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## UNIT 10 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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*You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.*

***Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru***

*“Development, if not engendered, is endangered”* was the slogan coined by Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq, the progenitor of the series of Human Development Reports, in the Human Development Report of 1995.

Women are a vital link in protecting the environment and sustaining development. Women and the environment are truly partners in life. Their voices and their visions must be heard and heeded. The close link women have with the environment helps explain the huge interest of women's non-governmental organisations in ecological activities.

The Earth Charter and Agenda 21, the main documents of the Summit, include both men and women in their rights and obligations. Therefore, the ecological problems call on women throughout the world to stand united. If we want to resolve them, if we intend to exert greater influence in environmental management, we must not view the world as North/South or East/West. We must view the world as an array of ecosystems, each with different capacities. In the present Unit, we would deliberate on importance of women in environment and development. We have pondered upon as to why women participation is not appropriate in policy/decision making and which strategic actions should be taken for gender mainstreaming.

### Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- appreciate the role of women in environment and development,
- analyse the present status of women in the South Asian countries,
- discuss the key gender issues,

- explain the gaps and barriers in women participation and how this gap can be over come effectively, and
- appreciate various women's movements and other organisations working towards gender mainstreaming.

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## 10.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

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*We will lionise him, but will we ever listen to what he's saying?*

**Amartya Sen - The Unheeded Conscience:**

Sen points out that when he took up issues of women's welfare, he was accused in India of voicing "foreign concerns." "I was told Indian women don't think like that about equality. But I would like to argue that if they don't think like that they should be given a real opportunity to think like that."

Surviving through a normal life cycle is a resource-poor woman's greatest challenge. Looking through the lens of hunger and poverty, there are seven major areas of discrimination against women in South Asia (Box 10.1).

### Box 10.1: Status of women in South Asia

**Malnutrition:** The exceptionally high rates of malnutrition in South Asia are rooted deeply in the soil of inequality between men and women.

"...the poor care that is afforded to girls and women by their husbands and by elders is the first major reason for levels of child malnutrition that are markedly higher in South Asia than anywhere else in the world."

India has exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition, because tradition in India requires that women eat last and least throughout their lives, even when pregnant and lactating. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle.

**Poor Health:** Females receive less health care than males. Many women die in childbirth of easily prevented complications. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impair women's health.

**Lack of education:** Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys, and far more likely to pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of violence.

**Overwork:** Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's, yet their work is unrecognised. Men report that "women, like children, eat and do nothing." Technological progress in agriculture has had a negative impact on women.

**Unskilled:** Women have unequal access to resources. In women's primary employment sector-agriculture-extension services overlook women.

**Mistreatment:** In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related murders. Fear of violence suppresses the aspirations of all women. Female infanticide and sex-selective abortions are additional forms of violence that reflect the devaluing of females in the Indian society.

**Powerlessness:** While women are guaranteed equality under the Constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Women lack power to decide who they will marry, and are often married off as children. Legal loopholes are used to deny women inheritance rights.

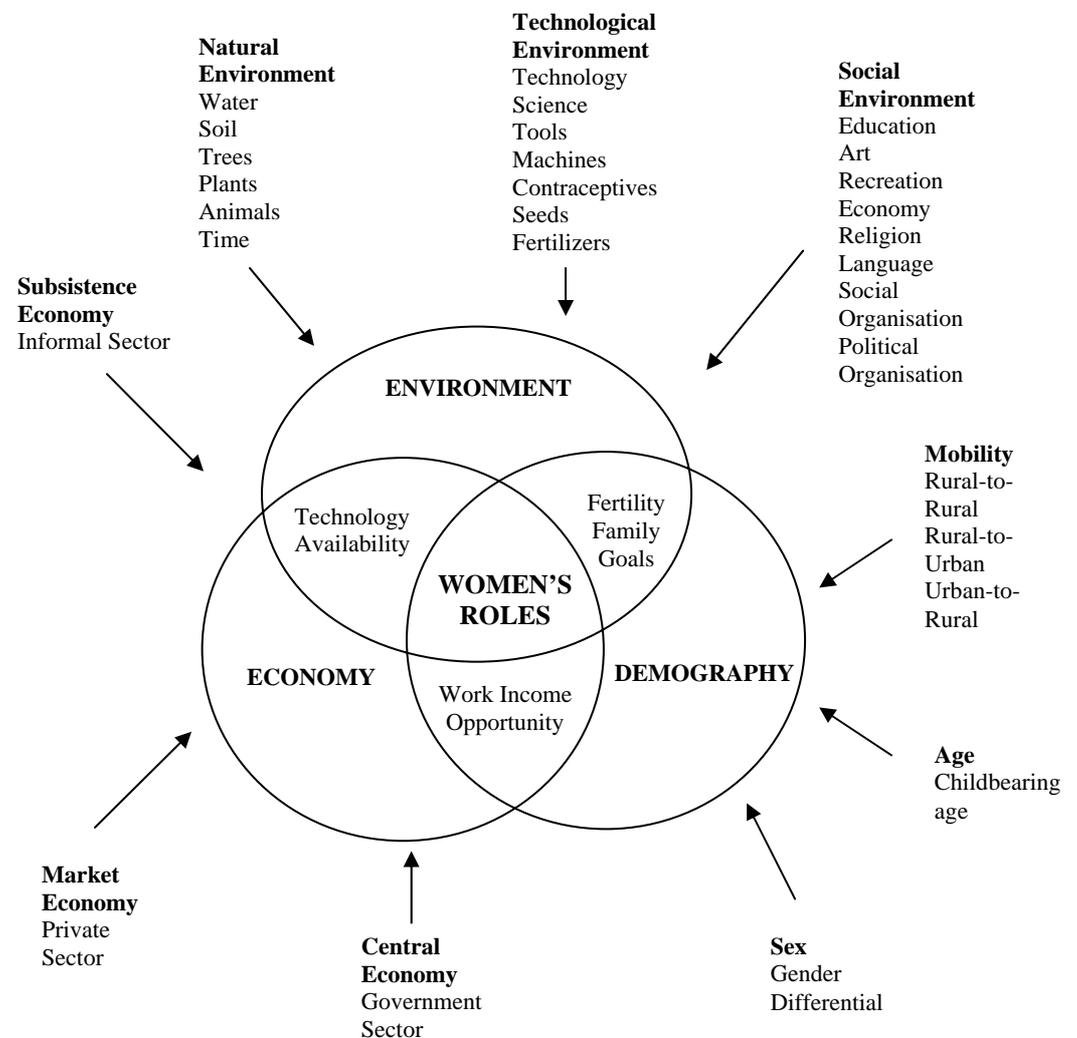
*The Asian Enigma*, published by Unique in the 1996 Progress of Nations made a point in the article: “Judgement and self-expression and independence is largely denied, millions of women in South Asia have neither the knowledge nor the means nor the freedom to act in their own and their children’s best interests.”

### 10.3 ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

*The women who participate in and lead ecology movements in countries like India are not speaking merely as victims. Their voices are the voices of liberation and transformation. . . The women’s and ecology movements are therefore one, and are primarily counter-trends to a patriarchal maldevelopment.*

*Chipko movement activist, Vandana Shiva*

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states that: **Women have a vital role in environmental management and development and their full participation is essential to achieve sustainable development.** Fig 10.1 gives you a comprehensive picture of interrelationship of women, environment and development.



**Fig. 10.1: Inter-relationship of woman, environment and development**

One of the questions that will be asked from time to time is: why focus on women? In the following discussion, we will consider a few of the issues, which make that focus important.

i) **Women as the majority of the world’s poor**

Women suffer many inequities and as a result are the majority of the world's poor. Any suitable development project, which aims to alleviate poverty, must have, built into it, the involvement of women in the decision-making; planning, advising and extension work in the field.

Women's poverty has been linked to inequalities in their:

- Situation in the market
- Access to credit
- Treatment under social welfare systems
- Access to health and education services, and
- Status and power in the family.

In each of these areas, more opportunities are available to men as compared to women.

