

# ECOFEMINISM: A MEANS TO EMPOWER WOMEN TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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## *Abstract*

Women have always played the role of a nurturer to build economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies as compared to men, who focus mainly on the economic growth in the development process. This paper wishes to focus on Ecofeminism, a concept that embraces ecology and feminist principles to achieve environmentally sustainable societies, which can automatically help achieve some of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of Agenda 2030; such as Goal number 12, that is, to ensure sustainable production and Consumption and Goal number 15, that is, protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, to name a few. But for this women have to play an active role in the decision making process at the Government level, which will automatically speed up the process to achieve Goal number 5 of SDGs, that is, Gender Equality. Women, Ecofeminists by nature, would like to be agents of change rather than just beneficiaries of the SDGs. In India, women's political participation is dismal, despite women accounting for 49% of the population, which is because they have been sidelined in a patriarchal society like India. The paper wishes to push for giving reservation to women in the Parliament in India. It is believed that world over, given a chance women will use their inclusive policy making skills to make Earth a sustainable planet. 'The voice of women is critically important for the world's future – not just for women's future.'- Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Ecology, Environment, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Decision making, Policy, Patriarchal Societies, Gender Equality, Parliament

## **Introduction**

Women have always played the role of a caregiver or a nurturer and there is almost a mystical bond that exists between women and nature that men do not perceive. It arises because women interact with nature on a day to day basis and thus are more aware and have greater respect for community coherence and solidarity at the micro level and sustainable societies at the macro level. Women follow the principle of: 'There is enough on Earth for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed', thus following the principle of optimizing the use of the Earth's resources. In the division of labour, it falls on the women to collect water,

gather fire wood and harvest edible plants in tribal and rural societies. Women are thus more easily able to respond to drying-up of springs or the disappearance of forests.

As per data compiled by Inter Parliament Union, published in April 2018, in India, women make for only 11.8 and 11.9 percent of the lower and upper house of the Parliament, which is below the world average of 13.8 percent. (UNICEF data, 2000). Thus, women in India have a subdued voice in the Parliament in policy making. It is believed that it is important to push for an Ecofeministic approach to handle the various SDG goals, which can be achieved through increasing women's representation in policy making by giving them reservation in seat representation in the Parliament and consulting them in policy making at both the grassroots and the national level. This will help achieve some of the 17 SDGs, thus making this Earth a sustainable planet.

### **Objective**

The objective of the paper is to present the idea, that an Ecofeministic approach in decision making in policies of a nation can address the issue of achieving SDGs of Agenda 2030. Responsible Consumption and Production, Clean Water and Sanitation, Life on Land, Life under Water, Affordable and Clean Energy, all these which are goals of Agenda 2030, can be achieved if the partnership for the goals include multi stakeholders, with women being encouraged to participate in policy making to create environmentally sustainable societies. The paper's objective is to emphasize this, since the Indian society has patriarchy deeply ingrained in it and thus leading to gender inequality. It believes that an increase in the number of women in decision making roles can be a solution to achieve many of the SDGs and thus a sustainable society. Women inherently being Ecofeminists, will always ensure that the development policies meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation's needs, thus maintaining the objectives of the Brundtland report.

### **Value**

1. To advocate, emphasize and reiterate what Mahatma Gandhi said, 'There is enough on Earth for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed'.
2. Ecofeminism can help achieving some goals of UNDP Agenda 2030.

### **Approach of discussion in this Paper**

The paper gives an introduction to the concept of sustainable societies, concept of Ecofeminism, how it came into being globally, gives instances of Ecofeministic movements in India, relates this concept to SDG goals, e.g., Goal No 12, 15, mentioned in the sustainable development goals of United Nations Agenda 2030 and how women contribute to the maintaining of sustainable societies. It presses that in a patriarchal society, where the male gender dominates both nature and women, women through their Ecofeministic approach can be the solution to make societies more sustainable with a balanced approach to development and use of natural resources. It sums up by pressing for giving more power to women in decision/policy making in

governance, be it at the grassroots level or in the Parliament in India. This will help in turn achieve goal number 5 of Agenda 2030.

