

# Eco Feminism and Women Representation in Governance: A Critical Analysis of the Nigerian Legal Framework

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## Abstract

Since 1995, Nigeria and 187 other countries have committed to ensuring women have equal access and participation in power structures and decision-making. This was a laudable step from the age-long convention of building governance on patriarchal lines. Patriarchal governance is believed to have adversely affected the environment as women are closer to nature being consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators. They play an essential role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Ironically, this significant role women play has become a justification for their alienation from the private sphere. Though globally acknowledged that women have a unique value and role in environmental governance, a host of factors are responsible for their exclusion and implementation of the existing legal framework in Nigeria related to environmental governance. The adverse side of technology, westernisation and others have exploited nature and led to the oppression of women, who are the most significant environmental degradation victims of their vulnerability and interface with nature. This has provoked the birth and growth of the concept of ecofeminism. Twenty-eight years after Nigeria's commitment to promoting women in governance, this paper seeks to, through doctrinal research, use ecofeminism as a lens to critically interrogate the existing legal framework and ascertain if, indeed, they provide the mechanism for the Nigerian woman to have equal access to and participate in decision making and environmental governance. This is to strategically address the inherent complexity of environmental problems and climate change ravaging mother earth. The paper will comprehensively address gaps that are snowballing

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with each passing day and identify the role women must play as the most significant stakeholder in its governance.

### Keywords

Ecofeminism, Governance, Environment, Sustainable Development, Representation

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## 1. Introduction

Governance based on patriarchal lines has been the norm for most regions. The impact of patriarchal governance is profound on the ecosystem, given the exclusion of women in decision-making that should drive sustainable practices that foster a clean and healthy environment (UN Women, 2024). This exclusion of women in governance and decision-making is exacerbated by their high vulnerability and constant interface with nature (Odunjo et al., 2015).

Ecofeminism, a concept that strives to protect women's interests and save the environment from the exploitation of nature by westernisation and the adverse effect of technology (Jesse, 1998) has come to stay (Rosemary, 2003). According to McGuire and McGuire, the solution to environmental challenges cannot be undertaken without including women in governance (McGuire & McGuire, 1998). Thus, suffice it to state that women in governance and ecofeminism are strongly interrelated concepts.

In Nigeria, Patriarchal structures and gender bias affect decision making in environmental matters, because the decision makers are male dominated (Onwutuebe, 2025). The suggestions from women are not taken seriously because the women do not have a political voice in Nigeria, however women activities dominate the environmental space, from agricultural practices to farming and cooking. Women are at the center of sustainable development, however the domestic laws and policies do not favour women. This evidence by the provisions of the Land Use Act of 1978 which places all lands in the hands of the Governor who is usually a male.<sup>1</sup> The Act which is in dire need of reform is yet to be reviewed because there are limited female voices in the parliament less than 10 percent of women are in the parliament (Policy and Legal Advocacy Center, 2025). This has affected the ability of women to access lands for sustainable agricultural practices.

Given Nigeria's history of being a patriarchal state (Makama, 2013), this paper investigates Nigeria's existing environmental legal framework to ascertain whether they reflect ecofeminism and women's representation in governance. To achieve this, this paper is divided into six sections. The first section, this introduction, gives an outline and structure of the paper. The second section clarifies the ecofeminism and governance concepts, outlining the scope and application of the topic of discussion. The third section interrogates the gender gaps in Nigerian

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<sup>1</sup>Land Use Act of 1978, S. 1.

Environmental Law. The fourth section examines the nexus between ecofeminism and governance. The fifth section indicates the next steps through recommendations, and the sixth section presents the conclusion.

## 2. Framing the Ecofeminism Concept: Scope and Context

This section discusses the ecofeminism concept to set this paper's context, scope, and application.

