

CATALYTIC ROLE OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN FOSTERING GREEN ECONOMY



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“Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development” (Principle 20, Rio Declaration)

The perspective

Gender equality and environmental sustainability are two sides of the same coin - both women and the environment are undervalued in our global systems and economies. And both are essential if we are to see transitions to inclusive and sustainable economies. Greener economies holds great potential to reduce gender inequalities and increase women's economic participation. It offers the opportunity to make women's contributions to society and the economy visible as well as to revalue them.

What is a green economy ?

Sustainable development has been at the forefront of development agendas all over the world. And with current challenges such as climate change, one of the major strategies in place for this form of development to be achieved is through the concept of facilitating a green economy. A green economy is one that improves human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. A green economy seeks to bring long-term societal benefits to short-term activities aimed at mitigating environmental risks

In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. Green economy, understood either as a goal or a structural adjustment process to greener industrialization, agriculture, services sector and scientific and technological development, must not be seen as an end in itself, but as a pathway toward achieving

the goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Transitioning to a green economy to achieve sustainable development is a tall order that requires consistent cooperation of every segment of society. As the complex but interconnected issues of social inequality, environmental degradation, and economic instability remain a major threat to progress and quality living, each and everyone has a role to play to fast-track the green economy movement worldwide.

What has gender got to do with nature?

Gender inequality is not just a moral issue. It's an economic and environmental one. The surge in activism for women's rights - #MeToo, #TimesUp and #StillMarching – send a strong global message: women have had enough. Fuelling the powerful sentiments driving these campaigns, there is now compelling evidence to show that reducing the gap between genders is essential for tackling humanity's greatest challenge: to develop fair economies within our ecological limits.

Women remain to be the majority of the population to be adversely affected by climate change and environmental degradation. Women constitute approximately 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living on less than US\$1 a day, and they tend to be more dependent on In the same way that the natural capital which underpins our economies is too often treated as an economic externality, so too is the unpaid work carried out by the majority of the world's women on a daily basis. Yet unpaid care and domestic work makes

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a very real contribution to our economies. At the same time, women own between 10 and 20% of the world's land yet produce the majority of the global food supply. Women consistently earn less and fewer women occupy corporate executive positions. Worldwide, the majority of women work in informal markets, mainly concentrated in the lowest-paid and least secure forms of work. And women carry out between two and ten times as much unpaid care work as men. The global value of this work each year is estimated at \$10 trillion – one-eighth of global GDP.

Women and Green economy

There is a dual rationale for promoting gender equality. Firstly, that equality between women and men - equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities – is a matter of human rights and social justice. And secondly, that greater equality between women and men is also a precondition for (and effective indicator of) sustainable people-centred development. The perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of both women and men must be taken into consideration not only as a matter of social justice but because they are necessary to enrich development processes” women are critical to global green economy movement.

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In this context, it is clear that women's participation in inclusive, sustainable and green growth can propel the growth of a green economy. Women are consumers, they are also workers and producers, and in this context they play a crucial role in benefiting the growth of a green economy and in reaping the benefits from it.

The Harvard Business review estimated that in 2009 women controlled roughly US\$20 trillion dollars of global consumer spending, with a predicted rise to US\$28 trillion by 2014. Studies also showed that economically empowered women are more likely to purchase goods for

their households — specifically for their children, including food, healthcare, education, clothing and personal-care products; and simultaneously they are more likely to buy recyclable, eco-labeled and energy efficient products.

So women's economic empowerment affects patterns of household spending and is likely to increase demand for sustainable services and products. This trend could lead to significant impact on green growth. Gender equality is good for the environment. Women tend to have smaller ecological footprints than men and engage in more sustainable behaviors. Women and men approach environmental issues differently, and have different levels of use, access to and control of environmental resources. In many parts of the world women's extensive experience also makes them an invaluable source of knowledge and expertise on more sustainable environmental management. Women around the world are powerful agents of change and can play a vital role in the greening of economies. Women are key managers of natural resources and powerful agents of change. Not just victims, women have been and can be central actors in pathways to sustainability and green transformation.

Women are a core player in this all-encompassing crusade to build a sustainable future for all. As active contributors to the economy and society as a whole, women are crucial to ensuring the growth of a green economy. Women have innate leadership skills and sound judgment to make them effective leaders. They're key partners in the green economic transition. They have a way of seeing things comprehensively, bringing a mentoring approach to management and treatment of issues, including social considerations and implications. Their unique leadership and skills, non-traditional approach to a myriad of issues, and great influence within families — the core of any society — are vital to pushing common green economy goals; increasing demand for green products and services; and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, among others. They can help push those in power to prioritize climate change and take immediate, long-lasting action addressing this threat. In the absence of

appropriate social policies, the green economy may exacerbate existing gender inequities to the detriment of overall sustainability.

