

Empowering Women through Sustainability: Exploring the Role of Eco-Conscious Business Practices in Poverty Alleviation

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Abstract

Sustainability and gender equality have become two inseparable issues in the development

discourse world over, especially in the recent decades. Although millions of women still live in poverty, the concept of eco-friendly business provides an innovative solution to the empowerment of both the economy and the environmental stability. Eco-conscious business models, when designed with gender sensitivity, can serve as powerful tools to break this cycle, offering women sustainable income opportunities while also tackling environmental degradation. The article discusses the role that sustainable businesses can play in increasing not only economic agency of women but also alleviating poverty in general. This article adds that the promise of ecologically sound entrepreneurship in creating inclusive and green economies is great by illustrating case studies that were successful and identifying the challenges facing women in eco-friendly entrepreneurship, and providing strategies that can be adopted to facilitate the process. Empowering women through eco-conscious business practices is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. By investing in women's capacity to innovate, lead, and collaborate within environmentally sustainable frameworks, societies can unlock a powerful engine for inclusive growth. Moving forward, governments, donors, the private sector, and civil society must work in concert to dismantle structural barriers, channel investments, and create enabling ecosystems where women and sustainability thrive together.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Sustainability, Eco-conscious business, Green entrepreneurship and Poverty alleviation

Introduction

The sustainable development discourse in the world cannot be complete without gender equity. Poverty and environmental degradation particularly affect women especially in Global South. Nevertheless, they also play one of the decisive roles in the shifts towards the green economy. Businesses that are ecologically conscious (or those businesses employing the idea of the environmental responsibility in their internal business processes) have been identified to be the best tool to empower women. These businesses including sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, sustainable fashion, renewable energy provider and others allow women to become engaged in the economy without damaging the ecological balance of their communities. This article

examines the role of eco friendly business operations in empowering women and being a liberating strategy towards fighting poverty. It looks at the theoretical and practical considerations of this approach and takes examples of various regions and makes recommendation to policymakers, NGOs and entrepreneurs. The inclusion of women, particularly their exposure to the adverse effects of environmental situations, must be recognized and addressed in a bid to develop environmentally-inclusive communities that are climate-resistant. Armed with resources and the ability to make decisions, women will be able to spearhead community-driven environmental restoration, social campaigns promoting clean energy, and sustainable farming activities in general - which are where women are the most key players when it comes to environmental sustainability as well as the wider social justice.

Intersection of Gender, Poverty, and Sustainability

Feminization of Poverty

In many regions, discriminatory legal systems and cultural norms hinder women's ability to own land, start businesses, or inherit assets—further entrenching their economic vulnerability. Additionally, single mothers, widows, and elderly women face heightened risks of poverty due to lack of social support. Feminized poverty not only limits women's personal development but also constrains national growth, as half the population remains underutilized in economic and decision-making spheres. Addressing the feminization of poverty requires targeted interventions that promote women's access to resources, education, and economic participation.

Environmental Vulnerabilities and Women

Some of the worst hit victims of climate change and environmental degradation are women, especially in the rural and marginalized societies. They are closely connected with the natural resources through their traditional roles in water fetching, farming; fuel getting and house hold administration. Women are affected when their environment degrades i.e. when they lose trees, or when they face drought or polluted environment; their daily workloads get heavier, and their health gets affected and their livelihood gets endangered. Women are usually the most vulnerable

when it comes to climatic-induced events like floods, droughts, and food insecurity due to lack of access to owning land, education, emergency services, and decision-making forums. Also, the exercise of gender norms may limit the movements or inclusion of women in disaster response and adaptation planning, which places women at higher risks. Nevertheless, women have also been found to have the most significant ecological knowledge and adaptive techniques, which may be useful to the rescue and sustainability initiatives.

