
UNIT 2 RELEVANCE OF GENDER IN SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and gender are prominent aspects of the development agenda since the 1980s. Gender shapes the motives, means, and opportunities for men and women to contribute to sustainability. Particular attention is given to evidence on closeness to nature, focus on conservation, rights to resources, opportunities to exploit resources, and constraints to adopting sustainable practices. Definitions and concepts of sustainability vary, and one of the most often cited is that of the Brundtland Commission: "Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" Although the emphasis is generally on physical or environmental sustainability, many analysts also pay attention to social and economic sustainability.

With the debate on sustainability becoming pronounced since the 1980s, theories about women's inherent connection to nature became popular in discussing the Environment and Development. Ecofeminist scholars posited that women are more closely linked to nature under their biological relationship to reproduction and are more likely to be harmed by its degradation and more likely to be responsible for its conservation. To understand the origin of Women, Environment and Development (WED), we need to trace the Southern country's economic Development, the history of three decades of UN development and WID, WAD and social movements like Chipko, Greenbelt movements.

The WID (Women in Development) movement in the 1970s criticized mainstream development thinking by arguing that women were being excluded from accessing resources, and development policies and theories considered women as mere receiver of the welfare benefits. Women possess the capacity and capability to contribute to growth. It is significant to involve women in the development process. However, the WID argument ignored the complexities of gender relations.

After studying the policies and programmes implemented based on the WID approach, feminists concluded that it is not about women's economic activities. Women do contribute to economic activities. But women's contributions are not recognized and valued. Based on the critiquing WID approach, feminists proposed and developed the Women and Development (WAD) approach.

The Women and Environment (WED) theme evolved in the developed countries within the feminists' movement in the mid-1970s after the emergence of ecofeminism. The theme WED emerged after questioning the existing development process and the significance of including the sustainability part in the existing development process. Developed nations wanted to assist the southern countries and their development process by addressing the sustainability part. The earlier WID and WAD were replaced in the early 1980s by the WED (women, environment, and development) argument heavily propagated by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It portrayed women as having a strong affinity for the Environment. We need to note that WED encompasses many professional fields, including forestry, agriculture, irrigation, and water systems. It also talks about women's interrelations with the Environment and Development and the impact of environmental degradation on women's lives. The existing patriarchal relations in developing nations like India expect women to take of the household activities. Women do contribute productive, reproductive and socio, political activities. The reproductive activities include childbearing, child-rearing, elders' care, and all household activities like cooking, cleaning, etc. Environmental degradation increases women's workload to provide household necessities like fuel, water fodder for animals in the rural areas, and degradation of air and water affects women's health in urban areas.

Nevertheless, realities of unsustainable patterns of development intensifying gender inequalities demonstrates a disproportionate effect on women in the form of economic, social and environmental stresses. Modern forms of development and under-regulated market-led growth, including industrial production, agriculture, energy services, have often contributed to unsustainability and gender inequality. As complex social, economic, and environmental challenges cut horizontally across sectors and vertically across government levels, gender, however, remains a common factor to strike a linkage between different goals and policy fields. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) established as a catalyst and coordinator for environmental issues within the United Nations (UN) after the Stockholm conference. UNEP established the Senior Women's Advisory Group on Sustainable Development to enhance women's environmental management participation. In the Nairobi International Women's Conference, 1985, ELCI

organized a parallel conference, Women and Environmental crisis. Feminists and women activists like Vandana Shiva, Wangari Mathai actively participated. In the Nairobi conference, the Asian and Pacific Women's Resource Network published many case studies of local communities' environmental action. In the Mid-1980s, popular media captured women's struggle from developing countries due to environmental degradation. They showed the image of women with the heavy load of wood logs water pots against barren landscapes. UN secretariat appointed UNEP as the leading agency on women and Environment in 1976. The publication of Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" in 1987 addressed the long term strategies for sustainable Development. The publication of 'Women and Environment in the Third world' by Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson in 1987 with case studies of the world women's environmental activism's contribution is a significant moment. UNCED organized an international symposium in 1991 titled "Women and Children First" and explored the impact of poverty and environmental degradation on women and children with the view that they are the potential actors for sustainable Development. The declaration of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and its relevance in addressing environmental sustainability (7th Goal) further brought international community commitments to address sustainability issues. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by United Nations in 2015 became the core of the development agenda till 2030. The 17 SDGs with Goal five as a stand-alone on gender equality and more than half of the 17 other goals have integrated gender dimensions with measurable indicators. The integration is well articulated in the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda, which signals an effort to integrate human development goals, economic growth, and equality. It is argued that greater well-being requires more economic diversification and thus result in equal participation of women in Development. There is a grand compromise at the core of sustainable Development between those who prioritize the Environment, prioritize social Development, and prioritize economic Development.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to

- Contextualise environmental Sustainability with economic development and Gender;
- Trace the inter-linkages among SDG Goals;
- Place the significance of Gender in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- Examine the neoliberal economic policies with sustainable development and Gender.

