

# Promoting Women in Green Economy: Initiatives in India

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## **Abstract**

*In most developing nations, women have been dealing with a number of issues under the umbrella term- gender inequality. This includes unequal compensation, limited educational options, a dearth of skill & training development chances, lack of funding, domestic responsibilities and limited access to technology and information. Because management and entrepreneurial abilities are viewed as a male-dominated field, women are restricted to household tasks and excluded from corporate positions in several cultures and nations. But given how quickly things are changing, it's important to realize that women can contribute just as much to a country's economic growth. It is indisputable that women indeed implement sustainable practices in their routine household chores. But now, the time has come for women to take charge and help create a sustainable economy. As per the report presented at the World Sustainable Development Summit, 2025, if India enables women to engage in the economy at par with men, it will boost the economy by USD \$2.9 trillion (TERI,2025). The present chapter explores how gender equality can unlock the potential among women so that they contribute towards a greener economy. It also aims to examine the provision of initiatives and strategies for women by the government of India to foster a green economy. To meet these objectives, the author has been through scholarly articles, policy documents, reports, blogs and websites. The chapter anticipates ways to overcome challenges and bring women to the forefront by creating an equitable and just society so that they are able to contribute to the economy. The chapter offers valuable insights for women, showcasing examples that can inspire them to achieve financial independence and freedom while catering to the sustainable development.*

## **Keywords:**

*Gender Equality, Initiatives, Women, Sustainable Practices, Green Economy*

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## Introduction

Gender Equality, which is a fundamental human right, is also a prerequisite to building a sustainable future. The lack of gender equality is often seen in many countries where women still face major obstacles to full participation in social, political, and economic life, despite recent decades of progress. In addition to being morally right, removing these obstacles and empowering women is a significant tool for promoting a more inclusive and sustainable economic revolution. Gender-based discrimination is illegal under International Human Rights Law (*UN Free & Equal*, n.d.). However, in the Asian Pacific region, “women are provided fewer opportunities and less autonomy; are given unequal or restricted access to financial resources and services, education, land, resources, and have little say in the decision-making processes”(UN. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019). Since women in the Asian Pacific region have the primary responsibility of managing food, water, energy and other resources, their knowledge and experiences could be utilized to provide sustainable solutions regarding the same.

This chapter explores the linkages between gender equality and a green economy, highlighting the critical role that unlocking women’s potential can play in transitioning to a more environmentally sustainable and equitable development model. It also aims to highlight the initiatives, specifically in India, by the government and the non governmental organizations towards the inclusion of women in the green economy. Let us first understand these concepts in brief so as to develop an understanding of the same.

## Understanding the Green Economy

There has been a lot of buzz around the phrase ‘green economy’ since it was used for the first time in the year 1989. Although the term has no consensual agreement and is defined by different agencies in different contexts, broadly the most acceptable is by the United Nations Environment Program as “low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in employment and income is driven by public and private investment into such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.” (*Green Economy n.d*). The goal of a green economy is to reduce waste and pollution while utilizing resources sustainably and efficiently. It encourages the use of renewable energy sources in order to lessen our reliance on fossil fuels and fight climatic change. It also encourages sustainable practices across different sectors like agriculture, transportation and manufacturing. The notion of a green economy acknowledges that economic progress and environmental conservation can be mutually reinforcing. By investing in green technology and sustainable practices, we can generate new employment, stimulate economic growth, and enhance our quality of life while also safeguarding the environment (UNDP,2024).

## Gender Equality for a Greener Economy

The importance of gender equality in promoting sustainable development is becoming more widely acknowledged. In order to manage natural resources, implement sustainable practices, and to combat climate change, the active participation of women is undeniably essential. However, women frequently encounter obstacles when trying to access and manage these resources. Not only these, they also are often ignored for their participation in economic and environmental policy decision-making processes. The contribution of women towards economic growth is not acknowledged in certain countries due to structural or cultural barriers. In Indonesia, the women are not leading the green economy initiative due to the conservative view of the patriarchal society which considers green economy initiatives run by women as mere side-business and does not accept the role of women as the ‘breadwinners of their family’ (Gaol et al.,2024). Contrary to this, in the countries, where there are no such barriers, social

science researchers have proven that empowerment of women boosted the economic growth of the country (Ginting et al., 2022). Women, when involved in the green economy initiatives, may provide a diverse perspective and probably more innovative and effective solutions. It is said that, ‘When you educate a man; you educate an individual, When you educate a woman, you educate a generation’ (*A Quote by Brigham Young*, n.d.). Expanding the same thought in the present times, it can be rightly said that men may lead the economy but empowering women for their contribution to the economy strengthens the community and improves livelihoods. Gender equality guarantees that the shift towards a sustainable paradigm is just and inclusive, preventing current inequities from worsening and providing women with equal access to green occupations and resources.

