

Chapter 13

Women, Gender Equality, and Environmental Justice

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ABSTRACT

Environmental justice and gender equality are interconnected issues that highlight the need for an inclusive approach to addressing environmental challenges and promoting social equity. Environmental justice seeks to address the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on marginalized communities, including women, who often bear the brunt of ecological degradation due to pre-existing social inequalities. Gender equality, on the other hand, aims to ensure that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities and rights. The relationship between environmental justice and gender equality is deeply interconnected. This chapter highlights the importance of interdisciplinary research and action in tackling the dual challenges of environmental injustice and gender inequality. By integrating gender perspectives into environmental policies and practices, we can create more resilient and equitable societies that are better equipped to face the environmental challenges of the future.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental justice and gender equality are two critical dimensions of social equity that are deeply interconnected. Both aim to address systemic inequalities and promote fairness, whether in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens or in the treatment of different genders. Understanding the relationship between these two issues is essential for creating inclusive and effective solutions to the world's

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most pressing environmental challenges. This chapter explores the intersection of environmental justice and gender equality, examining how these issues affect one another and highlighting the importance of integrated approaches to achieve sustainable development. **Environmental Justice** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental Justice seeks to ensure that no group of people, especially marginalized communities, bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences. The key Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. **Equity:** Addressing the uneven distribution of environmental benefits and burdens.
2. **Participation:** Ensuring that affected communities have a voice in environmental decision-making.
3. **Access to Information:** Providing transparent and accessible information to all stakeholders.
4. **Policy Integration:** Incorporating EJ considerations into broader policy frameworks.

On the other hand, **Gender Equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of all genders. It emphasizes the need to address systemic inequalities that disadvantage women and non-binary individuals, ensuring equal participation in social, economic, and political spheres. The key Principles of Gender Equality:

1. **Empowerment:** Enhancing the capacity of women and marginalized genders to participate in decision-making.
2. **Equity:** Ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities.
3. **Protection:** Safeguarding against gender-based violence and discrimination.
4. **Inclusion:** Promoting gender-sensitive policies and practices.

Power disparities for women and other marginalized groups in the Global South are perpetuated by historical, market-based, and neoliberal “solutions” to environmental degradation as the climate catastrophe worsens. Marginalized people frequently have fewer resources and are less able to adjust to environmental sabotage and natural catastrophes. Women are disproportionately affected by severe climate change, as they are more likely to be victims of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, crop loss, and lack of access to clean water. They also have to endure risky post-relief procedures for which they are ill-prepared.

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