

GENDER EQUALITY IN A GREEN ECONOMY



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GENDER EQUALITY IN A GREEN ECONOMY



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AVANT GARDE

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INTRODUCTION

Women account for the world's majority poor and they suffer most when erratic weather brings droughts or floods to marginal lands or crowded urban areas. Existing evidence shows the vulnerability of women to climate change and takes cognizance of the fact that women play an important role in supporting households and communities to mitigate the effects and adapt to climate change.

Women have led – and continue to lead – many of the most innovative responses to environmental challenges all over the world. However, they are left out of the room when key decisions are being made.

This paper focuses on the importance of gender equality as it relates to sustainability, climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation.

In the discourse, the importance of gender equality in achieving a green economy and mitigating the effects of climate change would be addressed

amongst more...

- How crucial is gender equality in tackling climate change?
- The recognition that an inclusive circular economy is an approach to protect the economy while reducing the potentials menace of unemployment, underemployment, insecurity and social inequality.
- Importance and benefits of education at various levels and targeted at different stakeholders and awareness campaigns
- How low-income livelihoods are at greater risk from climate change, biodiversity, deforestation etc.
- What efforts are being made to address this and ensure stakeholder participation in decision making in affected communities?

Gender equality- have we passed the point of no return...??

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FOREWORD - REMARKS ON GENDER EQUALITY

MOFIFOLUWA OLAWUMI *SUSTAINABILITY ACCESS BANK PLC*

I would like to talk about gender equality in line with SDGs and how people can overcome inequality. We are talking about improved access to resources, opportunities, a better quality of practices and provisions at every level - federal, state, local government, private sector, industry, family - to end discrimination and all forms of violence against women and children.

At Access Bank, we are very much committed to women. We do this in our various programmes and we have policies that support women. For example, in the workplace, we have Access Women Network that is a hub centred on providing the best support for all female employees to assist with their personal and professional development. This year alone, we've done free health checks, we've organised capacity building programmes, we paid for about sixty of our employees to go and familiarise themselves with women from other sectors.

We have the W Initiative which is our hub for all the financial products we have to offer women. We have W Academy where we organise training sessions and capacity building programmes for our customers. We have the Maternal Health Service

Scheme which provides discounted financing for medical procedures for women. Through this, we have successfully delivered over 60 babies and this programme is available to women in Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and Rwanda. We also have the Beta Proposition which is an Access Bank effort to promote financial inclusion and bridge the gap between the banked and unbanked. Additionally, we go into underserved communities and educate women in languages they understand. Encouraging them to develop a savings culture and provide them with more access to financial services.

We host pioneer several initiatives in the community; one is the Code for Impact where we train girls in digital skills such as coding, website development, application development, amongst others. Some of the girls have gone on to be gainfully employed in top organisations like Google.

I see sustainability as a collaborative effort. Not one person or organisation can do it alone. Imagine the impact that would come from a meeting like this if we all work together. I will implore every one of us to ensure that we do the best we can.

DISCUSSION

- PANEL EXCERPTS

MODERATOR:

Women account for the majority of the world's poor and they suffer the most when erratic weather brings drought or floods to marginal lands or crowded urban areas. Existing evidence shows the vulnerability of women to climate change and takes cognizance of the fact that women play an important role in supporting households and communities to mitigate the effects and adapt to climate changes. So, this panel will be discussing gender issues as it relates to climate change.

My first question will be on the recognition that an inclusive circular economy is an approach to protect the economy while reducing unemployment and underemployment, and insecurity and social inequality. How important is gender equality in achieving this?

TEMITOPE:

Gender equality is one of the most frequent social inequalities in the world. It is deeply rooted in culture, religion, beliefs and systems generally. For instance, you are looking for a job and you are asked to specify your gender and because you're not of a particular gender, you don't get selected for the role. That is the reality, and until we break down this system and culture in our little corners

individually, we will never get there. Going to your question, there is no way unemployment will be taken away if we have some jobs selected for the male gender and others for the female gender. We are getting to a point where it won't be a case of whether a male or a female successfully completed a task. Rather, the identifier will be 'somebody' -regardless of gender - that completed the task. Whoever says what a man can do, a woman cannot do, is wrong. Until we start integrating the personalities rather than marginalizing and suppressing women in favour of their male counterparts, we won't see any progress.

