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15 APPRAISAL OF ECOFEMINISM PERSPECTIVES IN ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN KENYA

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INTRODUCTION

Matters of environmental sustainability have received increased attention as industrialisation continues to increase globally. This is because of the nature of exploitation of natural resources that is taking place and the resulting environmental degradation and human health problems. Ecofeminism is one of the tools that this chapter suggests could result in environmental sustainability. As envisaged in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, women have a vital role in environmental management and development. As such, their full participation is essential to achieve sustainable development.² Ecofeminists believe that women interact with the environment in a spiritual, nurturing and intuitive manner. As a result of this close association with the environment, women have suffered domination and oppression in conjunction with the domination and degradation of the environment.³

The ecofeminist approach to address the oppression of women and environmental degradation is centred on reclaiming and reviving nature and women as powerful forces. On the other hand, spirituality is viewed as a source of both personal and social change.⁴ Ecofeminism asserts that both women and nature have been mutually degraded and devalued. Ecofeminism shares assumptions with radical cultural feminism. Where cultural ecofeminism argues that cross-culturally, women have been associated with or seen to be closer to nature because of their reproductive function, associated roles and psychic culture.⁵

Men, on the other hand, are associated with culture. Culture universally attempts to control and dominate nature, while men universally dominate and subordinate women. Contrary to the expected reaction, instead of rejecting this culturally constructed association, ecofeminism sees it as a source of women's close relationship with nature which gives them special ways of knowing and conceiving

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2 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 13 June 1992, reprinted in 31 ILM 876(1992), Principle 20.

3 James B. 1996. "Is Ecofeminism Relevant?" (special issue on Women and the Environment), *Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 12(29):8-21. Online at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10130950.1996.9675519>

4 James, "Is Ecofeminism Relevant?"

5 James, "Is Ecofeminism Relevant?"

the world which is in opposition to dominant patriarchal worldview.⁶ The Rio Declaration, in addition, states that the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation should be protected.⁷ This provision aims to secure the protection of women and the environment, which are both under oppression and domination by patriarchal society in ways that deter environmental sustainability.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses ecofeminism perspectives, with a special focus on how women are connected with the environment. The second part addresses gender discrimination and the ways in which society which discriminates against and overburdens women. The third part discusses the relationship between religion, ecofeminism and environmental sustainability. The fourth part examines the imprints of ecofeminism in Kenya with a special focus on the Green Belt Movement. The chapter ends with some concise conclusions.

ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

According to ecofeminist philosopher Karen Warren, ecofeminism insists that feminism and environmentalism are inherently connected, but it is not always clear what the nature of that connection is. In general, ecofeminist work applies feminist analyses to environmental issues, so the claim is not so much that feminist concerns are environmentally grounded, as that environmental issues warrant feminist analysis.⁸ Environmental and feminist issues have their basis in the logic of domination that is reinforced by patriarchy, so feminists and environmentalists can form an alliance in the face of a common enemy. But for the connection between feminism and ecology to be necessary, it would have to be shown that patriarchy is inherently undermining.⁹

Warren argues for transformative feminism, which she envisions as including: (1) expanding feminism by unequivocally stating interconnections between all types of oppression; (2) providing a theoretical space for the diversity of women's experiences; (3) rejection of the logic of patriarchal conceptual framework; (4) rethinking what it means to be human; and (5) recasting traditional ethical concerns to create a central place for value and challenging patriarchal bias in technology research to favour appropriate technologies that preserve rather than destroy the Earth. This feminism is transformative of feminism itself, but it is also directed at broad social change. It embodies Warren's constructive and practically useful insights into the necessity for connection of feminism with environmentalism,

6 James, "Is Ecofeminism Relevant?"

7 Rio Declaration, Principle, 20.

8 Glazebrook P. 2002. "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism", *Ethics and the Environment* 7(2) 12-26 [https://doi.org/10.1353/een.2002.0015].

9 Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism".

