

Actualizing Gender Equity for Environmental Sustainability

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 The Nexus between Gender Equity and Environmental Sustainability.....	6
3.0 Actualizing Gender Equity for Environmental Sustainability: Prospects and Problems.....	10
4.0 Way Forward.....	14
5.0 Conclusion	17
References	18

Actualizing Gender Equity for Environmental Sustainability

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Abstract

The paper critically appraises the role of gender equity in fostering environmental sustainability. It examines the disparities between men and women in environmental governance and management and how these differences have hindered realization of environmental sustainability. The paper further evaluates the progress made towards promoting gender equity in environmental matters and challenges thereof. It also proposes reforms towards actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability towards Sustainable Development.

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1.0 Introduction

Environmental sustainability has been defined as a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs without diminishing biological diversity¹. It has also been defined as the responsibility to conserve natural resources and protect global ecosystems to support health and wellbeing, now and in the future². This concept received global attention following the release of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report) which considered it within the context of Sustainable Development³. The Report defined Sustainable Development as development which meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. Sustainable Development seeks to foster development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable⁵.

Environmental sustainability thus seeks to promote the various facets of development in a manner that does not harm future generations through loss and damage of global ecosystems⁶. It encapsulates the principle of intergenerational equity which provides that natural resources of the earth must be safeguarded for the benefit of the present and future generations through careful planning and management⁷. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development further stipulates that the right to development must be

¹ Morelli, J., 'Environmental Sustainability: A Definition for Environmental Professionals.' *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2011)

² Sphera., 'What Is Environmental Sustainability?' Available at <https://sphera.com/glossary/what-is-environmental-sustainability/> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

³ Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development., 'Our Common Future' 1987 (Brundtland Report)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Fitzmaurice, M., 'The Principle of Sustainable Development in International Development Law.' *International Sustainable Development Law.*, Vol 1.

⁶ Goodland, R., 'The Concept of Environmental Sustainability.' *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, Volume 26 (1995), 1-24

⁷ United Nations., 'Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972' Principle 2

fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations⁸.

Achieving environmental sustainability has become a pertinent concern in the wake of global environmental challenges⁹. These problems include global warming, loss of biodiversity, pollution, deforestation, ocean acidification, food and water insecurity, soil degradation and depletion of natural resources through overfishing, unsustainable mining among others¹⁰. These environmental problems have been worsened by the threat of climate change which is the most defining challenge of our time¹¹. The impacts of climate change such as warmer temperatures, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe wild fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity are being witnessed across the world¹². These environmental problems including climate change affect environmental sustainability by affecting natural ecosystems as evidenced by loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural resources¹³. It has been argued that environmental problems including climate change are caused by human activities such as burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas, deforestation and unsustainable agriculture practices¹⁴. Addressing these problems towards fostering environmental sustainability therefore requires a change in human behaviour and practices¹⁵.

⁸ United Nations General Assembly., 'Report of the United Nations Conference On Environment and Development: Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.' A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), Principle 3

⁹ Robinson. D., '15 Biggest Environmental Problems of 2023.' Available at <https://earth.org/the-biggest-environmental-problems-of-our-lifetime/> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs., 'Forum on Climate Change and Science and Technology Innovation.' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/desa/forum-climate-change-and-science-and-technology-innovation> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹² United Nations., 'What is Climate Change?' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹³ UNICEF., 'Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability.' Available at <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/climate-change> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹⁴ United Nations., 'What is Climate Change?' Op Cit

¹⁵ Ibid

Realizing environmental sustainability requires sound environmental governance and management¹⁶. One of the fundamental problems identified in environmental governance and management is the issue of gender disparities between men and women with the latter being disproportionately disadvantaged¹⁷. It has been argued that there is a need for active participation of both men and women in the management of natural resources and environmental governance in order to foster environmental sustainability¹⁸. Achieving gender equity is therefore vital in attaining environmental sustainability¹⁹.

The paper critically appraises the role of gender equity in fostering environmental sustainability. It examines the disparities between men and women in environmental governance and management and how these differences have hindered realization of environmental sustainability. The paper further evaluates the progress made towards promoting gender equity in environmental matters and challenges thereof. It also proposes reforms towards actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability.