Access to credit is crucial for any woman who plays a dominant role in agriculture, for example managing small farms. Such women are left to deal with problems such as poor output and crop loss through diseases. However, they rarely receive the benefit of agricultural training or technical assistance from extension services. Even when faced with these inequalities, women constantly strive for a better quality of life.

The quality of life for women and children can be quantified and used as an index of the effectiveness of sustainable development programmes. This index tells us a great deal about the relative social positions of men and women. It manifests itself in the struggle of women for a better livelihood, comprising access to:

- Sanitation and proper housing
- Health care and education
- The right to live in a healthy and balanced environment and satisfy the demands of life.

It is mainly through their battle against the deterioration of their living conditions and those of their families, that women have been playing a major role in sustainable development issues.

#### ii) **Women as educators**

As children's first teachers, women have an important and far-reaching role to play to inculcate concern for the environment in their children. Women teach best through reasoning and by different examples.

#### iii) **Women as users, managers and conservers of environmental resources**

In carrying out domestic duties, women are in intimate, daily contact with their immediate environment as users and /or collectors of fuel, food, water etc. Women in many parts of the world collect fruits, nuts, leaves etc. from forests for food. In places like the Caribbean, women still largely make choice of food in the market place. In a real sense, women determine a crucial part of the nutrition of the country. They also grow much of the world's food: 70% in Africa, 50-60% in Asia, and 30% in Latin America.

Women manage water supply at home. They are responsible for safeguarding health by providing potable water and water for hygiene. They are also responsible for conserving supplies in many parts of the world; women are also carriers of water, which is a tiring and time-consuming task.

**Women are conservers.** Women have often been called traditional natural scientists. Their detailed knowledge of the local flora and fauna helped them as gatherers of food, fuel and fodder and herbal medicines thereby making them subsistence agriculturists. Women play a vital role in conserving fuel, food, and water. They also

play an important role in protecting other environmental resources. For example, they can contribute in reducing ozone depletion by choosing environment friendly products. In addition, they can contribute to reduce the depletion of natural resources such as corals and wild animals by choosing fashions, which do not require their destruction.

**Women are controllers of population growth.** Through family planning, women help in controlling population growth. Therefore, there is a need for an increase in efforts to educate women on family planning. To be effective, all such efforts must take into account traditional practices and views about contraception, and the relationship between population growth and resource consumption.

As the foregoing discussion shows, women are in a position to influence attitudes to, and use, of, the environment. Their choice in using natural resources affects not only the environment but also their own and their families' health. However, if their influence is to be positive, they need training, land, credit and simple conservation technologies.

When women's needs are not met, the results are detrimental not only to the environment but also to their families' health. For example, if appropriate technologies for cooking are not provided, women may have either of the two options:

- to rely on trees for firewood and charcoal, thus contributing to deforestation.
- to conserve fuel by not boiling water or cooking food long enough thus contributing to ill health in their families.

Neither of these options is desirable. When women's needs are met, the results are generally beneficial. For example, if alternative fuel sources are available and appropriate training is provided, many women around the world could get involved in replanting trees and managing forests. This is particularly true for women in Asia and Africa (Bynoe, P. 1998).

Through their management and use of natural resources, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for the present and future generations. Governments have expressed their commitment to create a new development paradigm that integrates environmental sustainability with gender equality and justice within and between generations as contained in Chapter 24 of Agenda 21.

Women have often played **leadership roles** or taken the lead in **promoting an environmental ethic**, reducing resource use, and reusing and recycling resources to minimise waste and excessive consumption. Women can have a particularly powerful role in influencing sustainable consumption decisions. In addition, women's contributions to environmental management, including through grass-roots and youth campaigns to protect the environment, have often taken place at the local level, where decentralised action on environmental issues is most needed and decisive. Women, especially indigenous women, have particular knowledge of ecological linkages and fragile ecosystem management. Women in many communities provide the main labour force for subsistence production, including production of seafood; thus, their role is crucial to the provision of food and nutrition, the enhancement of the subsistence and informal sectors and the preservation of the environment. In certain regions, women are generally the most stable members of the community, as men often pursue work in distant locations, leaving women to safeguard the natural environment and ensure adequate and sustainable resource allocation within the household and the community.

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## SAQ 1

Discuss the interrelationship of women, development and environment.

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## 10.4 WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

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In the previous section, you have studied about the interrelationship of women, development and environment. In this section we will discuss about women and environment approach to development.

Trends in development research and practice reflect the changes of “women in development.” The terms “WID” (women in development), “WAD” (women and development), “GAD” (gender and development), and “WED” (women, environment, [sustainable] development) represent differing views of the relationship between women, gender and development in research, policymaking, and NGO practice since the mid-1960s. Each term is associated with a specific set of assumptions and values leading to the formulation of strategies for the participation of women in the development process.

The WED approach grew out of the mid-1970s oil crisis event and the literature about the earth's limited natural resources. The raised awareness of environmental concerns to a global scale catapulted development planners to look for more systematic solutions to global commons issues.

The WED movement emerged as a theme in the context of this debate with planners looking to strategies for people in the South who would be depending upon wood fuel as their major energy source. Lessons learned from development planner's failed forestry and energy projects attracted global attention as women's spontaneous grassroots social movements in India led to the widely-known Chipko Movement. You will study about this movement in detail later in this section. The increased environmental degradation of the late 1970s and the realisation of the feminisation of poverty in early 1980s led to deeper connections between the relationship of gender, development, and the environment. The inclusion of women's voices and their participation in decision-making became a UNEP policy goal to move nations from the unsustainable to sustainable path. From the late 1980s, WED 'professionals' and 'experts' from both the North and the South were charged with bringing women's role to promote sustainable development.

### 10.4.1 Gender and Development (GAD)

While the category 'gender' can be loosely defined as a set of beliefs about the psychological makeup of women and men, social roles are constructed based on these beliefs. Male roles are assigned higher importance than female roles, and therefore, are given greater status.

Stereotypes are used to justify traditional gender roles, division of labour, and men's higher social and economic status. The gender argument is circular – the relationship between gender roles and gender stereotypes is reciprocal and self-maintaining. GAD sets out to transform these unequal gender roles and relations and seeks to redistribute power inequities. Also known as the empowerment approach, GAD emphasises income-generating activities and grassroots initiatives to improve women's status and increase her self-reliance and strength. In practice, the GAD approach is seen as laden with Western feminist values which raises concerns for some funding agencies, and the approach is criticised as too academic in nature.

### 10.4.2 Gender Approaches to Environment

**The Earth Charter Initiative, affirms “gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity”** (Earth Charter; Section 3, Item 11). Agenda 21 recommends an increase of “the proportion of women involved as

decision-makers, planners, managers, scientists and technical advisers in programmes for sustainable development.” Governments acknowledged the crucial role women play in promoting environmental awareness in the **Rio +5** evaluation, and encouraged more opportunities to be created “**for women to participate effectively in economic, social and political development as equal partners in all sectors of the economy.**” A wide range of newly formed NGOs in the 1990s to implement the specific strategies of UN agenda continue to organise the necessary infrastructure to include women in the policy planning.

While efforts have been made at policy levels to acknowledge the critical role women play in environmental sustainability as local natural resource managers and as agriculturalists, the application of a universal gender analysis to environmental policy planning does not exist. Regulatory frameworks and entrenched social and cultural gender norms continue to exclude women and girls. UNIFEM acknowledges that although women throughout the world are the main care-takers and nurturers of our future generation, she still receives less education than men. Current development research finds that improvement in women’s economic status may not be a sufficient condition to change social, cultural and political status.

There still are no targets for improving women’s economic status or for reducing the “feminisation” of poverty. Women’s environmental NGOs report that it is still men who are in important environmental positions. At the national level, in many countries where laws give the same rights to women as to men, it is only the powerful men who are benefiting from land tenure rights. Globalisation has, on one hand, opened up new international experiences for women, but it has, on the other, created new inequalities that profoundly impact the lives of women and children.

