

Women's Empowerment in the Green Economy: Legal and Development Review

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Abstract. This article studies the link between green economy and gender justice from a legal and development perspective. The main issue is the lack of attention to practical and vital role of women who play in achieving sustainable development and green economy. According to the United Nations definition, green economy is an economic system that enhances the natural resources of the earth, reduces environmental risks and promotes social justice. In addition, it improves human well-being and emphasizes the use of renewable energy and the protection of natural resources. Meanwhile, women, as an active force who play a practical and vital role in environmental protection and sustainable agriculture, have received less attention for their activities and participation and face economic, social and legal obstacles. [1] This article examines the relationship between women's empowerment, gender justice and green economy in a qualitative and analytical way by studying international documents and analytical reports. The results show that women's empowerment can facilitate the transition to a green and just economy, so policymakers should provide appropriate legal and development platforms and strengthen the role of women in the green economy to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development. This approach will not only help protect the environment but will also promote social justice and reduce poverty. Also, if existing barriers are removed and resources and benefits are provided equal to those of men, women can increase productivity and achieve sustainable development goals in the development and environmental protection processes.

Keywords: Green Economy, Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment.

1 Introduction

The green economy, according to the definition of the United Nations (UNEP), is a model of economic system that leads to improved human well-being and social equality while significantly reducing environmental risks and the scarcity of natural resources[1]. The goal of the green economy is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote the use of renewable energy, and protect natural resources. A green economy also focuses on social equity and ensures that economic growth benefits all members of society, including the most vulnerable[2].

The green economy is one of the main foundations of sustainable development and facilitates the achievement of sustainable development. Thus, by supporting clean industries and innovative technologies provides new job opportunities in green sectors such as renewable energy and sustainable agriculture and helps reduce poverty [3].

Research shows that even though women do not play a significant role in organizational measures and “environmental decision-making” in most countries, they take more practical actions in the field of environmental protection and optimal use of energy than men. According to the report "The Role of Women in Development" published by UN Women (2024), women have a significant role in the development process and environmental protection [3]. The spread of modern life in the world has resulted in the expansion of the diversity of environmental damages, and the concept of green economy has been considered as a vital role in achieving sustainable development goals. In the meantime, women, as half of the world's population and as an active and constructive force, play a vital role in achieving development and environmental goals, especially in agriculture, the protection of natural resources, and food security. But unfortunately, they have not been given the attention they should have in the development process.

Women's participation has always faced numerous economic, legal, and social obstacles. Although, international documents emphasize gender justice and environmental sustainability, this gap still exists in the national policies of many countries. This article attempts to examine the link between gender justice and green economy from a legal and development perspective and to answer the question of how the transition to a sustainable and just economy can be facilitated by empowering women [4].

This paper examines the link between women's empowerment, gender justice, and green economics using a qualitative and analytical method through the study of international documents, national laws, and analytical reports.

2 Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research approach, combining normative legal and comparative methods. The normative legal method is used to analyze international conventions, national laws, and policy documents related to gender justice and the green economy. Comparative analysis is applied to examine and contrast legal frameworks and policy measures from different countries and international organizations. Additionally, relevant secondary sources - including academic literature, reports, and analytical studies-are reviewed to contextualize findings and support the analysis. This approach enables a comprehensive evaluation of how empowering women can facilitate the transition to a sustainable and just green economy.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This article analyzes the relationship between women's empowerment, gender justice, sustainable development, and green economy based on specific frameworks and doctrines that form its theoretical and legal basis.

Sustainable Development Theory. The green economy is one of the recognized pillars of sustainable development and encompasses three issues (economic, social,

and environmental) simultaneously, and its emphasis is on the balance between these three factors. In this perspective, women are recognized as a key factor in sustainable development. This theory shows that women's empowerment and their active participation in the economy play a critical role in reducing poverty in society[5].

Social and Gender Justice Theory. This theory emphasizes that women and men have equal access to resources, opportunities, and facilities, and analyzes the economic, social, and legal barriers that limit women's participation [6].

Intergenerational Justice Theory. This theory emphasizes that the protection of natural resources and the environment is an important matter. That we are responsible to future generations, and that natural resources should be used, and the environment should be protected in a way that does not harm future generations [7].

Political Ecology Theory. This theory examines power relations and social, economic and political impact on the environment and emphasizes that sustainable development should include the participation of local communities [8].

Doctrine of Sustainable Development in International Law. This doctrine examines international principles and agreements such as the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [9].

Human Rights Doctrine. This doctrine emphasizes the principle of respect for human rights in achieving sustainable development goals. Sustainable development should ensure that all people, especially vulnerable groups including women and children, benefit from the benefits of development. According to this doctrine, respecting human rights and gender equality can contribute to the empowerment of women [9].

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 The Role of Women “Sustainable Development” and The Green Economy

Women play a vital and undeniable role in natural resource management, agriculture and the development of clean energy. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), women make up nearly 45 percent of the agricultural workforce in developing countries. They are responsible for a large part of food production and the conservation of natural resources. In the area of clean energy, women play an important role as users and developers of green technologies, such as solar panels and energy-efficient stoves, in reducing pollution and improving the living conditions of the poor [10].

Women in agriculture work longer hours but have less access to resources than men, own less than 20 percent of land and in many parts of the South less than 5 percent, and their work is often neglected and unpaid. If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, they could increase their farm yields by 20 to 30 percent, which could increase total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4

percent and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent.

Women reinvest up to 90 percent of their income back into their households, spending it on the nutrition, health, and education of their children, helping to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Women continue to play a significant role in the processing of agricultural commodities and are more involved in post-harvest activities such as sorting, cleaning, and packaging. Women also play a significant role in marketing agricultural products. They navigate local markets, manage sales, and build relationships with buyers. Women continue to be responsible for 60 to 80 percent of food production for rural economies by raising poultry and small livestock and growing food crops. But compared to men, women suffer more from poverty, hunger, and disease.