Sustainability as a Catalyst for Empowerment

When inclusive development strategies are applied alongside sustainability, it turns into a dynamic empowerment tool to women. Eco-friendly business ideologies like organic agriculture, green power, green production, inclusive business models not only provide employments, but also provide women with leadership positions and social status. Such practices combine economic actions with environmental stewardship to establish sustainable ecosystems, where women can live. Engaging in green business enables women to learn innovative ways of doing business, as well as marketing and managing the available resources- strengthening their personal and professional agency. Sustainability also contributes to the resilience of the community in the long term, so that the empowerment of the economy does not do so to the ecological environment. Notably, sustainable models can be characterized by a focus on conveying various values, such as teamwork, equity, and unity between generations, which is bound to appeals to the traditional and community-based ideals of feminine leadership. Including women in the nucleus of sustainable development can help societies to promote environmental conservation and gender equity at the same time. Development The term sustainability is not merely a concept in development but a tactical and feasible course to empower the women and take the community out of poverty.

Eco-Conscious Business Practices and Women's Empowerment

Eco-conscious businesses focus on minimizing environmental impact while promoting social and economic well-being. For women, these businesses present three key benefits:

Access to Livelihoods

Environmentally friendly entrepreneurship activities provide women with a critical access to access sustainable and diversified income that is readily available especially in the regions where formal jobs are limited. The areas of organic agricultural production, eco-friendly textile industry, renewable energy, eco-tourism, and cleaning up waste have offered women productive occupation with the positive side of environmental friendliness. Such green livelihoods are usually community oriented, requiring low levels of capital to start and occupy a position that is congruent with the roles of women as caregivers hence they are very accessible. As an illustration, rural India and Sub-Saharan Africa women have already been able to engage in solar powered micro-enterprises, organic food co-operatives and plastic recycling projects. The activities do not only give them incomes but also make them economically independent and this enhances household stability and the resilience of the communities. In addition, eco-friendly projects tend to sustain value-added production: the transfer of farm products into packaged organic food, the creation of handicrafts out of recycled materials, and so on, so women could recoup the greater value in the marketplace. Getting access to these green livelihoods has a potential to make women active players in the economy since they can stop being mere beneficiaries of aid. This way, the inclusion of women in green job market is of paramount importance in poverty eradication as well as environmental sustainability. Women are able to be important contributors in green economies at the local and global levels, with the tailored assistance, which would include access to markets, finance, and infrastructure.

Leadership and Decision-Making

Involvement in environmental-friendly enterprises often allows women to attend leadership and decision-making circles, in which women have been underrepresented. Participatory and cooperative structure is common in sustainable enterprises since it promotes collective governance and local leadership. Women in such environments are strengthened to assume leadership over both group planning, division of resources, conflict resolution as well as innovations. As an example, the farmer cooperatives organized by women in East Africa are not only involved in the sustainable farming but also shape the food policy of the district and

determine conditions at the market. In other renewable energy projects such as Solar Sister program in Sub-Saharan Africa, women are both entrepreneurs and members of their communities who can inform energy decisions and argue in favor of cleaner living cultures. Being on the path of leadership gains women visibility, confidence, and power and contends with the conventional gender expectations. Besides, there is the tendency of women leaders to reinvest in health, education, and community development thus producing positive positive ripple effects going out of individual businesses. Eco-businesses leadership also helps in developing the political voice of women which gives them the ability to take part in wider governance and formation of policies regarding the environment. Leadership in sustainable ventures is therefore not tokenistic rather than penetrating. Granting women decision-making powers, eco-friendly businesses can enable inclusive development, which takes into consideration the needs, values, and strengths of the whole communities.