Other problems contributing to the failure of a successful gender analysis framework are that policy planning for all women is problematic – women are not a homogeneous category, but a diverse range of class, ethnicity, religion and so forth. Cultural and environmental contexts are unique and not all gender relationships and gender divisions of labour come from Western patriarchal values. Some rural indigenous communities, for example, share tasks and adapt to environmental conditions.

Beyond academic theoretical debates of women’s greater connection to the earth (or as peacemakers) based on either her childbearing capacities or women’s knowledge vis-à-vis her experiences, the on-going entrenched cultural and social attitudes and behaviour towards gender roles continue to inhibit women’s participation in important decision-making processes, both on the ground and in policy planning. Only when women speak, and only when women’s voices are heard, can communities learn more about environmental stewardship from those whose livelihoods are most dependent upon their direct relationship with the land.

#### **10.4.3 Women’s Movements for the Protection of the Environment**

Today, women are no longer seen as passive powers. World-wide environmental crisis has created a kind of united thought in women that they must practically prove their existence and in this way turn into an effective material force. This process has been going on for years. Today, women’s movements have been formally recognised all over the world. Leslie Calmen in her analysis of women’s movements in India suggests that “A movement can target society, particularly with regard to social consciousness or ideology, it acts to influence the state, and it can act on participants within the movement itself”. The success of a movement can be gauged by analysing three potential arenas of action.

- i) Empowering women in the personal, familial and social realms
- ii) Moving the state to protect and enhance the rights and opportunities of women
- iii) Transforming social consciousness

The **Chipko movement of India** is one such example. Women are the main powers in this movement which continues to be led by them even today. In 1970's when logging merchants set out to axe the last remains of the forest trees of Himalaya, women who understood the importance of these forests for the survival of their lives and villages, and had recognised the link between the loss of Himalayan rivers, erosion and flooding with deforestation, rose to fight these plunderers. Women, confident of their knowledge and first hand experience of what had happened, united against the authorities who had denied the existence of a link between deforestation and desertification, and by hugging the trees prevented logging. This resistance saved the forests, and provided the basis for a movement which was called **Chipko** (meaning to hug). Today, this movement which has its origins in the Buddha teachings, is one of the most successful public movements for environmental protection, and one which has also gained world respect.

### Box 10.2: Chipko Movement

Chipko movement was very successful because of the following reasons.

#### i) **Empowerment**

The main indication of empowerment as a result of Chipko has been the growing involvement and impact of village level women's organisations called Mahila Mangal Dals (MMDs). Across India, many forest management initiatives have emerged; while some are State-initiated, others focused around the panchayats. Chhaya Kunwar of the Himalayan Action Research Centre relates an example of the village of Bacchair, which has an all-women forest panchayat and has set an example of successful forest management. In Dongri Paintolli, the women protested the all-male panchayat agreement to let the state government fell a forest in exchange for a new road, secondary school, hospital, and electricity. In Fungari Paitoli women reacted spontaneously to a move by their own men to sell the panchayat forest in exchange for a potato cultivation project. Bachni Dei of Adwani led a resistance against her own husband who had obtained a local contract to fell the forest. There are many examples like these where women confronted the authority to save forests and their livelihood.

#### ii) **Moving the State**

Chipko was quite successful in affecting government policy at both the state and national level. After multiple bans had been issued on tree felling in various regional forests, a major success occurred in 1981, when late Prime Ministers Mrs. Indira Gandhi issued a 15-year ban on the felling of trees above 1000 meters in the entire state of Uttar Pradesh. This decree came as a direct result of the women's activism. Women's political participation received a push in 1992 when pressure from women's groups led to the seventy-third Constitutional Amendment in India, under which one-third of the seats in village and block level elected bodies are now reserved for women. This does not guarantee their agenda but it at least potentially provides them with a voice. Indian women's organisations have also helped negotiate with the State and community for more gender-just property laws and for women's greater access to economic resources. At the Conference on Women in Beijing, one of the five commitments made by the Indian government included the draft of a National Policy on Women.

#### iii) **Transforming Social Consciousness**

The Chipko movement is considered as an important success story in the fight to secure women's rights, in the process of strengthening local community through forestry, and in environmental protection. Yet the collective mobilisation of women for the cause of preserving forests has brought about a situation of conflict regarding their own status in society. Women have demanded a share in the decision-making process along with men resulting in opposition by men to women's involvement in the Chipko movement. Women are seeking to change their position in society while supporting a social movement that is resisting change.

The transformation of views about women as decision-makers has definitely begun as evidenced by the previous examples of legislation and the restructuring of some local panchayats. The examples of the villages of Adwani, Dongri Paintolli, and Fungari Paitolli illustrate how women have challenged the men and succeeded. But many men resent the intrusion of the women and are resisting the process. Some men such as C.P. Bhatt and the DGSM workers were able to recognise the potential strength of the women and found them very sensitive and responsive to ecological problems. They were able to move beyond the cultural constraints of what women were supposed to be and see them as knowledgeable, organised and eager co-workers in a common goal. But as the statistics for education, birthrate, etc. indicate, the improvement in political status has not yet made significant changes at home.

An other well-known Movement campaigning for the protection of the environment is the **Green Belt Organisation** in Kenya which is led by one of Kenya's leading ladies, Vangary Ma'atay. Today Vangary leads thousands of Kenyan women in their fight for the protection of the environment. In this campaign, 'tree' is the symbol of hope and a sign of the measures that need to be taken for the protection of the environment and ensure sustainable development.

The Green Belt Organisation was formed by Vangary in 1977 to combat desertification, deforestation and soil erosion. This organisation was formed under the supervision of the National Council for women in Kenya. Its mission is to halt desertification by adopting forestation measures to be executed by rural communities. This movement carries out a broad range of activities to increase the level of public awareness regarding the link between environmental destruction and issues such as poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and improper management of natural resources, and the effect that these issues have on socio-economic conditions throughout Africa.

Due to this movement, more than one million trees were planted with the least facilities at the outset of its formation. Today it is recognised as one of the effective movements and has won global respect.

The Green Belt Organisation's purpose is not just to give hope and confidence to rural people to believe in themselves when combating problems, but the protection of biological resources, genetic diversity and ecologically important regions are on amongst its agenda. The organisation plays effective role in biodiversity protection through propagation of the importance of endemic species adaptable to the environment, in place of using non-endemic species.

Mrs. Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India was amongst the forerunners of environmental protection. In the 1970's when the Zero Growth theory was put forward by Forester and the Rome Club with Medoz in the lead, Mrs. Ghandi analysed and criticised this theory and fought against it. This theory suggested that to avoid world destruction, growth and development must be stopped and the current gap between the developing countries and the industrial world must remain.

It is clear that this suggestion could not have been to the advantage of the Third World countries. This theory disregarded the fact that industrial countries have been responsible for creating a critical environmental situation.

**Environmental pollution in poor countries is not due to development but lack of it.** In addition, environmental pollution is not a technical subject arising from science and technology but originates from the values of the contemporary world which disregard the rights of others and forgets the long term prospects. For this reason we can argue that in these countries, environmental issues are due to poverty and lack of development.

Environmental awakening of the world is also closely related to Rachel Carson's "**Silent Spring**". Environmental activists of the present generation and the future ones will always respect the memory of the initial endeavours of man in protecting

nature and living resources against the destructive world community which Rachel Carson described in her memorable work, "Silent Spring" about 30 years ago. This classical research on the destruction and poisoning of nature and loss of biodiversity through the over use of chemical poisons, was the first work that warned of the destruction of nature and living resources and insisted on the need to conserve the environment.

Women as ethical architects of the family, who are responsible for raising and educating generations, can, by raising the level of their knowledge and awareness, play a creative and constructive role in the propagation of culture and environmental ethics of the modern age. The acceptance of ethical values that are harmonious with respect for nature and its protection brings about a change in people's attitudes and behaviour towards nature. Such a change is only possible if the generations of today and tomorrow have belief in it and make it intrinsic, as they do with the general principles of ethics.