2.0 The Nexus between Gender Equity and Environmental Sustainability

The term gender refers to the set of social norms, practices and institutions that regulate the relations between women and men in a society²⁰. It has also been defined as a social construct that ascribes different qualities and rights to women and men regardless of individual competence or desires²¹. Further, the term gender is also used to refer to the

¹⁶ Goodland. R., 'The Concept of Environmental Sustainability.' Op Cit

¹⁷ Geneva Environment Network., 'Gender and the Environment.' Available at <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/gender-and-the-environment/> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹⁸ Muigua. K., 'Gender Perspectives in Biodiversity Conservation.' Available at <http://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Gender-Perspectives-in-Biodiversity-Conservation-Kariuki-Muigua-November-2021.pdf> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ United Nations, "The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality," Women 2000 and Beyond, December 2008, p.4. Available at <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/media/publications/un/en/w2000menandboysew eb.pdf> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

²¹ G. J. Latham, "A study on gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development," Report to the Environment Advisory Council, Sweden 2007:2, p. 17. Available at

socially-constructed expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes and behaviours associated with being a woman or a man, and while gender defines what is feminine and masculine, it shapes the social roles that men and women play and the power relations between them, which can have a profound effect on the use and management of natural resources²².

Gender equality entails giving men and women equal treatment when it comes to rights, responsibilities and opportunities²³. It enshrines equal outcomes for women, men and gender-diverse people²⁴. Gender equity on the other hand is about fairness²⁵. In order to ensure everyone has equal opportunities, gender equity considers privilege, bias and other parameters that can limit how people access opportunities²⁶. Gender equity is the process to achieve gender equality²⁷. It recognizes that due to historical and social disadvantages some people especially women are not in the same position as men and thus treating them 'equally' may not be fair hence the need to address these inequalities²⁸.

It has been observed that men and women relate to the environment in different ways, and environmental changes have different impacts on their lives²⁹. Women play a critical role in sustaining communities and managing natural resources, but their contributions are often undervalued and neglected³⁰. For example, women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of freshwater as a natural resource, and they

http://www.uft.oekologie.unibremen.de/hartmutkoehler_fuer_studierende/MEC/09-MECreading/gender%202007%20EAC%20rapport_engelska.pdf (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

²² 'What Is Gender and Biodiversity?' Available at <https://www.cbd.int/gender/biodiversity/> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

²³ Crabtree. E., 'Why we Need Gender Equity, Not Just Equality.' Available at <https://iqeq.com/insights/why-we-need-gender-equity-not-just-equality/#:~:text=Gender%20equality%20is%20giving%20all,limit%20how%20people%20access%20opportunities.> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ DCED., 'Gender Equality vs Equity.' Available at <https://www.enterprise-development.org/weegateway/gender-equality-vs-equity/> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ United Nations Environment Programme., 'About Gender.' Available at <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/gender/about-gender> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

³⁰ Ibid

are often responsible for sanitation and maintaining a hygienic home³¹. Women are also more likely than men to live in poverty, and they are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and other environmental hazards, especially in developing countries³².

Natural disasters such as erosion and other forms of soil degradation, pollution of freshwaters, shore-line erosion, flooding, loss of wetlands, drought and desertification impact directly on women in their roles as providers of food, water and fuel³³. It has also been observed that climate change can also impact on women's productive roles since its impacts such as rising sea levels, flooding in low-lying delta areas and increased salt-water intrusion can jeopardize sustainable livelihood strategies³⁴. Further, food security and family well-being are threatened when the resource base on which women rely to carry out their critical roles and obtain supplementary incomes is undermined³⁵. Agriculture is the most important employment sector for women in low and middle income countries and therefore, during periods of drought and erratic rainfall, women, as agricultural workers and primary procurers, work harder to secure income and resources for their families³⁶. This puts added pressure on girls, who often have to leave school to help their mothers manage the increased burden³⁷. Women also bear a disproportional burden of deteriorating water quality and availability in rural and urban areas due to environmental problems such as pollution and drought and have to travel long distances in search of water to sustain households³⁸. Based on the foregoing, it has