Coined by Françoise D'Eaubonne in 1978 in her book entitled *Feminism-Ecology* (D'Eaubonne, 1999), the concept highlights the common thread of unjust dominance and oppression of the male-centred society towards women and nature (Miles, 2024); "for the earth is treated with the same disregard as are women" (Gates, 1996). Thus, with the intricate linkage between women and nature, the salvation of one from the abject male-driven destruction cannot be undertaken without the other; both must be saved simultaneously (Gates, 1996).

In the course of development, there are two main strands of thought, the radical school and the cultural school. The radical school pushes for an apparent dichotomy between women and nature, whilst the cultural school "encourage an association between women and nature" (Miles, 2024). The cultural school argues that given their roles as "family nurturer and often provider of food, and their biological make-up (pregnancy, menstruation, lactation), women are more sensitive to the sanctity and degradation of the ecosystem" (Miles, 2024). The cultural school reinforces gender stereotypes and could further entrench oppression and dominance (Miles, 2024).

Despite the divergent views on the radical or cultural school of thought, in this paper's context, ecofeminism refers to recognising the intrinsic link between women's rights and environmental rights. As it is well known, human rights are universal, indivisible, inalienable, interdependent, and interrelated. Therefore, the right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment is crucial for all humans, whether identifying as male or female. One might ask, then, why focus on women? How are women's rights critical to environmental rights and vice versa?

Women are highly vulnerable because of their low resilience and high sensitivity to environmental degradation and climate change impacts (United Nations Women, 2022; United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, 2023; United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, 2022; Ellis, 2025; Luers, 2005). Based on entrenched cultural roles, the societal challenges women face vary from that of men (United Nations Environment Programme, 2004). Women often are the ones who engage in subsistence farming to ensure the family has what to eat; they often trek miles to access safe drinking water for the family; and use firewood, charcoal, and other unsafe energy sources for food and warmth (Owren, 2017). Despite their contribution of energy, skills, time, and personal visions for the nuclear family and the community at large (United Nations Environment Programme, 2004), women are seldom included in the decision-making process and leadership, suffer unequal access to land, and are often exposed to

gender-based violence (International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2020).

Thus, whilst not disregarding the argument against the ecofeminism cultural school of thought, the context and application of the ecofeminism concept refer to the linkage between women's and environmental rights. Enforcing environmental rights is crucial to realising and fulfilling women's rights.

### 3. The Nexus between Ecofeminism and Women in Governance

The concept of ecofeminism explores the relationship between women and nature (Thomas, 2002a). A key argument of proponents of "Ecofeminism theory" such as (Thomas, 2002b) is the fact that the degradation of the planet and the exploitation of women are all connected to the patriarchy, and the devaluing of women has led to disastrous conditions in the ecosystem. Ecofeminism concepts build on the fact that the planet cannot be saved without dismantling systems of oppression of women. It further states that environmental justice is tied to gender equality and emphasises the need for women in ecological governance structures (Andrade Correa, 2022).

It is common knowledge that the earth is construed as feminine in nature as it has often been metaphorically termed "Mother Earth". Historically, women in Nigeria have had faint access to power and decision-making processes, they had been excluded from developmental methods, or their roles were seen as secondary to the potential economic gains. Women have been generally submissive, as has nature (Ogbole & Orokpo, 2017). Studies have suggested that identifying women with heart and males with culture is both ancient and universal, which means it is not limited to a country like Nigeria, same with the marginalisation of women in governance.

In Nigeria, for instance, the marginalisation of women in decision-making and appointive positions is glaring; for example, the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Nigerian National Assembly, despite being lauded for the passage of critical environmental protection Laws such as the Climate Change Act of 2021 marginalised gender-based laws before them (Aliogo, 2022).<sup>2</sup> This shows how women are constantly marginalised in Nigeria's governance and decision-making processes. This is also extended to environmental matters as the disempowerment of women in other social domains is duplicated into environmental governance despite the universality of the role of women in the preservation of the environment.