Capacity Building and Skill Development

The training, knowledge and skill development that comes with the eco-conscious business models is one of the most empowering as well. Such projects tend to give women access to technical, financial, and environmental training where otherwise they would have been denied. In informal workshops, vocational programs or with the help of NGO training center, women learn practical skills in organic farming, installing solar panels, composting, designing a product, managing a business and digital marketing to name a few. This knowledge does not only make them competent to handle green businesses but also gives them a strong employability and resilience in a fast-changing economy. Indicatively, in Bangladesh and Nepal they have turned women into valuable professionals in sustainable tourism sectors such as training women as nature guides, managers in the hospitality industry and also cultural ambassadors through the eco-tourism projects. Additionally, capacity building helps to boost self-confidence and therefore, the women learn to experiment, innovate and to act as mentors. Women are also entering the world of entrepreneurship through skill development to overcome obstacles by learning to cope and interact with the financial systems, legal rights and as well as technology. Over the long-run the impact of such human capital investments is multiplier in nature: women

become powerful agents of knowledge sharing, peer learning and community-wide growth. By so doing, capacity building will be one of the foundations of the empowerment of women and the sustainable prosperity of business ecosystems with a layered consciousness to the environment.

How Sustainability Enhances Poverty Alleviation

Job Creation and Income Diversification

Eco companies play a great role in creating employment opportunities and earning an alternative source of income especially by women who do not gain entry to the formal job market. Green industries e.g. renewable energy, green agriculture, waste management and green crafts, create jobs that are geographically distributed, environmentally neutral and female friendly as they suit the existing role of women. They are capital intensive jobs and since they have flexible hours, women are able to combine income-making activities with their home duties. As in the case of cooking compost or distributing solar products, women in their communities may gain constant income with few challenges. In addition, most of the sustainable businesses encourage adding value in the form of revenue variety by adding value to the products in the form of added services (transforming farm produce into organic produce, up cycling materials into marketable products). This lessens reliance on one source of income, and renders the households more adaptive to economic disturbance. Income diversification enables women to invest in education, medicine and feeding of the family thus leading to more sustainable eradication of poverty. Eco-conscious business practices do not only alleviate unemployment, but they also ensure that women are involved accessing financial independence as entrepreneurs since they get to contribute to the local economy in their communities and become direct stakeholders in the economy.

Improved Health Outcomes

Sustainable business practices positively influence public health, particularly for women and children who often bear the brunt of environmental hazards. In many developing regions, women

rely on biomass fuels for cooking, exposing them to indoor air pollution, respiratory diseases, and physical strain. Transitioning to clean energy solutions—such as solar cookers and improved stoves—significantly reduces these health risks. Similarly, eco-conscious farming reduces the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, minimizing women’s exposure to toxic substances and enhancing the safety of local food supplies. Waste management initiatives that replace open dumping with recycling or composting help reduce the spread of disease and contamination of water sources. Women-led sanitation or hygiene enterprises further promote health awareness at the grassroots level. In addition to reducing direct health risks, eco-enterprises often use profits or cooperative structures to invest in community clinics, water purification systems, or health education campaigns. Improved health outcomes translate into reduced medical costs, fewer lost workdays, and better quality of life for families. Thus, sustainable practices not only address environmental degradation but also contribute to physical and mental well-being, making them a vital strategy in poverty reduction and women’s empowerment.

Food and Resource Security

Security of food and resources plays an essential role in reducing poverty and providing sustainability in the long term particularly to women, who are the usual members taking the primary roles of care and provision of food. The main items of eco conscious business practices are agro ecology, permaculture and sustainable water management as they not only increase agricultural output, but also do not degrade the environment. The women involved in them enjoy high soil fertility, enhanced farm output and a reliable supply of food throughout the year; hence, household diets and dependence on the supply of imported foods are less. In areas that experience drought or that have soils that are easily eroded, some of the methods that are sustainable such as rainwater harvesting or intercropping are useful in making the resources efficient and resilient. In addition, ecologically-friendly businesses tend to promote local crop farming, which is both climate as well as nutritious. There are also opportunities outside the farming value chain through activities like food processing, organic packaging and local distribution that women can become part of to increase value and earn higher incomes. Other than food, the management of sustainable resources such as access to clean water and availability

of renewable fuel sources enhances the position of strong female control over other vital resources. These activities lessen work time in a day, enhance health and allow people to take part more in community life. Thus, sustainability is assumed to not only increase access to food but also strengthen female power as a producer and defender of communal resources.

