

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY



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ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND CONSERVATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women are significant actors in natural resources management and they are major contributors to environment rehabilitation and conservation. Women are not only knowledgeable about the environment; they are also protective and caring. Women being primarily responsible for domestic and household management interact more intensively with both the natural and built environment. This study was carried out on role of women in environmental security in India with the objective to socio-economic status of women.

Keywords: Women, Environment, Security, Conservation, Energy.

INTRODUCTION

The environmental issues and peace and national security concerns are monolithic problems. Resource extraction often leads to severe environmental and other impacts on local communities. If the benefits and burdens of extractive projects such as oil production, mining, logging, and large scale dam construction are distributed unequally, the result may be protracted conflict. The role of women in such situation is significant. They participate in activities related to the environment such as household, health and hygiene, water, air and noise, awareness and adoption level of available related technologies, identify the constraints and hurdles in adopting related modern technologies and role of home scientists in

solving the remaining constraints and hurdles in adopting develop practices. These household activities are eco friendly in nature and protect the environment. Women face some problems and constraints to use and handle household gadgets.

Environmental change and conflicts

Resource scarcity and environmental degradation play an important role in generating or exacerbating conflicts. Conflict may arise over access to renewable natural resources such as water, arable land, forests, and fisheries. This may be the result of a tightening of supplies distributive inequities, or a combination of these factors. Environmental degradation may be mediated and sometimes augmented by social

disparities, ethnic and community rivalries, and political dynamics. A multitude of pressures including persistent poverty, wealth disparities, unequal land distribution, unemployment and job insecurity, population growth, health epidemics, and environmental degradation is provoking social stress, discontent and polarization, leading to political strife in many countries and to devastating violence in some. The global environment has the potential to become a major source of conflict between North and South. Most of the conflict was concerned to the resources.

ENVIRONMENT SECURITY VS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development and environmental security are mutually directed to form the policy. Sustainable development focuses on environmentally sound development that is economically, financially, socially and environmentally sustainable. Environmental security focuses more on preventing conflict and loss of state authority due to environmental factors and related to our energy, food and nutrition, health and hygiene, water, air and livelihood securities.

1. Energy

Most of our population depends upon oil for energy. One way to reduce dependence on oil would be to generate more fuel from biomass, such as forest waste, cow dung and molasses. Those and other biological materials already supply one third of the country's primary energy needs, providing cooking and heating fuel especially in electricity starved rural areas. In India most of people depend on biomass for heating and cooking. The poorest people in India use cattle dung for fuel and switch to wood when they are slightly better off economically. As a population's economic well-being improves, they graduate to liquefied petroleum gas and electricity. Use of biomass and waste materials as an energy source in India is expected to begin tapering off.

2. Food security

Food security is a part of the broader concept of nutrition security. Nutritional security is not only food security, but security of other requirements necessary for a healthy life, such as health care, a hygienic environment and knowledge of personal hygiene. All of these issues are central to women, yet their role in food security has not attracted attention of many policy-makers.

Empowering women is the key to ensuring food and nutritional security in the developing world. There is a lack of gender-specific information due to weak dissemination and lack of real awareness of the target audience i.e. role of man and women in achieving food security, human development and contribution of women. One reason for women's work remaining largely invisible in statistics is that a great deal of it takes place outside the formal economy which is frequently considered to be a residual category that does not contribute significant output to the national economy. Recognition and adequate compensation of women's productive as well as their reproductive labour are essential to maintain their contribution to global food production and security.

In developing country, women are considered the primary users of natural resources (land, forest and water), because they are the ones who are responsible for gathering food, fuel, and fodder. Although in these countries, women mostly can't own the land and farms outright, they are the ones who spend most of their time working on the farms to feed the household. Shouldering this responsibility leads them to learn more about soil, plants, and trees and not misuse them. Although, technological inputs increase male involvement with land, many of them leave the farm to go to cities to find jobs; so women become increasingly responsible for an increasing portion of farm tasks. These rural women tend to have a closer relationship with

land and other natural resources, which promotes a new culture of respectful use and preservation of natural resources and the environment, ensuring that the following generations can meet their needs. Besides considering how to achieve appropriate agricultural production and human nutrition, women want to secure access to the land. Women's perspectives and values for the environment are somewhat different than men's. Women give greater priority to protection of and improving the capacity of nature, maintaining farming lands, and caring for nature and environment's future. Repeated studies have shown that women have a stake in environment, and this take is reflected in the degree to which they care about natural resources.

3. Health and hygiene security

Mostly women are involved in the water supply but they have lack of knowledge of hygiene needed for health. Women are mostly devoid of education and not getting used to have analysis on the relation of water, hygiene and sanitation conditions for health. Several gender risks related conditions are noted for health inequity outcomes: open area for urinate and defecate that led to sexual assaulted; lack of water in the family; lack of sanitary for girls etc. Health is not health sector responsibility alone because it is investment for the family advancement. The understanding about gender, water sanitation and health would become asset for future investment on the family advancement.

