

Chapter 13

The Role of Women and Gender-Diverse Leaders in Building a Sustainable World

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ABSTRACT

Women and gender-diverse leaders play vital roles in society, ranging from maintaining households to protecting the environment. They are not homogenous but contribute significantly towards building a sustainable world. Being historically at the forefront of social and environmental movements, they have been advocating for change and are an integral part in promoting sustainability. This chapter explores the contributions of women and gender-diverse leaders in building a sustainable world. Women's unique perspective and skills will be highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

In our polarized world, leaders have a crucial role in promoting social justice. To create a better world for all, diverse leaders of different genders are needed in various sectors such as civil society, religion, culture, politics, and business. Different genders bring unique values to leadership. Despite progress in science, technology, and finance, we have not achieved an inclusive, equal, fair, and peaceful world for all citizens through the promotion of inclusive and diverse leadership. A global leadership that encompasses females, males, transgender individuals, and LGBTQIA+ individuals with equal participation could be the solution to address social injustices like inequality, poverty, conflict, communal violence, and climate change. In the context of achieving the UNSDG Agenda, this is crucial.

Leadership and gender have been subjects of constant exploration in social science research aimed at establishing a just and sustainable world order. Scholars have debated and explored this topic from various perspectives, yielding diverse results. Ecumenical human rights activist Bunch argues that while women have been leading families and communities for years, they have been excluded from decision-making positions that impact their lives. She emphasizes the need to empower women and diverse gender

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leaders to create a more sustainable world. Historian Gordon notes that women social movement leaders are gifted, hardworking individuals whose self-recognition often takes a back seat to the visibility of their cause or followers in the movement. Agoy, a member of the World Council of Churches central committee, highlights that many women want to save the world but often experience burnout at a young age, while men become leaders later in life, benefiting from the work women have done. The historical achievements of women, although evident, have often been underplayed or recorded remotely in historical sources. Burnham emphasizes the importance of nurturing women leaders for social transformation.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental pillars for achieving sustainable development. However, the involvement of women and gender-diverse individuals in community leadership roles has historically been limited. Women have been champions of sustainable development in various ways. They have spearheaded initiatives to address climate change, promote renewable energy, advocate for environmental conservation, and promote sustainable agriculture practices. Women's leadership in these areas has led to innovative solutions and positive impacts on local communities and the planet. Gender-diverse community leaders, including those who identify as non-binary or transgender, also play an essential role in building a sustainable world. Their presence ensures that a wide range of perspectives are considered in decision-making processes, leading to more inclusive and equitable outcomes. By embracing gender diversity, communities can tap into a wealth of knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Moreover, women and gender-diverse leaders bring a unique lens to sustainability efforts. They often prioritize social equity, health, and well-being, recognizing the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues. By addressing systemic inequalities and empowering marginalized communities, they foster a more just and sustainable society. Building a sustainable world requires collaboration, cooperation, and collective action. Women and gender-diverse community leaders have a vital role to play in rallying communities, fostering partnerships, and mobilizing resources. They can engage in advocacy, education, and awareness campaigns, inspiring others to embrace sustainable practices and lifestyles. Recognizing and supporting the leadership of women and gender-diverse individuals is key to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. It is essential to provide equal access to education, training, and resources, ensuring that women and gender-diverse leaders have the tools they need to drive change effectively.

Women have proven to be effective agents of change, advocating for social, economic, and environmental justice within their communities. The achievements and contributions of prominent women and gender-diverse community leaders have made significant strides in sustainable development. Examples include Wangari Maathai, the founder of the Green Belt Movement, who empowered women through environmental conservation efforts, and Christiana Figueres, who played a pivotal role in the adoption of the Paris Agreement as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The role of women and gender-diverse community leaders in building a sustainable world is indispensable. Their contributions span various domains, including environmental conservation, social equity, and community empowerment. By embracing gender diversity and empowering these leaders, we can foster a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all. To build a sustainable world, it is essential to empower and support women and gender-diverse individuals in leadership roles. This section explores the importance of representation and the benefits of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. Studies have shown that gender diversity in leadership positions leads to better outcomes, increased innovation, and more inclusive policies.

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