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# Critical Reviews on Gender-Women Issues in Sustainable Development

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**Abstract:** Gender equality and women in particular have recently gained attention by researchers, development organizations and human rights activists. The issues around gender and the inequality that exists have been evidenced most in less developed countries including Uganda. In regard to the present paper, critical reviews have eloquently provided empirical and conclusive issues that places women at a disadvantage in economic growth and societal development. Objectively, it provides a clear sense of direction for policy review and development concerns. Various research papers, reports and findings were critically investigated and found out that women were more inferiorly treated than men, and hence gender inequality exercised. World over, stylized evidences from different models and theories recognize the role of women in development. They are into livelihood and productivity, education, agriculture and health. In the recent times, where we have high level of industrialization and digitalization, women though not fully recognized, a lot is done by them to produce and market both industrial and agricultural products. The literature outlines that dynamics and issues around gender span from the aspect of economic development, including but not limited to women involvement in resource allocation, legal structures on inheritance, power in politics and household decision making, labour and credit market access, education and others. Our review findings indicate the need for extra engagement with gender as a unit of analysis in developing nations, with further engagement on inclusive and intersectional feminisms.

**Keywords:** Gender Issues, Gender, Women in Sustainable Development, Gender Equality, Women

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## 1. Introduction

Issues concerning Women and their counter parts in the process of development are increasingly receiving attention in the current era. Though there has been variation in the way different institutions and people have addressed the issue at hand [15]. Role of women in society and their situation is influenced by law, norms of religion, cultural values, economic status, ethnic origin and household productivity. Women are most seen as workers for child care, family care, and cooking and food provision. However much of their participation in these activities, they remain unrecognized in areas of social and political power and development programs [6].

Both economically and socially, gender has ramifications which are complex in the current local and international debate. Experience and empirical evidences show a large number of results towards gender development such as labour discrimination, gender inequalities inappropriate and poor modes of access to resources (like land, education), decisions and contributions to agriculture [8]. Globally, all countries whether developed or less developed through their policy makers, economists and general public are concerned about gender development issues, some of which have been enshrined in the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [2]. Approximately 15% of all landowners,

range from 5% in the middle East & North Africa to 18% in Latin American and the Caribbean are women [13]. Hence Women's education and entry into labour market contribute to both macroeconomic social and economic welfare (Morais, 2017).

## 2. Categorical Issues of Gender

Gender can be legal and be categorized as female or male at birth, mostly based on a visual inspection of the baby's genitalia [11]. This describes the newborn's legal gender, which is salient in, for example a passport. Legal gender might be a bad proxy for the outcome variable. For example, there is a risk that inequality patterns in health that correspond to gender identity rather than legal gender might be neglected [13, 26]. Social sciences relate gender measurements to demographical variables even if research and policy do not recognize gender as a binary category [3, 19, 40].

## 3. Women and Rural Agricultural Development

Agriculture is a main employment sector for over 60% women in many developing nations of Africa, Asia and parts of Oceania region [18]. However, both women and men farmers differently face different production conditions and choices, hence are consequently at different levels in farming productivity [1]. Women find it difficult to obtain ample amount of male labour to work on their plots, on top of their ability to work being constrained by social expectations that they are supposed to perform non-monetarily rewarded care and domestic work, as well as contributing to unpaid labour on husbands' plots. In turn they have limited control of output produced, particularly coffee. Empirical evidence shows relationships between agricultural productivity, economic growth and gender inequalities in Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi [34]. As a result women are expected to provide the necessary cash to meet household maintenance basic needs by engaging in off-farm casual waged jobs or petty trading activities, both of which reduce on amount of time that they could use on their gardens [1, 37]. This implies that women do not have adequate cash to buy farm inputs and implements thus contributing to gender inequality in agriculture, more especially to coffee production activities.

