and adaptation (GCF, 2018).

Furthermore, the GAP supports gender-responsive climate actions; however, the actual policies and plans on the ground are not well aligned with the developed policies. In many countries, gender aspects are integrated into climate plans, but there is little implementation in terms of concrete measures that would help women in practice. For instance, gender-sensitive climate adaptation projects may be part of national policy strategies, but they are poorly funded or do not have the technical assistance needed for their implementation (UNFCCC, 2018).

To overcome these challenges, further work should be continued in the enhancement of the Gender Action Plan at the national, regional, and local levels of governance. This entails scaling up resources available for gender-sensitive climate interventions, strengthening the capacity of national and subnational governments to address gender dimensions of climate change, and promoting women's participation in climate decision-making across the policy cycle. Moreover, it is crucial to have effective supervision and reporting systems to control the advancement and guarantee that gender equality remains a focus in the climate processes.

6.2 The Intersection of Gender Equality and Climate Finance

The area where climate finance has been most advanced is in addressing gender concerns through international agreements. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest multilateral climate finance institution has recently approved a Gender Policy that mandates that all projects funded by the institution must factor in gender. This policy acknowledges the fact that women especially those in developing countries are vulnerable to climate change and therefore calls for increased financing of women's climate solutions. By integrating gender perspectives into the funding for climate change, the GCF aims to support women and ensure that they get proper instruments to properly address climate issues (GCF, 2018).

The Gender Policy of the Green Climate Fund serves as a best practice for other climate finance institutions including the Adaptation Fund and GEF which have also mainstreamed gender-sensitive approaches to funding. All these efforts are undertaken within the framework of the Gender Action Plan and can help to prevent climate finance from being concentrated primarily on rich men and white males and instead, to address the needs and concerns of women and other vulnerable populations (UNFCCC, 2017).

However, there are still some limitations in the provision of climate finance to the women most in need. Women, especially those in rural and poor areas, are locked out of climate finance because they cannot provide documents such as titles, credit records, and financial literacy. To address these issues, more effort should be extended to enhance gender-responsive approaches in international agreements and climate financing institutions as well as to eradicate systematic factors that hinder women's access to financing (UN Women, 2020).

7. The Intersection of Gender and Climate Justice

Climate justice is the idea of the unfair distribution of the effects of climate change and the call for fairness in the management of climate change effects. Climate justice aims to make sure that women and other vulnerable groups should not suffer the impact of climate change especially in being affected by decisions or policies to be implemented. Women are among the most vulnerable groups in the climate change impact since they are at the lower end of the economic scale, depend on natural resources, and have little say in political and financial matters. Hence, a need to incorporate a gender perspective in the fight against climate justice to develop equitable climate policies.

7.1 Gendered Vulnerabilities in Climate Change

Gender vulnerability to climate change is well connected with the socio-economic roles and responsibilities of women, particularly in the developing world. In most regions of the globe, women are responsible for the care of families and control most of the household resources including food, water, and fuel. That is, with the conditions that exacerbate scarcity of resources aggravated by climate change, women are typically left with the additional challenge of sourcing these from other places, which can entail a long journey for water or fuel and additional stress. For example, in the SSA region, females in rural areas spent as many as 5hrs to gather water and firewood (UN Women, 2020). Climate-induced droughts and deforestation also compounded this burden on women, they had limited resources to maintain their families and communities.

In addition, because most women are involved in the economic activity of agriculture, they are the most affected by climate change. In developing countries, women contribute up to 60-80% of the food production, and their farming is mostly rain-fed and small-scale farming for their consumption, which makes them vulnerable to changes in rainfall, soil nutrient status, and climate shocks (FAO, 2018). Whenever there is drought or flood or wherever a farmer cannot harvest crops, the woman loses her source of income as well as becomes a food insecure person as she must feed the entire family. This is especially so in the global south where climate change has already deepened poverty and hunger in vulnerable communities (Dankelman, 2010).

‘Climate justice will remain elusive without addressing gender justice because women in the vulnerable areas are most affected by climate change.’ (Roberts & Parks, 2007).

7.2 Climate Justice and Gender Inequalities

Climate justice assumes that the people who contribute least to climate change are the ones who suffer its consequences most. The world’s women, especially those in the Global South, emit the least carbon in the atmosphere but bear the brunt of climate change impacts. The injustice is worsened by gender disparities in access to resources and decision-making authority across the globe because most women lack the voice or the financial capital to help make decisions on climate policies and, to arrange for adaptation and resilience (UNEP, 2018).

As it is apparent from the power relations analysis, gender, and climate justice converge when looking at how women are marginalized in climate governance. Women are often locked out of political and economic power structures that would enable them to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. For example, in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, women are not allowed to own land or access formal financial services; they cannot invest in climate-smart technologies or sustainable agriculture (FAO, 2018). Also, socio-cultural practices limit women’s mobility and interaction in public activities, thus they cannot be involved in climate change adaptation or champion their issues in policy-making processes. To this end, a gender-sensitive approach to climate justice is imperative. This approach takes cognizance of the fact that women are more vulnerable in the face of climate change and therefore seeks to mainstream women’s participation in climate change decision-making. Sex-based Climate Policies need to focus on women and their role in vulnerable groups, stressing the rights of women to have access to instruments to adapt to climate change (UNDP, 2019).

