

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Human beings are very fortunate enough than any other living being on the planet earth. Because we have the advantage of regulating ourselves as ourselves as we wish .Unlike other animals we can live and let others live. I am sure no other species on the earth can lead their life as much comfortable as men and women. But, from the ancient times itself, there exists a discrimination between the male and feminine gender. As a result the society has been marked as male dominated for generations together but for the recent developments in the 20th century. Though women are more or less equal in number of men, we don't find considerable number of women in any development indicators like education, employment, entrepreneurship and politics, social service and foreign assignments etc. The development of any nation is meaningful when both male and women are equally involved in carrying the nation forward and enjoy the fruits of the development. The fact, that out of 196 countries in the world, only 18 countries are ruled by women, highlights the balance of gender unfair equality. Even in the most advanced countries like U.S the compensation packages offered to women employees are relatively low which is a true reflection of the unfair treatment being meted out to the women. It is a good sign in recent times that women are allowed into various economic growth activities in a significant number by taking advantage of technical and psychological changes in the global scenario ensuring the sustainable development across the globe.

Keywords: *compensation package, unfair equality, sustainable development.*

Introduction:

The imperatives of achieving gender equality and attaining sustainable development were clearly acknowledged in the outcome document of the United Nations

Conference on Sustainable Development: We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to

ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making. We underscore that women have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable development. We recognize the leadership role of women, and we resolve to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels. The World Survey articulates what sustainable development with gender equality could mean for policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels in the current global juncture. In doing so it reflects on the early twenty-first century global context, when entrenched poverty and hunger, rising inequalities, ecosystem destruction and climate change, all of which are consequences, in large part, of prevailing economic models and paradigms, pose unprecedented challenges for the realization of women's rights and risk undermining further the sustainability of their households, communities and societies. Dominant development patterns have both entrenched gender inequalities and proved unsustainable as regards many issues covered in the World Survey, including economic growth and work; population and reproduction; food and agriculture; and water, sanitation and energy. Yet the overall message of the

World Survey is one of hope in the possibilities of constructing, through vigorous democratic deliberation that involves states, women and men, civil society organizations, the private sector and global institutions, alternative development trajectories within which gender equality and sustainability can powerfully reinforce each other. International norms and standards on women's and girls' human rights and gender equality provide a solid basis for advancing action to strengthen the vital role of women in achieving sustainable development. Discrimination on the basis of sex is prohibited under all major international human rights instruments. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁵ obligates States parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women. International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions have continuously enhanced women's rights to and at work, including, most recently, those of domestic workers.

DEFINITIONS:

The understanding of sustainable development for the present World Survey is in line with the definition proposed, in 1987, in the landmark report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: sustainable development should "meet the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” which involves integrating the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

Gender Equality:

The understanding of gender equality for the purpose of the World Survey is that elaborated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which clarified that: “... a purely formal legal or programmatic approach is not sufficient to achieve women’s de facto equality with men. This concept of substantive gender equality resonates strongly with the capabilities framework, which draws attention to the substantive freedoms that people have “to lead the kinds of lives they value — and have reason to value”

Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development, therefore, is economic, social and environmental development that ensures human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice, now and in the future. Sustainable development is economic, Social and environmental development that ensures human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice, now and in the future

Constraints of Gender Equality and Sustainable Development:

Human activities have become key drivers of earth system processes and are manifested in the depletion and degradation of natural resources; the loss of key ecosystems, habitats and biodiversity; the pollution of land, oceans and the atmosphere; and in climate change, with concomitant severe and unpredictable weather effects as humanity approaches or exceeds what have been referred to as “planetary boundaries” (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013; Rockström and others, 2009). In recent years such processes have produced unprecedented shocks and stresses, reflected in floods, droughts, devastated urban and rural landscapes and livelihoods, with many people and places suffering from a confluence of food, climate and financial crises. These crises of unsustainability potentially affect all and carry profound risks for future generations, as described in 1987 in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development