## **Methodology**

The paper uses a theoretical method, analysing secondary data which has been collected from secondary sources such as journals, books, magazines, newspaper articles and website publications.

## **Sustainable Societies**

A Sustainable Society is one wherein there is a balance of environmental, economic and social parameters, which takes into consideration the quality of life of a citizen, which is not compromised at the cost of economic growth of a country. This would also mean that the critical quality of life is preserved for future generations. Since the industrial revolution, countries in their quest for getting the tag of a developed nation, have been only looking at the economic improvement of the lives of their citizens. This is more so, in a capitalistic-patriarchal society, a society where men dominate women, capitalism dominates the environment and the privileged dominate the marginalised. Men are by and large patriarchy by nature and do not worry about the long term effects of not maintaining a sustainable society.

## **Women and their role as policy makers in Sustainable societies : Gender equality in the Indian Context**

In the census of 2011 conducted in India, it was revealed that the nationwide overall sex ratio of males to females was 1000 to 940. Added to that, is the Indian society norms, which do not allow a woman to move beyond the four walls of her house. The Constitutional 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, (commonly referred to as the Panchayati Raj Act) and the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act. 1992, (the Nagarpalika Act) have made provisions for 33 percent reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipal bodies respectively. Despite this provision, women's contribution to decision making has been underplayed because of domination of male members who by and large are hostile and create hurdles in decision making for women in administrative roles. According to a study conducted by Inter Parliamentary Union, India ranks 149 in a list of 193 countries in terms of women's representation in the Lok Sabha. (data of April 1, 2018). India's position on rankings, such as, Gender Development Index, male-female wage gap, women labour force and gender pay gap is disappointing. Therefore, in this context Goal number 5 of Agenda 2030, it is all the more important and if this goal is targeted first, it will help achieve various other goals of the SDGs.

## **Ecofeminism**

Ecology is the study of interaction among organisms and their environment. It is also a political movement that is concerned with protecting the environment. Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of equality of sexes. The concept of Ecofeminism connects the two. The concept of Ecofeminism (Ecology + Feminism), which was coined by French feminist Françoise d' Eaubonne in her book "Le Feminisme ou la Mort" (Feminism or Death) (1974). It brings into picture consequences to the environment

in a capitalist-patriarchal society. It highlights the link between human values, human centric activities and environmental destruction. Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Ynestra King (1987), an Ecofeminist, challenged the American belief of exploiting the Earth for capital gains and felt it was akin to a patriarchal society oppressing women. She was instrumental in making this concept more philosophical rather than academic.

Many other feminists including environmentalists have postulated their theory about this concept. Ivone Gebara, (1990), concluded that environmental degradation led to a global disorder which was a result of patriarchal beliefs of capitalistic market theories popularized by the West. This led to marginalization of the economically weaker sections of society which she observed from her study of urban Sao Paulo societies. Rosemary Radford Ruether, (1993), believed that Ecofeminism can lead to global justice. Dr. Vandana Shiva (2009) believes that the world today is bent upon degrading the environment and exploiting mother Earth. This is what creates a culture of male domination, inequality and exploitation of women. To put it in perspective, Ecofeminists believe that oppression of women and nature is a result of a patriarchal capitalistic mindset.

### **The basis of Ecofeminism**

There is a basic connection of ethics between women and nature. Both play an important role in the basis of life on Earth. Since time immemorial, the dominant gender of a society have always sidelined women and nature. It makes corporations or governments, (even in developed societies), represented by the male gender, believe that they have the authority to exploit nature and the nurturer, thus creating a deep ecological crisis. Ecofeminism highlights this patriarchal belief prevalent in societies in all forms. It also leads one to focus on the 'local' to solve a global problem. It compels one to think about moral values while finding solutions to sustainable growth on this Earth. American Ecofeminist, Carolyn Merchant, the author of the book, "The Death of Nature" (1980), stressed on how the scientific revolution in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century eventually resulted in men dominating both women and nature.