³¹ SIDA., 'Gender and the Environment.' Available at <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/-gender-and-the-environment.pdf> (Accessed on 11/08/2023)

³² United Nations Environment Programme., 'About Gender.' Op Cit

³³ Hannan. C., 'Mainstreaming Gender Perspectives in Environmental Management and Mitigation of Natural Disasters.' Available at https://web.archive.org/web/20180721174301id_/http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/presn-at%20disaster.PDF (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ UN Women., 'Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected.' Available at https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected?gclid=CjwKCAjw29ymBhAKEiwAHJbJ8p-iWBVsiOQq0h8-HiXaObwP7T1nztSxRGpldFcxcRs-flzzRIQIgRoCVrIQAvD_BwE (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ SIDA., 'Gender and the Environment.' Op Cit

been argued that women were more worried about climate change than men and that more women than men felt they could do something to curb climate change and were prepared to take action to that effect³⁹. Actualizing gender equity and giving women a voice in environmental decision making can therefore foster environmental sustainability.

In addition, in the context of corporate governance, it has been observed that women play a more significant role, compared to men, in establishing positive values in terms of social welfare but also toward reducing carbon emissions⁴⁰. Thus, enhancing board gender diversity is vital in enabling firms to 'go green⁴¹.' Gender board diversity is positively related to a firm's 'environmental consciousness and foster environmental sustainability initiatives through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities⁴². To this extent, it has been argued that women have a lower proclivity for unethical business behavior and are more socially oriented than men, which could mean that more gender diverse boards are less likely to engage in unethical behavior and be more effective in CSR-related decision-making⁴³. Actualizing gender equity in board decision making can thus enhance environmental sustainability.

Based on the foregoing, it has been asserted that Gender equity and environmental sustainability are gaining political momentum as global challenges that require urgent co-ordinated action⁴⁴. Women and men around the world are affected differently by climate change, deforestation, land degradation, desertification, unsustainable infrastructure, growing water scarcity and inadequate sanitation, making the goals of

³⁹ Kassinis. G et al., 'Gender and Environmental Sustainability: A Longitudinal Analysis.' *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* (2016)

⁴⁰ De Silva. DG., & Pownall. RA., 'Going Green: Does it Depend on Education, Gender or Income?' *Applied Economics*, Volume 46, No. 5. (2014) pp573–586.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Kassinis. G et al., 'Gender and Environmental Sustainability: A Longitudinal Analysis.' Op Cit

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development., 'Gender and the Environment.' Available at <https://www.oecd.org/env/gender-and-the-environment-3d32ca39-en.htm> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

gender equality and environmental sustainability mutually reinforcing⁴⁵. Integrating a gender lens to environmental data collection and policy making can thus foster environmental sustainability⁴⁶.

3.0 Actualizing Gender Equity for Environmental Sustainability: Prospects and Problems

There have been some attempts towards fostering gender equity for environmental sustainability. The Third United Nations Women's Conference held in Nairobi Kenya in 1985 was among the first international forums that made explicit the linkages between Sustainable Development and women's involvement and empowerment as well as gender equality and equity⁴⁷. The conference identified the environment as an area of concern for women and called for a gender perspective on Sustainable Development, planning and implementation⁴⁸. The *Rio Declaration* also envisages the participation of all people in environmental management⁴⁹. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration states as follows:

'Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided⁵⁰.'

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ United Nations., 'Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.' A/CONF.116/128/Rev.1

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ United Nations General Assembly., 'Report of the United Nations Conference On Environment and Development: Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.' Op Cit

⁵⁰ Ibid

Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration thus encapsulates several tenets that are vital in actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability including participation of all citizens, access to information and access to justice⁵¹. Upholding these principles can enhance gender equity for environmental sustainability.