The basis for redressing the attitudes of the community towards nature and living resources lies in the family ethics and the inclusion of the necessary principles and emphasis on the importance of conserving the environment. In this respect women have irreplaceable values, which cannot be assessed against any other ordinary criteria. They are completely aware that the link between man and nature is a social one and follows the conditions of economic and social systems, i. e. the destruction of nature is directly linked with world economic policies, especially the industrially developed countries. In the Miami Congress of 1991 (Women's World Congress for the Health of the Earth) and its statement which was published under the title of, "A challenge for men and women to cooperate in the creation of a sound and sustainable future", there were factors which pointed to women's awareness, innovation and creativity in environmental issues.

Further, it is worth recalling the Rio Conference where women in global movements played a most effective role in supporting the Convention on Biodiversity protection, and the Green House phenomenon and its Outcomes. Today these two conventions have brought about new hopes in ensuring the existence of nature and living resources.

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## SAQ 2

- i) What do you understand by gender and development?
  - ii) Why do you think Chipko movement was successful?
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## 10.5 GENDER MAINSTREAMING

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Lot of efforts are being made for gender mainstreaming. There is shift in approaches towards gender equity. But before discussing about the shift in approaches towards gender equity, let us first examine key gender issues.

### 10.5.1 Key Gender Issues

- i) An **adverse sex ratio** with far and fewer women than men, particularly in the 0-6 age group; low literacy and poor health; very low participation in the decision making arenas; unequal access to resources, whether food, land, jobs or assets; high risk during pregnancy and childbirth; increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. All this points out that poverty has an increasingly feminine face in the fast moving scenario of globalisation, with the erosion of traditional livelihoods and social sector investment by Governments.

The Beijing Platform for Action has emphasised that **“empowerment of women is a *critical* factor in the eradication of poverty.”**

- ii) **Women grow food for the household rather than for the cash economy**, and so their contribution to food production still tends to be left out of national and international statistics. In this context, is, of course, the problem of ensuring that women gain access to cultivable land, the most important resource for farmers everywhere.

Apart from land, women need water, seeds, credit, information and training, technologies and access to markets to become better farmers. For women to be equal partners in development, Prof. M S Swaminathan reminds us of the vital need for exclusivity to bridge not only the digital, but also the gender divide. He says, **“if women are empowered with technological information and skills, all members of a family benefit. The reverse may not happen”.**

Food production in the villages of India is also increasingly vulnerable to global macro-economic changes and priority shifts. Changes in the cropping patterns, with land increasingly being diverted from food crops to cash crops, has affected women the most. It is women rather than men who lose work when landowners decide to grow cotton instead of paddy, or sugarcane instead of wheat.

Furthermore, scientists all over the world are today increasingly concerned about the gradual decline in the use of many traditional varieties of food crops and farm animals. These varieties and breeds, which were highly nutritious, adapted to local conditions and resistant to local diseases, have in many cases been supplanted by introduced varieties. This disappearance of biodiversity has long-term consequences for the ecology of the planet. Similarly, the large-scale use of fertilisers and pesticides, once touted as miracle chemicals, has brought us to the brink of ecological disaster.

It is here that women’s age- old knowledge and practical experience is invaluable. After all, most of the ‘alternative’ and ‘appropriate’ agricultural technologies we are talking about are basically women’s technologies.

### iii) **Valuing Women’s Work**

Women’s work is often underpaid and undervalued, and their contributions to the national economy are underestimated. Indeed, the contribution of women is often invisible.

The Human Development Report, 1995 estimated the value of unremunerated work at about \$16 billion, from which “\$11 billion represents the invisible contribution of women”. The report pointed out that “this has an impact on the status of women in society, their opportunities in public life and the gender-blindness of development policy.” For the majority of poor women, and their girl children, in developing countries (especially South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa) the struggle to survive – to haul water, fuel and fodder, to keep the hearth going – takes up most of the day.

In most countries, unpaid work or household-value-added work is of a similar magnitude of the work in the cash-economy production sector. To promote a development process that is engendered, therefore, macro economic policies must address unpaid work in their scope of enquiry, formulation and appraisal.

Improvement in the paid and unpaid work, as well as formal and informal work, is crucial for empowering those whose ‘work’ is not measured by the conventional statistical and accounting systems.

This would mean moving away:

- from seeing the market as the “core of economic activity”;

- from recognising only “work for pay or profit”; and
- from inclusion of only formal labour processes in national income accounts.

We need to focus on the broader domain of work – that which includes subsistence production of goods for households; and non-economic activities such as domestic work, caring for family and elders, construction or repair of owner-occupied buildings, and voluntary work for which individuals receive no remuneration. The time-use survey is perhaps the best methodology to gather comprehensive information about activities and their outputs, yielding specificity and comprehensiveness that is not achieved in any other social survey. It is a key source of data for gender analysis, providing crucial inputs for policy planning as well as measuring the impact of policies at household levels.

Particular attention and recognition should be given to the role and special situation of women living in rural areas and those working in the agricultural sector, where access to training, land, natural and productive resources, credit, development programmes and cooperative structures can help them increase their participation in sustainable development. Environmental risks at home and workplace may have a disproportionate impact on women's health because of women's different susceptibilities to the toxic effects of various chemicals. These risks to women's health are particularly high in urban areas, as well as in low-income areas where there is a high concentration of polluting industrial facilities.

### 10.5.2 Effects of Globalisation

In most countries of the world – if not all – women form a disadvantaged section vis-à-vis men. India is no exception. India's economy has to fight an unequal battle with the developed countries in the international market; its society is doubly burdened by the inequities suffered by women, enhanced by the effects of this unfavourable competition. It is true that a section of Indian women – the elite and the upper middle class – has gained by the exposure to the global network. More women are engaged in business enterprises, in international platforms like the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and have greater career opportunities as a result of international network. Freer movement of goods and capital is helpful to this section. In India statistics show that unemployment rate for educated women (and for that matter for educated men as well) has declined considerably throughout the late 1970s to early 1990s, though it is still very high.

But what about the majority? Let us explain it with three examples – since globalisation is **introducing technological inputs**, women are being marginalised in economic activities, while men are being offered new scopes of learning and training. Consequently, female workers are joining the informal sector or casual labour force more than ever before. For instance, while new rice technology has given rise to higher use of female labour, the increased work-load for women is in operations that are unrecorded, and often unpaid, since these fall within the category of home production activities. Application of commercial chemical inputs (fertilisers and other plant treatment), essential for new (HYV) rice technology, are done exclusively by men.

**Secondly**, since SAP has led to the unemployment of a large number of men, and has increased frustration, tension and a fear of job insecurity, women are being made to pay the social cost. Family violence has increased, rape has become an everyday event, and dowry deaths (a fall-out of consumerism) are escalating.

**Thirdly**, the economy, strained to the utmost under the challenges of globalisation, is unable to bear the burden of necessary health-care and educational expenses. The weaker sections, especially the women, are denied the physical care they deserve. Maternal mortality is extremely high, anaemia is common and women die in large numbers from communicable diseases while increasing use of amniocentesis is killing yet-to-be born women in mothers' wombs. 40% women are illiterate, and drop-out rate among girls in schools is high. Sky rocketing food prices and export-

oriented cropping pattern in agriculture contributes to women's declining access to food and nutrition. The less than satisfactory public distribution system deteriorates under the SAP, and brings extra sufferings to women, especially to women heading households (and women-headed households are on the increase in India).

This is not to suggest that all this is the result of globalisation, but to assert that globalisation/SAP has not ensured a good quality of life for the majority of Indian women; on the other hand it has reinforced the existing gender inequalities.

### 10.5.3 Changing Approaches in Gender Equity

Approaches to the issues of gender equity and engendering development policy have seen a fundamental shift over the years. The major credit for this must go to the global women's movement and to women's activism, supported by the findings of substantive social science research, which have provided incontrovertible evidence of the social, economic and cultural exclusion of women from mainstream development efforts.