In health we believe that prevention is better than cure. Children are the future generation for family, community and nation. Since the children are mostly depend on their mothers hence the involvement of women and family to the prevention action would become investment to the family advancement.

4. Water and air security

Water is vital for the life and health of people and ecosystems and a basic requirement for the

development of countries, but around the world women, men and children lack access to adequate and safe water to meet their most basic needs. Water resources and the related ecosystems are under threat from pollution, unsustainable use, land-use changes, climate change and many other forces. The link between these threats and poverty is clear, for it is the poor who are hit first and hardest. There is, of course, a huge diversity of needs and situations around the globe, but together we have one common goal; to provide water security in the 21st Century. This means ensuring that freshwater, coastal and related ecosystems are protected and improved, that sustainable development and political stability are promoted, that every person has access to enough safe water at an affordable cost to lead a healthy and productive life and that the vulnerable are protected from the risks of water-related hazards. The need for user involvement in maintaining water quality and looking at other aspects like hygiene, environment sanitation, storage and disposal are critical elements to maintain the quality of water resources.

Air pollution is the contamination of air by the discharge of harmful substances into atmosphere. It results from a variety of causes, not all of which are within human control. Dust storms in desert areas and smoke from forest fires and grass fires contribute to chemical and particulate pollution of the air. The source of pollution may be in one country but the impact of pollution may be felt elsewhere.

5. Livelihood security

The care household livelihood security framework has broadened our view of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. The livelihood security encompasses aspects of life not normally correlated with need or want. Thus, in addition to food, water, health, shelter and education, care includes participation in community, personal security and identity as

pre-requisites of a livelihood secure households. Similarly, a householder's assets would include not only its physical, financial and natural resources, but also its social and political positioning, its collective knowledge and its human capacities. Our household livelihood security perspective also confirms that overcoming poverty cannot be the purview of any single actor. Care must work in strategic partnerships, including with the poor. Perhaps most importantly, the framework clarifies that achieving household livelihood security requires attention to power relation within and among households, and particularly those rooted in gender.

RELEVANCE AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Increasing economic activities in developing countries result in more energy and consumption demand, which generally lead to environmental degradation. There is a conventional belief that such environmental degradation would resolve as soon as these countries grow economically since that would enable them to afford environmental friendly technology as well as pro-environmental regulations and policies. Major difficulties are not only the lack of legal and economic framework for environmental protection, but also lack of participation among general public in pro-environmental behaviours.

Moreover, there are increasing needs for such public participation due to the recent changes in sources of environmental problems. Today, the sources of pollution have shifted from production to consumption processes. The Human Development Report of 1998 (UNDP) affirms this trend and states that growth in consumption and unbalanced consumption patterns are placing unprecedented pressure on the environment. In this light, the acceptance of pro-environmental behaviour by general public, that is, to adopt sustainable life style, is an urgent issue in protecting environment.

The participation of citizen can complement existent legal and economic instruments, which are facing shortage of institutional, managerial and financial capabilities for enforcement. The increase of participation of citizen means that legal frameworks would be more respected and economic mechanisms would be more accepted thus increase their effectiveness. However, it remains unclear what can cause the participation of people in environmental actions. Today, women struggle against alarming global trends, but they are working together to effect change. By establishing domestic and international non-governmental organizations, many women have recognized themselves and acknowledge to the world that they not only have the right to participate in environmental dilemmas but they have different relationship with environment including different needs, responsibilities, and knowledge about natural resources. This is why women are affected differently than men by environmental degradation, deforestation, pollution and overpopulation. Women are often the most directly affected by environmental issues, so they become more concerned about environmental problems.

CONCLUSION

Growing population and technological advancement are continuously putting a strain on the environment and on country's natural resources. Hence, it is utmost important to conserve and promote the natural resources and environment. Women have direct contact with natural resources like fuel, food and fodder, forest, water and land especially in rural areas where 70% of Indian population reside and directly dependent upon natural resources. Women are also responsible for using these resources to satisfy the basic needs of their families. Women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water,

sources for fuel, and food, as well as both forests and agricultural terrain. From the high level to the grassroots, the 1992 UN Earth Summit, India's Chipko movement and Kenya's Green Belt Movement all highlighted the role of women's voices and perspectives in sustainable development. Similarly, nowadays Medha Patekar, a social worker, Menaka Gandhi, an environmentalist and politician, are playing key role for the conservation and promotion of the environment. Therefore, conservation of natural resources and promotion of environment cannot be done without involving the women in planning and training for promoting the values for conservation and promotion of environment. The eco-friendly efforts with absolute involvement of women power will definitely provide good health, inclusive and sustainable development with clean environment as well as safety to the future generation.

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