This is further evidenced in the key appointive positions in Environmental based agencies and institutions such as National Environmental Standard and

<sup>2</sup>The Gender-based Bills are Special seats for women at the National Assembly, Affirmative Action for women in Political Party Administration; To grant citizenship to foreign-born husbands of Nigerian women. Already, a Nigerian man's foreign-born wife is automatically a Nigerian citizen. Another bill also sought to allocate 35 percent of Political Positions based on Appointment to women and the Creation of additional 111 seats in the National Assembly as well as at the state constituent assemblies. The bill also seeks the inclusion of at least 10 per cent Affirmative Action in favor of women in Ministerial Appointments see Aliogo, U. (2022). Implications of Rejecting Gender Equality Bills, Thisdaylive Retrieved from <https://www.thisdaylive.com/>.

Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), National Agency for Great Green Wall (NAGGW) as most of these institutions are headed by males (Anyanwu, 2022). The goal of eco-feminism is to promote the integration of women into crucial decision-making processes in the environment (Mukherjee, 2023). Ecofeminism can only be achieved by having women in governance as done in some countries, as this is the nexus between ecofeminism and women in Governance. In Africa, Rwanda has the highest number of women in parliament, with over 63%.<sup>3</sup> This has promoted female-led initiatives on sustainable agriculture, plastic bag ban and generally driven policies that promote green growth.<sup>4</sup> Norway also has the highest female political participation, strong gender quotas in parliament and corporate boards. This has translated to the country leading globally in sustainable policies, including renewable energy investments and carbon taxation (Storvik, 2025). Women legislators in the United States of America House of Representatives favour more stringent environmental policies and countries with higher women's political empowerment see long-term reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Also, Women members of the European Parliament were significantly more likely than their male counterparts to support environmental legislation and while increases in GDP can often increase emissions, nations with more gender equality see the association between GDP and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Salomon, 2025).

Female leadership generally improves environmental policies because women focus more on sustainability because of their concerns on environmental issues. This is therefore followed up with stronger environmental laws and enforcement. In Rwanda for instance, environmental disasters are shown to affect women and persons with disabilities the most. The fact that there are more women in parliament, has enabled them to address a lot of the issues to assist women through the government, however a lot still needs to be done.<sup>5</sup> Further, increased participation of women in parliaments increases the likelihood that women's pro-environmental views are reflected in policy outcomes that support environmental protection and sustainability.

The term Eco-feminism refers to ecology and feminism (Anyanwu, 2022). The word 'ecology' emerges from the biological science of natural environmental systems. It examines how these natural communities sustain a healthy web of life and how they become disrupted, causing death in plant and animal life (Anyanwu, 2022). Human intervention is one of the leading causes of such disruption. Thus, ecology emerged as a combined socio-economic and biological study to examine how human overuse of nature is causing pollution of soil, air and water and the destruction of biodiversity, threatening the base of life on which the human

<sup>3</sup>Rwanda is the first country in the world to have a female majority in governance. <<https://www.parliament.gov.rw/women-representation>> accessed 9 March 2025

<sup>4</sup>Ibid

<sup>5</sup>Gender, Women's Rights, Environment and Climate change in Rwanda', available in <https://kvinnaatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Womens-Rights-Gender-ECC-Kvinna-till-Kvinna-Rwanda-2021.pdf>, accessed on March 9, 2025

community depends.

Ecology speaks for the earth, though the past few decades have witnessed an enormous interest in both women's and environmental movements. Presently, we are in an era of notable union of policy objectives that projects sustainability, environmental conservation, and the advancement of women. This era is the rebirth of the ongoing movement of Ecological feminism, or ecofeminism, which is an answer to the cry to save the earth or ecology from wanton destruction by man (Tristan, 2021). Ecofeminism is, therefore, an interdisciplinary movement that represents the synthesis of the radical movement in ecology and feminism. This movement calls for a new way of thinking about nature politics and environmental governance. Ecofeminist theory questions or rejects previously held patriarchal paradigms and has that the domination of women by men is intimately linked to the destruction of the environment (Guy-Evans, 2023).