There are a number of factors that adversely affect and cause underperformance of Ugandan agriculture, of which gender inequality is partly significant. It was found out that on average female managed agricultural lands are 30.6% less productive than their counter parts in Uganda [25]. They face limited resources and opportunities they need to make most productive of their time in many rural farming households [18]. As a result of these gender differences, household heads fail to adapt well to coffee production and productivity. Gender inequality or gaps have mainly continued to exist in agriculture in line to the key resources and inputs for

agriculture such as land, labour, credit, information, extension and technology [5, 41]. Gender gaps in agricultural productivity exist not because household heads are less efficient farmers but rather exist due to experience to inequitable access to farm inputs such as yield crops, pesticides, including family labour and fertilizer [35].

Female involvement in rural households is very indispensable and they face gender related challenges in accessing resources that hamper their agricultural productivity which adversely affect entire household wellbeing [6, 12]. There are significant differences between men and women in their empowerment, ability plus capacity to deal with agricultural production choices to transform them into output desired [20, 42]. Control over productive resources, ability to move freely, ability to decision making over formation of family and freedom from risk of violence are usually lacking expressions in farming communities.

## 4. Women Discrimination and Livelihood Development

It is reported that women are less likely to plant high valued crops, with gender differences in planting estimated at 13% in Uganda [35]. High-value crops include cash crops and exported crops, which are typically farmed by men, while women are more likely to plant subsistence crops. Social norms that assign the primary responsibility for household food production to women contribute to this disparity, along with the fact that women typically receive lower returns to their inputs because of gender biases in product markets. Moreover, women may be unable to scale up to the level required for high-value crops if they are constrained by plot size, plot quality and/or ownership. Women's lower likelihood of planting high-value crops may also result from limited access to climate change adaptation tools and extension services. Women contribute to men's livelihood activities, providing their labor. They may cultivate parts of the land that is allocated to their husband or their husband's clans [12]. In pursuit of gender equality and empowerment of women, effective and sustainable Food Security & Nutrition programs should be implemented [12].

Additionally, male and female labour participation rates with their discrepancies as noted earlier, there exist gender differences in the way they take up positions in the labour market, and many factors across cultures and regions contribute to this [32]. Important to note, women are not only less likely to participate in labour force, they are usually tasked with the burden of taking care of children and domestic work. Even though those that participate, engage in self-employment activities. As a result of taking care the children, women who would have been economically active, find themselves having limited labour market involvement and thus limited job experience. Consequently, if women are to be involved into productive work, they are more or less part time workers in the informal sector activities, where they get peanuts. Otherwise, they end being engaged in activities

of supply chain such as packaging, post-harvest handling and others.

## 5. Women and Decision Making in Development

For many countries that are reliant on agriculture, farming is usually recognized as a family business where men and women work side by side to grow, maintain, harvest and process agricultural crops like coffee all over African continent [16]. However, female work 2/3 of the main working hours in a day, and they are only rewarded with 10% of the World's income that creates gender disparities [36]. Their contribution towards crop production ranges between 60 to 80% though is overlooked in decision making. Even though they are strongly involved in this production, women are never considered and do not adequately receive their pay, and are denied leadership roles which make them lack all the basic knowledge and resources for healthy lives [26].

As identified in rural agriculture, labour is divided in such a way that men performs activities like felling of trees, ploughing with oxen/tractors, purchase & use of chemicals, marketing and land ownership. Statistics indicate that 81% of the female in the labor force only 7% of women own & control the use of land [33]. About 49% of women experience limited access to or decision making ability over credit and marketing with about 70% of men taking major decisions in this, while about 15% decisions are jointly made. This confirms that over 21% of women lack sole or joint decision-making authority over income. Limited education and knowledge contribute to 35 to 55% of women in making decisions in the market as they fear to being cheated [39].

## 6. Gender and Education

Gender and education are key to social and economic development though research shows that gender equality and education are linked to job/career development, hiring, human capital and decision making. Women with limited formal education and information access, especially in third world countries, tend to lose economic and social opportunities [31]. Education is proven to impact local and rural communities in terms of communication benefits. Once women access education, their trend and image in society increase performance which is passed on to their children [21, 23].