1. Patterns of unsustainable development and gender inequality

The underlying causes and consequences of unsustainability and gender inequality are deeply intertwined and rooted in the

dominant economic models (Fukuda-Parr, Heintz and Seguino, 2013). These involve economic liberalization and the concentration of productive and financial activity geared to short-term profits; unrestrained material consumption; unparalleled levels of militarism; and the privatization of public goods and services, all at the expense of state regulation and redistribution. Such processes have caused, in many places, crises of care, which means the breakdown in the abilities of individuals, families, communities and societies to sustain, care for and educate themselves and future generations, thereby undermining people's rights and dignity (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), 2014). Financial crises and recessions, which have taken hold in many countries with severe repercussions across the world, have brought to the fore the risks and vulnerabilities inherent to liberalized and financialized market models. These risks and vulnerabilities undermine the viability of market models even on their own terms. The fruits of economic growth have also been unequally divided. Over the past three decades, economic disparities between and within countries and regions have increased. The richest 1 per cent of the world's population owns some 40 per cent of all assets while the poorer half of the population owns just 1 per cent of global

assets (UNDP, 2013a). The world's most rapidly growing economies, including those of Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America, have also seen rapid rises in inequality. Inequality itself threatens economic sustainability, fuelling unrest and conflict and undermining the stability, level playing field and consumer demand on which growth relies

2. Responding to the challenges

Growing international attention and debate has recognized the clear need to move economies and societies onto more sustainable paths, whether to avert crisis and catastrophe, or enable prosperity through green economies. In an attempt to regulate greenhouse gas emissions, carbon emissions have been monetized and traded on world markets. Biodiversity offset schemes posit that the destruction of biodiversity can be compensated by creating similar habitats elsewhere. Payments for ecosystem services compensate communities and individuals for conserving and protecting such essential natural goods as water sources and forests. Such schemes aim to assign value to natural capital so it can be internalized in economic calculations. However, the resulting transactions and markets have often militated against equal access to and benefit from natural resources for women and men because of power differentials and the lack of participation in decision-making and

negotiations (McAfee, 2012; UNRISD, 2012b). They have also further intensified pressures on natural resources through land, water and green “grabs.

Women’s knowledge, agency and collective action are central to finding, demonstrating and building more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable pathways to manage local landscapes; adapt to climate change; produce and access food; and secure Sustainable water, sanitation and energy services. For example women’s decisive involvement in Community forest management bodies yields positive outcomes for both forest sustainability and gender equality.

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development: three important policy debates:

In the run-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in 2012, the Potential pathways to sustainable development were the subject of deliberation in the context of climate, food and finance crises. In that context, many policy and business actors embraced positive alignments between economic growth and environmental concerns through such notions as the green economy, in the name of sustainable development. Social movements, on the other hand, proposed alternative perspectives on issues such as climate change, water privatization,

genetically modified organisms, biodiversity and “land grabbing”, and advocated pathways that link sustainable development firmly with questions of social justice. In this context, debates have continued between key actors on the topics of climate change, planetary boundaries and the green economy, which are elaborated upon below, with a focus on their gender dimensions. Since the 1990s, climate change has become one of the defining challenges of the modern world. The relative successes and setbacks of global climate change frameworks and negotiations, difficulties in implementing the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in mitigating far-reaching threats, and the plight and coping strategies of people who must adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses have galvanized public reaction. This has taken the form of renewed and globalized social and environmental movements and campaigns, stretching across local and global scales. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was weak on gender equality, and despite the sustained engagement and efforts of gender equality advocates, subsequent efforts to mainstream gender issues into climate change debates have been piecemeal (UN-Women and Mary Robinson Foundation — Climate Justice, 2013). Their unpaid work without addressing whether they had the rights, voice and power to control project benefits.

“Policies should ensure women’s effective participation in and equal benefit from sustainable development projects and actively address entrenched discriminatory stereotypes and inequalities.”

