

Gender Equality: Way Forward for Development Sustainability in the 21st Century

Dr Lucy Jajo Shimray^{1*}, Dr Chithung Mary Thomas²

^{1*} Associate professor, Dept. of Economics, DMC of Arts, DM University, Imphal.

² Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, DM College of Commerce, DM University, Imphal.

Abstract;

Gender equality has become a burning issue in today's world of conflict amidst climate crisis due to global warming and climate change. It has become a menacing global phenomenon for more than three decades for defence of nature and the environment on the global stage at the United Nations conference in 1985. Women and girls face serious environmental issues that could undermine the peace building process. Therefore, it is important to identify gender-sensitive strategies for responding to human security needs and environmental and humanitarian crisis caused by climate change for sustainable development in future.

Keywords: gender equality, climate change, sustainable, UNs, SDGs etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Gender equality is mainly for upholding women's achievement, recognize challenges and focus greater attention on women's rights and gender equality and also address their issues. Each year we are celebrating International Women's Day as we push continuously with the hope of creating a completely equal society. However, achieving full human potential and sustainable development will not be possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources, political participation and equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision making for sustainable development.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but it is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. The United Nations (UNs) started celebrating Women's Day on March 8th, 1975 and officially recognized world wide in 1977. In 1909, Women's Day was celebrated in America for the first time on 28th Feb under the Socialist party of America to honor the 1908 strike by the garment workers in New York and lack of voting rights. (www.un.org/womenwatch, retrieved 2021)

The United Nations (UNs) emphasize the responsibilities of all states in conformity with the charter of the UNs to respect, protect and promote human rights and Fundamental freedom for all, having no distinction based on race, colour, sex, language, religion or other opinions of national or social origin on the pursuits of global development that can benefit all the countries and moving forward for a sustainable inclusive growth and prosperity. The UNs targets on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commit to provide inclusiveness and equitable education at all levels especially those in vulnerable situations having access to lifelong learning opportunities to let them acquire the knowledge and fully exploit and participate in the society so that no one is left behind.

The UNs 2030 SDGs Agenda aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls under the fifth point of the 17 components of the SDGs (Wikipedia, undp.org, retrieved, 2021). Under this goal the UN aims to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and to eliminate all forms of violence against them in public and private spheres. It also ensures full effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making and political, economic and public life so that gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at all levels are strengthened through sound policies and enforceable legislations.

Gender equality in terms of climate change and its effects are mostly felt by women as they are more vulnerable in terms of natural hazards, agriculture and food security, water resources, and conservation of environments. Since pre historic times, women have had an inalienable close relationship with their natural surroundings in their history. It is not surprising therefore women all over the world have played important role in the conservation and in initiating concerns for the consequences of climate resulting from human beings' mindless projects taken up as measures of development. (Chungkham, 2020). It is believed that majority of the world's poor are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. Those charged with the responsibility to secure water, food and fuel for cooking faced the greatest challenges. Moreover, with limited unequal access to resources women are placed in disproportionate position affected by climate change. It is therefore imperative to identify gender sensitive strategies to the environmental and humanitarian crisis caused by climate change. One must not forget that women though vulnerable have a strong body and knowledge and its expertise in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies, making them effective actors and agents in households and communities positioning them to livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities. (Wikipedia, retrieved 2021). Without gender equality today a sustainable future remains beyond our reach. Unfortunately the policy betrays a minimalist approach by merely voicing

concern for women's problem and not taking into account their contribution to climate change policy implementation, especially in adaptation. Women still bear the crunch of barriers and discriminations of all forms at workplace, amongst the communities in which they live and other social platforms. Women and girls still bore the brunt of climate crisis especially in a conflict torn states like Manipur and Nagaland. For any development effort to be sustainable and effective, it must consider the needs of all people, including those who don't typically have a voice in decision making. Whether it is exploring in helping governments' development policies to address inequality, tackle climate change and end poverty and hunger, or working with communities to build resilience to climate change.

Gender Equality to Responsive climate change adaptations: National Adaptation Plans (NAP) under this IISD is working with country govts and international partners to promote gender responsive approaches to adaption through analysis and guidance, technical assistance and capacity building.(iisd.org/ retrieved,2021).According to the UNDP,2022, the climate crisis, Covid-19, and every other humanitarian and development challenge, women are at the worst receiving ends to the unequal sharing of power and deep-rooted gender discrimination. Gender equality being an explicit goal of 2030 Agenda for sustainable development further states that all goals and targets depends on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This means empowering women at the right perspectives.

Legal innovations for women in contract farming: Under this the contract can eliminate some of the risk around agricultural commodity productions, creating opportunities for investment and expansion that might not arise in less regulated transactions. Few examples can be cited that Asla AI Hajaia after attending leadership training became the youngest city council member in Jordan in 2016 who is now helping the Syrian refugees in her community and educate women on their legal rights (SDGs) (retrieved.2020). UNDP is expanding collaboration with the private sector to promote women's leadership and participation, develop inclusive work places and ensure equal pay for equal work through gender equality Seal Certification and further prevent gender base violent in the society. It is believed that partnerships with governments and private sectors on closing digital divides will remove barriers related to availability, affordability and skills among other factors.