There are various ways women connect to nature. One connection between women and nature is historical. Authors such as Ariel Salleh (Bieler & Salleh, 2017) believe the historical connection between women and nature results from oppression and patriarchal culture. In many cultures in Nigeria, the girl child and women are denied a formal education because they are supposed to nurture life, including plants and animals. Their role is purely domestic in nature. In promoting lives, women are connected to the environment, and this culture has been passed to different generations and has become historic. Another explanation is in sex-gender differences, particularly in differentiated personality formation or consciousness. The claim is that female bodily experiences (e.g., of reproduction and childbearing) situate women differently concerning nature than men.

The ways mentioned above reveal how women relate to nature for women more than men. This relationship can help mitigate climate change and promote environmental sustainability if mainstreamed into environmental-related laws and policies. Ecofeminism aims to develop gender-sensitive language, theory, and practices that do not further the exploitative experiences and habits of dissociating from nature women through male-dominated cultural practices. One aim of ecofeminism is to expose and dismantle the domination of men in environmental governance and exclude women who relate more to nature (Lahar, 1991).

One such empirical evidence in Nigeria is the super highway in the Cross-Rive State of Nigeria (Mayah, 2018). While women engage in reforestation to mitigate climate change in River State (Woods, 2018), male-dominated policies aim at the destruction of the environment in Cross River State. This proves that women play a vital role in the conservation and management of sustainable eco-system In Nigeria. It is also evidence that since time immemorial, women are traditionally involved in protecting and conserving their natural resources. Women's role in the conservation of the environment is not limited to Nigeria; from a global perspective, women are at the forefront of protecting and preserving the environment and natural resources.

Women, particularly indigenous women and those living in mountainous areas, have a special relationship with the environment. They are closer to nature than men, and this very close relationship makes them the perfect managers of an ecosystem. The life of most indigenous women revolves around the environment as they are entirely dependent on the forest to meet their daily needs, such as water, food, fuels, and minor forest produce; with their extraordinary skills and traditional knowledge, indigenous women have proved how land, water, forest, and other natural resources can be used and managed. They have their own devised system and ways to sustain and manage the resources which are the basis of survival for their families and communities.

The notion that women and environmental domination are linked has also been generally accepted at the international level; first, in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (United Nations, 2024), women's environmental organisations lobbied for women's and environmental rights to be considered in tandem, this is regarding the closeness of women to nature. Second, the 1995 Fourth Women's Conference in Beijing (United Nations, 2025) agreed for the first time that environmental rights could not be disentangled. The Beijing conference aimed to secure women's equality with men in significant aspects of life, including environment and governance. The conference revealed the critical role of women in environmental protection and called for gender equality and representation of women in governance to achieve environmental sustainability. Over two decades after the Beijing conference, the strategic objective of securing equality of women and men in critical areas of concern, such as in governance and environment, is yet to be fully mainstreamed into domestic laws and policies in Nigeria. Hence, the purpose of this paper.

The paper joins the growing ecofeminism movement, which seeks to dismantle the oppression and marginalisation of women in the environmental governance process. The authors believe that since women are considered closer to nature than men, there is a need to mainstream the strategic objectives of the Beijing conference on gender equality into Nigerian domestic laws and policies on the environment to ensure that women are represented and participate in the decision-making process as this will help women bring ideas that can help mitigate climate change and promote environmental justice in Nigeria.

#### 4. Overview of Gender Gaps in Nigerian Law

The Nigerian legal system, particularly laws, is prone to gender bias due to several factors. One major factor is the patriarchal line it tows (Makama, 2013). This is not peculiar to Nigeria, as several jurisdictions are guilty of gender inequality and discrimination. Discrimination is widespread and ranges from discrimination in education, politics, law, governance, religion, culture, health, etc. (Makama, 2013). Apart from the patriarchal factor, which has cultural ties, the words and style of drafting legislation play a massive role in its use of pronouns.