CALEB:

I think gender inequality is a real issue to be considered in a circular economy. A circular economy essentially means that nothing is going to waste. You are using and finding some other use for it such that it is coming back into the system. You would find that dealing with a circular economy starts with the home. Let's take waste, for instance. The last two panels talked about waste management and how it is an issue. More often than not, the people dealing with the waste from the kitchen, which is where most of the waste comes from, are women. Now, if these women are not involved in the conversations about climate change then

it's a great problem. In the culture we have in this part of the world, you find that it's women that are often in the kitchen, cleaning the entire house and doing other domestic household chores. If you're not considering them in the conversations about climate change, environmental sustainability and how the circular economy works, who is going to tell the people throwing waste (the kids in the house and others) how to differentiate between degradable and non-degradable waste?

I run an NGO and two years ago, my organisation, Earth-Plus, took a certain project to an all-girls school for certain reasons. The project was essentially about using waste materials to create useful items. We felt that a lot of similar projects had been taken to either mixed schools or boys-alone schools and, additionally, it seemed like the boys had more access to opportunities compared to girls. So, we took it to the girls and we told them that we were not just going to teach you how to make useful items but we are also going to teach you to make items that can be sold for money such that you are keeping the environment clean, battling the effect of climate change and at the same time making money. So, I think gender inequality is a real issue when it comes to circular economy and women must be involved in the conversation?

ZAHRA:

In addition to what Caleb mentioned about women being a key part of the household, I think that we have to look at climate change at the micro and individual levels. Women have a huge role to play in terms of changing the habits of the home and especially educating the children. I think it is extremely important that women are brought into the conversation and that they are educated and empowered to be able to make these decisions. Even if we ask in this room, who does the groceries and cooking in the house, I bet the majority of the answers would be 'the women'. So, we as women have a huge role to play as regards what is consumed at home and even in the type of groceries we shop for. Women can decide to shop for products that are produced locally because the carbon footprints are shorter or they can patronise products from companies that are environmentally friendly and sustainable. We need to educate women on why these decisions are important because a lot of the time, the women in the grass-roots are engrossed with thinking about how to feed their children or how their children are going to go to school. People don't think about climate change at the micro and individual levels and we have to start educating women who would in turn educate their children as to why climate change is important and how it is practically affecting their daily lives.

MODERATOR:

Caleb and Zahra have spoken extensively about the role of women. Any thoughts about the role of men in ensuring gender inequality?

CALEB:

I agree that men and women should be involved in the process and it should not be one-sided. But what we are trying to push for is the inclusion of women in the process because the men are already in the process. What is the role of the men? The first role is to ensure that women are involved. And, then, to push the message because the message of climate action is for everyone at every level. The question then becomes, if we have a certain percentage of the population pushing it or having access to the ability to make it happen, what happens to the rest of the population? For example, we have more women farmers than men and certain education is being given on-farm practices that will help them mitigate climate change and you have more men participating. How are we making these pieces of trainings more inclusive for women? How are we ensuring that the women are at the table when policy decisions about climate change are being made? So, the men are a big part of this but what we are saying is, don't let one gender be side-lined. The men must make sure that the women are a part of every step of the process so that it is a fair playing field and it's an opportunity for everyone to bring their bit to the table.

At the Conference of Parties last year in Poland, a yearly conference on the environment, there was a big conversation on the gender action plan and how there was a need to integrate the gender discussion into sustainability. This happened because of the realisation that; in many places, women suffer more of the effects of climate disasters; 68% of the disasters are environmental or climate-related and women have 14 times more possibility of being in danger from a climate disaster than men. So, if women suffer more from these issues and if they are hampered by either religion or social status from moving from places where there is climate disaster or where they cannot survive due to climate change issues, why should they not be involved in the conversations? So, it's a duty for everyone, but we should make sure that no part of the population is side-lined.

TEMITOPE:

Let me quickly add this, a colleague of mine said something to me while I was seated here. He said, "Today you guys have the upper hand. There are more women in the room than men." If you ask me, what should be the role of men, I would say: Allow us. Let us be included.

MODERATOR:

In terms of education, how do we institutionalise some of these ideas?

How do we get it into our secondary and tertiary institutions and how do we make it a part of our daily lives?