Initially, most mainstream approaches to women's development were not based on analyses of the overall reality of women's lives. **During the fifties and the sixties**, women's concerns took second place to the single-minded obsession with economic growth which, it was argued, would bring equality as well. This assumption came to be questioned in the seventies. In **seventies** the development planners focused either on women's roles as mothers and housewives, or as economic agents. Development for women was seen as an issue of "letting them participate" in initiatives which they were not involved in developing, and on terms decided by others.

"Top-down welfare approach", had very little lasting impact. In the nineties it was realised that gender inequality is not a result of the lack of women's integration in development, or their lack of skills, credit and resources. The root cause of the problem, as the women's movement had been saying for many years and in many ways, lies in the social structures, institutions, values and beliefs which create and perpetuate women's subordination.

#### Creating Space for Women

In the development process, the issue is not merely one of "adding on" women to various processes, but of *reshaping* these processes to create space for women's involvement not only in implementing the development agenda, but also in *setting* that agenda.

It is a shift away from the image of women as victims to women and as agents of change. The Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995 put women's issues in the forefront of the global arena. Along with women, who were identified as the primary agents of change, there was also recognition for the central role of men in first recognising the need for, and then participating in, transforming gender relations and improving the status of women. The World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, also in 1995, the Beijing Plus 5 conference at the United Nations in 2000, Cairo, and the World Summit on Social Development at Johannesburg in 2002, took the agenda forward, though the actual change that has taken place is under debate.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) report on the world's women released in 2000, was a comprehensive survey of progress. The report focused on the economic dimensions of women's progress in the context of globalisation, and found that progress had been uneven, with gender inequalities even in the richest countries. As the UNIFEM director has aptly put it: "the countries of the world have agreed to a path, but have neglected to create sufficient road signs that let us know how far we have come in our journey and how far we have to go."

It is for all these reasons that gender mainstreaming is recognised an essential component of UNDP's policies, programmes and activities. Gender mainstreaming attempts to ensure gender equality through creating space for everyone – women and

men – to contribute their energies to translate the shared vision of people-centred sustainable human development into reality.

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### SAQ 3

How has globalisation affected gender inequalities?

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## 10.6 GENDER AND PARTICIPATION

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**Institutions need to mainstream gender-awareness and participatory approaches into their own work to ensure that development is truly equitable.**

Critical voices about participatory initiatives have focused largely on mis-matches between over ambitious aims and poor practice. One such breach is the one between claimed social inclusiveness and the reality of gender bias. Despite the aims of participatory development to involve people in development that affects them directly, little attention is paid to understanding who wants to 'participate', what makes their participation possible, and what is in it for them. Often, participatory processes have left women on the sidelines, along with the gender issues that shape their lives. **Combining gender awareness and participatory approaches can be used to unlock men and women's voices for gender redistributive change and gender -sensitive programme and policy development.**

### 10.6.1 Gaps and Barriers

Let us now discuss the lacunae in our system which hinder the participation of women in the development process.

- a) **Women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making** in natural resource and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation; their experience and skills in advocacy for and monitoring of proper natural resource management too often remains marginalised in policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as in educational institutions and environment-related agencies at the managerial level.
- b) **Women are rarely trained as professional natural resource managers** with policy-making capacities, such as land-use planners, agriculturalists, foresters, marine scientists and environmental lawyers. Even in cases where women are trained as professional natural resource managers, they are often underrepresented in formal institutions with policy-making capacities at the national, regional and international levels.
- c) **Women are not equal participants in the management of financial and corporate institutions** whose decision-making greatly affects environmental quality.
- d) Furthermore, there are **institutional weaknesses** in coordination between women's non-governmental organisations and national institutions dealing with environmental issues, despite the recent rapid growth and visibility of women's non-governmental organisations working on these issues at all levels.

### 10.6.2 Bridging the Gap

The recent years have seen a cautious convergence of gender and participation. Its success appears to hinge on three factors that often require organisational change. **Firstly, conceptual clarity** lays the basis for practical application; hence the urgent need to use clear and commonly agreed terminology. Several concepts that need attention include the following:

- The use of simplistic and stereotypical concepts of '**gender**' have alienated rather than encouraged men and have done a disservice to the complexity of gender relations.

- Smoothly used but rarely explained, the term ‘**empowerment**’ is seldom accompanied by analysis of the causes of gender-related suffering or of the processes through which it is commonly but erroneously assumed to occur.
- Comparing official definitions of ‘**participation**’ with organisational mandates and available resources can reveal conceptual inconsistencies.
- The term ‘**community**’ is also problematic with its simple but incorrect image of an undifferentiated and co-operative social group.

**Secondly**, the inherent limitation of visual methods associated with **participatory methodologies** and, above all, their **application** have glossed over gender-differentiated experiences, thus creating the impression of a uniform and static local knowledge. For example, much participatory work relies on mixed group-based discussions or assumes the dominance of a male/female division over other forms of social difference.

‘Empowerment’- oriented work requires methods that can make social transformation a principal goal, yet they do not expose or generate conflicts that increase the vulnerability of marginalised groups.

**The third essential change** lies **within the organisations** that seek equitable participatory development, as concepts and methods work only if supported by organisations and institutions in which they are nested. Experiences from Uganda, Zambia and India show time horizons of 3 to 8 years to integrate an intra-communal difference perspective into practice.

Training programmes are one small step, only if gender and participation are presented as integral components and if participants’ personal experiences and views on gender are explored.

Stimulating empowerment in ways that women and/or men might not support not only threatens to expose vulnerable people to conflict but will also determine the extent to which they wish to engage in a process that may draw attention to deeply rooted conflicts. Participation is only inclusive of gendered views if those who drive the process want it to be, or if those involved demand it to be. Gender-sensitive and participatory techniques can help translate their intentions into practice.

Recent decades have witnessed an international trend towards **democratic decentralisation** (the shifting of power, functions, responsibility and accountability from national level to grassroots communities) in order to strengthen local governance. A significant contribution of this decentralisation is to provide constitutional status to women in local governments and enhance their political participation. A clear example is the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of India (1993), which transferred power to people in decentralised Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI – local government institutions), with one third reservation of seats for women. This paved the way for women to exercise their political rights in local governance, thereby gradually giving a new thrust to more woman-friendly grassroots governance. However, it has not necessarily enabled them to influentially define priorities or address gender issues. The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA-a non-profit development organisation based in New Delhi) has developed innovative approaches to enhance the participation of women.

Women’s entry into provincial politics has, to a certain extent, challenged the social stigmas related to their ability to exercise power, and altered the texture of daily politics by injecting different values, and perspectives, as well as a different atmosphere within Panchayats. Although it is important not to assume that women display more integrity than men, it has been suggested that political administration has improved because women are more accessible to the community than men, more transparent, and more effective in fighting grassroots corruption. They have also drawn attention to issues such as education, water, sanitation, fuel and alcohol abuse, issues which are generally not focused on by men.

Ensuring women's political participation through reservations is a first important step, but much needs to be done to bring about a fundamental change in society. NGOs, CSOs and women's organisations need to increasingly network and share experiences on working with the government to increase dialogue on gender and quality of women's participation within the PRI system. Systematic and sustained efforts to motivate women to actively participate in local governance need to be accompanied by strong information and knowledge support through training and innovative communication, as well as participatory bottom-up processes. More attention needs to be focused on sensitising men as an integral part of such programmes. Without these, the promise of women's political participation offered by reservation of seats will not be effectively realised.

It makes sense for poverty alleviation interventions to reflect complex and diverse local experiences of poverty if they are to be credible, relevant and effective. But this does not always happen. With the introduction of government-led Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) the World Bank has acknowledged the importance of civil society in formulating national policy to tackle poverty. PRSPs are supposed to be based on participatory consultation and planning processes. Yet specifically designing these processes to address gender biases that limit the participation of different women (and men) in national policy processes, and to integrate gender analysis into poverty diagnosis poses a major challenge.

### **Box 10.3: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)**

While many countries have already developed their own poverty reduction strategies, the World Bank and the IMF have recently linked access to concessional lending and debt relief to the development of a poverty reduction strategy. This strategy, to be developed by governments in consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, is then to be summarised in a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and presented to the boards of the World Bank and the IMF. Countries that need to access funds can develop an Interim PRSP (IPRSP), which is designed to offer guidance for developing the main PRSP and outline the areas that need attention.