In Africa, the *African Charter on Human and People's Rights*⁵² stipulates that all people shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favourable to their development⁵³. It also calls upon Africa states to ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women⁵⁴. The *African Charter on Human and People's Rights* therefore envisages the ideas of environmental sustainability and gender equity. Further, the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*⁵⁵ states that women shall have the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment⁵⁶. It implores states to ensure greater participation of women in the planning, management and preservation of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources at all levels⁵⁷. The Protocol thus envisages the role of gender equity in environmental sustainability.

In Kenya, the Constitution enshrines equity and equality as being among the national values and principles of governance⁵⁸. It further captures the right of every person to a clean and healthy environment⁵⁹. The Constitution also obliges the state to encourage public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment⁶⁰. It also states that every person has a duty to cooperate with State organs

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² African Charter on Human and People's Rights., Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁵³ Ibid, Article 24

⁵⁴ Ibid, Article 18 (3)

⁵⁵ Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa., Available at

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/ProtocolontheRightsofWomen.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁵⁶ Ibid, Article 18 (1)

⁵⁷ Ibid, Article 18 (2) (a)

⁵⁸ Constitution of Kenya, 2010., Article 10 (2) (b)

⁵⁹ Article 42

⁶⁰ Ibid, Article 69 (1) (d)

and other persons to protect and conserve the environment and ensure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources⁶¹. Actualizing these Constitutional provisions will foster gender equity for environmental sustainability in Kenya.

In addition, the *National Policy on Gender and Development*⁶² seeks to create a just, fair and transformed society free from gender-based discrimination in all spheres of life practices⁶³. The policy is further aimed at integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into sectoral policies, planning and programmes including the environment and natural resources management⁶⁴. The policy acknowledges that access to and control over environmental resources is gender biased⁶⁵. It seeks to promote gender equity for environmental sustainability through measures such as having women well represented in decision-making processes over the environment and natural resources; taking into account women's input into climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies; reducing gender disparities in access to natural resources; providing affordable clean water to reduce health risks related to poor quality of water and providing gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of environmental and natural resources' degradation and climate change⁶⁶. Realizing the vision of this policy is vital in actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability in Kenya.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that there have been attempts towards fostering gender equity for environmental sustainability. However, it has also been observed that there are still gender disparities which hinder effective realization of gender equity for sustainable development⁶⁷. It has been observed that men are the main actors in the management of renewable and non-renewable natural resources such as forests, wildlife,

⁶¹ Ibid, Article 69 (2)

⁶² Republic of Kenya., 'Sessional Paper No. 02 of 2019 on National Policy on Gender and Development.' Available at <http://psyg.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NATIONAL-POLICY-ON-GENDER-AND-DEVELOPMENT.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Kassinis. G et al., 'Gender and Environmental Sustainability: A Longitudinal Analysis.' Op Cit

minerals and natural gas⁶⁸. This has significant implications on the Gross Domestic Product and the livelihoods of Kenyans dependent on the environment and natural resources⁶⁹. Further, gender disparities are also witnessed through cases of unequal and insecure rights over land with women being disproportionately disadvantaged⁷⁰. In Kenya, it has been stated that there are gender inequalities in land ownership and representation⁷¹. The Constitution of Kenya acknowledges this problem and enshrines the elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land as one of the principles of land policy in Kenya⁷². Access to and secure tenure over land is closely linked to natural resource access and management, such as water and forest resources, with benefits for sustainable ecosystems⁷³.

In addition, it has been pointed out that looking at gender aspects of the use of natural resources such as water, forests and land and experiences of environmental degradation through climate change, pollution, chemicals, loss of biodiversity illustrates gender inequalities⁷⁴. Women are severely affected by challenges such as the lack of access to modern energy services, lack of access to safe and clean water and inadequate land rights due to their important role in sustaining households⁷⁵. Furthermore, women have been severely impacted by the effects of climate change as witnessed by inadequate access to natural resources such as water, food insecurity due to drought which hinders farming

⁶⁸ Republic of Kenya., 'Sessional Paper No. 02 of 2019 on National Policy on Gender and Development.' Op Cit

