

THE ROLE OF GENDER INCLUSION IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE." 2025

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the critical role of gender inclusion in addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and environmental injustice in Kenya, where existing socio-economic inequalities and gender norms exacerbate environmental vulnerabilities for women and marginalized groups. It argues that the frequent oversight of gender in current approaches hinders effective solutions. Through a qualitative analysis of Kenyan constitutional provisions, national policies (including the National Policy on Gender and Development and the National Climate Change Framework Policy), relevant legislation (such as the Climate Change Act), and scholarly literature, this research examines the gendered impacts of climate change, the vital contributions of women (including indigenous knowledge), and the extent of gender mainstreaming in legal and policy frameworks. Findings reveal significant gender disparities, highlight women's crucial roles in environmental sustainability, and identify persistent barriers to gender inclusion, such as data gaps and patriarchal norms. The paper underscores the indispensable nature of meaningful gender inclusion for achieving sustainable and just climate action and environmental justice in Kenya. It recommends a paradigm shift towards fully integrating gender considerations into all stages of climate initiatives, advocating for gender-responsive finance, environmental impact assessments, enhanced participation in decision-making, and addressing structural inequalities to build a more resilient and equitable future for all Kenyans.

Key words: *Gender Inclusion, Climate Change & Environmental Justice, Women and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming, Environmental Sustainability, environmental feminism, ecofeminism.*

INTRODUCTION

Background

The intertwined global crises of climate change and environmental degradation present profound and far-reaching challenges, yet their impacts are far from gender-neutral. In Kenya, just like in many parts of the world, existing socio-economic inequalities and deeply entrenched gender norms exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and marginalized gender groups to environmental risks, rendering the oversight of gender in climate change and environmental justice initiatives a critical inadequacy.¹

This research posits that meaningful gender inclusion is not merely a matter of social equity but an indispensable prerequisite for developing effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions to these interconnected challenges in the Kenyan context. Through a qualitative lens, this paper undertakes an analysis of Kenya's constitutional framework, national policies such as the National Policy on Gender and Development and the National Climate Change Framework Policy, relevant legislative instruments including the Climate Change Act (2016), and pertinent scholarly literature to explore the gendered dimensions of climate change impacts, the significant contributions of women, including their vital traditional knowledge, and the current state of gender mainstreaming within legal and policy frameworks. While acknowledging the increasing recognition of gender considerations, this research highlights persistent gender disparities and crucial barriers to effective inclusion, such as data gaps and deeply rooted patriarchal norms.

Ultimately, this paper underscores the indispensable role of fully integrating gender perspectives into all stages of climate action and environmental governance, advocating for gender-responsive finance, the systematic inclusion of gender in environmental impact assessments, enhanced participation in decision-making processes, and concerted efforts to address structural inequalities as critical steps towards building a more resilient, equitable, and environmentally just future for all Kenyans.

Definitions of key terms

Gender Inclusion: This refers to the meaningful participation and empowerment of all genders, particularly women and marginalized gender groups, in decision-making processes and the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens in the context of climate change and environmental justice. It involves recognizing the distinct vulnerabilities, capacities, and knowledge of all genders.

Climate Change: While not explicitly defined in a single source, it is understood as a profound global challenge with far-reaching consequences for human societies and ecosystems, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, diminished livelihoods, and threats to food security. The mainstreaming of climate change responses into development planning at national and county levels is a key aspect.

Environmental Justice: This entails the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in environmental decision-making and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. It recognizes that environmental injustices often disproportionately burden marginalized communities, including women.

Gender Equality: This is recognized as a fundamental human right, calling for equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. It means that their rights, responsibilities, and access to opportunities should not be dependent on, nor constrained by, their sex. It also implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men are equally valued and considered, recognizing diversity within society. Gender equality is a powerful driver for growth and social justice and a requirement for achieving sustainable development.

Gender Equity: While often used interchangeably with gender equality, "equity" in the context of climate change response involves ensuring that the response is equally beneficial to both women and men. The Climate Change Act (2016) emphasizes "ensuring equity and social inclusion in allocation of effort and costs and benefits to cater for special needs, vulnerabilities, capabilities, disparities and responsibilities".

Gender Mainstreaming: This is a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. It is not simply adding a 'woman's component' but entails giving equal weight to the perceptions, experiences, knowledge, interests, needs, and priorities of males and females in planning and decision-making.

Gender-Responsive: This term describes approaches that take into account gender differences and inequalities and actively seek to address them in policies, programs, and actions. Gender-responsive frameworks actively integrate gender perspectives into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of climate and environmental initiatives. This includes conducting in-depth **gender analysis** to understand the differentiated impacts and existing gender power relations.

¹ Zaid Obuyi, Rehema. "Effects of Climate Change on Women's Security Dynamics in Baragoi, Samburu County, Kenya." *The Journal of Social Encounters* 8.2 (2024): 259-290.

Traditional Knowledge and Technology (TKT): In the context of Indigenous and local communities (IPLC), TKT refers to their **knowledge and practices** often held by women, related to climate change and environmental management. Understanding, documenting, and protecting Indigenous women's TKT is essential for gender-responsive climate action. This knowledge can offer valuable insights for climate solutions and sustainable resource management.

The doctrines

Doctrine of Environmental Justice: This doctrine links social justice and environmental sustainability, advocating for the inclusion of marginalized groups—especially women—in climate and environmental decisions. Gender inclusion ensures equal representation and benefits across all communities

Polluter Pays Principle: Emphasized in international environmental law, this principle could incorporate gendered dimensions by addressing the disproportionate burden borne by women in pollution-impacted communities

Human Rights Approach: The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights emphasizes the interrelation of gender, human rights, and environmental justice, ensuring gender-responsive solutions

Doctrine of Subsidiarity: Recognizes that decisions should be made at the community level, empowering women who are often stewards of local ecosystems

Doctrine of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR): Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), it recognizes that developed nations bear more responsibility for climate change. Gendered strategies within this doctrine ensure that women in developing nations receive equitable support.

Principle of Intergenerational Equity: Promotes the idea of preserving resources for future generations. Women's inclusion ensures sustainable practices that benefit both present and future generations.

Problem statement

Despite growing global and national recognition, as evidenced by frameworks like the Paris Agreement and Kenya's Climate Change Act, a critical inadequacy persists in current approaches to climate change and environmental justice due to the frequent oversight and insufficient integration of gender inclusion in their design and implementation. This gap results in ineffective and inequitable outcomes by neglecting the disproportionate impacts on women and marginalized gender groups, failing to leverage their unique knowledge and capacities, and exacerbating existing socio-economic inequalities. While Kenya possesses progressive legal and policy frameworks, a significant "implementation gap" persists, hindered by entrenched patriarchal norms, insufficient gender analysis and data, and limited resources, ultimately undermining the potential for just and sustainable climate and environmental solutions.

Core Issues:

- a) The frequent oversight, insufficient gender inclusion in climate change and environmental justice policies and implementation, leading to ineffective and inequitable outcomes in Kenya.
- b) The entrenched patriarchal social norms and cultural attitudes acting as barriers to women's meaningful participation and leadership in environmental action in Kenya.

Research Objectives:

- a) To evaluate the impact of gender inclusion on the effectiveness and equity of climate change and environmental justice efforts, particularly in the Kenya.
- b) To investigate the nexus between gender, traditional knowledge, and climate solutions, concerning Indigenous and local women's roles and barriers.

