



Towards Inclusive Sustainability: Exploring the Intersectionality of Climate Change, Gender Equity and Indigenous Women in Global Environmental Advocacy

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Received: 23 Aug 2025; Received in revised form: 19 Sep 2025; Accepted: 21 Sep 2025; Available online: 26 Sep 2025

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Abstract— This study examines the intricate nexus encompassing climate change, gender parity and the specific involvements of Indigenous women within the sphere of worldwide environmental advocacy. Embracing an intersectional analytical framework, this study focuses on the nuanced vulnerabilities and distinctive contribution of Indigenous women amidst environmental adversities. It portrays the multifaceted interconnections between sociocultural determinants, gender dynamics and environmental exigencies, thereby elucidating the nuanced impacts on Indigenous women. Within this paradigm, this study seeks to elucidate the perspectives that bridge the divergence between climate mitigation efforts and gender inclusivity. It evaluates the frameworks and policies endeavouring to discern areas where environmental endeavours can exhibit greater inclusivity and responsiveness to the requisites of Indigenous women. With a multidisciplinary methodology, amalgamating environmental science, social justice and gender studies, the study aims to provide a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate relationships that exist between these areas. This study contributes to the discourse on sustainable development by propounding inclusive strategies that afford agency to Indigenous women as pivotal stakeholders in the global environmental landscape. This study endeavours to facilitate the formulation of more efficacious, equitable and enduring resolutions to address the exigencies posed by climate change.



Keywords— Gender Equity, Women, Climate Change, Sustainable Development, Indigenous Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change poses a critical challenge to the planet, necessitating comprehensive and inclusive approaches to address its multifaceted impacts. This research paper delves into the intricate intersectionality of climate change, gender equity, and the specific experiences of Indigenous women within the broader context of global environmental advocacy.

Climate change signifies long-term shifts in global or regional climate patterns, primarily resulting from human activities such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and alterations in precipitation patterns. Though

many organizations take steps to raise awareness through programs and conferences, the responsibility lies with communities and individuals to implement practical solutions. Climate change particularly affects marginalized communities and Indigenous peoples, whose sustenance and livelihood are deeply tied to the environment.

Gender equity refers to fair treatment and equal opportunities for individuals of all genders. It advocates for the removal of discrimination and the establishment of a balance in power, resources, and responsibilities. The European Institute of Gender Equality defines it as “provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of

benefits and responsibilities between women, men and all genders.” According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the world’s Indigenous population comprises some 476 million people across 90 countries, representing 5,000 cultures.

Indigenous women experience intersectional vulnerabilities rooted in their gender, social status, and environmental marginalization. Intersectionality—an analytical framework that explores how race, gender, class, and other social categories overlap—provides a lens to understand these compounding factors.

As such, achieving inclusive sustainability requires a nuanced understanding of climate change, gender equity, and Indigenous women’s experiences. By situating these dimensions together, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights to global environmental advocacy and policy formulation.

II. POSITIONING WOMEN IN THE GLOBALENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY

Indigenous women face a triple risk: being women, being Indigenous, and being environmental activists or defenders. They are among the world’s poorest populations and yet are key agents of environmental preservation. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) emphasizes that their consent must be sought before engaging in activities that affect their rights and survival.

Prominent climate activists such as Greta Thunberg, Vandana Shiva, and Luisa Neubauer have gained global recognition, yet Indigenous women activists often remain unheard. One exception is Xiye Bastida, a Chilean-Mexican activist from the Otomi-Toltec community. As a youth climate organizer, she co-led one of the largest marches in New York City with over 300,000 participants.

Despite such contributions, many Indigenous women remain marginalized. As Patricia Espinosa, former UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, observed: “When Indigenous women engage, climate policies and actions at every level benefit from their holistic, nature-focused knowledge and leadership.”

III. THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN CLIMATE ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A comparative study by Arneil G. Gabriel on two Indigenous groups in the Philippines (Kalanguya and Dumagat) highlights the crucial role of Indigenous women in environmental protection. These women placed warning

signs to prevent overuse of plants and trees, enforced prohibitions against illegal hunting, and carried out rituals that tied environmental conservation to cultural identity.

Such contributions, though often overlooked, are critical for climate action. Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) held by Indigenous women can inform more sustainable practices and policies. Encouraging their participation in political decision-making is key to ensuring cultural as well as environmental sustainability.

IV. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S ENVIRONMENT

Indigenous women remain largely excluded from policy-making and decision-making regarding natural resource management and environmental conservation. Their skills and experiences are often marginalized at political and institutional levels.

The Malukan Declaration emphasizes Indigenous women as “guardians of Indigenous knowledge,” reflected in cultural practices such as weaving, rituals, agriculture, and ecological stewardship. Despite various UN declarations recognizing their role, implementation at the national level remains weak.

The Convention on Biological Diversity highlights women’s central role in biodiversity conservation, but gender inequities persist. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) has repeatedly emphasized the importance of recognizing Indigenous women’s knowledge in sustainable development, yet capacity-building and political will remain lacking.

Indigenous women continue to face structural discrimination, poverty, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Their knowledge, however, offers invaluable contributions to ecological resilience and sustainable practices if adequately recognized and supported.

V. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the vital role of Indigenous women as catalysts for sustainable development and environmental advocacy. Their Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) provides holistic insights into ecological stewardship, making them key agents in addressing climate change.

The findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive, inclusive approaches in climate policy. Despite persistent patriarchal structures that limit women’s participation, gender mainstreaming can foster equitable engagement. Integrating Indigenous women’s perspectives in leadership

and decision-making enriches the discourse on sustainability, offering both ecological and social solutions.

Ultimately, this study advocates for policies that actively promote Indigenous women's agency, ensuring their meaningful participation in climate action and global environmental governance.

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