ZAHRA:

Some areas that we need to see more women are in places like engineering and technology. These fields are predominantly male fields and we need more women coming into these spaces to help shape ideas, policies and innovations that are more caring and will take care of our environment. Back to the question about how we are bringing these conversations to our public spaces, these kinds of conferences also help bring it to general public awareness. I'll love to see secondary school children here, for example, because the ordinary everyday person is not thinking about climate change. That's the fact of the matter. When you talk about climate change, people think it's an "Oyinbo thing". If you ask about global warming, they will say, "we don't have snow so nothing is melting." But we need to start educating people that even the flooding that is happening in Lagos is part of a changing climate. All the gutters are filled with plastic bottles and bottles floating on the ocean, that's climate change. We need to bring this down to how people can understand it. We need to start going into schools and educating students about climate change and how to look after the

environment.

How does the circular economy work as opposed to the linear economy model of just taking something, using it and throwing it away? It is not every time you need to purchase a new piece of clothing. In this room right now, deciding what we are going to stop or start will make a difference. Maybe it could be switching to efficient light energy bulbs in our homes and offices. We need to start educating people on the practical things we can do for the environment.

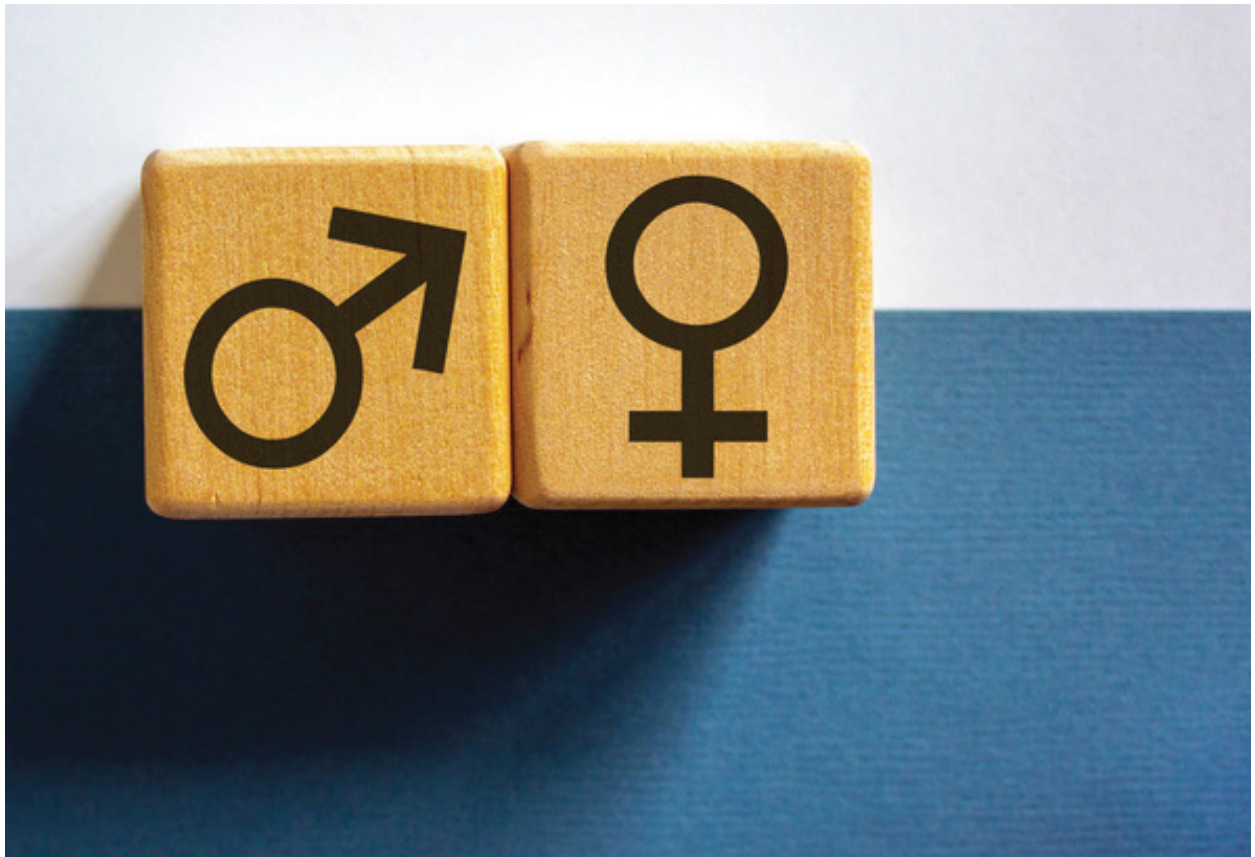
MODERATOR:

Temitope, you work in Unity Bank and the MD is a woman which is uncommon because today there are only a few female CEOs in Nigeria's banking sector. What has Unity Bank done intentionally as an institution to support gender equality? Do you have a gender equality policy, for example?

