ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

AIOU LIBRARY
aioulibrary.com

Name:

Registration No.:

Course Code: 878

Program: BS/MSc

Semester: Autumn 2026

ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

(Department of Gender & Women Studies)

Course: Women and Environment (9167/878) • Level: BS/MSc

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 2 (Units 6–9)

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

For Study & Reference

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book, understand the concepts, and then write the assignment in their own words. Copying this guide word for word is not recommended.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Question 1: Women's Vulnerability in Natural Disasters and Gender-Sensitive Mitigation (20 Marks)

Using the framework from Unit 6, discuss why women are disproportionately vulnerable during natural disasters. How can 'disaster mitigation' strategies be made more gender-sensitive to reduce these risks?

Introduction

When a flood, earthquake, cyclone or heatwave strikes a community, the hazard is natural but the disaster is not. The same water that inconveniences a well-built, well-served neighbourhood destroys homes, livelihoods and lives in a poor one. Unit 6 builds its analysis on this distinction and on a further one: within the same poor neighbourhood, the disaster does not strike women and men equally. Across event after event, in South Asia and beyond, women and girls die at higher rates, suffer more injury, illness, displacement hardship and violence, and recover more slowly than men. This is not because women are inherently weaker. It is because pre-existing gender inequalities, in mobility, skills, assets, information and power, shape who is exposed to the hazard, who can escape it, who is protected during it and who can rebuild after it. This answer uses the unit's framework of exposure, vulnerability and capacity to explain

women's disproportionate risk, phase by phase, and then sets out how disaster mitigation can be made genuinely gender-sensitive.

The Framework: Hazard, Exposure, Vulnerability and Capacity

In the framework used in Unit 6, disaster risk arises where a hazard meets vulnerability under conditions of exposure, and it is reduced by capacity. Vulnerability itself has several components. Physical vulnerability includes weak housing and dangerous locations. Social vulnerability includes isolation, illiteracy and restrictive norms. Economic vulnerability includes poverty and lack of assets, credit and insurance in one's own name. Political vulnerability means absence from the bodies that plan, warn and distribute relief. Capacity is the other side of the ledger: knowledge, skills such as swimming, savings, networks, mobility and decision-making power. Women's position in most of the societies this course studies is characterised by higher vulnerability on nearly every component and lower recognised capacity, not because women lack abilities, but because institutions record, reward and build upon men's. A disaster then acts as a multiplier of everyday inequality: it takes the gaps of normal life and converts them, within hours, into differences in survival.

Why Women Are Disproportionately Vulnerable

Begin with the moments of impact. Dress and mobility norms can turn escape into a hazard in itself: long, wrapping garments impede running, climbing and swimming, and in many communities girls are never taught to swim, climb trees or ride a bicycle, the very skills that decide survival in floods and cyclones. Norms of seclusion delay departure, because a woman may wait for a male relative to accompany her, refuse to leave for a mixed shelter, or stay to protect household goods, children and elderly relatives. Care responsibilities slow and bind: in

earthquakes and floods alike, women die disproportionately while shielding children and assisting parents and parents-in-law, and heavily pregnant women and women with infants have the least physical capacity to flee. Warning systems complete the trap when they are designed around male spaces and technologies: information posted in markets, mosques and tea shops, broadcast on channels men control, or sent to mobile phones registered to men, may never reach the women inside homes who most need time to act.

In the emergency phase, the design of relief frequently reproduces the danger. Shelters and camps without partitions, lighting, sex-segregated and lockable toilets, or safe water points expose women to harassment and assault, and many women respond rationally by staying in damaged, unsafe houses instead. Distribution systems that hand rations to 'heads of household' divert food, cash and materials away from widows, separated women and women whose husbands are absent or have died, while queueing systems that reward physical assertiveness disadvantage the elderly and the pregnant. Health needs specific to women, menstrual hygiene, antenatal and delivery care, contraception, treatment of injuries from violence, are routinely absent from emergency supplies planned by male-dominated teams, and the breakdown of ordinary services raises maternal risk precisely when stress, poor nutrition and infection peak. After the water recedes, the recovery phase imposes its long tax: women's unpaid work multiplies, collecting water and fuel from damaged sources, nursing the injured, queuing, cleaning and rebuilding domestic life, while compensation, housing reconstruction grants and livelihood schemes are registered to male owners, so women's losses of livestock, tools, stock and savings, the assets of the informal economy, go unrecorded and unrestored. Girls are withdrawn from school to help, early marriage is used in some settings as a coping

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

strategy, and trafficking risk rises in displacement. The disaster ends in the statistics long before it ends in women's lives.