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ IUCN., 'Gender and the Environment: What are the Barriers to Gender Equality in Sustainable Ecosystem Management?' Available at <https://www.iucn.org/news/gender/202001/gender-and-environment-what-are-barriers-gender-equality-sustainable-ecosystem-management> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁷¹ Kariuki. J., & Birner. R., 'Exploring Gender Equity in Ecological Restoration: The Case of a Market Based Program in Kenya.' Available at <https://er.uwpress.org/content/wper/39/1-2/77.full.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁷² Constitution of Kenya., Article 60 (1) (f)

⁷³ IUCN., 'Gender and the Environment: What are the Barriers to Gender Equality in Sustainable Ecosystem Management?' Op Cit

⁷⁴ SIDA., 'Gender and the Environment.' Op Cit

⁷⁵ Ibid

activities and gender based violence⁷⁶. It has also been noted that inadequate representation by women in environmental governance in areas such as energy, forestry and land has resulted in mismanagement of these sectors contributing to the threat of climate change and adverse effects on women⁷⁷. It is necessary to solve these problems in order to actualize gender equity for environmental sustainability.

4.0 Way Forward

There is need to actualize gender equity in order to enhance environmental sustainability. It has been stated that gender equality and women's empowerment are matters of fundamental human rights and prerequisites to meeting Sustainable Development goals around the world⁷⁸. This fact is acknowledged by the *United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*⁷⁹ which asserts that realizing gender equality and empowerment of women will make a crucial contribution towards progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets⁸⁰. Sustainable Development Goal 5 seeks to ensure effective and full participation of women and equal opportunities at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life including access to ownership and control over land and natural resources⁸¹. Realizing this goal is vital in actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability.

Further, there is need to foster participation of women in environmental decision making including formulation of laws and policies on the environment and implementation of

⁷⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change., 'New Report: Why Climate Change Impacts Women Differently than Men.' Available at https://unfccc.int/news/new-report-why-climate-change-impacts-women-differently-than-men?gclid=CjwKCAjw29ymBhAKEiwAHJbJ8ssIfst99WBehD0DHNpgsbjqaHye6wOiIPq9xBR4ZYRvsL8yf_KNgxoCskUQAvD_BwE (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁷⁷ SIDA., 'Gender and the Environment.' Op Cit

⁷⁸ IUCN., 'Gender and the Environment: What are the Barriers to Gender Equality in Sustainable Ecosystem Management?' Op Cit

⁷⁹ United Nations., 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid

environmental projects⁸². Public participation is a fundamental principle that can enhance sound management of the environment and natural resources towards environmental sustainability⁸³. The importance of public participation has been enunciated under the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development⁸⁴. Public participation has also been captured as among the national values and principles of governance in Kenya⁸⁵. The Constitution also obliges the state to encourage public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment⁸⁶. Public participation can foster the voice of women in environmental decision making and contribute towards the realization of environmental sustainability through sound and effective decisions that incorporate the decision of all concerned citizens including women⁸⁷. Women have always been the custodians of the environment and incorporating their views in environmental decision making will enhance the quality of such decisions thus fostering Sustainable Development⁸⁸. It is imperative to empower women and enhance access to information which are important tenets in fostering effective public participation⁸⁹.

The *National Policy on Gender and Development*⁹⁰ in Kenya also envisages several ways through which gender equity can be realized for environmental sustainability. These

⁸² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change., 'New Report: Why Climate Change Impacts Women Differently than Men.' Op Cit

⁸³ Muigua. K., 'Towards Meaningful Public Participation in Natural Resource Management in Kenya.' Available at <http://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TOWARDS-MEANINGFUL-PUBLIC-PARTICIPATION-IN-NATURAL-RESOURCE-MANAGEMENT-IN-KENYA.pdf> (Accessed on 12/09/2023)

⁸⁴ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development., Principe 10

⁸⁵ Constitution of Kenya, 2010., Article 10 (2) (a)

⁸⁶ Ibid, Article 69 (1) (d)

⁸⁷ Shobeiri. S., & Meiboudi. H., 'Women's Participation in Environmental Management and Development Promotion Culture.' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311533595_Women's_participation_in_environmental_management_and_development_Promotion_Culture#:~:text=Women%20are%20the%20main%20cause,environmental%20management%20are%20so%20obvious. (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Muigua. K., 'Towards Meaningful Public Participation in Natural Resource Management in Kenya.' Op Cit