TEMITOPE:

For us at Unity Bank, it's a story of being an individual rather than being a man or a woman. There are no limits. There is no limitation to colour, to gender and that we do purposefully and with all boldness. We put this in the selection process. It doesn't matter to us if you are a male or a female and that is an HR policy that is so loud. The number of leave days given to a man is the same as for a woman. We now have paternity leave and we believe what applies to a woman should apply to a man the same way what applies to a man

applies to a woman. A mother will care for a child and so will a father. That is how we have put it in our culture when it comes to selection. The same goes for promotion. We realise that subconsciously when a man does something, it is applauded and loudly too. The same is applicable to women in Unity Bank. We celebrate women, we put a special day for them to be celebrated, we have special programmes, capacity building. There are no limits. That's the summary for us at Unity Bank.



AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Student, Ekiti State University: Mrs Aransi, you mentioned that women should be allowed to come into the corporate space. Statistics show that women are the majority in every population, even in Nigeria. We say we want them to come into the space, but they don't want to. For example, in my school, I approached some ladies and asked why we don't have more women in leadership positions in the school, but they said no, they don't want the role. So, women need to build themselves up to a stage where they can take up these opportunities and not wait for men to call them up. My second observation is that nothing has been said about Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

ARASI:

First, we have more men than women where 49.6% of Nigeria's population are women. Gender inequality is rooted in culture, religion and systems. The way a lot of women were brought up, they were not allowed to do some specific things while they were growing up so it became a man-thing. It has formed their sub consciousness, the way they work, the way they live. Probably those ladies you have seen were brought up that way. They move to the back when the man is there because they believe the man should come forward first.

How can you break out? It is an individual thing. If you want to remain at the back, you will remain there. Nobody will create the space for you. The competition is fierce; you will have to create that competitive spirit within you to fight for your own space. It is not a gender thing. Some men cannot come out, they like to work from the background, to be seated rather than standing. Some women have accepted it because of the system they are used to and that's why we are saying this today, they need to break free from it. Who says a woman cannot be the president of Nigeria?

Those ladies you are talking about; I believe it's their personality. You cannot use that one event, to sum up, the entire system.

ZAHRA:

I just want to share something that stuck with me reading the the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women policy document. Gender Inequality and that is that women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore half of its potential. When you think of gender equality like that; literally, this is the potential of our nation. This is the potential of the world that is just lying fallow. If we are not educating and

empowering our girls and our women to take up these roles and positions and be active players in our community, then humanity is losing out. We need to start taking these conversations seriously and making proactive steps in educate and empowering because part of what you have identified here is the lack of empowerment for women and reorienting what are limited in some way. Systematically, whole generations have grown up to know that women are disempowered so it's not just about, "one guy said in school that I should run for a leadership position". It will take a lot of education to change the psyche of the community. We need to invest in educating and empowering these women.

Lastly, I want everybody present to pledge to: "what am I going to do as an individual? What am I going to do in my home? What am I going to tell my friends about? Because that's how the change is going to come about from the bottom up. Yes, we need the bottom-down approach as well which is a conversation to be had in those spaces. Even from us, what are we going to do to make our planet a better place and how can we create clusters in our communities and homes to effect that change and allow it to grow on a wider scale?

1. AYODEJI OLUWAGBEMI:

Is it possible for us to talk about gender inequality and at the same time be gender blind? We are talking about bringing the women up. For instance, if there are 80 men on this platform, are we saying, no, let's make it balanced, let's have 50-50? I think we are saying I don't care who is doing what. Just close your eyes, we have 100 people on the platform. Can we get to that point of gender equality where it doesn't matter who is doing what? I think we should continue to ask who is doing what so that we can know when we have 50 women and 50 men on the platform. I'm trying to see where the balance is.

Secondly, today we are saying gender inequality, the scale is currently tilted against women. Are there any parameters of measurements such that 50 years down the line we won't be saying it's tilted against the men, then let's start another war on gender equality in favour of men?

