**“Sustainable Transformation through Women’s Empowerment”**

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**“Roadmap to Sustainable Transformation through Women’s Empowerment”**

Some groups within our entire population are at greater risk of experiencing harmful environmental conditions as a result of their social circumstances. This environmental dimension of social inequality and its multiple facets, known as environmental justice or environmental (in) equity, has in recent years been increasingly recognized both by researchers and national governments across continents and internationally. (WEDO, 2010)

According to WHO (World Health Organisation) the disadvantaged population groups are disproportionately more exposed to environmental risk factors. Low income and poverty are the strongest determinants of increased risk. Gender inequality all over the world is another strong determinant of the skewed results. Current evidence on the impact of social factors and gender inequality on increase in environmental risk has been researched and established.

The added disadvantage for women is that they are at times unable to voice their specific requirements even though the impact of climate change and scarcity of resources affect women and men differently. As business women they are also denied full access to loans, education and information, specifically in the developing nations. (Governance Cluster Programme, Working Paper, Oct 2010)

The potential of women as agents of climate change mitigation and adaptation remains untapped. In terms of economic and social participation, their potential contribution to climate mitigation by being part of the economic cycle is not sufficiently exploited. There are, however, several ways of promoting women’s economic and socio-cultural participation while also counteracting climate change. The economic empowerment of women through climate mitigation, resource efficiency and adaptation can foster economic growth and socioeconomic development, reduce poverty, keep environmental problems in check, and increase the potential for adaptation, which is to the benefit of both women and men.

At Sustainable Design Research Consortium, a group of management consultants, developmental sector and policy professionals along with civil society stakeholders tries to addresses a roadmap to mitigate gender inequalities and environmental risks focussing on women community leaders, entrepreneurs, social activists, by studying the current state of identified community of women who might or might not be sensitised about the risks of environmental degradation and the need for climate action in every detail of life. The organisation hopes to explore an approach for building capacities to reverse some of the harmful effects of the climate crisis through raising the awareness of the scope of green jobs including energy transformation and recycling demands through behavioural changes and mitigate the harmful effects of climate change as well as create a ripple effect in their communities and impact marginalised women within their ambit. The organisations approach is to explore the ecological boundaries pertaining to gender apropos the triple bottomline which would include general awareness of women regarding sustainability vis-a-vis the degree of awareness present amongst community leaders, entrepreneurs, social activists, as regards the implications of sustainability in reference to their own gender, evaluate various intended and emergent narratives that are present in women led, women based and women centric discourse communities to qualitatively measure the efficacy of extant norms of sustainable behaviour.

The organisation works with primary data obtained from focus group discussions and structured interviews as well as looking at existing literature and reports on the concept of social entrepreneurship, sustainability, the triple bottom. By connecting with a heterogeneous group of social sector activists, women small business owners and entrepreneurs through the existing network of people connected to this ecology, the organisation tries to adopt case descriptions where the transformative journey of identified social sector entities, small businesses who have been able to use sustainable practices for a gender just transformative journey of their businesses following the green business model and build the narrative in public discourses.

One of the focus of the efforts is in capturing the level of awareness and behavioural efficacy of women involved in community work or in small businesses who are or might be change agents for climate action with a regional focus and the structural and cultural barriers in their participation. Women’s voices, their unique knowledge and skills are vital to affective climate change solutions and the efforts of this group of people envisages a two-pronged approach to ensure women entrepreneurs’, business persons or community workers participation is promoted in the post COVID situation where their livelihoods, work or ventures are tottering in the after math of, not only the economic slowdown but the cultural and socio-economic pressures they habitually face which are now exacerbated manifold. The first approach would be evaluative research to explore the current state of awareness and challenges faced by women regarding the scope of economic empowerment through climate action by studying their narratives around green entrepreneurship, climate action, gender equity and sustainable behavioural mores. The second would be developing a roadmap to address these challenges through both addressing the gaps as well as a recommendative way forward to address the need for women's voices being strongly reflected in the climate solutions. It would be especially useful to address needs in sectors characterized by informality and decent work deficits where the vulnerabilities of women workers are immensely magnified due to climate impacts especially in the informal economy. Climate change impacts can particularly exacerbate poverty and socio-economic vulnerabilities among women. Hence the need to study in depth the granulated sectoral implications in the context of the above issues.

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