Once human beings, rather the male gender, understood the secrets of nature, they learnt how to control its resources for maximum capital benefits. Nothing remained *hers* thereafter. Elizabeth Dodson Gray, an Ecofeminist from America, in her book, *Green Paradise Lost* (1979), wondered how humans could get away with treating nature so badly. One needs to rethink if we need to sustain life on Earth especially in the times of major climate change and global warming, Today with environmental catastrophes occurring frequently, the need to debate and discuss ecofeministic solutions to natural disasters is more critical than ever. Ecofeminists also argue that because humans created the crisis, the healing must also come from them.

### **Literature on Ecofeminism**

"But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself" (Rachel Carson, 1962). Rachel Carson's work made the US Government take a look at environment degradation and its

effects seriously. Her book “Silent Spring” in particular, that highlighted the effects of DDT on human health, was an eye opener and proved to be a catalyst for the environmental social movement of the 1960s. Her work also influenced the rise of ecofeminism as well as many scientists, who kept their arguments in this materialist/capitalist versus environment movement. Throughout the 1970s, a few Ecofeminists in academic settings, brought forward their academic endeavours linking Ecology and feminism. Rachel Carson made discussion of the environment respectable.

Other books of academic interest that bring out the conflict between human beings and nature, in light of the environmental crisis, include Rosemary Ruether’s “New Woman/New Earth” (1975), Susan Griffin’s “Woman and Nature” (1978), Mary Daly’s “Gyn/Ecology” (1978) and Carolyn Merchant’s “The Death of Nature” (1980). These books substantiate the concept of Ecofeminism; reiterating that the case for environment and sustainable development is thus a concept very close to women’s ethos, logos and pathos.

The last five years have seen a few more studies, which have been done especially in the West on Ecofeminism. Ivone Gebera (2013), an Ecofeminist theologian, in her studies of anthropology linked patriarchy and religion to different social forms of ecological and gendered oppression. The human male species considers it natural to do so. Lisa Kemmerer (2013), saw a connection between societies that create oppression and behave in a way that affects nature, women, and animals. Astrida Neimanis (2015) concluded that considering the speed at which environmental devastation is taking place, ecofeminism may be more relevant than ever. She was of the opinion that the world should be looking more at ecofeminist analyses without further delay to understand how to get on in this anthropocenic world in a more balanced way. Carol J Adams through her principle of Ecofeminism endorses the concept through ‘Ethics of Care’, in which she feels caring is not just for another human being but potentially for any part of the planet. She says that the ecofeministic articulation of care becomes both a radical critique of patriarchal privilege and becomes a remedy to this privilege.

Dr. Vandana Shiva, an environmentalist and self-proclaimed Ecofeminist of Indian origin, believes in a concept called Earth democracy and the philosophy of Ecofeminism. She realised through the Chipko movement, that there exists an intimate connection between nature’s economy and the sustenance economy and that women are ideal for taking care of this connection. She believes that today we are discussing the concept of environmental sustainability and sustainable societies because the Earth is facing the challenge from greed economy. (The Wall Street Journal, 2013). Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva through their book ‘Ecofeminism’, argue that women can counter ecological destruction and industrial catastrophes and offer solutions to these and many other issues from a unique perspective.

### **Ecofeministic Movements in India**

Indian women’s connection with land, water, air, health, peace and justice for all demonstrates that they are agents of change in the maintenance of sustainable societies. Time and again they have reminded the nation of its misuse of its natural resources either through mass movements or using pen as a tool to write and apprise people about it.