In a system where the male gender subsumes the female gender in legislation,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>See sec. 14(a) of the Interpretation Act.

there is bound to be male superiority. This has posed a grave challenge directly and indirectly for the female gender. Though seeking to protect the environment and enacted as a result of improper use of the environment, environmental laws may have apathetic gender effects. The laws may be the right tool to address any form of gender balance. However, the gaps inherent therein need to be identified and addressed.

It should be noted that the gender gaps referred to here are the loopholes that are inherent in the law. It is a gender-based inequality. They may take the form of discrimination or bias towards gender.<sup>7</sup> In this case, they hinder sustainable development and opportunities for the female gender to make decisions (IUCN, 2020).

The Constitution, the grundnorm in Nigeria,<sup>8</sup> emphatically provides for the fundamental rights to freedom from discrimination.<sup>9</sup> The provision provides that all citizens shall be treated equally irrespective of community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion.

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act<sup>10</sup> also provides for the equality of persons and makes it mandatory that the law protects every individual. This goes without saying that the law has individualised these rights, recognising each individual as distinct. The Act further provides that every sovereign state must eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.<sup>11</sup>

Using masculine nouns implies that the environment and humanity may be all about the male gender, which is far from reality (Thornton, 1996). Away from the form of the legislation, the context of the Legislation also shares a great deal in the discrimination of the female gender.

Nigeria's population depends on the environment as it's a source of livelihood. A more significant number of this population is made up of women (Makama, 2013). To achieve good governance in sustainable ecosystem management, conservation goals and human rights, a deliberate effort must be made to address gender gaps where they exist (IUCN, 2020). Not oblivious of other gender gaps that act as barriers to the management of the ecosystem,<sup>12</sup> the focus here is on the gender gaps in the law. Notably, these other barriers are referred to even manifest via their absence in statutes.

With the Constitution<sup>13</sup> as the foundation of all laws in Nigeria, all environmental laws in Nigeria derive their source from it. They are enacted to fulfil the purpose of the ecological provision of the Constitution. Sec. 20 of the Constitution

<sup>7</sup>The term gender addresses both the male and female gender. For the purpose of the paper, the focus is on the female gender

<sup>8</sup>Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

<sup>9</sup>Sec. 42 (1), (a) and (b) Const

<sup>10</sup>Article 3 (1)(2)

<sup>11</sup>Article 18 (3)

<sup>12</sup>Other gender gaps include insecure land rights, traditional and cultural norms, underrepresentation in decision-making and leadership, transformative powers

<sup>13</sup>Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)

provides: “The State shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria”.

It is vital to note that following the enactment of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act 1983, given the decision of the Supreme Court in *Olafisoye v FRN*,<sup>14</sup> article 24 of the ACHPR Act 1983 gives room for the justiciability of section 20, despite being located under Chapter 2 (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy), further giving rise to the enactment of Environmental laws which govern Nigeria’s environmental activities.

#### 4.1. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act 1992

One of the critical environmental laws in Nigeria, this significant legislation seeks to govern the impact assessment of the Nigerian environment. It ensures that before any person undertakes an activity, it must be assessed and shown to be safe for the environment.<sup>15</sup> It sets out the general principles to enable the consideration of environmental impact assessment on projects.

The beauty of this legislation is that it is people-oriented as it carries the people along before its decision. It gives opportunity to the government, relevant experts, members of the public and even interested groups to provide their input on environmental impact assessment.<sup>16</sup> However, it is one thing for these procedures to exist, and it is another whether they are indeed implemented to the latter.