Research Questions:

- a) How does the integration of gender perspectives affect the outcomes of climate change policies and environmental justice initiatives in Kenya?
- b) What are the specific barriers hindering the effective inclusion of gender considerations in climate action at various levels in Kenya?

Kenyan Legal Context of Gender Inclusion in Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Kenya has progressively acknowledged the intrinsic link between gender equality, climate change, and environmental justice, moving from a peripheral consideration to a central tenet for effective action.² The understanding has evolved that these domains are not isolated but deeply interwoven, demanding integrated and gender-responsive solutions to ensure a sustainable and equitable future. The journey towards integrating gender into Kenya's climate and environmental endeavors has manifested in the development of key legal and policy frameworks, yet the crucial imperative of their effective implementation remains a significant area of focus.³

² Ndethiu, Maureen K. "Environmental justice in Kenya: a critical analysis." *Signature* 2018 (2018): 02-27.

³ Kameri-Mbote, Patricia, and Nkatha Kabira. "Gender equality and climate change in plural legal contexts: A critical analysis of Kenya's law and policy framework." *Feminist Frontiers in Climate Justice*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023. 165-187.

The Constitutional Framework

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 dedicates a whole Chapter five on "Land and Environment" and lays a robust groundwork by enshrining equality and freedom from discrimination based on gender. Article (10) of the constitution identifies public participation as a national value, crucial for ensuring that the voices of all, including women, are heard in environmental governance.⁴ This constitutional commitment sets the stage for gender-inclusive approaches across all sectors, including the response to climate change and the pursuit of environmental justice. Several other articles of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 are seemingly marrying gender or non-discrimination with environmental matters:

Article 27 guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination for every person before the law and prohibits discrimination directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including sex and gender. This forms a fundamental basis for addressing gender inequalities in all spheres, including climate change and environmental matters. It mandates the elimination of gender-based discrimination in environmental laws, policies, and their implementation. Specifically, Article 27(4) and (5) are highlighted as important for ensuring that all persons, including women, have access to, control, and use of natural resources.⁵

Article (10) as aforementioned, sets out the national values and principles of governance, including human dignity, equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination, and protection of the marginalized. These principles are binding on all state organs and persons when applying or interpreting the Constitution or any law, or making or implementing public policy decisions. This underscores the need for gender-inclusive approaches in climate action and environmental justice. Article 10(2)(b) particularly emphasizes public participation as a binding national value. This principle is crucial for ensuring the voices of all genders, including marginalized women, are heard in climate change governance and environmental decision-making.

Article (42) guarantees every person, regardless of gender, the right to a clean and healthy environment, linked its realization and enforcement (Article 70) to gender equality and non-discrimination, noting that environmental degradation and climate impacts disproportionately affect women.⁶ Ensuring women's unique vulnerabilities are addressed is key to fulfilling this right. **Article 60(1)** sets out the principles of land policy, including the elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property in land. This principle is seen as one of the best ways of achieving environmental justice for all, including women, by addressing disparities in access, use, management, and ownership of property. Article (68) also mandates legislation to protect matrimonial property.⁷

Article 69 outlines the obligations of the State in respect of the environment. Specifically, Article 69(1)(c) requires the State to ensure the participation of all the people, regardless of gender, in the management, protection and conservation of the environment.⁸ This includes the meaningful participation of women in environmental decision-making processes. The State's obligations must be interpreted and implemented with consideration for gendered vulnerabilities and the role of women in natural resource management. Article 43 guarantees economic and social rights, such as the right to water, food, housing, and sanitation, which are all components of the environment. These rights are particularly relevant in the context of climate change impacts and gendered vulnerabilities, as climate change and environmental degradation can disproportionately impact women's access to these rights, necessitating gender-sensitive approaches to their realization.

In addition to these, the Constitution includes affirmative action measures under Article 27(6) designed to redress disadvantages suffered by individuals or groups due to past discrimination (which arguably includes women). The principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender, established in Article 27(8) and reiterated for county assemblies in Article 197, is also relevant for ensuring gender balance in decision-making organs related to climate and environmental governance.⁹

Subsequently, the Climate Change Act, No. 11 of 2016, provides a framework for enhanced coordination and response to climate change and explicitly recognizes the importance of gender perspectives. The Act's preamble acknowledges the need to mainstream intergenerational and gender equity in all aspects of climate change responses. Furthermore, it includes "ensuring equity and social inclusion" as a guiding principle and mandates the establishment of Climate Change Units in all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, including the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, to ensure gender is integrated into climate policies and actions.¹⁰

Several national policies further underscore the growing recognition of the gendered dimensions of climate change. The National Climate Change Framework Policy recognizes that climate change mainstreaming is the best strategic

⁴ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 - Article (10)

⁵ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 -Article (27)

⁶ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 -Article (42)

⁷ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 - Article 60(1)

⁸ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 - Article 69

⁹ Constitution of Kenya, 2010 -Article 27(6) & Article 179

¹⁰ Climate Change Act, No. 11 of 2016,

approach and emphasizes adopting gender mainstreaming across all aspects of Kenya's climate change response.¹¹ The National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) aims to achieve gender equality across all sectors, including environmental management and climate change.¹² Notably, Kenya is actively developing the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (NGCCAP) 2024-2027, intended to provide a comprehensive framework for gender-inclusive climate action over the next three years, mainstreaming gender considerations into sectors heavily impacted by climate change such as agriculture, energy, and health. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) plays a central role in this process, ensuring the concerns of marginalized groups, especially women, are adequately reflected through public consultations.

The necessity of prioritizing gender inclusion in addressing climate change and environmental justice in Kenya arises from the stark reality that climate change disproportionately impacts women and marginalized gender groups. This unequal vulnerability is rooted in pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and discriminatory gender norms that limit their access to resources, decision-making processes, and social protection. Entrenched patriarchal social norms and cultural attitudes often hinder women's meaningful participation and leadership in environmental decision-making processes. Furthermore, insufficient gender analysis and a lack of sex-disaggregated data often lead to climate actions that fail to address the specific needs and capacities of all genders. For instance, women in rural communities, often primary users and managers of natural resources, face heightened risks due to their reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods like agriculture. Recent floods in Kenya have further highlighted the vulnerabilities faced by women and girls, exacerbating existing gender inequalities.¹³

However, women are not merely passive victims of climate change; they are key stakeholders and possess invaluable traditional knowledge and experience in environmental management and climate adaptation.¹⁴ Their intimate knowledge of ecosystems makes them invaluable in shaping effective and sustainable environmental policies. The Green Belt Movement, founded by Wangari Maathai, serves as a powerful example of how empowering women can drive reforestation, restore ecosystems, and address climate change, while also championing women's rights.¹⁵ Therefore, their meaningful participation and empowerment are not just matters of social justice but fundamental prerequisites for developing sustainable and just climate and environmental solutions. Integrating gender perspectives enhances the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of climate responses by ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and capacities of all genders.

Despite the progressive legal and policy landscape, a significant "implementation gap" persists between policies and actions on the ground. Challenges such as resource constraints, lack of awareness, weak enforcement mechanisms, and persistent patriarchal norms hinder the effective integration of gender perspectives. Addressing entrenched biases against women in policy processes and ensuring accountability for gender integration in climate interventions are crucial steps forward.

