

## Chapter 8

# Women Leadership in Fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals in India

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### ABSTRACT

*Rio in 1992 known as United Nations Conference on Environment and Development focused mainly on issues relating to environmental resources and intergenerational concerns of global warming, ozone layer depletion collectively termed as ‘green agenda.’ However, with the development of sustainable development goals and growing awareness of ‘brown agenda’ which is directly connected to the development process and environmental problems, it becomes quintessential to talk about gender equality.*

### INTRODUCTION

Goals to “promote gender equality and empower women and to ensure environmental sustainability” were included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. According to the Rio Declaration of 1992, it was asserted that the involvement of women in environmental management and development is of utmost importance, as their complete participation is crucial for the attainment of sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals acknowledge the imperative of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as the necessity of mitigating poverty and fostering sustainable environmental conservation. One of the objectives pertaining to the aim of achieving environmental sustainability is to reduce by half, by the year 2015, the percentage of individuals lacking sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (United Nations, 2019).

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This was a major focus of India's Ten-Year Plan (2002-2007). The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was given top priority by being translated into action with a three-fold strategy focusing on economic empowerment, social empowerment, and gender justice. However, the Millennium Development Goals were replaced with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were established during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The aim was to generate a collection of universally applicable objectives that effectively address the pressing environmental, political, and economic challenges confronting our global community (Patel, 1996). In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which exclusively focused on developing nations, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompass all countries, regardless of their economic status, including high-income, middle-income, and low-income nations. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are characterised by a nationally owned and country-led approach, allowing each country the autonomy to develop a national framework for attaining the SDGs (Gwagwa, 1991).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a resolute commitment to effectively conclude ongoing endeavours and address the most urgent global challenges currently encountered. The interconnection of all 17 Goals implies that the achievement of one goal has a direct impact on the achievement of others. The management of our delicate natural resources is influenced by the challenge posed by climate change. Additionally, the eradication of poverty is facilitated by the attainment of gender equality and improved health outcomes. Furthermore, the promotion of peace and inclusive societies contributes to the reduction of inequalities and the enhancement of economic prosperity. In summary, this presents a significant opportunity to enhance the quality of life for forthcoming generations which has been incorporated in India.

The Five-Year Plans (FYPs) provide a comprehensive framework and direction for India's policies, programmes, and projects. Annual plans, commonly referred to as APs, are utilized to implement the objectives outlined in five-year plans. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan from 2012 to 2017 was a comprehensive and centralised national economic blueprint. The subtitle of the Twelfth Plan articulates the comprehensive vision and aspirations that it seeks to accomplish, which are centred around achieving 'faster, sustainable, and more inclusive growth.

Presently, India does not have an operational Five-Year Plan. Subsequently, the government of India made the decision to cease the implementation of the Five-Year Plan system and instead embraced a more extensive development strategy known as the NITI Aayog. NITI Aayog is the apex think tank of the government of India which functions as the primary public policy research institution of the Government of India. It is responsible for driving economic development and promoting cooperative federalism by engaging State Governments in the process of economic policy formulation, employing a bottom-up approach to move away from a bargaining-based federalism model. Two of the many objectives of this think tank is "to create a knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support system through a collaborative community of national and international experts, practitioners and other partners" and "To maintain a state-of-the-art resource centre, be a repository of research on good governance and best practices in sustainable and equitable development as well as help their dissemination to stakeholders." (United Nations, n.d.)

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