Similarly, bringing it home to gender gaps which this part of the paper seeks to address, it is evident that there is no particular consideration for the female gender and the role they may play in the environmental impact assessment. It may be argued that the groups enumerated above<sup>17</sup> include both the female and male gender. There should be more than this; there should be specific consideration for women and other vulnerable sections of society. This is because, more often than not, they bear the brunt of any effect of development (Singh & Wankhede, 2018). Taking a cue from South Africa, legal provisions should seek to cater for gender mainstreaming in such legislation. The joint reading of South Africa’s National Environmental Management Act, 1998 and Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014<sup>18</sup> recognises and advocates for the participation of women and youth in environmental management and development. To solidify this proposition, Section 4 of the South African Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2014 provides that the South Africa’s Environmental Advisory forum shall be made up of a female representative.<sup>19</sup> This is a laudable move as the female gender is protected, which protects the environment.

<sup>14</sup>(2004) LPELR 2553 (SC)

<sup>15</sup>Sec. 1 Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA) 1992

<sup>16</sup>Sec. 7 EIAA

<sup>17</sup>Sec 7 EIAA

<sup>18</sup>Sec. 2(4)(q) and Sec. 4 respectively

<sup>19</sup>Sec. 4 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2014

This style of inclusion and recognition is a fast-growing trend that Nigeria is called upon to take a cue from.<sup>20</sup> It must be noted that the female gender must not just participate in EIA, but due consideration must be given to the impact a project has on the female gender.<sup>21</sup> The need to include gender specific provisions as seen in Section 4 of the South African Environment Impact Assessment Regulation 2014 in the Nigeria EIA amendment cannot be overemphasised because of such an infrastructural project's massive impact on gender.<sup>22</sup> The benefits to be gained outweighs the disadvantages, if any, as it opens a jurisdiction within an environment to economic development, better decision-making, improved planning, etc. It is, therefore, necessary to include gender in the stages of the EIA as it is not sufficient to only seek the opinion of women.

#### **4.2. National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) (Establishment) Act**

Replacing the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act, the government fused relevant departments to make up a single Ministry of Environment. The NESREA was created to give life to environmental laws in Nigeria. As reflected in its long title, the core purpose of this act is to establish the National Environmental Standards and regulations enforcement agency (NESREA).

As in the case of EIA, where there was an advocate for female representation, the same should be the fate of the NESREA. The technical committee established under the Act<sup>23</sup> does not make recourse specifically to the Ministry of Women's Affairs or women as a member of the committee. Once again, female participation is vital, as continually reiterated in this paper, in Nigeria's environmental governance. This is of utmost importance as the NESREA is responsible for protecting and developing the environment and biodiversity conservation and sustainable development,<sup>24</sup> a role in which the female gender is needed. The preparation of national policy for the protection of the environment procedure for EIA for projects which is one of the core mandates of the NESREA,<sup>25</sup> no doubt requires gender balance for a proper and realistic analysis of the environment.

It is trite that more than laws is required for environmental compliance (Ladan, 2012). Most national and state environmental laws lack adequate female parti-

<sup>20</sup>Other African countries such as Kenya, Malawi Namibia and Tanzania have reflected gender mainstreaming in their Environmental impact assessment. See Sujit Kumar Singh, op cit note 24

<sup>21</sup>See schedule 2, Environmental Impact Assessment and Audit Regulations, 2005 Tanzania

<sup>22</sup>These range from environmental, health, social and economic impact. These various impacts have attendant effects that may affect their food security, security threats and health threats including pollution, domestic violence and high rate of children dropping out of school

<sup>23</sup>Sec. 3 NESREA Act, 2007

<sup>24</sup>Sec. 7 NESREA Act, 2007

<sup>25</sup>Sec. 5(a) NESREA Act, 2007

<sup>26</sup>Nigeria has a host of National and state laws that seek to provide for the various aspects of environmental needs. E.g. Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions etc) Act (Cap H1 LFN 2004), National Oil Spill, Detection and Response Agency Act 2006 (NOSDRA), Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act 2007, National Park Services Act, Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Act: Gas Flaring (Prohibition and Punishment) Act 2010