Gender indifferences pose extra hardships to women's enrollment and persistence in both scientific and technical fields of research due to biases and stereotypes [17]. Moreover, access to education does not translate into employment opportunities for women and minority groups automatically, hence limited access to managerial positions [27]. Parents and guardians take their female children in view that after school they could obtain and perform same roles as male children [30]. This is always not the case because society is ruined by a number of factors that deter women

empowerment or gender equality. Equality is still far from being achieved in areas of education even though there is increased sensitization on access to opportunities and participation in decision making [8, 29]. There is a high association between gender and education whose roles are related to compensation of gender, hence women who are educated are supposed to participate in the formal employment sector [28].

Ferrant, G. et al. (2014) [14] Postulated that women spend more time than men in unpaid work such as caring for children and routine housework which denies women and girls from attaining formal education and thus fail to attain formal labour market participation. This reduces their bargaining power which later contributes gender income inequality. Many scholars and activists emphasize that education is the best solution to reduce gender differences, such as wage and income inequality, segregation at work and many other forms of discrimination [4, 9].

## 7. Gender Issues and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Achieving gender equality is SDG 5 of the UN targets more especially in developing countries. Emphasis is on ending all forms of discrimination, violence, stop harmful practices like female genital mutilation against women and girls everywhere. Gender equality is linked to Sustainable development ranging from moral & ethical, human rights and economic capabilities. Achieving gender equality is therefore an international call which requires addressing its impact on social, economic and environmental shocks and stresses on women and girls and more so in addressing economic growth and food security and improved health and education [22, 42]. Evidence on synergies between gender equality and sustainable development recognize women to have greater involvement in public management of resources and offices [37].

## 8. Women and Entrepreneurial Development

Women in entrepreneurship are also receiving attention, especially on taking up the lead of different projects and investments. Many factors however are failing the success of women in getting involved in leadership of entrepreneurial ventures including but not limited to bias and discrimination, which make it difficult for women to compete favorably and take up the leadership role [24]. However much studies emphasize programs and interventions to reduce gender bias, still little has been achieved in giving opportunities to women to stabilize in entrepreneurial projects [7, 24]. Some reports and studies indicate that women lack competitiveness and fail to withstand pressure attributed with leadership positions. From the point of economics, women's socialization with various developmental activities and people could reduce

gender inequality [22, 38]. The world economic forum recognizes women economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment [43].

## 9. Conclusion

Gender inequality is generally a worldwide development issue. Gender led efforts are not recognized even when some experts argue that both household heads are equally productive as their counterparts and therefore receive equal value [10, 20]. Moreover, a comprehensive and properly contextualized analysis of gender contribution among farming areas, as well as the way it comes into play in agricultural-based household livelihood production is lacking in much of the scholarly and policy debate surrounding gender issue. Gender remains vital in analysis and operationalization of many developmental issues around the globe.

This paper has focused reviews on gender issues in sustainable development, giving focus more to women in issues of agriculture, household disaggregation and development. Gender predefined roles in different areas along with societal constraints make children, women and young people especially vulnerable to the changing development issues though men and young boys have of recent been left out. To effectively address gender inequality, there is need therefore to design interventions that address the needs of the respective gender groups. Gender inclusivity will ensure that the differentiated needs of all gender categories are addressed during any sustainable development project or programmes such as agriculture, education, health and politics. It is recognized, however, that achieving gender inclusivity is not an easy task due to deep-rooted behaviors, inequitable power relations, discrepancies in education, economic and access and control of resources that tend to marginalize gender groups, especially the women.

Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms are powerful but separate determinants of health and wellbeing. Gender norms and beliefs in developing societies sustain a hierarchy of power and privilege that typically favours male person over female, buttressing a systemic inequality that undercuts the rights of women and girls. While taking efforts in addressing gender inequality, it's vital to recognize all contribution by women, girls and men as essential for achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

We, the Authors of this paper, do not have any conflict of interest.

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