Achieving Gender Equality and Sustainable Development:

The attainment of sustainable development and gender equality potentially involves trade-offs that need to be openly discussed among different social groups (UNDP, 2011). In such negotiations, the social dimensions of sustainability — too often neglected — must be fully integrated, and states and other powerful actors must be held accountable for delivering sustainable development

1. Bringing social sustainability to the fore

Achieving sustainable development means not only reconciling economic and environmental sustainability, but also prioritizing social sustainability. The realization of women’s human rights, capabilities and well-being now and in the future requires paying specific attention to the care economy, that is, the provision of care through the family and/or household, markets,

The non-profit sector and the public sector and/or state, especially the “private” domain of non-market or unpaid care work. How

societies organize this work is central to their social sustainability. Policymakers rarely consider the production of human resources in the economy, apart from formal education, which is recognized for its contribution to human capital, and yet economic growth cannot take place without this unpaid and often invisible work (Folbre, 1994; UNRISD, 2010). In all societies, women typically spend more time on these non-market activities than men do, especially in contexts of environmental stress and poor infrastructure. Thus the gender division of labour between paid work and unpaid work represents a significant structural source of gender inequality. The fact that the bulk of unpaid care work is carried out by women and girls has significant implications for their capacity to realize their rights to education, paid work, a decent standard of living and political participation (see the report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, A/68/293). In this and other domains, gender and other inequalities intersect, and it is women and girls from marginalized social groups whose capabilities and rights are most often compromised and in need of realization. Poverty and exclusion increase the amount and intensity of unpaid care work, as a result of limited access to public services and inadequate infrastructure and the lack of resources to pay for care services and time-saving technology. Unpaid care

work is also intensified in contexts of economic crisis, health crises, environmental degradation, natural disasters and inadequate infrastructure and services. A just and sustainable society is one that recognizes unpaid care work by making it visible through statistics and by ensuring that policies are in place to reduce its drudgery, through appropriate public investments in infrastructure and social services, and to redistribute it between women and men within households, and between households and society more broadly.

2. Tensions and trade-offs

It is important to recognize that there may be tensions and trade-offs between the different dimensions of sustainability and with substantive gender equality, regarding the areas into which sustainability should be integrated and considerations as regards the beneficiaries

3. Accountability and renewed social contracts

Reconciling the policy dilemmas in order to achieve sustainable development with gender equality requires robust democratic spaces for deliberation, grass-roots voices and accountability mechanisms at multiple levels. Women's voices and participation in diverse forums is of critical importance, both as an issue of justice and equality and because the active presence of women can

put gender-specific concerns on the agenda and contribute to collective actions that are more effective in meeting the three dimensions of sustainability (Agarwal, 2010). Enabling women's meaningful participation, however, should not mean that women carry the sole responsibility for prioritizing gender equality concerns in sustainable development policies. All decision-makers, women and men, must take responsibility. Moving towards sustainable development and gender equality will require action at many levels by a diversity of actors and can only be achieved through democratic alliances between the state, policymakers, donors, the private and civil sectors and women and men. For such alliances to be viable, the reach and organizing power of the state are necessary. Sustainable development pathways can be conceived, inspired and piloted by non-governmental organizations, donors and private enterprises, but only the state can take them to scale, offer universal access which reaches the populations of the poor and marginalized, and provide the regulatory and institutional power to ensure sustainability.

However, to ensure that the state actually delivers, civil society and social movements must have the space and mechanisms to hold decision-makers to account, which calls for renewed social contracts between the state and its people, where states fulfill their

obligations, as the duty bearer, and rights holders claim and enjoy their human rights. An enabling global context is indispensable for such social contracts to hold. The extent of global economic integration over the past decades has increased the influence and impact of a number of actors (e.g., Multinational corporations or international financial institutions) on the enjoyment of human rights in many countries. These actors have an influence on the protection of labour standards, the development of infrastructure, the accessibility of public services, the protection of natural resources and access to information — all of which have serious implications for women's and girl's human rights. Hence, global governance must ensure that the actions of those actors are aligned with the efforts of governments to facilitate the realization of rights, the enhancement of capabilities and initiatives to achieve sustainable development. States need to use their capacity and ability to deliver in ways that respect sustainability and gender equality, rather than relying on market forces. This requires accountability frameworks that secure human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination in areas like work and employment, reproduction and health, food and land and natural resource tenure. Governments also have central roles to play in Providing public goods and services, supporting health, education and care for