2.3 CONTEXT

The challenge of maintaining environmental sustainability in the context of economic growth and material well-being entered global discussions in the

UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. The report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, placed the concept of sustainable development into the global environmental and development agenda. It defined *sustainable development* as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Since that time, sustainable development has been the overarching theme and guiding principle of global development.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, reaffirmed this commitment and included a reference to the three pillars of sustainable development by assuming ‘a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at the local, national, regional and global levels.

In 2000, the UN Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Declaration with eight time-bound targets, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with a deadline of 2015. It committed all countries to reduce extreme poverty and set a road map towards the implementation of the MDGs, which focused on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combatting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

The MDGs became widely accepted goals but were primarily relevant for developing countries. The developing countries achieved remarkable progress towards these goals, especially in eradicating poverty and improving primary education access; progress has been uneven within and across countries.

The MDG implementation approach has also been criticised for addressing complex development challenges with only eight concrete goals and reducing the development agenda to meeting basic material needs. The resulting narrow focus on selected indicators has accordingly been criticised for ignoring issues that are not captured with specific, quantifiable indicators, thus potentially leading to shifting priorities when implementing the MDGs.

While the SDGs build on the MDGs, there are significant differences between them and the processes leading to their adoption. The SDGs broadened the focus from that of the MDGs towards a wider development policy agenda addressing many aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability. While the MDGs were mainly relevant for developing countries, the SDGs apply to all countries. They also address issues that were not included in the MDGs and ones that the MDGs were criticised for only partially, including inequality, gender, political and human rights, economic development, and climate change.

Agenda 2030 is a universal plan of action that aims at guiding development efforts and national development policies until 2030. It recognises that the

SDGs are 'integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. Universal development and ending poverty in the spirit of 'no one will be left behind are the central principles of Agenda 2030. 'Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty' is considered the 'greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

2.4 INTER-RELATION AMONG SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMNT GOALS(SDGs)

SDGs stated to form a complex, integrated system of goals and interrelated targets that cut across traditional administrative sectors. Many of the goals have an overall sectoral focus. There is great variation in the SDGs' nature and scope, and the related targets have different functions. Some targets are ends in themselves, while others are means to reach other targets by supporting the development of an enabling environment or providing resources that support other targets' achievement. The relationship among the more intermediate targets can be synergistic, and a lack of progress in one may often hinder progress within another. While synergies among the targets can increase the effectiveness of implementation, incompatible targets lead to trade-offs. Besides, the interactions among the SDGs are non-linear. Deficient performance in one crucial goal or target can potentially undermine progress in the overall agenda. Similarly, the implementation of one target at the expense of a non-compatible one can reinforce the trade-offs.

The interlinkages and interactions among the SDGs and related targets are receiving increasing attention. Le Blanc (2015) conducted a network analysis of the links among SDGs and targets (except those related to implementation) based on their wording. The results show that the SDGs are unequally connected. Some goals are connected through multiple targets, while others have weak connections to other goals. Sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), reducing inequality (SDG 10), eliminating poverty (SDG 1) and promoting economic growth and employment (SDG 8) are directly or indirectly linked to at least ten other goals. Life on land (SDG 15) is linked to six other goals. The network analysis results were compared to previous studies that had used a nexus approach to analyse the interconnections among climate, land, energy, and water targets. SDG interactions have also been analysed by classifying and clustering the goals and their interactions. The potential interactions among SDGs are closely related to their position in the framework. The authors argue that there is potential for synergies among the goals at the inner level as they focus on different aspects of human well-being. Similarly, the outer-level environmental goals are interrelated and potentially synergistic. The middle infrastructure goals contribute to achieving the well-being goals but compete for limited ecological resources such as land for agriculture, forestry, or energy.