Moreover, neglecting gender inclusion leads to ineffective and inequitable outcomes in climate action¹⁶. Women are not merely victims of climate change; they are key stakeholders and possess invaluable traditional knowledge and experience in environmental management and climate adaptation, particularly as primary users and managers of natural resources in many communities. Their meaningful participation and empowerment are therefore not just a matter of social justice but a fundamental prerequisite for developing sustainable and just climate and environmental solutions. Integrating gender perspectives enhances the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of climate responses by ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and capacities of all genders. Ultimately, prioritizing gender inclusion in climate action and environmental justice in Kenya is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equality) and SDG 13 (climate action), paving the way for a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all citizens.¹⁷

Thesis Statement: While Kenya has established a progressive legal and policy framework acknowledging the interconnectedness of gender equality, climate change, and environmental justice, the effective realization of gender-inclusive action remains a critical necessity due to the disproportionate vulnerabilities of women, their vital roles in

¹¹ The National Climate Change Framework Policy

¹² The National Policy on Gender and Development (2019)

¹³ Mukuna, Truphena E. "Vulnerability analysis of the gender-differentiated impact of flooding in Budalangi Flood Plains, Kenya." *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 6.2 (2015): 201-216.

¹⁴ Kilonzo, Susan Mbula. "Women, indigenous knowledge systems, and climate change in Kenya." *African perspectives on religion and climate change*. Routledge, 2022. 79-90.

¹⁵ Adhikari, Bhawani Shankar. "Ecofeminism in Wangari Maathai's Environmental Activism." (2025).

¹⁶ Lau, Jacqueline D., et al. "Gender equality in climate policy and practice hindered by assumptions." *Nature climate change* 11.3 (2021): 186-192.

¹⁷ Kangero, Dagless Steven. "Environmental Equity, a Means for Securing Our Environment." (In) *Security: Identifying the Invisible Disruptors of Security*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024. 351-380.

environmental sustainability, and the imperative of their meaningful participation for achieving equitable and impactful climate and environmental outcomes.

In synopsis, the journey in Kenya has seen a significant evolution in recognizing the crucial role of gender inclusion in addressing climate change and environmental justice. The constitutional guarantees and progressive policies lay a strong foundation. However, the imperative now lies in bridging the implementation gap, challenging persistent patriarchal norms, and investing in the empowerment and meaningful participation of women. Prioritizing gender inclusion is not merely a matter of social equity but a fundamental necessity for achieving a climate-resilient and environmentally just future for all Kenyans. Continued commitment and concerted efforts from all stakeholders are essential to translate policy into impactful action, ensuring that gender inclusion truly becomes the norm in Kenya's journey towards climate justice and environmental sustainability.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The Nexus of Gender, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice in Kenya

This section provides a critical engagement with existing scholarly work that examines the relationships between gender, climate change, and environmental justice in the Kenyan context. It offers a comprehensive summary and analysis of relevant research, theoretical frameworks, and policy discussions, highlighting key findings, ongoing debates, and existing gaps in the literature. This review will lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis by contextualizing the critical role of gender inclusion in addressing the intertwined challenges of climate change and environmental justice in Kenya.

2.1 The Gendered Dynamics of Climate Change

The literature increasingly recognizes that climate change impacts are not gender-neutral, with women and marginalized gender groups often experiencing disproportionate vulnerabilities.¹⁸ This section explores the dynamics of gender within the context of climate change in Kenya.

2.1.1 Disproportionate Vulnerabilities and Impacts on Women.

Existing research highlights that climate change exacerbates pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and discriminatory gender norms, leading to differential impacts on women.¹⁹ For instance, in many Kenyan communities, women are primarily responsible for fetching water and collecting fuel wood, tasks made more arduous and time-consuming by droughts and environmental degradation linked to climate change.²⁰ Additionally, women's dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods like agriculture often renders them more vulnerable to the impacts of changing weather patterns and extreme events²¹. The Kenya Gender Analysis underscores that gender inequalities in access to and use of resources amplify the differentiated impacts of climate change on various gender groups. Furthermore, climate change can heighten the risk of gender-based violence, as resource scarcity and displacement can create environments where such violence is more likely to occur. The recent floods in Kenya serve as a stark reminder of how these disasters disproportionately affect women and girls, exacerbating existing gender inequalities.

2.1.2 Gendered Coping Mechanisms and Adaptation Strategies

Scholarly work also explores the gender-based coping mechanisms adopted by communities in response to climate change. These mechanisms are often shaped by traditional gender roles and access to resources. Research in the Buyangu as well as Kajiado forest-dependent community in Kakamega County, Kenya, examines these gendered coping strategies in detail. Understanding these existing strategies is crucial for developing effective and culturally appropriate adaptation interventions.²² However, it is important to note that these coping mechanisms are often inadequate in the face of severe climate impacts and may even reinforce existing gender inequalities if not carefully considered.

2.1.3 Traditional Knowledge of Women in Climate Adaptation

A growing body of literature emphasizes the invaluable traditional knowledge and practices possessed by women, particularly indigenous women, in environmental management and climate adaptation. These knowledge systems, relevant to sectors like climate-smart agriculture, water management, and forestry, are often overlooked in mainstream

¹⁸ Reggers, Amy. "Climate change is not gender neutral: gender inequality, rights and vulnerabilities in Bangladesh." *Confronting climate change in Bangladesh: Policy strategies for adaptation and resilience*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019. 103-118.

¹⁹ Rather, Kashif Nesar, and Mantu Kumar Mahalik. "Do climate change and world uncertainty exacerbate gender inequality? Global evidence." *Population and Environment* 47.1 (2025): 5.

²⁰ Otieno, Caroline Marygorety Akinyi. *Climate Change, Gender Vulnerability and Adaptation Mechanism; A Study of the Ilchamus Community Living around Lake 94 in Baringo County Kenya*. Diss. The Open University of Tanzania, 2019.

²¹ Liru, Pauline Nelima. *The influence of climate change on the livelihoods of women involved in rural agriculture in Kakamega county, Kenya*. Diss. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2020.

²² Nyambura, Tabitha. *Gendered Access to Management of Forest Resources in Ngong Hills Forest, Kajiado North Sub-county*. Diss. University of Nairobi, 2023.

climate action.²³ The report "empowering indigenous women to integrate traditional knowledge and practices in climate action" directly addresses this critical gap by defining the gender dimensions of traditional knowledge for climate solutions relevant to Indigenous and Local Peoples (IPLC) women. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) women serve as crucial agents of change, playing a vital role in developing, applying, transmitting, and preserving traditional knowledge that strengthens community resilience against climate change and other environmental and societal shocks.²⁴ This invaluable traditional knowledge encompasses a wide array of practices, including deep understanding and sustainable utilization of edible wild vegetables, medicinal and herbal plants, and effective water resource management techniques. Furthermore, IPLC women employ sustainable gathering methods, cultivate homestead gardens, manage livestock using traditional ecological principles, and possess nuanced skills in weather forecasting based on the observation of bioindicators within their local environments.²⁵

Through actively applying these rich bodies of traditional knowledge, IPLC women make significant contributions to ensuring food and water security within their communities, building robust resilience to the impacts of diverse hazards, spearheading essential reforestation and sustainable forestry initiatives, and managing natural resources in a manner that promotes both climate change mitigation and effective adaptation strategies. Recognizing and integrating this knowledge is essential for developing effective and sustainable climate solutions that are rooted in local contexts.

2.2 Established Frameworks of Environmental Justice

The concept of environmental justice provides a lens through which to understand and address the disproportionate environmental burdens faced by marginalized communities. This section examines established frameworks of environmental justice and their relevance to gender in the Kenyan context.

2.2.1 Core Principles of Environmental Justice

At its core, environmental justice asserts the right of all people to live in healthy environments, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or gender. It encompasses fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, meaningful participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice and redress for environmental harm.