In order to access debt relief, several countries have already advanced in the PRSP process. According to Tony Burdon, Policy Adviser with Oxfam "in the 14 PRSPs completed, gender as a cross-cutting issue has been addressed in variable ways, and generally in a weak manner" (Links, 2000). Major decisions continue to be taken by the IMF, World Bank and governments, whereas the voices of civil society actors have generally been marginalised. However, according to the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD), in some countries the PRSP process has resulted in higher levels of civil society-government interaction than in the past.

If PRSPs are to fulfil their potential to integrate gender aware participatory approaches, the following is recommended for bilateral and multilateral donors, international NGOs, national governments and CSOs:

- Establish standards by which to measure the quality of gender-aware participation and participatory gender analysis, and develop projects to monitor them.
- Build government capacity and commitment to using participatory approaches for the PRSP process and to effectively respond to gender concerns.
- Support the development of advocacy skills of local groups committed to gender equality to engage effectively with the PRSP process.
- Ensure that approaches to participatory research and policy dialogue address the gender biases that currently limit the participation of marginalised groups.
- Integrate and use feminist participatory research and analysis on the local poverty situation to inform priorities for action.

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### **SAQ 4**

- i) In your opinion, where do the major lacunae lie in the present organisational set up which prohibit appropriate women participation?
  - ii) How far do you think participation can overcome these barriers?
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## 10.7 STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION

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**The strategic actions needed for sound environmental management require a holistic, multidisciplinary and intersectoral approach.** Women's participation and leadership are essential to every aspect of that approach. The recent United Nations global conferences on development, as well as regional preparatory conferences for the Fourth World Conference on Women, have all acknowledged that sustainable development policies that do not involve women and men alike will not succeed in the long run. They have called for effective participation of women in the generating an information and environmental education in decision-making and management at all levels. Women's experiences and contributions to an ecologically sound environment must therefore be central to the agenda for the twenty-first century. Sustainable development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognised and supported.

### 10.7.1 Strategic Objectives

In addressing the lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to conservation and management of natural resources and safeguarding the environment, governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, including, as appropriate, an analysis of the effects on women and men, respectively, before decisions are taken.

#### I INVOLVE WOMEN ACTIVELY IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING AT ALL LEVELS

**Actions to be taken** by Governments, at all levels, including municipal authorities, as appropriate:

- a) Ensure opportunities for women, including indigenous women, to participate in the environmental decision-making at all levels, including as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects;
- b) Facilitate and increase women's access to information and education, including in the areas of science, technology and economics, thus enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities for participation in environmental decisions;
- c) Encourage, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the effective protection and use of the knowledge, innovations and practices of women of indigenous and local communities, including practices relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies, and endeavour to ensure that these are respected, maintained, promoted and preserved in an ecologically sustainable manner, and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge; in addition, safeguard the existing intellectual property rights of these women as protected under national and international law; work actively, where necessary, to find additional ways and means for the effective protection and use of such knowledge, innovations and practices, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity and relevant international law, and encourage fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of such knowledge, innovation and practices;
- d) Take appropriate measures to reduce risks to women from identified environmental hazards at home, at work and in other environments, including appropriate application of clean technologies, taking into account the

precautionary approach as agreed in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;

- e) Take measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of, among other things, environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms, production techniques and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;
- f) Take measures to empower women as producers and consumers so that they can take effective environmental actions, along with men, in their homes, communities and workplaces;
- g) Promote the participation of local communities, particularly women, in the identification of public service needs, spatial planning and the provision and design of urban infrastructure.

By Governments and international organisations and private sector institutions, as appropriate:

- a) Take gender impact into consideration in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other appropriate United Nations bodies and in the activities of international financial institutions;
- b) Promote the involvement of women and the incorporation of a gender perspective in the design, approval and execution of projects funded under the Global Environment Facility and other appropriate United Nations organisations;
- c) Encourage the design of projects in the areas of concern to the Global Environment Facility that would benefit women and projects managed by women;
- d) Establish strategies and mechanisms to increase the proportion of women, particularly at grass-roots levels, involved as decision makers, planners, managers, scientists and technical advisers and as beneficiaries in the design, development and implementation of policies and programmes for natural resource management and environmental protection and conservation;
- e) Encourage social, economic, political and scientific institutions to address environmental degradation and the resulting impact on women.

By non-governmental organisations and the private sector:

- a) Assume advocacy of environmental and natural resource management issues of concern to women and provide information to contribute to resource mobilisation for environmental protection and conservation;
- b) Facilitate the access of women agriculturists, and pastoralists to knowledge, skills, marketing services and environmentally sound technologies to support and strengthen their crucial roles and expertise in resource management and the conservation of biological diversity.

## **II INTEGRATE GENDER CONCERNS AND PERSPECTIVES IN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Actions to be taken**

By Governments:

- a) Integrate women, including indigenous women, their perspectives and knowledge, on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including in particular those designed to address and prevent environmental degradation of the land;
- b) Evaluate policies and programmes in terms of environmental impact and women's equal access to and use of natural resources;
- c) Ensure adequate research to assess how and to what extent women are particularly susceptible or exposed to environmental degradation and hazards, including, as necessary, research and data collection on specific groups of women, particularly women with low income, indigenous women and women belonging to minorities;

- d) Integrate rural women's traditional knowledge and practices of sustainable resource use and management in the development of environmental management and extension programmes;
- e) Integrate the results of gender-sensitive research into mainstream policies with a view to developing sustainable human settlements;
- f) Promote knowledge of and sponsor research on the role of women, particularly rural and indigenous women, in food gathering and production, soil conservation, irrigation, watershed management, sanitation, coastal zone and marine resource management, integrated pest management, land-use planning, forest conservation and community forestry, fisheries, natural disaster prevention, and new and renewable sources of energy, focusing particularly on indigenous women's knowledge and experience;
- g) Develop a strategy for change to eliminate all obstacles to women's full and equal participation in sustainable development and equal access to and control over resources;
- h) Promote the education of girls and women of all ages in science, technology, economics and other disciplines relating to the natural environment so that they can make informed choices and offer informed input in determining local economic, scientific and environmental priorities for the management and appropriate use of natural and local resources and ecosystems;
- i) Develop programmes to involve female professionals and scientists, as well as technical, administrative and clerical workers, in environmental management, develop training programmes for girls and women in these fields, expand opportunities for the promotion of women in these fields and implement special measures to advance women's expertise and participation in these activities;
- j) Identify and promote environmentally sound technologies that have been designed, developed and improved in consultation with women and that are appropriate to both women and men;
- k) Support the development of women's equal access to housing infrastructure, safe water, and sustainable and affordable energy technologies, such as wind, solar, biomass and other renewable sources, through participatory needs assessments, energy planning and policy formulation at the local and national levels;
- l) Ensure that clean water is available and accessible to all and that environmental protection and conservation plans are designed and implemented to restore polluted water systems and rebuild damaged watersheds.

By international organisations, non-governmental organisations and private sector institutions:

- a) Involve women in the communication industries in raising awareness regarding environmental issues, especially on the environmental and health impacts of products, technologies and industry processes;
- b) Encourage consumers to use their purchasing power to promote the production of environmentally safe products and encourage investment in environmentally sound and productive agricultural, fisheries, commercial and industrial activities and technologies;
- c) Support women's consumer initiatives by promoting the marketing of organic food and recycling facilities, product information and product labelling, including labelling of toxic chemical and pesticide containers with language and symbols that are understood by consumers, regardless of age and level of literacy.