When food is scarce, women in households often receive the least. Mothers suffer the most from lack of medical care and a balanced diet, and they often make greater sacrifices for the survival of their children. Gender inequality is a major factor in the poor performance of the agricultural sector. If the gender gap in agriculture is not closed, there will be disproportionate costs for women, the agricultural sector, the macroeconomy, and society. Since, the role of women in achieving sustainable development and transition to a green economy is multifaceted. And for a better understanding of this content, it is summarized in the table below.

Women's Rights Area	Explanation of the role and effects
Environmental protection	Management of natural resources, education of future generations, reduction of environmental degradation
Entrepreneurship and green business	Creation of sustainable businesses, handicrafts, sustainable agriculture, reduction of poverty and unemployment
Participation in decision-making	Participation in environmental and economic policymaking for sustainable development
Promotion of culture and education	Instilling a culture of environmental protection and sustainable development in society
Economic and social development	Creation of employment, economic growth, empowerment of women and promotion of social status

Fig. 1. Women’s Right Area

Empowering women in agriculture through education, access to resources, and policy support can lead to increased productivity, increased food production, improved child nutrition, reduced poverty and hunger, improved social well-being, and economic growth. Effective policymaking and increasing women’s participation in agricultural production is not just a gender equality issue; it is a strategic imperative

for the development of the agricultural industry and beyond [4].

3.2 Legal Analysis: International and National Support Frameworks

Women's empowerment and their role in achieving sustainable development have been considered vital and are a topic that has received increasing attention from international institutions and policymakers in recent years. This concept means providing equal opportunities for women in the economic, social and environmental arenas so that they can play an active role in the green economy and the transition towards sustainable development [11].

At the international level, there are key conventions, reports and documents that emphasize ensuring access to safe and sufficient food for all, eliminating gender inequalities, in access to economic benefits and land ownership, promoting enabling technologies, and promoting gender equality. It is believed that sustainable development is ineffective without considering the gender dimension.

Since women in rural communities and developing countries play a fundamental role in protecting natural resources and preserving the environment, such as sustainable agriculture, water conservation, and renewable energy, they play an important role in achieving the goals of the green economy, which are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote the use of renewable energy, protect natural resources, and achieve social equality [3].

The report "The Role of Women in Development" published by UN Women (2024) emphasizes that social resilience and the fight against poverty and environmental conditions are not possible without the active participation and empowerment of women. On the other hand, the UNEP report "Global Gender and Environment Outlook" (GGEO) shows that women, especially in rural communities, have valuable indigenous knowledge and experiences in natural resource management that can play an effective role in environmental policymaking [2].

The report UNEP (2011) defines a green economy as an economy that promotes human well-being and reduces inequalities while reducing environmental risks. It also emphasizes that women, especially in agricultural societies, play a key role in conserving natural resources, but unfortunately receive a small share of economic benefits. The report emphasizes that governments should adopt gender-sensitive policies to increase women's access to education, capital and green technology.

The report focuses on the link between the Paris Agreement and gender equality. The report states that climate change has different impacts on women and men. Governments have a responsibility to consider the specific needs of women, especially rural women, in climate policymaking and to involve women at different levels of climate decision-making [6].

The report UNDP (2022) states that achieving sustainable development is not possible without the active participation of women. also emphasizes that women's empowerment depends on factors such as environmental education, access to green finance, and presence in decision-making structures. In developing countries, special attention should be paid to ensuring that women can participate in clean energy projects, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management.

The SDG Report is an annual document of the United Nations and aims to review

global progress towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. These goals were adopted in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and cover issues such as poverty, education, gender equality, health, gender equality and justice. SDG 5 includes gender equality and empowering all women and girls to have equal access to benefits and technology. The document SDG 13 is about climate change and its impacts and emphasizes that gender policies must be fair and inclusive [12]. Therefore, gender justice and sustainable development are two complementary approaches, and without integrating gender considerations into environmental policies, it will not be possible to achieve environmental and development goals.

3.3 The Role of Governments in Gender-Based Policy Making in the Environment

It is the responsibility of governments to understand the different impacts that climate change has on women. and consider their role in decision-making bodies (environmental councils, climate committees and local councils), and strengthen their presence in international negotiations on climate. Provide women with training in new skills such as solar panel installation, smart agriculture. And support women in sustainable businesses.

Policies should be inclusive and gender responsive. Policies should support women who are traditional custodians of the environment at the national and local levels and ensure that women have equal access to clean and climate-resilient resources and technologies and markets for products from green economy initiatives. In addition, providing more opportunities beyond agriculture, supporting women's rights in green projects, etc. These approaches and policies will empower women and highlight their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the transition to a green economy [13].

4 Conclusion

Gender inequalities, along with women's access to sustainable development and environmental protection, are a good opportunity for the transition to a green economy. The results of this article show that women in general, but more in rural areas and developing countries, play a constructive role in natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, clean energy, and environmental education and protection.

Although international documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Paris Agreement, UN WOMEN, the SDG Report of the International Organization, UNEP CEDAW & emphasize the inclusion of gender justice in environmental policymaking and economic development. However, women still face numerous structural barriers in accessing land, financial resources, education, and participation in decision-making. Broadly speaking, to achieve the goals of a green economy, women must first be empowered in the field of policy design, participation in climate decision-making, and in the field of a green economy.

Based on the findings of this study, the author proposes a plan to establish “Green Women's Innovation Hubs” that support women-led climate projects in rural or semi-urban areas, contribute to their economic and social empowerment, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The plan includes four features: green skills training, women's green entrepreneurship, participation in local policymaking, and a supporting digital platform.

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