### **India Towards Green Economy**

The outcome of the ‘United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - The Future We Want’, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 recognized the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment for sustainable development and stated:

We emphasize that sustainable development must be inclusive and people-centered, benefiting and involving all people, including youth and children. We recognize that gender equality and women’s empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure women’s equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making (United Nations, n.d.).

The report emphasizes that the green economy should aid in the eradication of poverty and advance sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and human well-being while maintaining our natural ecosystems. It further states that policies pertaining to the green economy must guarantee equitable participation for men and women in the framework of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty in all nations. It necessitates the creation of opportunities for employment and decent work for everyone. This conference led to the alliance of five UN agencies, funding partners and 22 countries and created the ‘Partnership for Action on Green Economy Program’ (PAGE) in 2013. India became its partner in 2018 and since then has been getting assistance in developing, adopting and implementing green economy policies and strategies. As per the information on its website, through this partnership, India is being assisted “towards the fulfillment of following Sustainable Development Goals- Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG-7), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG-8), Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG-9), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG-11), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG-12), Climate Action (SDG-13), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG-17)” (*India - UN PAGE - Partnership for Action on Green Economy*, n.d.). To promote gender equality in the Green Economy, new occupations should be evenly allocated between men and women, and women should have greater access to all the areas of the economy including those where women are underrepresented (Guerrero & Stock, 2012). In its recent report on India’s readiness to support and foster green jobs, it is estimated that ‘54 million green jobs will be created in India by 2030 across sectors such as green construction, solid waste management, water management, e-waste management’ etc. (PAGE, 2023).

### **Unlocking Women’s Potential: Strategies and Initiatives in India**

(a) **Government Initiatives:** To realize the sustainability goals, the Government of India (GoI) has launched many schemes and initiatives that boost the ‘green economy’ by encouraging employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the green sectors. Some of the noteworthy skill development initiatives include:

- ‘Skill Council for Green Jobs (SCGJ) is a joint venture of the ‘Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship’ (MSDE) and ‘Ministry of New and Renewable Energy’ (MNRE) and is

promoted by the ‘Confederation of Indian Industries’ (CII). Established in 2015, it has been working across 15 sectors for capacity building for green businesses and cutting edge climate friendly technologies (*Skill Council for Green Jobs, 2015*).

- ‘Surya Mitra Skill Development Program’ is another initiative by GoI, which aims to prepare the youth for the installation, maintenance and operations of the Solar Energy Power Projects. It is being implemented by ‘The National Institute of Solar Energy’ (NISE) which is the apex body for research and development in the areas of Solar Energy in India, It is an autonomous institute under ‘The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy’ (MNRE) (*N.I.S.E - Surya Mitra Skill Development Programme, n.d.*).
- ‘The Green Skill Development Program’ (GSDP) is an initiative launched by the ‘Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change’ (MoEF & CC) to equip young people with skills in the fields of environment, forestry, and wildlife so they can work for pay or be self-employed (*MoEFCC Green-skill-development-program, 2018*).

(b) **Non-Governmental and Civil Society Initiatives:** Apart from the government initiatives, there are some other programs and initiatives from non government and not-for-profit organizations which include:

- Women in Sustainability Initiative (WiS) was launched in 2017 by the ‘Council on Energy, Environment and Water’ (CEEW), a not-for-profit policy research institute of Asia, supported by the UN which works for networking, mentoring and skill-building programs to support women in their careers in the green economy (*Women in Sustainability (WIS) Initiative by CEEW, n.d.*).
- SEWA- Self Employed Womens’ Association launched ‘The Green Transition Centre’ in 2022 which works on raising awareness of climate shocks, adaptation and mitigation strategies, facilitating policy interventions and financial connections in order to build cleaner skies for the future generation (*Self Employed Women’s Association, n.d.*).
- ‘Generation India’ is a not-for-profit organization that works towards the inclusion of women in the green economy by promoting and supporting them in green jobs (James, 2025).

## Conclusion

The idea of a “green economy” guarantees that environmental preservation and economic empowerment for women can complement each other well. Through the establishment of women-only training institutes, the allocation of a portion of training institutes intake for women, the inclusion of women-related issues in skill training guidelines, the preparation of gender-sensitive training environments, and the maintenance of complaint redressal mechanisms, the efforts to train more women for their contribution towards a greener economy are quite promising in our nation. With such initiatives, we expect more women to contribute to the green economy leading towards “Harit and Viksit Bharat 2047.”

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