2.2.2 The Gendered Dimensions of Environmental Injustice

The literature highlights that environmental injustices often have distinct gendered dimensions. For instance, women in communities affected by pollution from extractive industries or poor waste management often face specific health risks due to their roles as caregivers and their biological vulnerabilities.²⁶ The study on "solid waste management policies in Kenya: the silence on the plight of women and children" reveals a significant gap in policy recognition of the differential exposure and health risks associated with solid waste for women and children in Nairobi and Mombasa. This silence underscores how gendered vulnerabilities can be overlooked in environmental policy.

2.2.3 Public Participation and Inclusive Governance

Meaningful and inclusive public participation, as enshrined in Article (10) of the Kenyan Constitution - 2010, is a cornerstone of environmental justice. However, the literature suggests that ensuring the genuine participation of all vulnerable groups, including women, in climate change governance remains a challenge. Entrenched biases against women in policy processes can hinder their effective involvement²⁷. Case laws like *Wangari Maathai v City Council of Nairobi* (2001) demonstrate the pivotal role women can play in defending environmental rights when their voices are amplified.²⁸

²³ Kwanya, Tom. "Mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in climate change response: traditional 'rainmaking' in Kenya." *The 8th*

International Conference on Knowledge Management in Organizations: Social and big data computing for knowledge management. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013.

²⁴ Otundo Richard, Martin. "Strategic Climate Change Management Practices to Empower Women, OVC And Youth for Sustainable Livelihoods and Development in Kenya; A Case of Kenya's Coast Region." *Strategic Climate Change Management Practices to Empower Women, OVC And Youth for Sustainable Livelihoods and Development in Kenya* (2024).

²⁵ Unuigbo, Ngozi Finette. "Ecological Integrity and Indigenous Farming Practices in Africa." *Ecological Integrity and International Law: Peace, Public Health, and Global Security* (2025).

²⁶ Kimani, Simon K. "Exposure to pollutants and health of women waste pickers at Dandora Dumpsite in Nairobi, Kenya." *Int J Innov Res Dev* 10 (6), <https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2021/v10/i6/JUN21049> (2021).

²⁷ Asomah, Joseph Kwesi. "Climate Change and Gender in Africa: An Analysis of Effects and Gender-Sensitive Approaches."

²⁸ *Maathai & 2 others v City Council of Nairobi & 2 others* (1994) 1 KLR (E&L) [1994] KEHC 4 (KLR)

2.3 The Principle of Intersectionality in Environmental Policy Formulation

The principle of intersectionality recognizes that various social categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, and age intersect and create unique experiences of vulnerability and privilege.²⁹ Applying an intersectional lens is crucial for understanding the complex and overlapping forms of discrimination that shape individuals' experiences of climate change and environmental injustice.

2.3.1 Understanding Intersecting Vulnerabilities: Research emphasizes that **women's vulnerability to climate change and environmental harm is often compounded by other factors** such as their ethnicity (as highlighted in studies on indigenous women), their socio-economic status, and their geographic location (e.g., rural women dependent on natural resources). For instance, indigenous women may face compounded marginalization due to both their gender and their indigenous identity, limiting their access to land rights, decision-making processes, and climate information.

2.3.2 Application of Intersectionality in Climate and Environmental Policies

The literature reviewed so far persistently calls for the integration of an intersectional perspective into the formulation of climate and environmental policies to ensure that the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of all individuals are addressed. This requires moving beyond a singular focus on gender and recognizing the interplay of multiple social identities in shaping experiences of environmental change and injustice.

2.3.3 Addressing Marginalized Gender Groups

Applying an intersectional lens also necessitates a focus on addressing the specific vulnerabilities and needs of marginalized gender groups beyond the binary understanding of men and women. This includes recognizing the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and other gender minorities who may face unique challenges in the context of climate change and environmental degradation³⁰.

2.4 Gender and Climate Justice in Kenyan Law and Policy

Kenya has made notable strides in developing legal and policy frameworks that acknowledge the importance of gender in the context of climate change. This section analyzes these frameworks and their effectiveness in promoting gender and climate justice.

Despite this relatively robust legal and policy framework, challenges remain in its effective implementation due to factors such as cultural attitudes, societal perceptions, and the need for adequate resources and monitoring mechanisms. Engaging with both formal and informal legal systems is also crucial for achieving climate justice and women's empowerment. The emphasis on public participation in the Constitution provides an avenue for ensuring that the voices and needs of all genders are considered in climate action and environmental governance.

2.4.1 The "Implementation Gap" and Legal Pluralism

Despite the progressive legal and policy frameworks, a significant **"implementation gap"** persists between policies and gender-equitable climate actions on the ground. Challenges such as resource constraints, lack of awareness, and weak enforcement mechanisms hinder effective gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, the novel work by Gachenga, Elizabeth on climate change governance, focusing on customary law and rural women argues that climate change efforts must engage with informal legal systems (customary and religious laws) where many women live their lives, as incongruences between formal and informal systems can sideline women and impede implementation.³¹

2.5 Women's Integral Role in Kenya's Environmental Sustainability

The existing body of literature increasingly recognizes the crucial and multifaceted role that women play in fostering environmental sustainability across Kenya. As primary users and managers of natural resources, particularly within rural communities, women's daily lives and livelihoods are intrinsically linked to the health and vitality of local ecosystems, positioning them as essential stakeholders in the pursuit of sustainable resource management practices.³²

Furthermore, women possess invaluable traditional knowledge and practical experience in climate-smart agriculture and sustainable forestry, making their empowerment within these sectors pivotal for achieving improved food security, enhanced biodiversity conservation efforts, and the implementation of more effective strategies for both climate change adaptation and mitigation. The impactful legacy of the Green Belt Movement, founded by Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, stands as a powerful illustration of how the empowerment of women can be a driving force behind significant

²⁹ Hankivsky, Olena. "INTERSECTIONALITY 101." (2022).

³⁰ Kilpatrick, Claire, et al. "A rapid review of the impacts of climate change on the queer community." *Environmental Justice* 17.5 (2024): 306-315.

³¹ Gachenga, Elizabeth. "Climate Change Governance: Customary Law and Rural Women." *Handbook of Climate Change Management: Research, Leadership, Transformation*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. 1639-1669.

³² Onyango, E. O., and S. J. Elliott. "Traversing the geographies of displacement, livelihoods, and embodied health and wellbeing of senior women in Kenya." *Wellbeing, Space and Society* 3 (2022): 100110.

environmental restoration, the crucial combat against deforestation, and effective action to address climate change, while simultaneously advancing the fundamental rights and leadership of women in environmental advocacy.

2.6 Gender-Responsive Frameworks for Climate and Environmental Justice in Kenya

Developing effective responses to climate change and environmental injustice necessitates the establishment of gender-responsive frameworks that consider the distinct needs and capacities of all genders. This requires the seamless integration of gender perspectives throughout the entire policy and project lifecycle, ensuring women's full and effective participation in decision-making processes at every level.³³ Furthermore, conducting thorough gender analyses of climate change impacts and proposed interventions is crucial for understanding differentiated vulnerabilities and needs. This evidence-based approach relies heavily on the systematic collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data, which aims to develop relevant indicators and gather gender-specific data across environmental sectors.³⁴ Ultimately, ensuring that climate finance mechanisms are gender-responsive is vital for supporting equitable climate action by strategically allocating resources to address the specific needs of women and marginalized gender groups in both climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

2.7 Fostering Women's Leadership in Climate Action

The empowerment of women to assume leadership roles in climate action is increasingly acknowledged as a pivotal element for realizing effective and enduring solutions to environmental challenges. Research consistently demonstrates that enhanced participation of women in decision-making processes concerning climate change and environmental management correlates with more impactful, equitable, and sustainable outcomes, as their distinct perspectives and lived experiences enrich both policy formulation and its implementation.³⁵ However, significant barriers impede women's meaningful engagement and leadership, including deeply rooted patriarchal social norms, unequal access to essential resources and education, and underrepresentation in political and various decision-making bodies.³⁶ Therefore, renewed and intensified efforts are imperative to dismantle these pervasive biases and cultivate supportive environments that actively promote and enable women's leadership in this critical domain.