- a. *Amrita Devi* : The first recorded such movement can be traced to the year 1731 when *Amrita Devi* from the *Bishnoi* Community, in Rajasthan died while trying to prevent the felling of trees. She took on the then *Maharaja* of Jodhpur. She was an inspiration for 363 women who also gave up their life to protect trees.
- b. *Saalumarada Thimmakka*: This environmentalist is famous for her effort in planting and tending to 384 banyan trees along a four kilometre stretch of highway between *Hulikal* and *Kudur* in Karnataka. She started this movement in 1948 and continues to inspire the people around her, including her family members. This ratifies the fact that women play a natural role in nourishing and preserving natural resources thus creating the base for sustainable environment.
- c. *Amrita Bai, Bachni Devi and Gaura Devi*: These women from Uttarakhand in 1973 who led the *Chipko* movement snatched away the axe from the woodcutters and prevented them from felling trees in the forests. The *Bishnoi* community movement was an inspiration for them and it showed that women are more sensitive to environment protection as the changes in the ecology affect their role of the nurturer.
- d. *Apikko Movement*: Inspired by the *Chipko* movement, the villagers of *Uttara Kannada* district launched a similar movement in Karnataka, to protect the Sahyadri range of forests and the Western Ghats, called the *Apikko* movement which has been alive for three decades. Like the *Chipko* movement, *Apikko* was also a non-violent movement where women played a major role to prevent denuding of forests. In the initial days of the movement, the women would keep aside a fistful of grains, which would then be collected by environmental activists, and passed on to those who stood guard over the trees continuously in the forests. The women belonged to *Mahila Mandals* (women's groups) in that region and had representations from different castes and tribal groups. From care givers to reapers and harvesters, from preservers of indigenous seeds to curators and custodians of nature, from animal keeping to firewood and fuel collection, these women replicated their culture to sustain their societies. What a patriarchal mindset does to women, it does to nature: Exploit, Subjugate and Oppress. Women generally engage in community level initiatives to spread awareness about environmental causes. These were the observations of Panduranga Hegde, founder of the *Apikko* movement.
- e. *Medha Patkar*: Riddled in controversy for more than 50 years, the *Sardar Sarovar* dam that has displaced thousands of villagers. In the last two decades the fight of these villagers has been led by Medha Patkar through the *Narmada Bachao Andolan*. She still continues to lead the struggle to fight for the rights of the displaced people of Madhya Pradesh.
- f. *Aruna Roy*: Another contemporary activist representing the people's voice is *Aruna Roy* who has fought for sustainable practices and has managed to achieve a lot of success. She has been

instrumental in getting the Parliament to pass bills such as Right to Information, Right to Food and Right to Work, to bring in changes and reforms in governance that has benefit the marginalized.

- g. *Sunita Narain*: She is a contemporary Environmentalist and Political Activist and the Editor of the magazine 'Down to Earth'. In India, where not much reporting is done on environment based issues, Sunita Narain and her team continue till date to fight for environmental causes through their pens and are voices that articulate to draw the Government's attention to the importance of maintaining sustainable societies.
- h. *Bahar Dutt*: She is a contemporary environmental journalist, who fought against commercial development in the wetlands. Her book, *Green Wars: Dispatches From A Vanishing World*, explores the conflicts between environment and development crusaders and questions the popular model of 'growth at any cost' that has led to compromising India's forests and rivers. Ms. Dutt has chased and reported stories from Arunachal Pradesh to the Andamans and from Gangotri to Goa.
- i. *Dr. Vandana Shiva*: She is an environmentalist and an anti-globalization author, who has been promoting biodiversity and agro-ecology, which she believes are answers to tackle the problem of climate change. She is also crusading against unethical genetic engineering and IPR in the food industry, the main aim being trying to protect India's traditional eco-friendly practices, that promotes vedic heritage for sustainable development. She has started a movement for Earth Democracy called *Navadanya* which has been promoting organic farming and fair trade. She believes that compassion and love, (not oppression and violence), heightened by ecological justice can replace consumerism laced with greed and competition as objectives of human life. It is a movement powered by women for delivering ecological justice and protecting the basic tenets of life on Earth.

### **Women Empowerment in decision making roles**

Women need to play a more proactive role in decision making capacity which has seen limited progress in the political space. The Constitution of India is based on the principles of equity. Article 325 and 326 of the Indian Constitution provides equality to women but women by and large have not benefited from this right. In all participatory strategic discussions, it has been highlighted that women need to be involved in a decision making role for a change in the national and international sustainable development agenda.