children, the elderly and the sick, which are so essential to people's capabilities, and for assuring the social dimensions of sustainability and care work. Public investment is also necessary for nurturing and scaling up key innovations for gender responsive public goods, such as the provision of modern energy services, water supplies and appropriate sanitation facilities. There are growing opportunities for businesses and the private sector to contribute to sustainable development solutions, as emerging green economy prospects emphasize. Nevertheless these often require state support to be viable, at least in the early stages. Meanwhile, growing evidence shows that partnership and co-production arrangements, in which private, public and civil society actors work jointly to deliver health, housing or energy services, or to manage forests, biodiversity or water, are often most effective. In order for such coproduced arrangements to work effectively for gender equality and sustainability, it is vital that women are centrally involved in planning and implementation and as such, policies must enable women's participation. Adequate financial resources are also required for achieving the goals of sustainable development (Schalatek, 2013). Approaches to participatory and gender-responsive budgeting offer prospects for gender-responsive decisions in funding allocation

decisions and for ensuring accountability for tracking and reporting on gender-specific financing benchmarks.

4. Criteria for policymaking

Given the diversity of contexts within which policymakers operate, rather than being prescriptive, the World Survey identifies three criteria for assessing whether policies, programmes and actions implemented in the name of sustainability are likely to achieve gender equality and women's rights, especially the rights of marginalized groups who are likely to bear a disproportionate share of the costs of economic, social and environmental unsustainability. The first criterion is with respect to women's capabilities and their enjoyment of human rights, particularly the capabilities and rights of the poorest and most marginalized groups. As a core criterion, policies, programmes and investments in the name of sustainable development should be assessed against compliance with human rights standards and their ability to enhance the capabilities of women and girls. No development pathway can be considered sustainable if it reduces women's capabilities and denies their human rights. In the case of population policies, for example, family planning methods that constrain women's reproductive choices and/or expose them to health risks through inappropriate contraceptive methods cannot

meet the minimal criteria of sustainability proposed here.

The second criterion is with respect to the impact on the unpaid care work of women and girls, especially from poorer and marginalized households and communities. If policies and programmes that are intended to enhance environmental sustainability inadvertently increase women's unpaid care work, then they are not on a sustainable development pathway. While there is a clear and urgent need for decarbonizing the global economy, this should include attention to local livelihoods and gender equality. For example, strict regulation of forest use that undermines local livelihoods and intensifies women's unpaid care work is unsustainable. Conversely, investments in locally adapted and ecological technology that facilitates women's access to water sources by ensuring their affordability and quality while minimizing the distance between water sources and dwellings are clearly desirable.

The third criterion relates to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in sustainable development, as actors, leaders and decision-makers in the processes that shape their lives as well as the future of their households, communities, nations and the world. In the area of food security, for instance, policy efforts aimed at national and local food sufficiency and low-chemical and environmentally sustainable agriculture, which are desirable objectives

from the perspective of ecological sustainability, need to consult smallholder farmers, particularly women, about their priorities and constraints rather than assume that their interests are already aligned with preconceived policy aims and visions.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made on overall sustainable development and gender equality.

1. Develop and implement policies on the economic, social and environmental dimensions
Of sustainable development in line with international norms and standards on gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights;
2. Promote transitions to sustainable low carbon, climate-resilient consumption and production patterns while ensuring gender equality;
3. Ensure women's right to an adequate standard of living, through increasing access to decent work and providing gender-responsive, universally accessible and high quality services, social protection measures and infrastructure, including education, health, water and sanitation, and energy;
4. Promote a renewed social contract between states and people that ensures the financing and

implementation of sustainable development, with universal access to public goods and services and common pool resources, particularly for the poorest groups of women and girls;

5. Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work between women and men within households, and between households and the state by expanding basic services and infrastructure that are accessible to all.
6. Respect, protect and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, particularly women and girls, across the life cycle;
7. Protect the commons and prevent the appropriation and exploitation of natural resources by private and public interests, through state oversight and multi-stakeholder regulation;
8. Ensure the full and equal participation of women and girls in sustainable development policies and initiatives as actors, leaders and decision makers;

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