Community Resilience and Social Capital

Environmentally conscientious enterprises provide more than taxable revenue because they create community well-being and societal capital, especially those that have women at the helm or as their wingmen. Community resilience is of a society to survive and adapt to the shocks in an economic, social or environmental impact, like climatic whims and market upheavals or pandemics. Green businesses that focus on women, e.g. cooperatives, savings groups, or farming collectives, foster trust and reciprocity as well as helping each other. The networks would serve as important safety nets in times of emergency whereby resources, knowledge and effort would be pooled. An example is in the drought prone areas where water- user groups consisting of women who have adopted conservation agriculture have collectively utilized the limited resources hence, saving and reviving all group members. It also leads to the development of social capital; collective learning, communal involvement, and cross-generation mentoring. Furthermore, another positive effect of these business ventures is the use of profits to invest in local schools, clinics or infrastructural projects, this enhances social solidarity and sustainable growth. Significantly, the leadership of women in these environments defies gender conventions, which leads to an increased interest in civic engagement and shared action. Due to such an influence, eco-conscious companies do not only empower people, but also reshape whole communities to become more integrated, adaptive, and equal systems, which allows proving the potential of sustainability as the basis of inclusive and long-lasting societal improvement.

Challenges Facing Women in Eco-Conscious Entrepreneurship

Despite the potential, women face several structural and contextual challenges:

Policy and Institutional Barriers

Limited Access to Capital

Lack of access to financial capital is a core challenge that is impeding the entry and growth of most women into eco-conscious businesses. The conventional banking system usually demands assets as collateral or credit record or regular job which most women, non-urban and marginalized sections in general cannot fulfill. Even micro finance institutions which are more targeted at inclusiveness may fail to achieve this in case the size of their loans, interest rates or repayments patterns are not attuned to women needs and circumstances. In addition, women may not be able to access financial literacy training well; thus, they struggle to learn how to go through the loan process, successful investment, interaction with formal markets, and so forth. Gender financing gap is even more acute in green sector such as renewable energy, or sustainable agriculture where initial outlays may be too high to enter into technology, infrastructure or certification. They cannot invest in pro-environmental equipment, develop their businesses and enter high-quality markets without proper capital. Closing this gap needs the specific financial products, including low-interest loans, grants, savings cooperatives, and impact investment funds that focus on the female-led sustainable business. Moreover, the policies and our collaboration involving the combination of financial inclusion and environmental purposes are vital in allowing women to make significant contributions into the green economy.

Education and Training Gaps

Educational and training disparities significantly hinder women's ability to participate in eco-conscious entrepreneurship. In many parts of the world, girls and women receive less access to formal education due to socio-economic, cultural, and institutional barriers. This education gap limits their literacy, technical knowledge, and confidence—all crucial for understanding and applying sustainable business practices. Even when basic education is available, women often lack access to specialized training in areas such as renewable energy, organic farming, environmental technologies, and sustainable supply chain management. Without such skills, women are excluded from green jobs that offer higher income and growth potential. Furthermore, digital literacy remains a major hurdle. In an era where eco-enterprises increasingly rely on online platforms for marketing, logistics, and customer engagement, the inability to use

digital tools restricts women's competitiveness and visibility. Vocational and capacity-building programs are often designed without considering women's needs, such as flexible schedules, local language instruction, or childcare support. Bridging this gap requires not just increased access to education but the creation of inclusive, gender-sensitive training environments that empower women with both practical skills and environmental awareness—enabling them to lead and innovate in the green economy.