The impactful work of pioneering figures such as Wangari Maathai and numerous other African women leaders serves as a powerful source of inspiration and offers invaluable lessons regarding the transformative influence of women's leadership in driving tangible climate action and advancing environmental justice. Consequently, it is of paramount importance to actively support and amplify the voices of women environmental defenders and climate activists who are at the forefront of this crucial movement.

2.7.1 Trailblazing Women's role in Climate and Environmental Justice in Kenya

Kenya's history is marked by significant contributions from women who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in environmental stewardship and advocacy. Their efforts underscore the indispensable role of women in addressing the multifaceted challenges of climate change and advancing the principles of environmental justice.

Wangari Maathai (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2004) stands as an emblematic figure in this context. Her establishment of the Green Belt Movement, a pivotal grassroots initiative centered on afforestation and environmental conservation, not only instigated tangible ecological transformations but also served as a powerful catalyst for women's empowerment across Kenya and beyond. Her unwavering dedication to sustainable development and reforestation has had a profound and enduring global impact.³⁷ Furthermore, her landmark legal victory in *Wangari Maathai v City Council of Nairobi* (2001) is a critical legal precedent, highlighting the crucial role of women in safeguarding public spaces and environmental rights against unlawful land allocation, thereby solidifying the foundation for environmental justice advocacy.

³³ Manoti, Ruth Mauti. "AN ASSESSMENT OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING EFFECTIVENESS IN PROMOTING

GENDER EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA." *International Journal of Social Sciences*

Management and Entrepreneurship (IJSSME) 8.1 (2024).

³⁴ Ngcamu, Bethuel Sibongiseni. "Climate change effects on vulnerable populations in the Global South: a systematic review." *Natural Hazards* 118.2 (2023): 977-991.

³⁵ Nosheen, Misbah, Javed Iqbal, and Shahzad Ahmad. "Economic empowerment of women through climate change mitigation." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 421 (2023): 138480.

³⁶ Beatrice, Keanche, Evans Omosa Nyamwaka, and Daniel Rotich Kandagor. "Breaking Barriers: The Struggles and Prospects of Women Leadership in the Gusii Region." *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 7.2 (2024): 51-63.

³⁷ Maathai, W. (2004). *Unbowed: A Memoir*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Rose Wamalwa, through her work with Women's Climate Centers International and Women in Water and Natural Resources Conservation, exemplifies dedicated advocacy for Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities.³⁸ Her efforts illuminate the critical agency of Indigenous and local women as drivers of change. Initiatives such as the provision of indigenous tree seedlings and the dissemination of their invaluable Indigenous ecological knowledge to government officials actively contribute to community sensitization and the development of effective strategies for mitigating the impacts of floods and droughts.

Edna Kaptoyo's work with the Pastoralist Communities Empowerment Programme underscores the efficacy of inclusive strategies that actively engage women in the implementation of environmental initiatives and the facilitation of dialogue with local leadership.³⁹ This participatory approach has demonstrably fostered an increased recognition of women's inherent significance and capacity in addressing the complex and interconnected challenges posed by climate change within pastoralist communities.

Jessica's leadership as the Climate Finance and Gender Lead for the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) highlights the growing and crucial presence of women in key leadership roles within prominent pan-African climate justice organizations⁴⁰. Her work ensures the central integration of gender perspectives within discussions and the formulation of strategies pertaining to climate finance mechanisms.

2.7.2 Persistent Challenges: Underrepresentation and the Imperative of Recognition

Despite the significant and diverse contributions of numerous women across Kenya, the African continent, and the globe, the available evidence underscores a persistent and critical challenge: the crucial work undertaken by women in environmental stewardship and climate action often remains unacknowledged, and they continue to be significantly underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels of governance and environmental management.⁴¹ Addressing this systemic inequity is paramount to achieving effective and equitable climate and environmental solutions. The unique insights and lived experiences of women, who frequently occupy the forefront of natural resource management and are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change, are indispensable for the development of holistic and sustainable strategies.

2.8 Integrating Gender into Kenya's Climate Solutions

The existing body of knowledge provides several key recommendations for effectively weaving gender considerations into Kenya's approaches to climate change. Firstly, it is crucial to ensure that all climate change mitigation and adaptation actions are rooted in genuine consultation with women, actively leveraging their unique skills and deep-seated knowledge⁴². In integrating gender perspectives into every facet of these efforts, the resulting actions become more relevant, equitable, and ultimately more effective for all members of society. Secondly, a vital aspect of enhancing resilience lies in building women's asset base and strengthening their adaptive capacities.

This necessitates improving women's access to and control over essential productive and reproductive resources, encompassing land ownership, access to credit facilities, and educational opportunities. Finally, truly transformative climate change responses must proactively address the fundamental sources of gender-based vulnerability, pervasive gender inequality, and the persistent issue of poverty. Policies and programs must recognize and value the central roles and significant contributions that women make to environmental, social, and economic development within the Kenyan context.

2.9 Gaps, Inconsistencies, and Ongoing Debates

Despite increasing acknowledgment of gender's significance in climate change and environmental justice, there exists several persistent gaps, inconsistencies, and ongoing debates. A notable deficiency is the scarcity of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data and in-depth research specifically examining the differentiated impacts of climate change and the efficacy of gender-responsive interventions within the Kenyan context⁴³. Further targeted research is essential to gain a more nuanced understanding of the distinct roles, knowledge, and capacities of women and men across sectors affected by climate change. Moreover, a recurring challenge lies in the discrepancy between progressive gender-

³⁸ Rose Wamalwa, through her work with Women's Climate Centers International and Women in Water and Natural Resources Conservation,

³⁹ Rogers, Kelli Erin. "Between Tradition and Transformation: A Feminist Investigation of the Role of Pastoral Women within Tanzania's Integrated Environment and Development Landscape." (2023).

⁴⁰ Aliyu, Zainab Ojone. *How effective is the Climate Justice Movement in sub-Saharan Africa?*. Diss. University of Reading, 2022.

⁴¹ Roy, Shyamashree. "Women as Environmental Change-Makers in Civil Society." *Gender, Environment, and Human Rights: An Intersectional Exploration*. IGI Global, 2025. 269-292.

⁴² Sengupta, Sreerupa, Divya Singhal, and Ananya Chakraborty. *Local feminist perspectives as transformative levers: Women's health and climate action in India*. No. 8/2025. IDOS Discussion Paper, 2025.

⁴³ Githukia, Cecilia Muthoni. *An Influence Of Gender Constraints Dimensions On Opportunities: A Focus On Gender Awareness On Aquaculture In Western Kenya*. Diss. Kisii University, 2023.

sensitive policies and their tangible implementation at the grassroots level. Comprehending and effectively addressing the systemic obstacles that hinder the practical application of these policies is paramount to achieving their intended objectives. Finally, discussions surrounding the most effective strategies for overcoming deeply entrenched gender inequalities within African patriarchal societies often encounter contestation and resistance. Addressing these culturally embedded norms and biases is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving meaningful and sustainable gender inclusion in climate action and the pursuit of environmental justice.