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and it is based on Warren's assessment of empirical data concerning the impact of environmental damage on women's lives.¹⁰

Ecofeminist ethicist Lori Swanson argues that a shared ethic, based on ecofeminism and caring, can unite humanity in the preservation of the environment. She envisions the possibilities of an ecofeminist ethics of care, practised beyond constraints of gender, whether real or conceived. In addition, Swanson argues that a foundation of an ecofeminist ethic of care ensures the sustainability of environment coupled with that of humanity.¹¹ Such an approach to feminism would lead to a suitable environment for all humans. The application of this approach would fulfil the fundamental right to a clean and healthy environment as envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya.¹²

Swanson delves into the stereotypical attributes associated with women and suggests that they are merely romantic notions. Her scholarly move is to discard the entrenched dualisms and embark on a third way movement in which both men and women are part of both nature and culture. Thus, Swanson argues for adoption of a critical ecofeminism that is anti-dualistic in its views and practices an integrative project that is mindful of all liberation struggles. Within such an integrative project, inclusion of the feminine need not be construed as dualistic or reductionist. Rather, the use of feminine is to emphasise one prism in a multifaceted lens on the world, where the potential of women is realised, nullifying a dualistic male-female split. Embracing the feminine, rather than rejecting it, may serve a better future.¹³ Swanson is of the view that in subtle but powerful ways, all life on earth is bound in one continuous homeostatic relationship, in interdependent ways. Sustaining life and sustaining the Earth being a great responsibility for humanity.¹⁴

Swanson's idea of feminism brings to the fore the aspect of environmental sustainability, which includes sustainable development. Sustainable development refers to development which takes into account the long-term perspectives of the socio-economic system, to ensure that activities taking place in the short term will not be detrimental to the future status or development potential of the system. This means that development will be sustainable only if it achieved on environmental, social and economic grounds.¹⁵ There is also another definition, which concentrates on the ecological aspects of sustainability. This is sustainability as a relationship between human economic systems and larger dynamic, but slower-changing ecological systems, in which human life can continue indefinitely,

10 Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism".

11 Swanson LJ. 2015. "A Feminist Ethic That Binds Us to Mother Earth", *Ethics and the Environment* 20(2):83-103 [<https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.20.2.83>].

12 The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, art 42.

13 Swanson, "A Feminist Ethic That Binds Us to Mother Earth".

14 Swanson, "A Feminist Ethic That Binds Us to Mother Earth".

15 Muigua K. 2016. *Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development*. Nairobi: Glenwood Publishers Limited.

human individuals can flourish, and human cultures can develop. However, the ecologically centred sustainability effects of human activities must remain within bounds in order not to destroy the diversity, complexity and function of the ecological life support system.¹⁶

It has been rightly observed that sustainability problems manifest as resource depletion or absence, resource degradation, the deliberate or accidental damage of resources for short term gain, or as a misunderstanding of the complex interrelationships between resources. Sustainable development has also been viewed as majorly a social justice project, focusing on equitable development to meet human needs, while still recognising that the preservation of natural resources is necessary to fulfil these needs. It is, therefore, arguable that the best approaches to sustainable development will establish a connection between the human activities and the ecological approaches in environmental matters in order to achieve environmental sustainability.¹⁷

Ecofeminism considers the ecological and social dimensions that reinforce women oppression globally, while sustainability practitioners and environmental justice activists expose the tensions inherent between human wants and needs in juxtaposition to environmental limits. Currently, many things are at risk in the world, starting with the health of the biosphere and extending to humanity's potential for healthy, adaptable and equitable communities. This creates the need for a fundamental commitment to ending oppression, while understanding how the destruction of the biosphere and the forces of oppression particularly against women are linked. Ecofeminist theorists Karyn Pilgrim and Louise David discuss the fragile state of the global environment and its interconnectedness to culture, which determines our behaviour and the dire consequences of ignoring women and nature from the work of cultural production.¹⁸ They argue that ecofeminism takes the position that within patriarchal and hierarchical systems, the fate of women, animals and nature is linked. The low status of women under patriarchy positions them as closer to animals and nature and as beings of a lower order. The oppression and exploitation of women, animals and nature is justified as a service to higher good of civilisation, the family, the social order, or dietary preferences.¹⁹

Pilgrim and David argue that the fate of women, non-humans and nature are linked in socially constructed and material ways and that no ethics or practice of sustainability can be achieved without awareness of how these material and social beings are linked, much less coupled with the development of practices, systems and behaviours that bring an end to their exploitation and abuse. They advocate a

16 Muigua, *Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development*.

17 Muigua, *Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development*, 16.

18 Pilgrim K and David HL. 2015. "More Crucial Matters: Reclaiming 'Sustainability' and Transending the Rhetoric of 'Choice' through Ecofeminism Pedagogy", *Ethics and Environment* 20(1):123-139 [<https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.20.1.123>].

