

## Chapter 6

# Opportunities and Challenges for Women Leaders in Environmental Management

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### ABSTRACT

*Women leaders in environmental management face unique opportunities and challenges in both developed and developing countries. In developed countries, opportunities include progressive policies, well-established institutions, and greater access to resources. Women can access quality education and training programs, legal frameworks promoting gender equality, and professional networks. However, in developed countries, women face challenges such as deep-rooted gender biases, stereotypes, and the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon, which limits women's representation in top decision-making positions. In developing countries, women leaders can engage with local communities and integrate traditional knowledge and sustainable practices into environmental management strategies. Limited resources and infrastructure in developing countries foster innovation and creativity, allowing them to develop contextualized solutions that address environmental challenges efficiently. However, challenges in developing countries include traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and resource constraints.*

### INTRODUCTION

Women's vital role in environmental management has earned widespread acknowledgment in recent decades. Women have emerged as essential stakeholders, leaders, and change agents in the pursuit of sustainable development and environmental preservation as the global community grapples with the rising difficulties posed by climate change, resource depletion, and ecological degradation. Despite their growing involvement and achievements, women's presence in leadership roles in environmental management remains disproportionately low, impeding their full potential and achieving transformative effects. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the opportunities and challenges that women confront

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5986-7.ch006

as environmental leaders. This chapter dives into the many factors that impact their experiences, covering concerns such as gender bias, cultural barriers, institutional constraints, and societal expectations, which frequently restrict women's professional advancement and recognition as prominent environmental leaders. Furthermore, this chapter hopes to shed light on the beneficial effects that gender diversity and inclusivity may have on environmental decision-making processes and generate innovative solutions to complicated ecological problems and the future of women leaders in environmental management. To provide a complete knowledge of the current condition of women's leadership in environmental management, the chapter focuses on a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, case studies, and expert insights. We hope to highlight the untapped potential of women leaders in encouraging sustainable development, conservation, and climate resilience by exploring success stories and best practises from many locations and industries.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the role of women in leadership roles in the field of environmental management. As public awareness of climate change, sustainable development, and environmental preservation has grown, so has the demand for strong leadership in these areas. However, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in environmental management when compared to their male colleagues. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the opportunities and challenges that women leaders confront in the context of environmental management.

Jackson (1993) contends that women's environmental interactions cannot be understood apart from men's, and that community service and natural resource defence by women have political, ideological, social, and economic causes. The essay also emphasises that women's environmental knowledge is a social product, and that gendered analysis of property relations is required to understand men and women's distinct incentives for conservation. Finally, it argues that gendered environmental decision making should be viewed through the lens of both cooperative and conflicting intrahousehold connections.

Kimball et al. (2012) contributed to the theory on the impact of leadership characteristics on corporate behaviour by investigating the effects of female leadership on corporate environmental performance in general. The authors discovered that organisations that include women in their top management team and board of directors have stronger environmental performance, with the board having a greater impact. Furthermore, adding women to a company's senior management has an impact on its environmental performance only if the company also has women on its board of directors. In particular, the authors explore how these findings contribute to studies of upper-level management and female leadership in major corporations. According to the article, gender diversity has positive effects on company environmental performance when it is present in leadership positions.

Mensah et al. (2014) found female traditional leaders in community planning and development has been a topic of interest in recent years. Several studies had highlighted the significant contributions of queen mothers in promoting sustainable development in their communities. A study conducted in Ghana found that queen mothers played a crucial role in mobilizing resources, promoting education, and advocating for the rights of women and children. Another study in Nigeria found that female traditional leaders were effective in promoting community participation in development projects and enhancing the well-being of their communities. However, despite their contributions, female traditional leaders often face challenges such as limited access to resources, cultural barriers, and gender-based discrimination.

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