

Role of Women to Reduce the Rate of Environmental Degradation

Sonia Rani¹ and Nimit Kumar²

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Extension Education, CCSHAU, Hisar, Haryana

²Assistant Professor, Department of Agriculture, Maharishi Markandeshwar University Sadopur, Ambala, Haryana

SUMMARY

Women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel, and food, as well as both forests and agricultural terrain. Growing population and technological advancement are continuously putting a strain on the environment and on country's natural resources. Over-exploitation of the country's resources like land, water, fuel etc. has resulted in degradation of resources mainly due to industrial pollution, soil erosion, deforestation and urbanization. Therefore, conservation of natural resources and promotion of environment cannot be done without involving the women in planning and training for promoting the values for conservation and promotion of environment. Hence, attempt has been made to assess the role of women in conservation and promotion of environment along with suitable strategy for the same.

INTRODUCTION

Environment is usually defined as the system of biological and physical resources and their processes of interaction that affect lives and livelihoods. In rural areas, a woman's life is very dependent on nature, as she has to carry on her family through managing and using natural resources. Women are primary providers of household food, fuel and water for cooking, heating, drinking and washing. As users, women have direct contact with the natural environment as they collect essential items like fruits, vegetables, medicinal herbs, fuel wood, fodder, water etc. for their every day needs and women are responsible for collecting water and for controlling its use. Mostly rural families depend on nature for their livelihood and women are the key persons in using, managing and protecting the natural resources hence, there is a close linkage between women and natural environment. The women have the knowledge of the location, reliability and quality of the local water resources. Women are in close contact with nature not only as users or consumers but also as producers and managers of environmental resources.

As a farmer women produce foods and agricultural products. Their tasks in agriculture and animal husbandry as well as in the household make them daily managers of the living environment. Women, particularly, rural and indigenous women play a major role in managing natural resources - soil, water, forests and energy- as they have profound knowledge of the plants, animals and ecological processes around them. Women's work responsibilities include managing the most basic and natural of all resources-food, fuel and water. When natural resources were abundant, women did not have to work so hard. Now with the depletion of resources, women with limited access to resources are required to manage. Through management of natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. Therefore, they are more concerned about environmental degradation than men are as they are responsible for the well - being of their families. They are fully aware that their livelihood and family welfare is linked to the potential of sustainable resource base and therefore, environment is to be conserved to meet their long - term needs. Poor women often have no choice but to exploit natural resources in order to survive, even though they may have knowledge to promote sustainability. They look to the environment for domestic needs and sources of their income -generation activities, so women have to suffer more for environmental degradation. At the same time, they have more concern about and better understanding of their immediate environment. That is why the study of women and environment assumes, particular significance when done so from the gender perspective.

Environment Degradation

Degradation is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil; ozone depletion and the destruction of marine environment. The destruction of ecosystem and the extinction of wildlife or any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be undesirable is termed as environment degradation.

Environment degradation is a situation in which a part of the natural environment is damaged. We can say any damage to the land, water, the air, loss of biodiversity and a loss of natural resources in an area/surrounding and destruction of ecosystem and the extinction of plant and animal species are also the example of environment degradation. It is caused in a variety of ways, predominantly by human actions; however, natural events also cause destruction results in the deterioration of an environment. There are many forms of environment degradation when habits are destroyed, biodiversity is lost, or natural resources are depleted, the environment is hurt. Earthquakes, volcanoes, storm, and intense rainfall events can all affects the environment in negative ways. Environmental degradation is also caused due to inappropriate land use, over cultivation, overgrazing, pollution, poverty, unfair land allocation, erosion of the quality of natural environment caused directly or indirectly by increased significantly since the industrial revolution. Some of the main types of environmental degradation in India are soil erosion, agricultural practices, deforestation, bush encroachment, desertification, Salinization, loss of biodiversity and urbanization. Some anthropologic cause which are responsible for environmental degradation such as urbanization, coal pollution, polluting industrial wastes, plastic pollution, indoor – air pollution, groundwater exploitation and municipal and bio – medical wastes etc. When the environment becomes less valuable or damaged, environmental degradation is said to occur. The United Nation has listed environment degradation is its top ten list of high-level threats faced by the planet to date. Environmental degradation is a serious threat to the lives of people, animals and plants, making it imperative that we stop further degradation from occurring.

Remedial Action to Reduce the Rate Of Environmental Degradation

Environment degradation may be limited by providing opportunities for women, to encourage their participation in environmental decision-making process at all levels, including them as managers, projects designers and planners, policy makers, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental programmes and projects. Facilitating and improving women's access to information and education, particularly, along the areas of science and technology, management, economics and rural development in order to enhance their knowledge, skills, capabilities, innovativeness and opportunities for participation in environmental developmental decisions. Environment degradation can be checked by establishing strategies and mechanisms to increase the proportion of women, particularly, at the grassroot levels, as decision makers, planners, technical advisers and beneficiaries in the design, development and implementation of policies and programmes for natural resource management and environmental protection and conservation. Women view environment as the life support system of humanity, source of all life, which people are dependent on the environment and without good environment; our life will not be sustainable, peaceful and healthy.

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the various ways women have participated actively in environmental protection and natural resource management in order to ensure sustainable use of environmental resources. Recommendations are proffered, especially those that can help the goal of women empowerment. The critical role of women, as resource managers, as community activists, as environmental advocates, must be recognized when strategies for the protection of the environment are being developed. Women should be allowed to participate at the local, regional, national, and international levels on environmental issues. As resource managers, women should be consulted and supported in what they are already doing to protect the environment. Specifically, more women should be involved in decision making with regard to policies programs, or funding of environment.

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