### **III STRENGTHEN OR ESTABLISH MECHANISMS AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES ON WOMEN**

#### **Actions to be taken**

By Governments, regional and international organisations and non-governmental organisations, as appropriate:

- a) Provide technical assistance to women, particularly in developing countries, in the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, small enterprises, trade and industry to ensure the continuing promotion of human resource development and the development of environmentally sound technologies and of women's entrepreneurship;
- b) Develop gender-sensitive databases, information and monitoring systems and participatory action-oriented research, methodologies and policy analyses with the collaboration of academic institutions and local women researchers, on the following:
  - i) Knowledge and experience on the part of women concerning the management and conservation of natural resources for incorporation in the databases and information systems for sustainable development;
  - ii) The impact on women of environmental and natural resource degradation, deriving from, inter alia, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, drought, poor quality water, global warming, desertification, sea level rise, hazardous waste, natural disasters, toxic chemicals and pesticide residues, radioactive waste, armed conflicts and its consequences;
  - iii) Analysis of the structural links between gender relations, environment and development, with special emphasis on particular sectors, such as agriculture, industry, fisheries, forestry, environmental health, biological diversity, climate, water resources and sanitation;
  - iv) Measures to develop and include environmental, economic, cultural, social and gender-sensitive analyses as an essential step in the development and monitoring of programmes and policies;
  - v) Programmes to create rural and urban training, research and resource centres that will disseminate environmentally sound technologies to women;
- c) Ensure the full compliance with relevant international obligations, including where relevant, the Basel Convention and other conventions relating to the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes (which include toxic wastes) and the Code of Practice of the International Atomic Energy Agency relating to the movement of radioactive waste; enact and enforce regulations for environmentally sound management related to safe storage and movements; consider taking action towards the prohibition of those movements that are unsafe and insecure; ensure the strict control and management of hazardous wastes and radioactive waste, in accordance with relevant international and regional obligations and eliminate the exportation of such wastes to countries that, individually or through international agreements, prohibit their importation;
- d) Promote coordination within and among institutions to implement the Platform for Action and Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 by, inter alia, requesting the Commission on Sustainable Development, through the Economic and Social Council, to seek input from the Commission on the Status of Women when reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21 with regard to women and the environment.

### **10.7.2 Strengthening the Role of Women in Environment and Development**

Women's participation in sustainable development and information to support this goal was a critical element of Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 with governments being called upon to take steps in a range of areas including (but not limited to)

- a) increasing the number and proportion of women involved in decision making for sustainable development,
- b) strengthening of government institutions such as women's bureaus and other mechanisms that systematically bring a gender perspective to government policy making,
- c) strengthening NGO capacity, and
- d) strengthening gender sensitive approaches to research, data collection and dissemination.

Clearly, women's participation in sustainable development cannot be divorced from advances in women's participation in government as a whole. Several countries report outstanding progress in this area.

While some progress has been made, there is currently inadequate research and analysis on women's participation in the decision-making roles related to environment and sustainable development. This would include more substantive understanding of existing barriers to participation and strategies to overcome them. Preliminary review of national reports submitted for both Beijing +5 and National Plans on Agenda 21 indicates that "measurable" data on governmental efforts to increase the proportion of women in decision making on sustainable development is quite limited.

Structural changes to facilitate a gender approach have been instituted in some countries. For example, in some countries the agencies responsible for women's affairs have implemented efforts to increase participation in environmental concerns. More long-lasting strategies will incorporate gender mainstreaming in national environmental agencies.

It is also critical that more national environmental institutions develop mechanisms for structured input and consultation with women's NGO's active on sustainable development. Local Agenda 21 processes represent a special opportunity to increase women's participation in sustainable development; however few localities have made efforts in this area. To a large extent to date, there has not been an explicit approach to gender in most countries as part of LA 21; however, surveys conducted both by the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) showed that there is an ample room for the development of such an approach.

Other barriers in LA 21 communities include a general lack of awareness by both women and men about the connections between environment and women's roles, lack of interest and political will among local authorities and a lack of desire to change the balance in current power relations.

i) **Strengthening Capacity of Women's NGOs**

Broad based, grassroots approach to involving women and obtaining their input on sustainable development issues need to be implemented. High priority should be given to working with women's NGOs active on sustainable development to facilitate investments in innovative information and communications technologies, which represent an important opportunity for women's empowerment. The ability to communicate their perspectives and concerns is a central empowerment issue, both for the publication of their concerns and perspectives, and for access to information and education that will promote women's consciousness-raising. Further, the decentralised, interactive and non-hierarchical nature of these technologies present a unique space for women to develop their views, opinions, benefit from the synergy of interactive communications with women. In addition, once the initial costs of access and technology are covered, it presents a low-cost and relatively simple mode of publishing newsletters, articles, statements, etc. Special attention should be given to involving women's NGOs in training and support, in partnership with technology providers.

ii) **Information and Research Availability**

Review of the United Nations "Indicators for Social Aspects of Sustainable Development", reveals that few of these are gender specific, for example, only the overall unemployment rate rather than gender disaggregated labour force participation rates. As countries continue work programmes on the development of the broader range of environmental indicators, they must ensure a gender analysis as part of this review. The Women's Caucus has previously suggested that a comprehensive effort should be conducted to measure progress. They have pointed to the utility of the Human Development Report's (HDR) two gender-related indices, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure

(GEM), provide useful and up-to-date data. The GDI is based on the Human Development Index (HDI) that measures the average achievements in a country on the basis of three dimensions, namely longevity, knowledge and the real GDP per capita. The GDI takes account of the inequality in HDI achievement between the sexes. The GEM aims to evaluate whether women are able to actively participate in key areas – economic, social, and political. GDI focuses on capabilities and conditions, while GEM is concerned with their use for full participation. *It is critical that these indices be integrated with the sustainable development indicators to take gender into account.*

The self reported ratings by governments in the National Reports on Sustainable Development of the availability of sustainable development information for women at the national level is as follows. For the Asia/Pacific region of 21 countries, almost half (10) countries provided no rating, 1 saying information was poor, 2 countries show some good data and another 5 indicating that information was either good or very good.

Adequate funding to support gender sensitive research and information in decision - making on sustainable development remains a barrier. Clearly, efforts need to be made to provide funding for creative partnerships between government, women's NGOs and universities active on gender and sustainable development for comprehensive strategies for research development and dissemination. Additional gender sensitive research at the international level also needs to be enhanced. For example, a comprehensive international analysis of policies for women's access to land and efforts to reform land legislation would be useful. At the local and national level, lack of land education remains a critical issue, and must be approached in conjunction with innovative methods of improving women's ability to understand legal texts.

In Rio+10 2002, commitment to strategies for strengthening women's access to information for participation and decision making including involvement of women in high level consultations was stressed upon.

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## SAQ 5

How can the role of women in environment and development be strengthened?

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## 10.8 INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

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*As a woman I have no country;  
As a woman my country is the whole world*

– Virginia Woolf

Some important international and Indian organisations working in the direction of women and sustainability leadership with brief description are given in Table 10.1 and Table 10.2 respectively.

**Table 10.1: International women organisations**

Organisation	Thrust Areas
<b>Common Well Institute International, Inc (USA)</b>	Is a non-profit organisation dedicated to inspiring sustainable leadership for the new century that promotes peace, and that is dedicated in spirit and action to the wellbeing of all citizens of the global village, including women and children
<b>Division for the Advancement of Women (UN)</b>	Grounded in the vision of equality of the United Nations Charter, (DAW) advocates the