19 Pilgrim and David, "More Crucial Matters".

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“think global act local feminism” where choices exist alongside an understanding of the range of possible options within a given set of cultural precepts.²⁰ Pilgrim and David argue that just as feminists must incorporate sustainability and social justice into their framework, so must environmental justice activists expand their activism to include issues of gender discrimination. This is because empowering women and giving them the tools of education, bodily sovereignty, access to health care, public voice, political access and choice to implement sustainable practices creates a culture’s most enabling opportunities for cultural change. Sustainability is, therefore, critically incomplete if it ignores ecofeminism, because it is the conditions and practices of women’s life in relation to the natural environment that determine much of humanity’s prospects for change.²¹

GENDER AND DISCRIMINATION

An inclusive, integrative framework should mediate dualistic framework, so that gender is a unifying factor rather than divisive. In this respect, femininity and masculinity should be celebrated rather than refuted. It is noteworthy that a binary of gender that is expressed as feminine is limited, because gender is a spectrum along which identity is located. Gender has also been defined as an apparatus by which the production and normalisation of masculine and feminine is addressed. Gender has further been described as femininity and masculinity as rooted in the social (gender) rather than biological (sex), such society decides what being male or female means.²² The link between how women and nature have been associated, or idealised together, has often been missed. One of the most blatant ways in history in which this was framed was in the work of the seventeenth-century scientist Francis Bacon, who stated, “Nature is a woman, waiting to be raped.”²³ This depicts the fact that we have had a weak and feminine science but now the author was calling for a strong and manly science where nature’s secrets have to be forced out of her literally. Bacon aimed for a detachment to characterisation of science and objectivity. It is only in recent times, through the ecofeminist lens, that we begin to challenge some of the presuppositions underlying much of science.²⁴

It is true that in the last century many unjust divisions of labour in Western cultures have been challenged by socialist and liberal feminism, but in many parts of the world it is assumed that legal, economic, sexual and social domination of women is part of the status quo. It is therefore inevitable that where nature suffers, women suffer as well. For instance, in Africa, it is women’s job to fetch water. In a drought situation, this means walking for many kilometres a day to the water source and back. Collecting firewood for cooking is also a woman’s job. All this must be done

20 Pilgrim and David, “More Crucial Matters”.

21 Pilgrim and David, “More Crucial Matters”.

22 Swanson, “A Feminist Ethic That Binds Us to Mother Earth”.

23 Grey M. 2000. “Ecofeminism and Christian Theology”, *The Furrow* 51(9):481-490, 483.

24 Grey, “Ecofeminism and Christian Theology”.

before the children are awakened, the family fed and the animals tended – and all before a full day's work in the fields. At the end of the, the same process begins again. It is said that most African women work a sixteen-hour day.²⁵

Such a society discriminates against women and overburdens them. The Constitution of Kenya recognises the right against discrimination as a fundamental right whereby every person is said to be equal before the law and to enjoy the right to equal benefit and protection of the law.²⁶ The Kenyan Constitution further asserts that equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms. Both women and men are recognised to have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. As such, the state is not to discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including but not limited to sex, pregnancy, religion, ethnic or social origin and culture.²⁷ In Kenya, women who are oppressed on grounds of their gender can be referred to as a "marginalized group as per the Constitution and they are entitled to all the rights mentioned above".²⁸

The Kenyan National Assembly is tasked with coming up with legislation and other measures to ensure the implementation of the principle that not more than two thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.²⁹ Discrimination, high illiteracy and high rates of poverty seem persistent, despite efforts towards social justice, and women continue to be perceived as burdens. In some instances, the state proposes policies designed to empower women.³⁰ However, despite the many legislations and policies, the situation of the oppressed women remains the same. Legal scholar Kariuki Muigua argues that efforts to introduce gender-sensitive approaches to national development have not been quite successful, because even as legislative measures are put in place, they fail to address the underlying norms and customs that define gender relations and power dynamics in the society. The power imbalance that defines gender relations influences women's access to and control over resources, their visibility and participation in social and political affairs and their ability to realise their fundamental human rights.³¹