7.3 Women as Agents of Climate Justice

On one hand, women are depicted as passive recipients of climate change impacts, on the other hand, they are active actors and survivors. Women from the Global South are at the center of activism and organizing to fight climate change and promote sustainable development. Women as environmental managers and community heads are thus bringing about sustainable measures to prevent and respond to the impacts of climate change.

For instance, in Bangladesh, women are the most affected and leading in the implementation of community-based adaptation measures to the effects of sea level rise and flooding. Some of the sustainable practices that women's organizations have adopted include floating gardens where crops are grown on water during the monsoon. These gardens not only play a role in food security provision to families but also empower women with means of earning income and as a result indulge in economic possibilities in a climate-challenged world (UNDP, 2019).

Likewise, in India, women groups have embarked on reforestation to check desertification and defend important systems. SEWA has played a crucial in training women farmers in climate-smart agriculture, water management, and women’s right to own land. They have also pulled women into leadership positions in their communities and engaged them in duties of climate management and policymaking thus transforming them from passive-rate victims of male domination (Shiva, 2016).

As for Climate Justice, women have also risen to the forefront in the Pacific Islands to seek justice afresh to protect their people drenched by the rise in sea level. For example, WECAN in Vanuatu has developed strategies such as constructing sea walls, improving methods of planting food and crops, and fighting for women to secede in climate change policies. Such initiatives by women have illustrated that women are central to community strengthening and climate change solutions (SPC, 2019).

7.4 Gender-Responsive Climate Justice Policies

To advance climate justice, gender must be made a part of the climate change policies. This means having women participate in climate change negotiations and more importantly coming up with policies that demarcate women’s rights

and empower them into climate change actions. It is crucial to note that while current frameworks like UNFCCC GAP and SDG remain pertinent in promoting the enforcement of gender equality in climate governance, both these frameworks need further support at the country and sub-national levels.

Another factor in gender justice climate change consideration is the affirmation of indigenous and rural women's expertise in the management of the environment. For instance, Indigenous women have a rich cultural knowledge of conservation of biological diversity, agriculture, and natural resource management. Indigenous women's participation in climate policy decisions is possible when policies that encourage the input of Indigenous women in the climate outcome are adopted into practice and therefore their knowledge applied towards the protection of ecosystems and climate resilience (UNEP, 2018). Moreover, climate finance should be gender-sensitive, to allow women to access the required funds for the implementation of climate change solutions. Currently, there is a gender policy that has been embraced by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) where female-headed projects will start being funded and more so too, climate cash will be shared fairly. But further effort is required to guarantee that such finances get to these women, from the rural and overall, most deprived groups (GCF, 2018).

According to Shiva (2016), to operationalize gender-sensitive climate justice, it is crucial not only to acknowledge the woman's fate but to also support women's agency in leadership and steering of fight against climate change.

7.5 International Lobbying for Gender and Climate Justice

Climate justice struggles around the world are gradually paying attention to gender equality as a key aspect of their campaigns. Youth especially young women have been at the forefront demanding that women's rights should be at the heart of climate change. Current youth climate activism spearheaded by persons like Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate has shifted a spotlight into how climate justice specifically addresses issues of gender equity. These movements make it clear that climate change affects human rights worldwide and that the emancipation of women is essential for creating a better and sustainable world (UN Women, 2020).

Non-governmental organizations like UN Women, UNEP, and the GGCA are still campaigning for gender mainstreaming in climate policies, offering information, reports, and training for capacity-building for women in the Global South. These organizations are at the forefront of advocating for gender mainstreaming in climate change processes and policies and for women's participation in climate justice initiatives (UNEP, 2018).

8. Conclusion

Women have emerged as indispensable actors in the global fight against climate change, driving policy, advocating for sustainable practices, and spearheading community-based adaptation efforts. Despite their significant contributions, women continue to face barriers rooted in structural inequalities, socio-cultural norms, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes. To address these challenges and ensure effective climate governance, international agreements such as the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* and the *UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (GAP)* have provided frameworks for promoting gender equality in climate policies.

However, the path toward gender-inclusive climate governance is still fraught with difficulties. Progress remains uneven across regions, and gender-responsive approaches are not always fully implemented. Achieving true climate justice requires not only addressing the vulnerabilities of women but also empowering them as leaders and innovators. Women, particularly in the Global South, must have access to education, financial resources, and decision-making platforms to fully realize their potential in shaping climate solutions.

As the impacts of climate change intensify, the intersection of gender and climate justice becomes increasingly critical. Women's knowledge and leadership, especially in rural and indigenous communities, are essential for building resilient and sustainable futures. Global advocacy efforts must continue to focus on integrating gender perspectives into climate governance, ensuring that women's voices are amplified, and their contributions recognized at all levels of policy and practice. By closing the gender gap in climate governance, the world can move toward more equitable, inclusive, and effective solutions to the climate crisis.

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