The SDGs and related targets form a complex, interconnected set of different kinds of goals. However, these interconnections are neither systematically

recognised nor addressed in the SDG agenda: 'A tendency to ignore interlinkages among sectors and across national borders has meant that success in one area or location has all too often come at the expense of increasing problems elsewhere'. Understanding the interactions among the targets is thus fundamental for making comprehensive progress towards the targets and ensuring that progress towards a specific target is not impeding other targets' achievement.

2.5 PLACING GENDER IN SDGS

UN's role in advancing gender equality stems from the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women - the leading global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Through the existing Commission, the UN could adopt various landmark agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and organized International Conventions to address the issues of gender.

United Nations Secretary-General BAN KI-MOON highlighted in his Report "We the Peoples", the crucial role of gender equality as a driver of development progress, recognizing that women's potential had not been fully realized owing to, inter alia, persistent social, economic and political inequalities. The vital role of women has been reaffirmed through UN conventions and declarations, with a focus on their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas of sustainable development, to accelerate the implementation of our respective commitments in this regard as contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as Agenda 21, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

It is recognized that although progress on gender equality has been made in some areas, the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change have not been fully realized, owing to inter alia, persistent social, economic and political inequalities. Prioritization of measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of our societies, including the removal of barriers to their full and equal participation in decision-making and management at all levels, and emphasis on the impact of setting specific targets and implementing temporary measures, as appropriate, for substantially increasing the number of women in leadership positions, with the aim of achieving gender parity is being advanced through governmental actions.

UN stands committed to unlocking the potential of women as drivers of sustainable development, including through the repeal of discriminatory laws and the removal of formal barriers, ensuring equal access to justice and legal support, the reform of institutions to ensure competence and capacity for gender mainstreaming and the development and adoption of innovative and

special approaches to address informal, harmful practices that act as barriers to gender equality.

SDGs' holistic approach breaks down the siloed approaches to development in the past – with separate pursuits of social, economic and environmental agendas – which led to policy cherry-picking instead of prioritising competing goals. It is argued that attempting to progress social, economic and environmental goals together through appropriate institutional and policy interventions ends the false dichotomy of conflict between goals and gender empowerment. The dominant and cross-cutting goal gets ascendance due to such actions.

2.6 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Since the 1980s, the body of research on gender and sustainability has expanded to include men, the relationships between men and women, and more nuanced views of women across different cultural, social, and environmental contexts. In the context of “feminist environmentalism,” a term coined by Bina Agarwal emphasized the need to understand women’s and men’s relationship with nature as rooted in their material reality and how gender- and class-based interactions with nature structure knowledge about nature, the effects of environmental change, and responses to it. The “feminist political ecology” school of thought focused on three key themes:

- Gendered knowledge of the environment
- Gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, including access to resources
- Gendered politics and grassroots activism

It also showed how culturally defined gender roles structure access to different knowledge, space, resources, and social-political processes.

Feminists, too, coined the term ‘Feminist Political Ecology’ and developed it as an interdisciplinary academic field to study the existing uneven power relations in the everyday ecologies. Based on the theoretical understanding of feminist political ecology, studies carried out on intersectionality and interrelational of gender, ecology with social structures.

2.7 FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

As Nightingale points out, love and respect for nature do not automatically result in nature's sustainable treatment. How people conceptualize, the boundary between themselves and nature affects how they understand and treat the environment.

Although caring for the environment has been interpreted to ensure natural resources for future generations, it may provide old-age support in communities where women do not control resources. In India, women are motivated to protect the environment owing to material realities and not to some close connection to nature. In dire poverty and scarcity, women may be

less prone than men to conserve because they are in charge of the family's immediate survival.

Women have also been viewed as those primarily affected by environmental change in the developing world, giving them further incentive to use resources sustainably. A recent empirical analysis of 141 countries from 1981 to 2002 found that natural disasters lower women's life expectancy more than that of men. In Kenya, the environmental change resulted in a more equitable sharing of labour by men and women for traditionally female tasks such as gathering water. However, this was viewed as temporary assistance and not a long-term change.

Several studies show that when women are involved in Natural Resource Management (NRM), they undertake actions that benefit the environment. The Chipko Movement in India and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya provide famous examples of women-led conservation efforts. Sultana & Thompson's work on floodplain and fisheries management in Bangladesh finds that when both men and women are involved in management groups, compliance with rules is higher, and conflict is lower. Agarwal's studies in Nepal and India find that controlling for other factors, the inclusion of women in forest management executive committees contributes to improved forest governance and resource sustainability.