RELIGION, ECOFEMINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This is another level of the ecofeminist analysis, namely, religion. In Christianity, the problem has been that the God of the Bible has been defined as outside and over and against the material world, as its Creator and Lord. When fused with Greek

25 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

26 Constitution of Kenya 2010, art 27(1).

27 Constitution of Kenya 2010, art 27(2-4).

28 Constitution of Kenya 2010, art 260.

29 Constitution of Kenya 2010, art 27(8).

30 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

31 Muigua, *Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development*, 100.

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philosophical dualism of spirit and matter that became part of Christianity's roots, the primary identity myth of the Western ruling-class male emerged. The sheer weight of this Western tradition of a God transcendent to the world, outside the whole dimension of embodiment can hardly be overemphasised. This follows the teaching that the true home of the Christian is beyond this physical world, with the implication that this world is ultimately expendable, since other-earthly paradise awaits.³² This is an approach that does not care for posterity. The 1972 Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, better known as the Stockholm Declaration, recognises that humans are both creatures and molders of their environment, which gives them physical sustenance and affords them the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth. Out of humanity's innovativeness through science and technology, we have acquired the power to transform the environment in many ways at a very fast rate.³³ However, both aspects of man's environment – that is, the natural and the humanly made, are important to human well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights, including the right to life. The Stockholm Declaration, therefore, states that the protection and improvement of the human environment is a central issue which affects the well-being of people and economic development throughout the world and should be a priority of all humanity and the responsibility of all governments.³⁴

According to ecofeminist liberation theologian Mary Grey, ecofeminism involves seeing and knowing the world differently. It involves knowing ourselves as part of the web of life, in communion with and interdependent with all living things – not as a subject, observing the world as object. Ecofeminist theology of creation involves experiencing the world as sacred. God is not extraneous to the world, but the power of life, energy, love, sustaining and energising this web of life.³⁵ This buttressed by the Rio Declaration, which places human beings at the centre of concerns for sustainable development, as they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.³⁶

In addition, there is the principle of inter-generational and intra-generational equity. This principle is part of the definition of sustainable development, as per the Brundtland Commission's report, which defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.³⁷ This means that the

32 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

33 UN General Assembly, Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 16 June 1972, A/CON.48/14 and Corr 1, reprinted in 11 ILM 1416(1972) [hereinafter Stockholm Declaration].

34 Stockholm Declaration, 1.

35 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

36 UN General Assembly, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 13 June 1992, A/CONF.151/26, vol I, reprinted in 31 ILM 876, Principle1 [hereinafter Rio Declaration].

37 Brundtland GH. 1987. *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

present generation has a right to use and enjoy the resources of the earth, but it is under obligation to take into account the long-term impact of its activities and to sustain the resource base and the global environment for the benefit of the future generations of humankind. In this context, benefit in its broadest form means economic, environmental, social and intrinsic gain.³⁸ The Kenyan Constitution also recognises the need to utilise natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner, as the preamble notes the respect for the environment which is our heritage and therefore calls upon Kenyans to sustain it for the benefit of future generations.³⁹ The right to a clean and healthy environment is also linked to the protection of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations through legislative and other measures.⁴⁰

Despite her earlier argument, Grey recommends recovering an ecofeminist eschatology, which rather than presuming that this world is disposable and that we merely pass through on our way to eternal bliss, prompts us to develop an ethic of care extending to all forms of existing life and to the very possibility of future life. Christian praxis can have no higher ideal than the ethics of the kingdom of peace and justice, but this very ideal is placed within the rhythm of dying and rebirth. Resurrection of the faith first demands that our lives are surrendered to the mercy and hope of God, the source of life. It may be that the very possibility of heaven depends on a resurrection story for the earth itself. It may be that our own hope of risen life is held in tension with the way we have given our energies to sustaining life on earth and not understood the way the earth herself is part and parcel of our own journey.⁴¹ This buttresses the point that the earth's resources should be used in a manner that does not hurt the planet or deprive future generations the benefits that come from a sustainable environment. Grey further observes that the woman of Revelation 12 offers a profound symbolism. It is the earth who rescues the woman from the jaws of the dragon and the earth who prepares a safe space for her. It could be that the redemptive processes are far more profound than we have begun to glimpse. It may be that the woman is now returning from the desert to show a new way and that this is the promise of ecofeminism.⁴²