2.10 Positioning the Current Research

This research paper aimed to contribute to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the critical role of gender inclusion in addressing climate change and environmental justice in Kenya. It builds upon the established legal and policy frameworks, highlight the invaluable contributions of women, and underscore the necessity of gender-responsive approaches. In exploring the implementation challenges and advocating for concrete strategies to empower women in climate leadership and integrate gender into climate solutions, this research sought to address the identified gaps and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how gender inclusion can lead to more resilient, sustainable, and just outcomes for Kenya.

The current oversight of gender inclusion in policies and implementation leads to ineffective outcomes by neglecting the disproportionate impacts on women and marginalized groups and failing to leverage their unique knowledge, such as traditional knowledge. This research will evaluate the impact of integrating gender perspectives on climate change policies and environmental justice initiatives in Kenya and investigate the specific barriers hindering the effective inclusion of gender considerations at various levels. By focusing on these gaps, the research aims to underscore that meaningful participation and empowerment of all genders are fundamental for developing sustainable and just climate and environmental solutions in Kenya.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this research involved a qualitative analysis of existing secondary data sources. The approach was primarily exploratory and analytical, aiming to understand the existing landscape of legal and policy frameworks, research findings, and other relevant documentation pertaining to gender inclusion in addressing climate change and environmental justice. This allowed me to critically examine the integration of gender perspectives within these frameworks without the need for primary data collection in the field.

Sources of data and information.

The data for this study was derived from a thorough review of diverse documentary sources. The analysis of the legal framework included the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which establishes fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, alongside specific legislative acts such as the Climate Change Act and pertinent environmental management regulations. Furthermore, the examination of policy documents encompassed national and sectoral strategies concerning climate change, the environment, and gender, including the National Climate Change Framework Policy and other relevant Sessional Papers and policy briefs. It also analyzed reports and publications from governmental agencies like the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), international bodies such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and various research institutions, which offered valuable insights into the current state of gender mainstreaming within environmental governance and climate action.

Academic literature, comprising scholarly articles and research papers exploring the nexus of gender, climate change, and environmental justice in Kenya and globally, informed the understanding of theoretical frameworks, identified existing research gaps, and provided knowledge of best practices from other contexts. Additionally, the study considered relevant case law that, while not always directly addressing the intersection of gender and climate change, establishes legal precedents concerning environmental rights, public participation, and gender equality within the Kenyan legal system.

Limitations of the Research Methodology

Given that this study employed a desktop research methodology relying exclusively on secondary sources, several inherent limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the findings are entirely contingent upon the availability and quality of existing documented information, meaning that potential biases or gaps present within the secondary data could have consequently influenced our analysis. Secondly, by not incorporating primary data collection through field studies or direct engagement with communities, the study was unable to gather firsthand perspectives and experiences from the diverse gender groups impacted by climate change and environmental injustices, which could have yielded richer and more nuanced insights.

Thirdly, the analysis of policy and legal documents inherently involves interpretation, and therefore, the conclusions are based on the researcher's specific understanding of these texts, with the possibility that alternative interpretations could lead to different conclusions. Furthermore, the scope of this research was constrained by the information publicly accessible through secondary channels, limiting access to potentially relevant internal documents or unpublished data that could have provided greater depth. Finally, it is important to note that the fields of climate change and gender

mainstreaming are dynamic and continuously evolving; while the study endeavored to review the most current information available, new developments may have emerged subsequent to the data collection phase.

Despite these limitations, our chosen methodology allowed for a systematic and comprehensive review of the existing legal, policy, and scholarly landscape concerning gender inclusion in addressing climate change and environmental justice in Kenya. This approach provided a foundational understanding of the current situation and enabled identification of key themes, gaps, and potential areas for future research and intervention.

Findings on the dynamics of gender in the context of climate change.

The study found that climate change disproportionately impacts women and marginalized groups in Kenya due to pre-existing gender inequalities that shape their vulnerability and capacity to cope with climate-related shocks. These inequalities manifest in various forms, including differentiated access to and control over resources, decision-making processes, and social protection mechanisms, thereby exacerbating the burdens and responsibilities placed on women in the face of climate change.⁴⁴ It implies therefore, that understanding how gender relations influence vulnerability to climate risks is crucial for developing effective policy responses.

Findings on established frameworks of environmental justice.

It was found that environmental justice frameworks in Kenya emphasize the importance of public participation in environmental decision-making and the enforcement of environmental rights, as outlined in the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA). These frameworks recognize that environmental injustices disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including women, highlighting the need for equitable and inclusive approaches to address climate change impacts, which are increasingly understood as having significant gender dimensions. Integrating a gender perspective into environmental justice ensures that the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women are considered in the pursuit of sustainable and just environmental solutions.⁴⁵

The principle of intersectionality in environmental policy formulation.

The principle of intersectionality is increasingly recognized as vital in understanding the complexities of vulnerability and resilience to climate change in Kenya. It highlights that in addition to gender, other factors such as age, race, income, caste, indigeneity, and disability intersect to shape differentiated patterns of vulnerability and resilience, particularly among women. Applying this principle to environmental policy formulation ensures that climate change interventions address the multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage experienced by diverse groups of women, such as Indigenous and local community (IPLC) women whose traditional knowledge and technology (TKT) and roles are critical for climate solutions.

Gender and Climate Justice in Kenyan Law and Policy.

Kenya has established a relatively robust legal and policy framework that acknowledges the interconnectedness of gender equality and climate action, with the Constitution providing a strong foundation for both. Key legislative instruments such as the Climate Change Act (2016) include principles of gender equity and social inclusion. Various national policies, including the National Policy on Gender and Development (2019) and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), aim to mainstream gender considerations into climate change responses.⁴⁶ The ongoing development of the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (NGCCAP) further demonstrates this commitment.⁴⁷ However, significant challenges persist in the effective implementation of these frameworks due to factors such as resource constraints, entrenched patriarchal norms, and a disconnect between formal policies and informal legal systems where many women operate.⁴⁸

Women's Role in Kenya's Environmental Sustainability.

Women in Kenya play a pivotal and multifaceted role in environmental sustainability, particularly as stewards of natural resources in rural areas and as holders of invaluable traditional knowledge related to environmental management and climate adaptation. Their active participation and leadership in environmental conservation efforts, exemplified by movements like Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement, demonstrate their capacity to drive significant positive change, enhancing community resilience and contributing to both environmental and socio-economic well-being. Recognizing and supporting women's contributions is essential for achieving effective and sustainable climate action and environmental justice, as their involvement often leads to improved environmental and productivity outcomes.

Gender-Responsive Frameworks for Climate and Environmental Justice in Kenya.

Findings indicate that developing gender-responsive frameworks for climate and environmental justice in Kenya necessitates the systematic integration of gender perspectives into all stages of policy and project cycles, from design to

⁴⁴ Agnes A Babugura, 'Gender Equality in Combatting Climate Change: The African Context - Africa Portal'

⁴⁵ The Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) (1999),

⁴⁶ Elvin Nyukuri, 'Gender approaches in climate compatible development: Lessons from Kenya'

⁴⁷ 'Gender Equality in Combatting Climate Change: The African Context - Africa Portal'; Julie Matheka

⁴⁸ 'Gender Mainstreaming and Climate Change - ICJ Kenya'; CHRISTINE ASUNA

implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This requires conducting thorough gender analyses to understand the differentiated impacts of climate change and existing gender power relations, ensuring that the diverse needs, priorities, and capacities of women and men are addressed equitably. Institutions like the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) play a crucial role in advocating for gender inclusion in climate action strategies and promoting women's meaningful participation in shaping climate policies. Moving beyond general commitments to gender equality towards concrete, sector-specific actions and the application of gender-responsive indicators are essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of climate and environmental justice efforts.