In the Philippines, attempts to have women monitor lake water to determine if soil conservation technologies (SCTs) were reducing silting were unsuccessful until project staff realized that women were more interested in health issues than in soil loss. When the project began to raise awareness about how water quality affected families' health and the program then expanded to include monitoring for *Escherichia coli*, women's participation increased significantly. Thus, men and women may prioritize different aspects of sustainability.

The above examples demonstrate that men and women can show a wide range of interests and sustainability motivations. These are conditioned by their situations and lived realities. Factors such as immediate necessities, labour constraints, information sources, social roles, livelihood options, and external interventions affect the choices men and women make. Thus it is hard to say whether men or women are more naturally inclined to care for the environment.

The ability to use natural resources is often highly gendered, with men and women enjoying differential levels of rights to different kinds of resources, which are embedded in customary and statutory legal institutions. Resources can be private, common, or public goods and can be accessed individually or via family, user groups, or the state. Rather than pure ownership, rights are better understood as overlapping bundles of rights. Using International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) data from 290 forest user groups in Kenya, Uganda, Bolivia, and Mexico, Sun et al. find that female-dominated groups tend to have more property rights to trees and bushes than do male-dominated or gender-balanced groups—perhaps because women collect non-timber minor forest produce or firewood for domestic use,

whereas men are more interested in timber harvesting, which is more commercially oriented and less sustainable.

In common-pool resources, control rights may rest with the government or with user groups. In the latter case, the extent of men's and women's effective voice in the user groups and the groups' overall effectiveness will determine their control rights. Work in Uzbekistan also finds that because women are not viewed as land managers—even though they perform most of the work due to high male out-migration in the area—their participation in water users' associations to manage irrigation technologies is limited. In Madhya Pradesh, India, when committee leaders report that women belong to forest protection committees, participate in committee meetings and patrol the forest, then control of illegal grazing and tree felling increases by 24% and 28%, respectively, and the regeneration of allotted forest also increases by 28%. The proportion of women on committees and their class background also matters. Based on data from 135 community forestry groups in Nepal and Gujarat, India, Agarwal finds that having more women on executive committees is associated with stricter rules, except when more landless women have no alternatives to the forest for firewood and fodder needs. The study shows how party to decision-making is more likely to follow and enforce the rules.

Women's limited formal education and lack of confidence in public may limit their participation in Natural Resource Management (NRM) user groups, especially formal meetings. But these limits can be overcome. A randomized evaluation of water infrastructure maintenance in rural Kenya found that speeches made by Non Governmental Organisation (NGOs) facilitators about the importance of women's participation in the user committees increased women's participation, along with encouraging women to attend the community meetings at which committee members were selected and holding the meetings at a convenient time for women.

Knowledge about biodiversity constitutes an essential aspect of NRM. Ecofeminists have stressed women's role as primary "selectors and custodians of seed," thus making them more knowledgeable about seed varieties than men are. In Jharkhand, India, Jewitt finds that many of the women moved to the village upon marriage and thus were not as familiar with the local species and varieties as the men in the village who had grown up in the area much of their childhood in the forests.

Many sustainable practices require additional labour inputs. Therefore, control over labour—own, family, or hired—is necessary for adoption. Quisumbing & Kumar find that although male- and female-headed households are equally likely to adopt SCTs in Ethiopia because SCTs are labour intensive, adoption tends to be higher in larger households with more labour resources and lower in households with higher opportunity costs of labour (better-educated households, more livestock). However, because men often have the means to hire labour or have greater bargaining power within the household, they can often mobilize more labour resources.

Women's inability to harness labour resources contributes to their time

burden, and male out-migration in some areas may exacerbate labour shortages for women. However, although it is common to assume that women in the developing world are more time-constrained, owing to their double involvement in productive and reproductive work, recent results from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index in 13 countries (152) show that both men and women report being highly time-constrained across most countries, though the levels of time poverty are higher for women.

Environmental degradation, particularly the depletion of water, wood, and soils, is assumed to affect women more heavily than men, lengthening a woman's workday as these resources become more scarce and she needs to travel farther to gather the same amount. Research by Kumar & Hotchkiss in Nepal's hill areas shows that as deforestation increases, so too does women's time burden; increased deforestation also reduces household income, food consumption, and nutrition. However, men's time can also be affected by environmental degradation. Research in the Volta Region of Ghana reveals that women's workload increased more than men's during periods of drought. However, men were also affected, often having to move to cities in search of work.