The change needs to begin at the grassroots level. India has seen progress in this after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution in 1992, which has reserved thirty three percent of seats for women in Panchayats and Municipal bodies respectively. As per (2014) data available in the Ministry of *Panchayati Raj*, under Government of India(GOI) portal, the ministry instituted the *Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar*, (National Award), under the auspices of GOI in 2010 to encourage and appreciate the work done

at the grassroots level, for outstanding contribution to create sustainable societies. Ten of the eighteen nominees, (one from each state, in 2014), were women, which is a testimonial to the principles of Ecofeminism. These leaders excelled in their task of identifying reforms and implementing them to promote economic and social development in their village. This was a classic case of proving that women when given a responsibility took decisions that helped build sustainable societies and ensured it through the last mile connectivity. This achievement is commendable considering villages in India are a microcosm of a patriarchal society. The following success stories of women, who have played an active role in Panchayats, reflect that women can perform admirably in helping achieve sustainable societies.

Women have been major actors in forest management in the Himalayas through a centuries old institution that is 'van' or forest panchayat. In Uttarakhand, *Bhagoti Devi*, who was the *sarpanch* (head of the local government body) of *Parwada* district for seven years, restored a 280 acre denuded forest under her leadership. This was undertaken in 2007 and after a decade of effort, the forest remains lush and healthy even today. Many self help groups all headed and led by women such as *Mahila Bans*, *Mahila Mangal Dal*, to name a few take it upon themselves to patrol and keep a vigil on the forest and personally implement their own conservation methods.

There are success stories from the south of India too. *Jesu Mary*, the President of *Michaelpattinam* Panchayat of *Ramnathpuram* district whose remarkable achievement of implementing the rain water harvesting system(2001), influenced the Government of Tamil Nadu to implement this system compulsorily in all buildings of Tamil Nadu. *Fatima Bi* of gram panchayat of *Kalva, Kurnool* district, Andhra Pradesh won the UNDP race against poverty (1998). *Rani Sathappan*, the President of *K Rayavaram Gram Panchayat* in *Pudukkottai* district was successful in providing basic facilities to farmers, banning the use of plastic and improving the sanitation conditions(2012). *Bhavani Illango*, the President of *Merpanaikadu Gram Panchayat*, of *Pudukkottai* district formed 23 self help groups and implemented de-silting of tanks that provided drinking water to the entire area.

*Ganga Joshi* associated with *Chirag* (a rural development NGO based in the *Kumao* region of Uttarakhand since 1990), an organization in the Nainital district of Uttarakhand, which has been entrusted with facilitating the creation of forest management plans for each *Panchayat*, observed that women have a close relationship with the forests as they are the ones who harvest resources from the forests and thus are more inclined to take care of it. When given a task they implement rules and measures to conserve the forest but are marginalised when it comes to decision making or recognition by the menfolk. It is generally observed that men in fear of losing their hierarchical position either react sharply against women in power and scuttle their efforts or do not want to hand over decision making to women. Despite facing such heavy resistance from the patriarchs of the *gram panchayats*, these women took important decisions and managed to build sustainable societies.

## Need to increase women's representation in decision making capacity in India

It has also been observed, (as per data published in Inter-Parliamentary Union), that countries like Rwanda, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Senegal have 61% to 41% of women representatives in the Upper House and 47% to 35% in the Lower House. Global average of women in national Parliament is 23.8% (2018), IPU. But India has only about 11.9% women representatives in the Parliament. Only 62 MPs out of 542 Lok Sabha members and 27 MPs out of 245 Rajya Sabha members are women, which is quite a dismal figure. There are only 6 women ministers today of cabinet rank in the ruling party. This means most of the decisions will be made by their male counterparts who would probably focus only the economic angle which does not translate into making a sustainable society in the long run. We believe that women's representation must increase from the current average of 11-12% representation in the Indian Parliament so that women can have a greater say in decision making roles to bring about changes in our societies.