icipation.<sup>26</sup> This is due to the patriarchal structures and gender bias result from under representation of Women in appointive and elective positions in environmental based Institutions in Nigeria. This gender bias affect decision making, because the decision makers are male dominated. The suggestions from women are not taken seriously because the women do not have a political voice in most African countries especially Nigeria. There is also the lack of political will power to prioritise environmental issues. The government may choose other areas of development, e.g., technology over environmental improvements. Ecofeminist policies are usually long-term. Therefore, when there is a change in government, it affects most of the policies that are long-term. The new government policies may not favour ecofeminist policies that a previous government had put in place. Division among the female frontliners is also a barrier. Where prominent feminist groups are divided over what should be prioritised, it becomes a problem. Some feminists may choose to prioritise the workplace, the parliamentary or customary rights over environmental issues. This paper is a call to action for Women in the parliament, those working in the environmental space and mining to be united in this pursuit.

The need for intentional efforts must be addressed. All stakeholders must be carried along and sensitised to achieve the law's goals so the law does not become worthless. Gender gaps must be closed to address these challenges and promote environmental protection in Nigeria. It is, therefore, necessary to mainstream gender in the environmental agenda of Nigeria and globally. A distinction should be drawn between governance and politics and the need to do what is needed to protect our environment. The call for gender inclusion and balance as a redemption for our environmental crises is long overdue.

## 5. Recommendation

The authors have identified that the male gender subsumes the female gender in Nigeria's legislative enactments, appointive and decision-making roles. Also, ecofeminism concepts build on the fact that the planet cannot be saved without dismantling these systems of oppression of women. Given this, the following recommendations are proffered.

- i. The National and State Laws on the environment should include more roles for women to engender participation of women in environmental matters in Nigeria. Gender gaps must be closed to address environmental challenges effectively. The laws should be gender specific for some of the positions for environmental governance especially in leading environmental based Ministries, Departments and Agencies like National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Oil Spill Detection and Response AGENCY (NOSDRA) and the National Agency for the Great Green Wall. The laws should also be specific on the number or percentage of females that must occupy certain offices or parliamentary positions and women should be made to chair the committees on environment and sustainable development at the National Assembly/Parliament.

ii. The call for gender inclusion and balance as a redemption for our environmental crises in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, women should be included in more appointive and decision-making positions on ecological matters. Considering that they are more sensitive to the sanctity and degradation of the ecosystem.

iii. The need to recognise the intrinsic link between women's and environmental rights. As it is well known, human rights are universal, indivisible, inalienable, interdependent, and interrelated. Therefore, the right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment is crucial for all humans, whether identifying as male or female.

iv. There is a need to mainstream the strategic objectives of the Beijing conference on gender equality into Nigerian domestic laws and policies on the environment to ensure that women are represented and also participate in the decision-making process, as this will help women bring ideas that can help promote environmental justice in Nigeria.

v. Women are highly vulnerable because of their low resilience and high sensitivity to environmental degradation and climate change impacts. They should be the key drivers of climate change mitigation measures.

vi. The preparation of national policy for the protection of the environment procedure for EIA for projects which is one of the core mandates of the NESREA, requires gender balance for a proper and realistic analysis of the environmental challenges.

vii. South Africa's National Environmental Management Act, 1998 and Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, examined in this paper, recognise and advocate for women and youth's participation in environmental management and development. Nigeria should take a clue from South Africa to ensure gender balance in environmental matters.

## 6. Conclusion

Given this paper's definition of the ecofeminism concept as one which recognises the intrinsic link between women's rights and environmental rights, this paper established the nexus between ecofeminism and governance. Considering that gender mainstreaming is relevant even in drafting the environmental legal framework, this paper finds a monumental gender gap in the drafting language in Nigerian Laws and the absence of women's participation, unlike in South Africa where there are specific gender provisions in the EIA Regulations. The paper indicates that the call for gender inclusion and balance as a redemption for our environmental crises is long overdue.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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