2. ARASI:

I will respond to the first thing you said. I was talking that it doesn't matter when selecting, for selection purposes. It doesn't matter who does what or who will bring what to the table. Give everybody an equal chance

SUSTAINABILITY TABLE

COMMENTS AND VIEWPOINT

Culturally women are primarily responsible for caring, feeding and maintaining the families and household. Given the above, young girls and women often have to walk long distances to gather firewood, spending a lot of time and effort at the cost of attending to other productive activities as they are expected to contribute through their productive work to their families. These responsibilities often place them in constant danger of exposure to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) – being abducted, arrested, raped and in extreme cases killed.

Moreover, in Nigeria, while men gained 4.9 million jobs in the last 12 months, women lost 4.5 million jobs. This disparity can be addressed by channelling additional resources to sustainable capacity building for women and providing environmentally sustainable alternatives to alleviate energy poverty.

In addition to household and community responsibilities, women are burdened with having to manage and conserve limited resources, further exacerbated by environmental challenges including deforestation, environmental degradation, and energy poverty. Their livelihoods are constantly threatened as they tend to have fewer legal and customary rights over land, property,

water, credit and other productive resources, such as energy, technology and information.

There is a crucial and intensifying need to engage women and young girls in systematically restoring their ecosystem easing their burdens, mitigating climate change and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) in a green, circular economy.

Gender inequality is a real issue to be considered in a circular economy. A circular economy essentially means that nothing is going to waste. Achieving a circular economy starts with the home.

More often than not, the people dealing with the waste from the kitchen, which is where most of the waste comes from, are women. Now, if these women are not involved in the conversations about climate change then it's a great problem. If you're not considering them in the conversations about climate change, environmental sustainability and how the circular economy works, who is going to tell the people throwing waste (the kids in the house and others) how to differentiate between degradable and non-degradable waste?

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES



It doesn't matter who does what or who will bring what to the table. Give everybody an equal chance. There is no way unemployment will be taken away if we have some jobs selected for the male gender and others for the female gender. Until we start integrating the personalities rather than marginalizing and suppressing women in favour of their male counterparts, we won't see any progress.

Some areas that we need to see more women are in places like engineering and technology. These fields are predominantly male fields and we need more women coming into these spaces to help shape ideas, policies and innovations that are more caring and will take care of our environment.

patronise products from companies that are environmentally friendly and sustainable.

If we are not educating and empowering our girls and our women to take up these roles and positions and be active players in our community, then humanity is losing out. So, we need to start taking these conversations seriously and taking the steps to educate and empowering because part of what you have identified here is the lack of empowerment for women and changing that thinking that they are limited in some way.

We have to start educating women who would in turn educate their children as to why climate change is important and how it is practically affecting their daily lives.

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT



We have to look at climate change at the micro and individual levels. Women have a huge role to play in terms of changing the habits of the home and especially educating the children. It is extremely important that women are brought into the conversation and that they are educated and empowered to be able to make these decisions.

Women have a huge role to play as regards what is consumed at home and even in the type of groceries we shop for. Women can decide to shop for products that are produced locally because the carbon footprints are shorter or they can

THE ROLE OF MEN



The first role men ought to play is to ensure that women are involved. Men are a big part of this but what we are saying is, don't let one gender be side-lined. Men must make sure that the women are a part of every step of the process so that it is a fair playing field and it's an opportunity for everyone to bring their bit to the table.

REORIENTATION



We need to start re-orientate people that even the flooding that is happening in Lagos is part of the climate change. All the gutters are filled with plastic bottles and

bottles floating on the ocean, that's climate change. We need to bring this down to how people can understand it. We need to start going into schools and educating students about climate change and how to look after the environment.

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION



How does the circular economy work as opposed to the linear economy model of just taking something, using it and throwing it away? It's not every time you need a new cloth. Changing our consumer habits would go a long way. Deciding what we are going to stop or start will make a difference. Maybe it could be switching to efficient light energy bulbs in the home. We need to start educating people on the practical things we can do for the environment.



CONCLUSION

Social and economic inequities are especially hard on women and children as they form the majority of the world's poor. However, women are workers and producers, and in this context, they play a crucial role in benefiting the growth of a green economy. Their economic empowerment would affect patterns of household spending and is likely to increase demand for sustainable services and products. This trend could lead to a significant impact on green growth.


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