	improvement of the status of women of the world and the achievement of their equality with men.
<b>The European Women’s Lobby (Belgium)</b>	(EWL) is the largest co-ordinating body of national and European non-governmental women’s organisations in the European Union. The EWL’s goal is to achieve equality of women and men in Europe and to serve as a link between political decision-makers and women’s organisations at EU level.
<b>Institute for Women’s Policy Research (USA)</b>	IWPR is a public policy research organisation dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families.
<b>International Women’s Media Foundation (USA)</b>	The IWMF’s mission is to strengthen the role of women in the news media around the world.
<b>National Organisation for Women (USA)</b>	NOW’s goal has been to take action to bring about equality for all women. NOW works to eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
<b>PeaceWomen (USA)</b>	Works to facilitate communication among and mobilisation of advocates and supporters in civil society, the UN system and governments working on women.
<b>Socialist International Women (UK)</b>	Is the international organisation of the women’s organisations of the socialist, social democratic and labour parties affiliated to the Socialist International.
<b>WELDO (Pakistan)</b>	Women Empowerment Literacy and Development Organisation is a world renowned, not for profit, progressive, non-governmental organisation working on Environmental Rehabilitation and Conservation and Promotion of International Trade and Public Private Partnership in Pakistan.
<b>Women’s Action for New Directions</b>	WAND empowers women to act politically to reduce violence and militarism.
<b>Women’s Environment &amp; Development Organisation (USA)</b>	WEDO is an international advocacy organisation that seeks to increase the power of women worldwide as policymakers at all levels in governments, institutions.
<b>Women for Sustainable Development (India)</b>	The aim of WSD, which is based on the principle of conscious and responsible participation of women, is to implement relevant development programmes.
<b>Women in Europe for a Common Future</b>	Is a network of organisations and individuals working for sustainable development, protection of human health and environment and poverty reduction.
<b>Women’s Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) (USA)</b>	Is an international, non-governmental organisation (NGO) that empowers women and girls in the Global South to re-imagine and re-structure their roles in their families.
<b>Women’s Transport Network (UK)</b>	To promote transport systems and pedestrian environments that are safe and accessible for all and to encourage women to enter and progress in the transport industry.
<b>Women’s WORLD (USA)</b>	To research, explore, and educate the public about the scope and prevalence of gender - based censorship

**Table 10.2: Women's organisations of India**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Thrust Areas</b>
<b>Aaina Bhubaneswar</b>	Aaina was founded in 1998 by a group of like minded women who wanted to focus, on the development of women and children's issues, especially as they relate to disability
<b>Aanchal Mumbai</b>	Aanchal is a help line and support group that reaches out to lesbian and bisexual women in Mumbai, India. This population was chosen because sexual minorities, especially lesbians are seen as invisible in India.
<b>Anveshi Dalit Women's Trust Tiruvalla</b>	Anveshi Dalit Women's Trust is an organisation that was founded in 1993 by a group of Dalit women. Anveshi's main goal is to empower Dalit women and the Dalit community as a whole for social change.
<b>ARPAN</b>	Advancement of Rural People And Nature (ARPAN) was established in 1992. The group was founded to help women of North Gujarat in India who suffer due to the prevailing social values.
<b>Centre for Women's Development and Research Chennai</b>	The Centre for Women's Development and Research (CWDR) is an organisation that was founded in 1993 by a group of female activists who wanted to address problems faced by women in the southeast end of Chennai, India in a region called Thiruvanmiyur. CWDR's mission includes creating awareness about gender issues, increasing the income of women, and eliminating violence against women.
<b>Guidance Society for Labour Orphans and Women (GLOW) Tamil Nadu</b>	GLOW (Guidance Society for Labour Orphans and Women) is a non-profit, social service organisation that has been assisting the poor, marginalised and vulnerable Dalit women of Taminadu, India since 1996.
<b>Indira Social Welfare Organisation (ISWO)</b>	Indira Social Welfare Organisation (ISWO) was started in 1985 by a group of enthusiastic female teenagers mainly from Thenkanal district in the state of Orissa. The organisation aims to empower the slum dwelling women, who are mostly Dalit and tribal women, to enable them to rise above the poverty line.
<b>Integrated Women Development Institute (IWDI)</b>	The Integrated Women Development Institute was founded in 1989 by Celinal Paul Daniel, a woman inspired by the ideology of Gandhian thoughts and Christianity, who wanted to implement programmes and rural development works that would benefit the people living in Gummidipoondi and Ponneri taluks of the Thiruvallur District. The IWDI targets homeless women, low income bonded labourers, the destitute, the deserted, aged, and girl children.
<b>Mahila Mandal Barmer Agor (MMBA)</b>	MMBA, founded by Ms. Mumtaz Ben as a result of her struggle to improve the quality of life at Indira Colony, has been working in the Barmer and Jaisalmer districts of India since 1985. It is a grass roots organisation that concentrates on education, health, gender

	discrimination, and serves primarily widowed women known as dalits.
<b>Nari-O-Sishu Kalyan Kendra (NSKK)</b>	Nari-O-Sishu Kalyan Kendra (NSKK) was registered in 1979. It was originally founded by Md. Mainuddin, who believed in empowering women. His initial goal was to empower women living in seven Muslim dominated villages who, due to their faith, were unable to receive an education. NSKK focuses its services on three age groups of women: up to 12; 12-18; and 18-45. Some of the current activities and programmes include: counselling services; mobilisation of local resources; and credit access for skill development and self employment opportunities.
<b>Rural Educational Awareness Development Society (READS)</b>	Founded in Tamil Nadu in 1998, Rural Educational Awareness Development Society (READS) organises women in order to raise their social and economic status. In Tamil Nadu, dowry torture is still prevalent, most women have little or no education due to pressure from their parents to stay home and help with household work.
<b>Rural Health and Environment Development Trust (RHEDT)</b>	Rural Health and Environment Development Trust was established in Tamil Nadu in 1990 by a group of male and female social workers. The mission of RHEDT is to organise the Tribal women into self-help groups and equip them with knowledge, awareness, analytical skills etc.
<b>Women Development Resource Centre (WDRC)</b>	The Women Development Resource Centre (WDRC), was started in 1991 to create a space for women to come together to sit and discuss the development of women, the injustice on them, and to bring conditional and positional changes to the lives of women. The organisation also addresses the livelihood needs of women, works on actions against violence on women and encourages the political participation of women in local governmental systems.
<b>Women’s Emancipation and Development Trust (WED)</b>	Women’s Emancipation and Development Trust (WED) was founded in 1992 with the aim of “building a gender-just society with self-sustained, economically independent, politically empowered women.” Their activities include programmes aimed at awareness education to prevent violence against women (especially female infanticide and foeticide), self-help groups and micro -finance for women’s income generation, as well as family counselling and legal aid.
<b>Women’s Organisation for Rural Development (WORD)</b>	Women’s Organisation for Rural Development (WORD) was founded in 1991 by Ms. Sivakamavalli who envisioned “promoting rights of the oppressed, discriminated and marginalised women” in India. Their goals include eradicating gender disparity through the attainment of social, economic, health, cultural, and environmental development.

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## 10.8 SUMMARY

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Let us summarise what you have studied so far:

- Women are the main victims of environmental degradation. They are sound managers of natural resources, are close to nature and are in constant contact with environment.
- Women are involved in all social and cultural activities. Due to women's vital role in production and reproduction, many programmes and policies targeted at the community have their greatest impact on women. Yet this gender-specific impact is too often ignored by planners, overlooked by field workers, and bypassed in project implementation.
- It is well documented that development programmes that ignore women either fail or have negative social impact, as they are based on an inadequate and only partial understanding of the society.
- Women, as agents of change, have developed their own strategies to cope up with environmental degradation. Their first reaction is to channelise more time, energy and effort into the supply of natural resources.
- Women have often played leadership roles or taken the lead in promoting an environmental ethic, judicious resource use and reusing and recycling resources to minimise waste and excessive consumption.
- There is a shift to wards the issues of gender equity over the years. Due to changes in the organisational and institutional mechanisms, there is a reshaping of woman's role.
- The image of a woman is changed from a victim to the agent of change.
- There is a cautious convergence of gender and participation at all the levels i.e. from grass root level to the formulation of policy.
- Strategic actions are being taken to involve women actively in environment, in decision making, in integrating gender concerns in policies and assessing the impact of development and environment policies on women at national, regional and international levels.
- Many international and national organisations are focusing on women and environment and development. But the capacity of NGOs has to be enhanced to strengthen the role of environment.

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## 10.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. Why it is necessary that women should participate in the decision making process?
2. Do you think there is a paradigm shift in approach towards gender equity in your country? Substantiate your answer.
3. What role is being played by the NGOs to overcome the barrier in women participation?
4. What are the key gender issues that need to be addressed while formulating a policy for women?
5. Why women are considered as traditional natural scientists?
6. How has globalisation reinforced the existing gender inequalities?

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