Empowering Women in Kenya Climate Leadership.

Empowering women for leadership in climate action is increasingly recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving equitable and effective climate change and environmental justice outcomes in Kenya. This requires actively increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies at all levels.⁴⁹ Key strategies for empowerment include targeted capacity building and training initiatives, ensuring institutional representation for women and marginalized groups, and addressing persistent cultural and societal barriers that limit women's full participation.⁵⁰ The presence of women in key leadership positions, such as the former cabinet secretary in charge of climate change, demonstrates the potential for mainstreaming gender at policy and implementation levels.⁵¹ Continued efforts are needed to ensure that women's unique perspectives and expertise are integral to climate governance and action.

Integrating Gender into Kenya's Climate Solutions.

The effective integration of gender considerations into specific climate solutions across various sectors in Kenya is crucial for enhancing their effectiveness, equity, and long-term sustainability. This integration necessitates moving beyond broad statements about gender equality to implementing concrete actions that address the distinct needs and capacities of women and men in different contexts, such as promoting climate-smart agriculture practices tailored to women's roles and ensuring their access to climate finance, resources, and technologies. Climate change actions must be grounded in consultations with women to incorporate their skills, knowledge, and preferences. Furthermore, conducting gender analysis of all budgetary allocations and financial instruments for climate change is essential to ensure gender-responsive investments in adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer, and capacity building initiatives. Recognizing and promoting women's traditional knowledge in sustainable resource management and land use practices is also vital for effective climate action.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

4.1 Gender Dimensions of Climate Change and Environmental Justice in Kenya

The review of research concerning the intersection of gender, climate change, and environmental justice in Kenya reveals that women and marginalized gender groups experience disproportionately severe impacts from climate change and environmental injustices. This heightened vulnerability arises from pre-existing socio-economic disparities and entrenched discriminatory gender norms, which limit their access to and control over essential resources, exclude them from decision-making processes, and restrict their access to social protection mechanisms.

Despite facing these significant vulnerabilities, women in Kenya play crucial and diverse roles in fostering environmental sustainability, particularly as primary users and managers of natural resources within rural communities. Their invaluable traditional knowledge regarding environmental management and climate adaptation positions them as key stakeholders in the development of effective and sustainable solutions. Furthermore, women in Kenya are increasingly active in climate activism and are vocal advocates for the integration of gender perspectives into all climate-related policies and procedures. Within the context of environmental justice, the study indicates that women and marginalized gender groups often bear the greatest burden of environmental degradation, such as pollution and limited access to natural resources, underscoring the gendered nature of environmental injustices. Ensuring their meaningful participation in environmental governance and decision-making is therefore essential for achieving equitable outcomes and safeguarding their environmental rights.

Illustrative examples from Kenya, such as Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement, which empowered women in grassroots tree-planting initiatives to enhance community resilience, and the active involvement of indigenous women in environmental conservation and adaptation, highlight the critical role women play. Legal cases, such as Wangari Maathai v City Council of Nairobi (2001), further underscore the significant role of women in defending public spaces and environmental rights.

4.2 Legal and Policy Frameworks

The Kenyan legal and policy landscape demonstrates a growing recognition of the intrinsic link between gender equality and effective climate action. Foundational to this is the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which enshrines the principles of equality and non-discrimination based on gender, further emphasizing the importance of public participation, as articulated in Article (10), to ensure inclusive policy and law-making processes. Several national policies and laws

⁴⁹ National Adaptation Plan (2016)

⁵⁰ National Climate Change Action Plan (2013)

⁵¹ National Determined Contributions (2015) and Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (2017);

actively seek to enhance the involvement of women in climate change initiatives and address gender-specific concerns within the climate change context. These include key documents such as the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), the National Policy on Gender and Development, the Climate Change Act of 2016, the Gender Policy in the Energy Sector, the Climate Finance Strategy, and the Draft Green Climate Fund Strategy.

The Climate Change Act, 2016, establishes a framework for improved coordination and response to climate change, explicitly acknowledging the significance of gender perspectives by recognizing the necessity of mainstreaming intergenerational and gender equity in its preamble and emphasizing equity and social inclusion as a guiding principle. The Act mandates the cabinet secretary responsible for environmental affairs to develop a national gender and intergenerational responsive public education and awareness strategy on climate change. Furthermore, the National Policy on Gender and Development, initially adopted in 2000 and reviewed in 2019, aims to achieve gender equality and integrate gender considerations across all sectors, including natural resource management and climate change, advocating for women's active involvement and participation. This commitment is further reinforced by the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2019 on National Policy on Gender and Development. Kenya is also in the process of developing its inaugural National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (NGCCAP) for 2024-2027, signaling a renewed dedication to embedding gender equity within climate policies across critical sectors like agriculture, energy, and health over the coming years, intending to provide a comprehensive framework for gender-inclusive climate action.

Women in Kenya play a vital and multifaceted role in environmental sustainability, particularly within rural communities where they often serve as primary users and managers of natural resources, acting as custodians of water and playing a significant role in the agricultural sector. Their traditional knowledge and practices in the sustainable management of resources are invaluable for formulating effective climate action strategies. Increasingly, evidence indicates that forests within Indigenous territories often exhibit more sustainable management practices, with women playing a central role in the sustainable management of forest landscapes and other critical ecosystems, making significant contributions to environmental conservation and regenerative food production systems within IPLC communities.

Developing gender-responsive frameworks is therefore essential for effectively tackling climate change and achieving environmental justice in Kenya. This necessitates the integration of gender perspectives at all stages of policy and project cycles, ensuring that the diverse needs, priorities, and capacities of women and men are adequately addressed. Gender analysis emerges as a critical component of these frameworks, facilitating an understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change and existing gender power dynamics, which should inform the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of climate change policies and projects to ensure they are gender-sensitive and pro-poor. A fundamental aspect of gender-responsive frameworks for climate and environmental justice is ensuring women's full and effective participation in decision-making processes at all levels, from local to international, including their involvement in the management, protection, and conservation of the environment.

Empowering women in climate leadership is identified as crucial for the development of more effective, equitable, and sustainable climate and environmental solutions in Kenya. Increasing women's representation in leadership positions, including in parliament and county assemblies, is deemed essential for ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions are duly recognized. Strategies for empowering women in climate leadership include promoting their active participation in climate decision-making and governance at all levels and strengthening the capacity and mandate of institutions such as the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC). Addressing cultural barriers and patriarchal norms that impede women's full participation is also considered critical. Recognizing and valuing women's knowledge, particularly that of Indigenous and local women, is highlighted as a key aspect of empowering them in environmental contexts, as their traditional knowledge systems hold significant relevance across various sectors, including climate-smart agriculture, sustainable resource management, and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Consequently, integrating gender considerations into specific climate solutions across various sectors is deemed crucial for enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability in Kenya. This necessitates a move beyond general statements on gender equality towards the implementation of concrete actions that address the specific needs and capacities of women and men in diverse contexts. Examples of this integration include promoting climate-smart agriculture practices tailored to women's needs, ensuring women's access to information, technology, and resources in the energy sector, and supporting women-led initiatives in water resource management, alongside ensuring that women-led projects have access to climate finance through gender analysis of budget lines and financial instruments. Furthermore, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) must systematically consider the potential gender-differentiated impacts of development projects and incorporate measures to mitigate negative effects and promote gender equality, placing the socio-economic emancipation of women at the core of EIA processes.