Karen Warren argues that ecofeminist spiritualities provide a place to heal from the wounds that patriarchy has inflicted on women and nature. In addition, ecofeminist spiritualities are a tool for surviving and overcoming patriarchy. They have a potential to intervene in and creatively change patriarchal and other systems of oppression. Spiritualities involve power, in particular, the power to move from unhealthy, life-denying systems and relationships to healthy, life-affirming

38 Robinson NA and Kurukulasuriya L. 2006. *Training Manual on International Environmental Law*. Nairobi: Division of Policy Development and Law, United Nations Environment Programme, 26.

39 Constitution of Kenya 2010, preamble.

40 Constitution of Kenya 2010, art 42(a).

41 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

42 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

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ones. They also provide a basis for nonviolent action. Thus, Warren's support of ecofeminist spiritualities is strategic in its suggesting recuperative and alternative space.⁴³ One of the first characteristics of ecofeminist theology is that it is a fusion of the environmental movement, feminism and women's spirituality. That the earth and all living things are sacred is an underlying principle.⁴⁴

In Grey's view, knowing and experiencing the world is done within the realities of environmental destruction, the economic system of global capitalism and the reduction of many people to the status of nonpersons. Maybe it is no accident that the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil is also the Tree of Life. From the beginnings of life on earth, poor people come to know the world amidst multiple oppressions that frame their struggle for survival. For the poor Jewish farmer, it was the climate, the arid land and the greed of rich landowners forcing them into bonded labour. This is the actual economic background of the book of Genesis. Nowadays, it is nuclear power, biotechnology, patenting of seeds, pollution on a gigantic scale, huge environmental disasters and global warming, all of which add obstacles to poor people's struggle for survival. Nature is neither the backcloth, nor the romantic escape from pollution, but the subject, object and fellow victim of human mismanagement.⁴⁵

Grey delves into the mystery of God and stipulates that, instead of seeing God as a Being, the invitation is to approach God as the Mystery of life and being itself, imaged within the full range of life forms. God is worshipped as rock, fire, running streams, eagle and dove, as well as through personal imagery of protector, nurturer, parent, guardian, shepherd, father and mother. The image God as Trinity in terms of relational being, often inspired by the famous icon of the Russian painter, Andrei Rublev. In a bid to push the relational imagery further, the iconic painting can also be understood in ecological terms. For instance, the altar is square, representing the four corners of the earth, the Tree of Life has its roots in the cosmos and the cup of suffering which Jesus is invited to drink involves the suffering of the earth itself.⁴⁶ This imagery can be widened to include the ecological Trinity, as does the image from Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, in Suffolk, England, where three rabbits represent God's watchfulness, as well as ceaseless movement. But more importantly, the key categories of liberation theology itself can be recast in ecofeminist terms. Ecofeminist imagery for God, instead of being satisfied with rather woolly language of "sacred being" or divine presence in nature, has to take account of the terrible destructive forces of nature, with the fact that poor people do not meet nature in romanticised form.⁴⁷

43 Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism".

44 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

45 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

46 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

47 Grey, "Ecofeminism and Christian Theology".

Grey further states that feminist liberation theology offers a powerful naming of God as the passion for Justice, as the power that works for justice and makes it. Liberation theology believes in the God who hears the cry and the anguish of the poor. However, in the current circumstances, we must stretch the categories of poverty to include nature. The compassionate ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is seen as inclusive of the suffering of birds and animals, of land turned to desert and streams polluted and focused on the anguish of poor people sustaining life in these conditions. And the miracle is that people do sustain life in these conditions, and witness to a reverence for it in celebrating the rhythms of the seasons. The sheer staying power and perseverance of poor women and small farmers throughout the world is a witness to the affirmation of life that is the heart of ecofeminism. It is also a testimony to the wisdom of God, now being revealed in myriads of simple, practical ways as well as in new dimensions of transcendence. If the way we meet this world is indeed through disease and violence, then the Body of God is indeed a suffering Body.⁴⁸