Cultural and Social Norms

Cultural and social norms remain deeply embedded obstacles to women's full participation in eco-conscious business activities. In many communities, patriarchal beliefs dictate that women should prioritize domestic duties over economic pursuits, restricting their mobility, decision-making power, and public visibility. Such norms discourage women from pursuing leadership roles, engaging in technical work, or handling financial matters—particularly in male-dominated sectors like renewable energy, agriculture, or construction. These expectations are often reinforced by family structures, religious teachings, or local customs, which collectively limit women's autonomy and self-expression. Moreover, fear of social backlash can prevent women from joining training programs, attending community meetings, or traveling to sell their products in markets. Even successful women entrepreneurs may face skepticism, resentment, or pressure to conform. These cultural constraints are further amplified in regions where women lack legal protection against discrimination or violence. Addressing these barriers requires long-term social change through community education, gender-sensitive policy frameworks, and advocacy. Engaging men and community leaders as allies, highlighting role models, and promoting shared responsibility in households are critical strategies. Ultimately, transforming restrictive norms is essential to create an enabling environment where women can fully participate in and lead sustainable development efforts.

Analysis, findings and Results

The analysis explores the differing perceptions of married and unmarried individuals concerning eco-conscious business practices. Understanding how marital status influences views on

sustainability-related initiatives provides valuable insights for inclusive policy and program design. As societies evolve, individual life circumstances—such as marital status—can shape priorities, needs, and awareness regarding environmental responsibility. This study investigates six key dimensions: Access to Livelihoods, Legal and Policy Reforms, Integrated Skill Development, Gender-Inclusive Green Finance, Leadership and Decision-Making, and Community Resilience and Social Capital. Each dimension reflects critical aspects of sustainable and equitable business practices. By applying the Mann-Whitney U test, the analysis determines whether the observed differences in perceptions between the groups are statistically significant. The findings offer evidence-based guidance for developing targeted interventions. They also highlight the socio-demographic diversity in engagement with green business agendas. Ultimately, this analysis contributes to a nuanced understanding of public perception in the context of sustainable development.

Table-1: Perceptions of the married and unmarried with regard to Eco-Conscious Business

Practices along with Mann-Whitney U test result

	Marital Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z value	P value
Access to Livelihoods	Married	120	101.98	12238.00	11.105	0.000
	Unmarried	80	98.28	7862.00		
	Total	200				
Legal and Policy Reforms	Married	120	104.35	12521.50	4.139	0.187
	Unmarried	80	94.73	7578.50		
	Total	200				
Integrated Skill Development	Married	120	91.34	10961.00	11.536	0.002
	Unmarried	80	114.24	9139.00		
	Total	200				
Gender-Inclusive Green Finance	Married	120	95.90	11508.50	4.215	0.065
	Unmarried	80	107.39	8591.50		
	Total	200				
Leadership and Decision-Making	Married	120	102.45	12294.50	1.053	0.541

Community Resilience and Social Capital	Unmarried	80	97.57	7805.50		
	Total	200				
	Married	120	109.42	13130.50	1.436	0.439
	Unmarried	80	87.12	6969.50		
	Total	200				

Table-1 presents the perceptions of married and unmarried individuals regarding various dimensions of eco-conscious business practices, along with the results of the Mann-Whitney U test used to determine whether marital status significantly influences these perceptions. For the dimension **“Access to Livelihoods,”** a significant difference was observed between the two groups ($Z = 11.105$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that marital status significantly affects perceptions, with married individuals showing slightly higher mean ranks (101.98) than unmarried individuals (98.28). Similarly, a significant difference was also found in **“Integrated Skill Development”** ($Z = 11.536$, $p = 0.002$), but in this case, unmarried respondents had a higher mean rank (114.24) than their married counterparts (91.34), suggesting greater favorability or concern among the unmarried group for this dimension. However, for other dimensions—**“Legal and Policy Reforms”** ($p = 0.187$), **“Gender-Inclusive Green Finance”** ($p = 0.065$), **“Leadership and Decision-Making”** ($p = 0.541$), and **“Community Resilience and Social Capital”** ($p = 0.439$)—the Mann-Whitney U test results indicate no statistically significant differences between the perceptions of married and unmarried participants, as all p-values exceed the conventional threshold of 0.05. Although there are minor variations in mean ranks, these differences are not strong enough to suggest a meaningful influence of marital status on perceptions in these areas. In summary, marital status significantly influences perceptions regarding access to livelihoods and integrated skill development, while perceptions on legal reforms, green finance, leadership, and social capital appear relatively unaffected.