Opportunities of green economy for gender equality

Actions are needed to address the issues that currently impede women from economic participation such as barriers to education, lack of time, limited access to productive inputs, lack of land rights, access to finance etc. Since women are over-represented in the informal sector this should also be considered when assessing the potential for women's participation in greening, particularly in relation to improving working conditions to ensure green jobs are decent jobs.

While there are concerns that the emerging jobs in key green sectors tend to be male-dominated and highly skilled, there is also the opportunity to recognize this and support both women and men to learn new skills for green jobs. Sectors such as agriculture, forestry and energy will also be a major focus of the transition to green economy. Given their high participation in these sectors, women could use their knowledge of and dependency on natural resources to access green and decent job opportunities. In many developing countries, though often unrecognized and undervalued, women as farmers, forest stewards, natural resource managers and entrepreneurs already engage in green economic activities.

Women remain under-represented in high-level corporate leadership —accounting for 37 percent of lower-level and middle managers, and only 26 percent of vice presidents and senior managers — and lack of career development is often cited as one of the barriers for women. If business actively provides opportunities to women in non-traditional fields, they can nurture the talents of women needed to propel and sustain long-term 'green' growth of their business and the economy overall. Women's economic empowerment affects patterns of household spending and is likely to increase demand for sustainable services and products. This trend could lead to significant impact on green growth. But women are also workers and producers and the potential of their participation in a "green

labour force should not be underestimated. Currently at least 80 percent of global green jobs are expected to be in the secondary sectors, such as construction, manufacturing and energy production — industries where women are currently under-represented. For example, women account for 9 percent of the workforce in construction, 12 percent in engineering, 15 percent in financial and business services, and 24 percent in manufacturing — all sectors critical to building a green economy. To fill this shortage, training is needed. While this entails a cost; the benefits are many. On the production end, women trained in research and development for environmentally friendly products can contribute to designs that have both women and men in mind, enhancing the marketability and use of such products.

With increasing demand for professionals trained in green sectors and sustainable business practices, women provide an untapped resource for green growth. Therefore, targeted public support can ensure that girls and women have equal opportunities in education and training, leading to a stronger role in research and development on environmentally sound technologies. Businesses have a key role to play in advancing these complementary objectives — gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, as well as climate-smart and environmentally sound practices.

The 'greening' of economies may also require the introduction of policy frameworks that promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production, public finance, and capacity development of local communities. Green policy instruments for moving along a sustainable growth path may require setting-up of specific incentive measures for both producers and consumers. This may involve subsidizing sustainable methods of production and taxing harmful practices, and require ecological tax reforms that promote a shift of the tax base away from 'good factors' of production (e.g. labour) to 'bad factors' (e.g. pollution), therewith boosting employment for both women and men while correcting environmental externalities.

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) — a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact — are a set of seven principles that offer a clear, coherent and attainable vision of the contribution that business can make to advance gender equality in lock-step with sustainable economic growth. The result can mean good business for women, the environment, and the marketplace. More broadly, an enabling environment must be created. Legal measures must be put in place to protect women's full and equal rights to land, property and inheritance. Gender-responsive budgeting in Ministries in charge of water, energy and agriculture is another tool to eliminate inequalities in access to basic services that simultaneously maximizes the effectiveness of development policies and contributes to the achievement of more equitable development outcomes.

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and poverty eradication. In this context, it is clear that women's participation in inclusive, sustainable and green growth can propel the growth of a green economy. Women are consumers, they are also workers and producers, and in this context they play a crucial role in benefiting the growth of a green economy and in reaping the benefits from it.

Conclusion

Enhancing and promoting gender equality and women's participation in green growth and a green economy will require a multi-stakeholder approach that cuts across different sectors, addresses different levels and takes into account different contexts and cultures. It has often been said that the green economy brings together the economic and environmental pillar of sustainable development. Women's participation in the green economy makes an important link to the social pillar. Their contributions are therefore not only central to sustainable development in its three dimensions, but also a key aspect of the integration of the three pillars - environmental, economic and social. Now is the time to make sure that the right policies and actions are in place to make this a reality

CSBF NIRC admission from 01.02.21 to 28.02.21

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