Sustainable resource practices often require financial investments or preceding immediate income to allow the resources to regenerate. Gender differences in cash or credit constraints and the ability to save or remittances would affect the adoption of those practices. In many developing countries, women have less information than men about financial products and services because of lower literacy rates and lower access to essential factors like transportation. Besides, they may face biases from bank tellers or lending institutions or lack the collateral (such as land) needed to take out a loan. However, men may not always have more access to credit. This is especially the case with microfinance, which in recent years has targeted primarily women and women's groups for receipt of loans, partly because of higher repayment rates among women.

Most programs to promote sustainability have been gender blind and thus ended up working primarily with men, who are more likely to occupy public spaces and are often more readily recognized by outsiders as the foresters, irrigators, fishers, and even farmers. Ecofeminism can be seen as a valid response to that tendency to overlook the importance of natural resources for women and the crucial roles women play in managing natural resources. But perpetuating an ecofeminist myth by considering only one side of the evidence on the extent of—and reasons for—gender differences in appropriation and provision of natural resources is also misleading.

Gender roles and dependence on livelihoods resources are particularly salient in shaping both pieces of knowledge of resources and their conservation preferences. Property rights to natural resources influence the motives and means that men and women have to exploit or conserve resources, but to understand these, we need to look beyond ownership to examine the bundles of rights to use and control resources and tenure security men and women enjoy. Decision-making and bargaining power within the household and community affect the extent to which men and women can exploit (or invest

in) resources. But whatever the motivations and decision-making power that men or women have, unless they also have the knowledge, labour, and financial resources necessary to adopt practices that either limit extraction or enhance the resource base, sustainability will not be achieved. Thus, understanding the specific constraints to adoption and how these may differ for men and women is fundamental to ensuring sustainability.

2.8 NEO- LIBERALIZATION OF SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE

The present discourse on sustainability and environmental is based on the ongoing discussion on international climate change conventions and conferences, various social movements, academic engagements, politics, business and other interactions (Huber, 2000, p. 270). Academicians and development professions documented the ecological damage caused by human beings between the 1950s till 1970s. As we already mentioned in this Unit, environmental activism has a different lineage in the north and south. There are varying degrees and criticisms in the north and south, but all agreed upon the damage caused on natural ecosystems for human survival. John Dryzek (2005) has called this discourse ‘survivalism’.

The Stockholm Summit foreshadowed the sustainability agenda integral to the Rio process on the Human Environment in 1972. This conference was the first in a series of four global UN conferences on sustainability. The World Commission followed it on Environment and Development in 1992 (which produced the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21), and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (Rio+10). The final conference was the UN Summit on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), held in 2012 (Rio+20). Sustainable development was initially launched as a global economic development trajectory in 1987 through the Brundtland Report, officially known as Our Common Future, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). The Brundtland Report is considered by Huber (2000) to be part of the Rio process, “which is regarded as spanning several decades and being central to the construction of sustainable development as a dominant discourse. Using the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992 as a platform, the Rio process refers to the interaction among key social groups and movements to pursue the goal of sustainable development”.

According to Lynley Tulloch and David Neilson “Sustainable development discourse is always concerned with the organically dependent relation between humanity and nature. Changing the way this relationship is constructed and presented is central to explaining sustainability discourse’s in neoliberalism. Thus, there are several strategic steps involved in the process of the re-articulation of sustainability with neoliberalism. In this section, we outline these steps as follows:

1. The depoliticised economy presentation is established, which is regarded as of equal importance with ecology for human survival.

2. The construction of sustainable development in terms of ‘neutral’ market economics is achieved.
3. Human-nature relations are reframed in terms of a depoliticised construction of humans as nature’s managers and nature as private property”.

They further stated that “The economy is not just about the production of wealth, and ecology is not just about protecting nature; they are both equally relevant for improving a lot of humankind. (WCED, 1987) Thus, the first step in the neo-liberalisation process was achieved in the Brundtland Report, which essentially put economic growth, eradication of poverty, and ecological integrity on an equal footing and as mutually interdependent. This report also signalled the viability of ‘markets’ and the importance of a globalising project in sustainable development. However, this is smuggled in as part of a neutral and non-partisan perspective. The reports states: ‘[t]hus the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries – developed or developing, market-oriented or centrally planned’ (WCED, 1987)”.