Building resilience: According to the UNDP, gender equality will be put at the Centre of resilience-building by diminishing structural obstacles and empowering individuals from keeping behind. One of the most important strategy of gender equality is to end multi- dimensional poverty around the 71 countries in advancing gender equality and equal access to quality health care specially reaching those who are most marginalized including multiple forms of discrimination(retrieve,UNDP.org.15June.2022). In order to prevent in mitigating and respond to diverse risks and crisis it depends involving women fully on equal terms at all levels including that of decision making.

Gender and fossil fuels subsidy reform: Govt. spent billions every year subsidizing fossils fuels. Recent studies found that fuel subsidies did not work well for poor women as large share of subsidies accrues to wealthier segments of the population because they consume more energy and have access to it such as Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) as found in India but also for poor people's fuel like kerosene, as observed in Bangladesh and Nigeria.

Gender progress toward SDG 5: While gender must be integrated across all the SDGs, it must be integrated across all SDGs and gender considerations must be included in all sustainable development work on climate action. SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls to reach their full potential. Goal 5 seeks to ensure that women and girls have full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, receive due recognition for their unpaid work, have full access to productive resource and enjoy equal participation with men in political, economic and public life.(Zara Sethna,2019) .Combating desertification, land degradation and drought can win socio-economic benefits for people in drylands and reduce climate change impacts,

Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 sustainable goals, but also to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. For example discriminatory laws need to change and legislation adopted to proactively advance equality. Yet 49 countries still lacks laws protecting women from domestic violence while 39 bar equal inheritance rights for daughters and sons. Eliminating gender- based violence is a priority given(www.unwomen.org retrieved).This is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world today. While women have political positions in recent years, including the use of special quotas, they still hold a mere 23.7 percent of parliamentary seats, far short of parity. With stepped up action on gender equality, every part of the world can make progress towards sustainable development by 2030 leaving no one behind. In the tribal society of the North East, Women are the peace makers known as Pukreila in times of war and conflict in solving the crisis between two villages and both the parties respect her verdict instantly (zimik,2020).This concept should be consider at a broader perspective today in our present society . The European Union (EU) and UNs are embarking on a new global initiative focusing on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, placing it at the centre of efforts to achieve gender equality and women empowerment in line with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. For any development effort to be sustainable and effective it must consider the needs of all people including those who don't typically have a voice in decision making, the IISD ensures that gender equality and women's empowerment are at the centre of sustainable development policies and legislation. It also aims to identify opportunities and empower women and girls with needed tools and skills to challenge systematic inequality and gender biases and allow them to participate as equal partners in climate change and sustainable decision making.

CONCLUSION:

Therefore, women need to take active role in tackling the climate crisis at all levels and must break the bias of all forms of gender inequalities and stereotypes to give the space they deserve in economic and social development. Together we can break the bias in our workplace, schools, colleges and universities and beyond keeping in mind conscious efforts of making people aware of giving respect and love to women and their rights. The day 8th March, is of great importance to raise the spirit of women and remove the inequality spread in the society. At the same time one must not forget that there are men who look into the faces of their women and girls with deep love and respect seeing the plight of women. Today as I look back I am deeply indebted to my father who against the criticism of many friends in my village stood up boldly and decided to give me all the necessary education irrespective of me being a girl child against the conventional tribal customs where women are treated as second grade specially in our tribal society. We need such more men to stand up side by side along women and girls. No such contribution is too small as we can see with collective participation, we can bring gender equality for a sustainable tomorrow and bring a change in the society. Let me conclude by quoting the statement of an environmentalist and a feminist, Gloria Steinem - 'The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any particular organisation but to collective efforts of all who care about human rights'.

References:

1. Ninghorla T. Zimik(2020); 'Naga Women as Peace Makers and Leaders) in Hao Chuk Rin.A Naga Journal. Vol.01.June 2020.
2. Sheelaramani Chungkham,(2019); 'Role of women in in the issues of climatechange",Dhanamanjuri College of Arts, 74th Annual College Magazine,2020.
3. ZahraSethna(2019);Genderequalityforsustainabledevelopment.InHowIISD work to achieve gender equality.iisd.org. retrieved,2021.
www.un.org/womenwatch, "Gateway on Gender Equality & Empowerment of Women; Women watch. Retrieved 2021.
<https://www.unwomen.org> in focus; SDG 5 :Achieve gender equality and empower, women and girls'- UN Economic & Social council, retrieved,2021. IISD,2019; 'Gender equality & Sustainable Development" retrieved,2021.
4. .<https://www.accountability.org/> 'Sustainable Development Goals" retrieved.
 8.UNs Department of Economic& Social Affairs; 'Sustainable Development", [sdgs.un.org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/).retrieved,2021.