

|| Editor's Note ||

Gender and Environment

Human economic activities affect environment negatively. Facing risks of environmental deterioration such as climate change, air pollution, and plastic islands, for example, on the people, demand for harmonizing economic development with environment has been increasing since the publication of the book, *The Limits to Growth*, in 1972.

Sustainable development has been the global agenda with top priority since 1990s. Economic, environmental and social aspects of development need to be integrated to improve the quality of life of the people. Even though great efforts have been made to implement the sustainable development policies and measures in a global scale, poverty, income inequality and gender inequality issues have not improved as targeted or have been deteriorated in some cases.

These three issues are so interconnected that addressing one issue without mainstreaming the other two issues in developing and implementing a relevant policy results in insufficient outcomes or deterioration of the states of one or all of those three issues. Gender inequality is the key element to consider in addressing environmental challenges in the developing countries, where tradition defines the social roles, the responsibilities and the inclusion of decision making in the household.

Environmental degradation could do more damages to the women in the developing countries due to gender inequality, on the one hand. Gender inequality could be the root of the environmental problems in the developing countries, on the other hand. Women are not allowed to participate in decision-making even though they have full knowledge or solutions, or forced to damage environment or to be the victims of the environmental problems. This special issue on *Gender and Environment* investigates these issues with three research papers.

Gender inequality issues are critical ones to determine the damages and compensations of environmental disasters to the women. Won et al. study how Hebei Spirit oil spill in Taean Peninsula, South Korea in 2007 has affected the ecosystem, the life of the women and the children, and the community over the last 10 years by interviewing the residents. They find that women show more severe vulner-

ability to the oil spills because of the job types, limited alternatives of jobs implicitly caused by the patriarchy in the Korean society, heavier burden of care giving and housework, and the underpayments for the women's labor even in the clean-up operation.

Oil spill in Taean Peninsula also causes unrest in the local communities over compensation and allocation of the grants and the funds created for the recovery and the development of the local communities. This study presents a strong case that an environmental disaster, Hebei Spirit oil spill in South Korea, gives more physical, health related, and economic damages to the women over the prolonged period. In addition environmental disasters could undermine the traditional bondage of the local communities from the unexpected conflicts over the compensations and other economic incentives.

Household air pollution is a major health and environmental threat to the women and the children in Southeast Asian region, where great majority of households use solid fuels as described in Barra and Barra's paper. They investigate the impact of the women's social status on the choice of solid fuel in cooking and heating in 4 Southeast Asia countries, Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines and Timor-Leste using the most recent survey data on Demographic and Health Survey in the period of 2014 to 2016.

The participation rates of the women in the labor force, the degree of women's involvement in household decision making, and the levels of education of the women affect negatively the decision on the use of solid fuels. Women's empowerment in developing countries is identified as one of the key factors in improving health of the women and the children, who are the most vulnerable members in a family. In short, Barra and Barra's paper is an addition to the accumulating empirical findings that gender inequality is the issue to be addressed to improve the health and the environment conditions of the households in the developing countries.

Perceptions of environment and health related risks could be different between men and women because women go through discriminated socialization process. Yoo and Baek classify exposures to environment and health related risks into two types, i.e., individual exposure to risks and social exposure to risks. Then, Yoo and Baek investigate how gender specific socialization, paternalist ideology and attitudes towards science are responsible for the differences in perceptions of the various environment and health related risks in two different types of exposures in South Korea.

Yoo and Back show that there are differences in perceptions of environment and health related risks between the men and the women, whether those risks are individual ones or societal ones. The women show statistically significant different perceptions towards individual health related risks and societal environment related risks from the men. They find no differences in perceptions between the women and the men towards individual environment related risks and societal health related risks. These empirical findings are informative, in that gender specific perceptions of risks change as the social role and the involvement in decision makings of the women change in Korean society.

Three papers show that gender inequality is a significant issue to be considered in combating the environmental disaster. The empowerment of the women in developing countries is an essential and effective measure to improve the quality of life in the household of the developing countries. It also needs to emphasize the differences in the perception of environment and health related issues between women and men and those perceptions have dynamic characteristics.

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