A rising tide of economic growth now replaces the sustainability discourse emerging from environmental concerns as an uplifter of all discourse. The prevailing discourse of sustainable development has arisen from a step-by-step reversal of the causal relationship between capitalism and sustainability. Sustainability is spearheaded as the discursive repositioning of ecology and environment and as equivalent priority based on the fuller and more explicit process of neoliberalisation where global expansion, economic growth, corporatisation, ecological adaptation to industrial growth, and the commodification of the non-human world (both biotic and abiotic) is the norm.

Sustainable development discourse is always concerned with the organically dependent relation between humanity and nature. However, neoliberalism has changed the way this relationship is constructed and presented. There are several strategic steps involved in the process of the re-articulation of sustainability with neoliberalism. Firstly, it is established with the presentation of a depoliticised economy, which regards ecology as vital for human survival. Secondly, it constructs sustainable development in terms of ‘neutral’ market economics, and thirdly human-nature relations are reframed in terms of a depoliticised construction of humans as nature’s managers and nature as private property.

The emphasis on ‘needs’ and ‘development’ in the same breath is significant as it positions economic development as the critical issue for meeting people’s needs – both now and in the future – while ecological sustainability is only implicitly and indirectly identified and subtly cast as a problem of the future. This signifies the importance of people’s material needs and appears to champion the concerns raised by the earlier radical sustainability position around global poverty.

As the Brundtland Report stresses, “economics and ecology must be completely integrated with decision making and law-making processes not

just to protect the environment, but also to protect and promote development. The economy is not just about the production of wealth, and ecology is not just about the protection of nature; they are both equally relevant for improving a lot of humankind. (WCED, 1987).

Agenda 21 of the Report signifies the privileging of market principles in sustainable development.

“The development process will not gather momentum if the global economy lacks dynamism and stability and is beset with uncertainties. Neither will it gather momentum if the developing countries are weighted down by external indebtedness, if development finance is inadequate, if barriers restrict access to markets and if commodity prices and the terms of trade of developing countries remain depressed. (UNCED, 1992a)”

There is recognition that the environment is not the ‘free’ good that has previously been assumed but rather seen as coming at a cost, both between and within countries and across generations. The reference to scarcity of resources used at the cost of future generations is seen to protect environmental interests and promote conservation and wise use of natural resources. It is premised as an essential aspect of sustainable development but argues that market society is the best way to achieve this.

Equitable distribution of resources is promoted as being best achieved by using market principles, which makes nature commodified and tradeable. Allocation of nature’s benefits and the burden is seen to be optimally achieved through market instruments. Sustainable development goals subsequently become subsumed ‘within a globalised eco-economic management project (McAfee, 2012). This capitalist centric vision of sustainable development inflects the social and environmental agenda with a neoliberal flavour (Jessop, 2012).

However, sustainable development has shed its capitalist character and has emerged triumphant in reframing this relationship between economy and ecology as equivalent and mutually interdependent dimensions. Furthermore, through depoliticising the capitalist economic formation and normalising the purely individualistic logic, sustainable development discourse effectively gives capitalism a clean slate. As a result, the destructive underpinnings of capitalism’s economic rendering of nature and people positions free-market capitalism as central to protecting nature and eradicating poverty.

Check Your Progress Exercise I

- Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions
ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit

1. Write short notes about your understanding about neo-liberalism

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

This Unit discusses the significance of gender in sustainability indicators by establishing inter-linkages between gender, ecology and sustainability. In Particular, the Unit focuses on the following aspects in the relevance of gender in sustainability indicators.

1. Contribution of the feminists for the establishment of alternative theories like WID, WAD, WED and GAD
2. Contextualising the economic growth in sustainability by looking at the wellbeing of all human beings, especially women and marginalised
3. Trace the history of feminists activism to establish the women's contribution in using the existing resources in a sustainable manner
4. Studies the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and their interlinkages with gender

Lastly, the Unit talked about neoliberal economic development and sustainability with an emphasis on gender.

2.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Define Sustainability. Discuss the significance of SDGs in addressing sustainability in neoliberal economic development.
2. How to contextualise economic growth in the context of sustainable development? Discuss
3. Write a short essay on interrelations among Sustainable Development Goals?

2.11 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Capitalism is essentially a set of social practices whose aim is the accumulation of capital. Unlike capitalism, 'Neoliberalism' is a political philosophy with beliefs and political programmes that try to maximise the existing means to flourish human beings. One of those beliefs is that the only natural way to maximise human flourishing is to maximise capitalists' profits. Neoliberalism favours a set of mechanisms that aim to privatise public utilities and deregulation of financial markets.

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