### The Arguments against Ecofeminism

It is documented that women face social, political and economic challenges, that limit their capacity to face any natural calamities like hurricanes / earthquakes or a man-made calamity like civil war. Therefore, it is but natural that women try to maintain a balance between nature and development, proving their Ecofeministic tilt. Many critics however have a different viewpoint. Ecofeminism as a concept is seen to be romanticizing women power and delivering justice to women, as these critics feel that there are women who adopt the 'patriarchal male' lifestyle too. Andrew Dobson (1990), says patriarchal societies have produced some 'good' and 'not-so good' traits in women. Robyn Eckersley (1992) believes that the concept of Ecofeminism can lead to stereotyping a woman's role in a society, without giving any room for criticism. She emphasizes three ways in which over-privileging womens' experiences can lead to an inhibition of the general emancipatory process. Firstly, one can sideline the number of women who have contributed to the degradation of environment in the past. Secondly, one may be tempted to ignore the fact that many men have suffered from masculine stereotypes. Thirdly, it may blind one to think rationally and thus conclude that all occurrences of gender/nature injustice is due to a so-called 'patriarchal mindset'. This can lead to a lopsided and reductionist analysis of social and ecological problems. Social ecologist and feminist Janet Biehl (1991), who initially postulated facts on social ecology and linked ecology and feminism rationally and coherently in order to champion the cause of women emancipation eventually became critical of it after various ecofeminists equated women and nature with mysticism and stereotypical theories rather than rational theories. She criticized Ynestra King's theory of women equals nature, a male ideology, calling it radical feminism. She lamented that it is a regressive theory rather a progressive one. A E Kings (2017), has criticized ecofeminism for not considering other human aspects, such as race or sexual orientation while theorizing about man and nature. He feels that there is a danger to conclude any theory with a prejudiced set of ideas of oppression, discrimination and gender bias.

## Findings and Conclusion

It has been observed that most of the women always think not about self but about the entire family or community. Many environmental sustainability campaigns have been led by women. This is because, women are the ones most affected by environmental challenges. It results in women bringing a first-hand perspective to the table. Also, since the age of early man, women have always been managing the use of natural resources by procuring food and water, and by ensuring shelter for the family. The responsibility of nurturing and caring comes as a second nature to most women. Therefore, consciously or unconsciously, a woman's contribution to the environment is indirect and hence, is unaccounted for and sidelined or dismissed as a gimmick by the patriarchs.

Way back in September 1995, the United Nations held the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. By the time the conference ended, that is after two weeks, the UN gave to the world the most comprehensive guideline for empowering women across the globe, that is, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. According to the Platform for Action, gender inequality is the main cause for all environmental concerns. As a remedial measure, the Platform for Action suggested women be involved in policy making, right from the grass-root level all the way up to the top. The more women forming the core environmental decision-making team, the higher the chances of creating a sustainable world for the future generations. This is the basic premise on which Dr. Vandana Shiva and Aruna Roy have based their advocacy and activism on, rooting for the cause of environment and for women representation respectively, both key to sustainable development.

Taking into consideration United Nation's suggestion about involving more and more women into policy making, we need to rethink India's Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament, also known as the 108th amendment. Though the bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010, the Lok Sabha refused to act on it, thus resulting in the lapse of the bill in 2014. When women account for one half of the country's potential talent, a nation's competitiveness depends on how efficiently it uses its talent base contributed by women. After critically analysing the positive impact seen by both First World and Third World countries, when involving women in crucial environmental decision-making processes, it might make sense for India as well, to give at least 33% reservation to women if not more to match the 1000 males to 940 females (Census 2011). Success stories of this have been seen in the Panchayat and Municipal body level in India. This will possibly help India first to achieve its UNDP Goal number 5 - 'Gender Equality', beyond just slogans, which will ensure defeating atrocities such as violence against women, equal access to education, health and opportunities, abolishing child marriage and above all representation of women in all fields especially decision making. In the gender gap index India today stands at 114 among 142 countries, with Bangladesh at 68 and Sri Lanka at 78, indicating that there is along way to go for India. One way to achieve this is through an Ecofeministic approach. This is crucial to accelerating sustainable development and will have a multiplier effect across all goals.

In the race for development in a capitalistic dominated world, it is but natural that today the United Nations has had to deliberate and bring out its Agenda 2030, on sustainable development goals. Since women have always been the nurturer or the care giver, an Ecofeministic viewpoint would like to believe that women would be more successful in implementing the various goals of Agenda 2030.

“Advancing gender equality may be one of the best ways of saving the environment and countering the dangers of overcrowding and other adversities associated with population pressure. The voice of women is critically important for the world’s future – not just for women’s future.” (Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics)

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