Recommendations for Scaling Women-Centered Green Enterprises

Gender-Inclusive Green Finance

Gender inclusive nature of green finance defines financial systems that are carefully established to favor women inclusion in sustainable economic participation. Conventional financial institutions do not usually take into consideration the particular obstacles women encounter- like absence of collaterals, poor comprehensive credit history and informality of their business. Consequently, women lack the available capital to finance the beginning or growth of eco-friendly businesses. Gender-responsive green finance fills this gap by providing such financial services as low-interest loans, grants, savings accounts, and investing in products that are aligned with environmental agendas and economic needs of women. Programs such as green investments funds targeting women or climate smart micro-financing models can enable and empower women to use renewable energy sources, engage in sustainable farming activities or expand green companies. More so, designing such programs by incorporating training sessions on financial literacy and digital banking would provide women with the ability to manage their resources and go through financial systems effectively. Governments, banks, and impact investors have to combine their efforts to develop policies and products to reduce entry barriers and prioritize the funds on the projects which women lead in the green field. The same process of deploying capital into the hands of women and particularly in areas where it is underserved will spur not only entrepreneurship but also promote a move towards a more inclusive and sustainable economy at the same time.

Integrated Skill Development

Integrated skill development is essential to empower women to actively participate in and lead eco-conscious businesses. Unlike traditional training models that focus narrowly on technical abilities, integrated approaches combine practical, financial, digital, and environmental education—creating a holistic learning experience. For women, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, this multidimensional training helps bridge gaps in both capability and confidence. Programs may include instruction in sustainable farming, solar installation, clean energy marketing, water conservation, business planning, and digital tools. Crucially, integrated models also factor in gender-specific challenges by offering flexible schedules, childcare support, and training in local languages. Community-based learning centers, vocational

institutes, and NGO-run bootcamps have proven effective in delivering these skill sets, especially when peer-to-peer learning is encouraged. For instance, women's cooperatives in Latin America and Southeast Asia have successfully trained members in eco-design, sustainable textiles, and cooperative governance—leading to both income generation and social empowerment. By equipping women with relevant, adaptable, and marketable skills, integrated training not only enhances employability but also enables them to innovate, lead, and scale sustainable enterprises. In the long run, skill development becomes a catalyst for transforming women from beneficiaries into architects of sustainable change.

Legal and Policy Reforms

Policy and legal changes are very important facilitators of empowerment of women through eco-entrepreneurship. In most nations, women are not permitted to own land, receive property via inheritance, obtain credit, or put up businesses due to outdated/discriminatory laws, and this affects their capacity to engage in sustainable economic activities. Looking at the fact that women have no legal rights or status, they are easily vacuumed into the informal economy which is left largely unprotected and unsupported. The initial step needed is a reform in the field of land ownership governance, rights to inheritance and registration of businesses so that they are gender-equal. Also, the policies should be very clear in factoring in gender in the environmental, agriculture and economic development policies. Specifically, quotas, incentives or funding channels targeting the green enterprise headed by women should be included in their national green growth plans. Government can also help in the reforms through gender responsive budgeting as well as representation of women in policy making organs in the area of climate change, energy and rural development. Institutionally, the law aid services and sensitization of women is an option that can enlighten and make women stand up their rights. By identifying and enshrining economic element of women in the legal systems, the society creates an enabling environment to promote sustainable growth of the nation. Whether it is policies or laws, the end result is everything but about equity, it is wising up in investments toward a more just and sustainable green economy.