4.3 Systemic Obstacles to Gender-Equitable Climate Action

This legal research findings reveal that despite notable advancements in establishing legal and policy frameworks, the effective inclusion of gender considerations within climate change and environmental justice efforts in Kenya faces several deep-rooted systemic challenges. The study underscores a significant implementation gap, where the translation of gender-equitable climate policies into tangible actions on the ground is often hampered by limitations in financial,

technical, and human resources, coupled with insufficient awareness, weak enforcement, and inadequate integration of gender perspectives at decentralized levels of governance. Furthermore, the review found that deeply ingrained gender biases, persistent patriarchal social norms, and cultural attitudes continue to marginalize women, thereby restricting their meaningful involvement and leadership in climate change and environmental decision-making processes.

The study also highlights that socio-economic disparities, including women's comparatively lower socio-economic standing and unequal access to critical resources such as land, credit, and education, amplify their vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change and constrain their capacity to contribute to solutions. Discriminatory property ownership policies further compound these challenges by impeding women's empowerment. The research further indicates that the perception of gender issues as exclusively concerning women impedes broader policy integration and development. Moreover, while climate change policies often acknowledge gender, comprehensive integration and specific mechanisms for women's empowerment are frequently absent. Weak coordination among advocates for gender mainstreaming also undermines their collective impact. Finally, the study points to a prevailing lack of adequate knowledge among policymakers and practitioners regarding gender dynamics and effective strategies for their integration into climate change policies and programs, a challenge exacerbated by the absence of guiding frameworks or tools. The silence on the specific vulnerabilities of women and children within certain environmental policies, such as those addressing solid waste management, further exemplifies a lack of gender sensitivity within these domains.

4.4 The Way Forward

A comprehensive and systemic transformation is essential to effectively address existing challenges and foster greater gender inclusion within Kenya's future climate and environmental endeavors. The review indicates that bolstering the enforcement of current legal and policy frameworks stands as a paramount necessity. This requires a commitment to allocating sufficient financial, technical, and human resources to ensure the effective operationalization of key instruments such as the Climate Change Act, the National Policy on Gender and Development, and the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan, alongside establishing mechanisms for institutional accountability regarding the integration of gender considerations in climate change interventions.

Furthermore, the study underscores the need for renewed efforts in dismantling deeply ingrained biases against women within policy-making spheres and actively challenging patriarchal societal norms, discriminatory laws, and customs that perpetuate women's disempowerment. Engaging men and boys as crucial allies in advancing gender equality is identified as integral to achieving lasting progress. It was also found that the integration of gender perspectives throughout all stages of mitigation and adaptation actions, informed by consultations with women and the incorporation of their expertise and knowledge, is vital. Climate change initiatives should be intentionally designed to strengthen women's asset base and address the underlying factors contributing to gender-based vulnerability and poverty. To ensure consistent attention to gender considerations, the review suggests the introduction of dedicated gender focal persons within every county department and relevant national institutions, coupled with strengthening the capacity and mandate of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) to champion gender inclusion in climate action strategies. The findings also highlight the importance of conducting systematic gender analyses of climate change responses and the routine collection and utilization of gender-disaggregated data to inform policies and programs related to land use, carbon storage, and other climate actions, alongside further research to document and integrate women's traditional knowledge into climate science and government programs. Moreover, ensuring meaningful and inclusive public participation of all vulnerable groups, particularly women, in climate change governance is identified as a critical area for improvement, necessitating the creation of safe and accessible spaces for their active involvement in decision-making processes. Integrating gender considerations into Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) is deemed crucial for systematically evaluating potential gender-differentiated impacts and incorporating measures to mitigate negative effects and advance gender equality. Promoting climate-smart agricultural practices tailored to women's needs, ensuring their access to resources and technology, and supporting women-led initiatives in sustainable resource management are highlighted as key strategies for mainstreaming gender into climate solutions, alongside ensuring women's access to climate finance through gender-responsive budgeting. Finally, the study emphasizes the necessity of enhancing education, awareness campaigns, and capacity-building initiatives that specifically target and equip vulnerable populations, including women, with the essential climate change knowledge and skills for effective adaptation and mitigation.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The analysis unequivocally demonstrates that gender inclusion is indispensable for effectively addressing climate change and environmental injustice, as their impacts disproportionately affect women and marginalized genders due to existing inequalities. While women are often more vulnerable, they are also crucial agents of change with invaluable traditional knowledge. Kenya's progressive legal framework acknowledges this, but a significant implementation gap persists due to patriarchal norms and a lack of gender-disaggregated data. Achieving climate resilience and environmental justice requires valuing the diverse knowledge of all Kenyans, bridging the implementation gap, challenging patriarchal norms, ensuring gender-responsive finance, and investing in women's capacities. The full participation of women in decision-making is not just a matter of justice but a prerequisite for effective and sustainable solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Policymakers:

- ✦ Strengthen Implementation: Dedicate resources and enforce gender-responsive climate policies.
- ✦ Operationalize NGCCAP: Finalize and implement with clear, measurable targets.
- ✦ Mandate Gender Analysis: Systematically integrate gender analysis and data collection.
- ✦ Develop Sectoral Guidelines: Provide clear guidance for gender mainstreaming in climate sectors.
- ✦ Ensure Women's Participation: Set targets and create enabling environments for women in decision-making.
- ✦ Prioritize Gender-Responsive Finance: Ensure women-led initiatives have access to funding.
- ✦ Integrate Gender in EIAs: Systematically consider gender impacts of development projects.
- ✦ Strengthen NGECC Mandate: Empower the NGECC to advocate for gender inclusion.
- ✦ Address Biases and Appoint Focal Persons: Combat biases and assign gender focal persons.
- ✦ Recognize Indigenous Knowledge: Involve and protect the knowledge of Indigenous and local women.

For NGOs/CSOs:

- ✦ Advocate for Gender Equality: Hold policymakers accountable.
- ✦ Raise Awareness: Educate communities on the gender-climate nexus.
- ✦ Support Capacity Building: Equip women with climate knowledge and leadership skills.
- ✦ Facilitate Women's Networks: Create platforms for knowledge sharing and solidarity.
- ✦ Undertake Participatory Research: Document women's experiences and knowledge.
- ✦ For Activists/Community Members:
- ✦ Engage in Public Participation: Ensure gender perspectives are heard.
- ✦ Demand Accountability: Hold institutions responsible for gender commitments.
- ✦ Support Women Leaders: Amplify their voices and initiatives.
- ✦ Promote Community Awareness: Educate on gendered impacts and women's roles.

Suggestions for Future Research:

- ✦ Analyze gender roles and coping strategies in climate-impacted sectors.
- ✦ Document gender-disaggregated data across relevant climate sectors.
- ✦ Assess the gender responsiveness of development and climate programs for marginalized groups.
- ✦ Explore the intersectionality of gender with other vulnerability factors.
- ✦ Investigate the integration of Indigenous women's knowledge in climate solutions.
- ✦ Evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming strategies.
- ✦ Explore linkages between climate change, gender-based violence, and women's health.
- ✦ Assess engagement of underrepresented populations in climate science.
- ✦ Analyze the influence of land tenure on integrating Indigenous women's knowledge.

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