⁹⁰ Republic of Kenya., 'Sessional Paper No. 02 of 2019 on National Policy on Gender and Development.' Op Cit

include developing and reviewing environment, and other natural resources (including forests, water, mining, petroleum and energy) management laws, policies and programmes to ensure gender and equity compliance; ensuring availability of water for multiple use to women taking into account the gender division of labour that defines women's domestic and productive activities in the household; ensuring that women participate in and benefit equitably from investments in various natural resources development initiatives; Building capacities of development agencies in gender mainstreaming into environment and climate change laws, policies and programmes and ensure that women participate in and contribute to and benefit from climate resilient programmes and projects and supporting interventions aimed at equitable participation of women in the sustainable utilization of natural resources for economic benefits including opportunities for carbon trading⁹¹. Realizing the vision of this policy is essential in actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability in Kenya. It is indeed possible to achieve gender equality and equity if the National Policy on Gender and Development can be implemented and supported by good will from all groups of persons and all levels of government⁹².

It is also imperative embrace the role of women in in environment and natural resource decision making and leadership⁹³. This can be achieved by appointing women in leadership positions in ministries, state departments, environmental management bodies and other positions in environment related sectors⁹⁴. Economic empowerment of women is also vital in actualizing gender equity and environmental sustainability⁹⁵. It can enhance the ability of women to access resources such as land, energy and water a factor

⁹¹ Ibid, Part 4.9

⁹² Muigua. K., 'Actualising the National Policy on Gender and Development in Kenya.' Available at <http://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Actualising-the-National-Policy-on-Gender-and-Development-in-Kenya-Kariuki-Muigua-Ph.D-October-2020.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

⁹³ IUCN., 'Gender and the Environment: What are the Barriers to Gender Equality in Sustainable Ecosystem Management?' Op Cit

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe., 'Gender and the Environment.' Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/f/36360.pdf> (Accessed on 12/08/2023)

that can enhance effective management of these resources towards environmental sustainability⁹⁶.

Though the foregoing among other measures, gender equity can be actualized for environmental sustainability towards Sustainable Development. It has been argued that if countries are to achieve the Sustainable Development goals as well as their national development plans such as the Vision 2030 development blueprint in Kenya, then gender equality and equity must be addressed as a matter of priority since development requires concerted efforts of both men and women⁹⁷.

5.0 Conclusion

Achieving environmental sustainability has become a pertinent concern in the wake of global environmental challenges especially the threat of climate change⁹⁸. Despite efforts being made towards fostering gender equity, it has been observed that gender disparities are evident in the sphere of environmental governance and management a situation that hinders environmental sustainability and realization of Sustainable Development⁹⁹. There is a need for active participation of both men and women in the management of natural resources and environmental governance in order to foster environmental sustainability.¹⁰⁰ This can be achieved through public participation and access to information; embracing the role of women in environment and natural resource decision making and leadership; economic empowerment of women and implementing national policies and programmes on gender such as Kenya's National Policy on Gender and Development¹⁰¹. Actualizing gender equity for environmental sustainability is thus feasible.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Muigua. K., 'Actualising the National Policy on Gender and Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

⁹⁸ Robinson. D., '15 Biggest Environmental Problems of 2023.' Op Cit

⁹⁹ Geneva Environment Network., 'Gender and the Environment.' Op Cit

¹⁰⁰ Muigua. K., 'Gender Perspectives in Biodiversity Conservation.' Op Cit

¹⁰¹ Muigua. K., 'Actualising the National Policy on Gender and Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

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African Charter on Human and People's Rights., Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf

Constitution of Kenya, 2010

Crabtree. E., 'Why we Need Gender Equity, Not Just Equality.' Available at <https://iqeq.com/insights/why-we-need-gender-equity-not-just-equality/#:~:text=Gender%20equality%20is%20giving%20all,limit%20how%20people%20access%20opportunities>

DCED., 'Gender Equality vs Equity.' Available at <https://www.enterprise-development.org/weegateway/gender-equality-vs-equity/>

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