Technology and Infrastructure Support

Technology and infrastructure support are foundational to scaling women-led eco-conscious enterprises, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Without access to reliable infrastructure—such as electricity, clean water, internet connectivity, and transport—women face significant challenges in managing or expanding sustainable businesses. Likewise, lack of access to appropriate technologies limits productivity, efficiency, and innovation. For example, women farmers without solar irrigation systems or cold storage facilities cannot maximize agricultural output or reduce post-harvest losses. Similarly, women artisans or entrepreneurs may struggle to access e-commerce platforms due to limited internet or digital skills. Investments in gender-sensitive infrastructure—such as safe markets, green energy hubs, mobile banking, and decentralized renewable energy systems—can significantly reduce these barriers. Technology should also be designed with inclusivity in mind: tools must be affordable, user-friendly, and tailored to women’s literacy and language needs. Public-private partnerships can play a pivotal role in making these technologies accessible, while digital inclusion programs can train women to use smart phones, apps, and online platforms for learning, sales, and networking. When women are equipped with both infrastructure and technology, they are better positioned to innovate, collaborate, and thrive in sustainable business ecosystems—turning local challenges into green opportunities.

Strengthening Cooperatives and Networks

Cooperatives and women-focused networks play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive, sustainable development by fostering collective action, shared resources, and mutual empowerment. In eco-conscious business models, cooperatives allow women to pool their labor, finances, skills, and knowledge to scale sustainable enterprises—ranging from organic farming and eco-tourism to renewable energy and waste management. These structures provide a supportive environment where women, especially those with limited individual resources, can gain access to training, financing, and markets. For example, women’s agricultural cooperatives in Kenya and Nepal have successfully adopted agro ecological techniques and collectively negotiated better prices for their products. Networks further enhance this impact by connecting

women across regions and sectors, enabling the exchange of ideas, mentorship, and advocacy. Such platforms often serve as safe spaces for leadership development, digital inclusion, and policy engagement. They also increase visibility for women entrepreneurs and help break isolation—particularly in conservative or rural settings. Strengthening these cooperatives and networks requires targeted support, including legal recognition, funding, capacity-building, and digital tools. Governments, NGOs, and private sector actors should prioritize this ecosystem approach, as it not only empowers individual women but also amplifies community resilience and environmental stewardship through collective strength and solidarity.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Women in Sustainable Economies

The urgency of addressing climate change, economic inequality, and gender injustice is converging in today's global landscape. As countries strive to meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), eco-conscious business models that center women's participation are increasingly relevant. Women are not just beneficiaries but also architects of sustainable development. Their intimate connection with the environment, combined with their roles as caregivers, innovators, and entrepreneurs, uniquely positions them to drive eco-conscious transformations. With the right support, women-led green enterprises can uplift entire communities out of poverty and catalyze systemic change.

Conclusion

Empowering women through sustainability is a transformative strategy for poverty alleviation, and eco-conscious business practices serve as a critical vehicle in achieving this goal. The study underscores that sustainable business initiatives, when designed with gender inclusivity, have the potential to enhance women's access to livelihoods, skills development, leadership roles, and financial independence. Eco-conscious practices not only promote environmental stewardship but also create economic opportunities that are resilient and socially inclusive. Particularly, dimensions such as integrated skill development and access to livelihoods emerged as significant in shaping perceptions across different marital statuses, highlighting the need for tailored

approaches in policy and program implementation. Moreover, legal and policy reforms, green finance, and community resilience must be structured in ways that address the unique challenges faced by women, especially those in marginalized communities. By bridging the gender gap in green entrepreneurship and decision-making, sustainable practices can drive social equity and uplift entire households from poverty. The insights drawn from this analysis call for a multi-stakeholder commitment—governments, businesses, and civil society—to embed eco-consciousness with a gender lens in all poverty reduction frameworks. Ultimately, empowering women through sustainable practices is not just an ethical imperative, but a strategic pathway toward inclusive and enduring development.

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