IMPRINTS OF ECOFEMINISM IN KENYA

The Kenyan Green Belt Movement (GBM) was founded in 1977 by the initiative of Wangari Maathai, recipient of Nobel Peace Prize 2004, under the auspices of National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) to launch a rural tree-planting programme. Green Belt is an environmental organisation which empowers communities, especially women, to conserve the environment and improve livelihoods.⁴⁹ Its aim was to solve the fuel problem in rural areas, as well as preventing creeping desertification and soil erosion, by surrounding each village with a “green belt” of at least a thousand trees. The movement both reduces the effects of deforestation and provides a forum for women to be creative and effective. Working with Green Belt gives women the ability to change their environment and make their own decisions.⁵⁰ The movement also involves the transfer of technology from experts to the people, turning small-scale farmers into agroforesters. Ideally, it raises public awareness on issues related to environment and development, and meetings related to tree planting activities encompass discussions on the relationships between food, population and energy. The Green Belt Movement aims to create an understanding of the relationship between the environment and other issues such as food production and health.⁵¹

Education serves an essential role. Children gain exposure through Green Belt projects at their schools. Small farmers learn to appreciate the connections between

48 Grey, “Ecofeminism and Christian Theology”.

49 Green Belt Movement. “Who We Are: Vision, Mission, and Values”. Online at: <https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/who-we-are> [Accessed 4 January 2019].

50 Green Belt Movement, “Who We Are: Our History”. Online at: <https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/who-we-are/our-history> [Accessed 4 January 2019].

51 Green Belt Movement, “Who We Are: Our History”.

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forestry, soil conservation and their own needs for wood. Involving women as equal participants and developers of the green belts leads to a positive self-image for women, and consequently provides models of significant female achievement. Trained to properly plant and cultivate seedlings, women both assist in reforestation and generate a source of income for themselves. Through GBM, women's image has been enhanced and public exposure and public awareness of environmental issues has also increased, confirming the essential connections between the improvement of women's condition and the needs of society as a whole. This movement has undoubtedly become an inspiration for ecofeminists internationally. The work of Maathai and the Green Belt Movement continues to stand as a testament to the power of grassroots organising, proof that one person's simple idea – that a community should come together to plant trees, can make a difference.⁵²

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed a selection of ecofeminist perspectives and their relation to the environment. The chapter has also discussed how men, women, gender and the environment relate culturally. Herein, gender has been described as the social construction of masculinity and femininity, as opposed to the biological definition which refers to the sex of the person. Dualism in this area has led to gendered oppression of women and the environment, particularly since women and nature are associated, idealised and ultimately oppressed in the same ways. The analysis depicts a society which is discriminative towards the woman and further oppresses women through overburdening them with chores.

These links come together in the discussion of the effects of religion on ecofeminism and environmental sustainability, three areas which are highly interrelated and interdependent. The principle of sustainable development and inter-generational and intra-general equity have also been discussed in ways that emphasise the importance of the environment for posterity. Finally, an imprint of ecofeminism in Kenya has been discussed with special analysis to the Green Belt Movement (GBM). Throughout this chapter, a nexus has been sought to interconnect religion, feminism and environmental sustainability. An integrative approach has suggested itself as the most ideal to allow these areas to mutually reinforce one another thus enhancing environmental sustainability.

Initiatives such as the Green Belt Movement aims at empowering women to conserve the environment and improve livelihoods through solving of fuel problems, widespread desertification and soil erosion through the actual surrounding of villages by a green belt of at least one thousand trees. Working with the Green Belt Movement gives women the opportunity to change their environment and make their decisions with regard to development. The Green Belt Movement and its activities towards environmental conservation resonate with ecofeminist

52 Green Belt Movement, "Who We Are: Our History".

eschatology, where the possibility of heaven depends on a resurrection story of the earth itself, hence the need to take care of the earth through such initiatives in order for the aforesaid resurrection to take place in a well preserved and conserved environment. The symbolism presented by the Revelation 12 woman who is rescued by the earth from the jaws of the dragon and prepared for a safe place by the earth speaks to the fact that there is the urgent need for synergy between the place of the woman in the society and the environment in order to achieve optimal environmental sustainability.