Table 1: Women's vulnerability across the disaster cycle and the gender-sensitive correction

Phase	How women are disadvantaged	Gender-sensitive correction
Before: preparedness	Warnings miss women; skills training excludes them; risk maps ignore their locations and routines	Warnings through women's networks, media and phones they control; swimming, first-aid and rescue training for girls and women; risk assessment with women's participation
During: response	Shelters unsafe and unsegregated; relief registered to male heads; reproductive health supplies missing	Lit, partitioned shelters; sex-segregated lockable sanitation; registration and direct distribution to women, including women-headed households; dignity and health kits; women in response teams
After: recovery	Compensation follows male title; women's assets and informal livelihoods uncounted; care burden blocks rebuilding	Compensation and housing grants in women's or joint names; loss assessment covering women's assets and work; childcare, cash-for-work equality and livelihood restoration targeted to women

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Making Disaster Mitigation Gender-Sensitive

Mitigation means the long-term measures, structural and non-structural, that reduce risk before the next event, and making it gender-sensitive means rebuilding each element around the analysis above. The foundation is information: sex- and age-disaggregated data on deaths, injuries, losses and needs, collected as routine, and vulnerability assessments conducted with women's organisations, so that plans address the risks women actually face rather than a generic population. On that foundation, structural mitigation includes housing and infrastructure designed with women users: raised, flood-resistant homes with safe water and sanitation inside the plot, schools and shelters built to serve as refuges with women's facilities

incorporated, and embankments, drainage and early-warning infrastructure planned around the locations where women live and work. Non-structural mitigation matters as much: land-use rules that do not push poor women-headed households onto the most dangerous land, building skills and mason training for women, insurance and social protection that women can access in their own names, and savings and credit groups that convert women's networks into financial capacity before they are needed as survival networks.

Institutionally, gender-sensitivity requires women inside the machinery: in disaster management authorities, district and union committees, rescue services and camp management, with targets, training and authority rather than observer status. It requires budgets examined for their gender effects, drills and school curricula that teach girls the physical and organisational skills of safety, and accountability mechanisms, including confidential complaint channels, for the conduct of relief operations. It also requires engaging men: on sharing care work in emergencies, on ending violence in displacement, and on accepting women's public roles in preparedness, because mitigation that treats half the community as a problem to be managed around will fail at the moment of stress. Pakistan's flood experience, notably in 2010 and 2022, illustrates both sides: women suffered severely in relief and recovery systems not designed for them, while women's groups, lady health workers and local organisations repeatedly demonstrated the reach and trust that formal systems lacked. A gender-sensitive strategy institutionalises that demonstrated capacity instead of rediscovering it in every emergency.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Conclusion

In conclusion, women are disproportionately vulnerable in natural disasters because disasters exploit the inequalities of ordinary life: restricted mobility and skills, dress and seclusion norms, care responsibilities, exclusion from warnings and decisions, poverty and lack of assets in their own names. Unit 6's framework shows that none of this is natural or fixed, because every component of vulnerability has a corresponding capacity that policy can build. Gender-sensitive mitigation therefore works before, during and after events: disaggregated data and participatory risk assessment, infrastructure and warnings designed around women's realities, safe and directly accessible relief, recovery that restores women's assets and titles, and women represented with authority throughout the disaster management system. The test of such a strategy is simple and measurable. In the next flood or earthquake, the death rates, relief records and recovery outcomes of women and men should no longer tell two different stories.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Question 2: Ecofeminism and the Logic of Domination (20 Marks)

Explore the core philosophy of 'Eco-feminism' as presented in Unit 7. In your opinion, how does the 'logic of domination' connect the exploitation of the natural world with the social oppression of women?

Introduction

Ecofeminism is the school of thought that insists the domination of women and the domination of nature are not two separate problems that happen to coexist, but connected expressions of a single pattern of thinking and organising society. The term was coined by the French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, and the philosophy was developed by thinkers including Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood and Ariel Salleh, in dialogue with

women's grassroots movements of the kind Unit 8 examines. Unit 7 presents ecofeminism as both a critique and an alternative: a critique of the conceptual framework that ranks some humans above others and all humans above the non-human world, and an alternative ethic of care, interdependence and respect for diversity. At the centre of the critique stands a precise idea, the logic of domination. This answer first explores the core philosophy of ecofeminism, then explains that logic, and finally gives my own assessment of how it connects the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women, and where its limits lie.

The Core Philosophy of Ecofeminism

The first core claim is the claim of connection. Ecofeminists observe that women and nature have been linked symbolically and materially for centuries: nature is spoken of as female, as mother, virgin or unruly woman to be tamed, while women are spoken of as natural, bodily and instinctive. Materially, women's work binds them to natural systems, and environmental destruction harms women first, as earlier units showed. Ecofeminism treats this double connection as evidence of a shared structure of subordination rather than coincidence. The second claim is that the source of the problem is a patriarchal conceptual framework built on value dualisms: culture over nature, reason over emotion, mind over body, male over female, human over non-human, production over reproduction. In each pair the first term is valued, the second devalued, and difference is converted into hierarchy. The third claim is ethical: ecofeminism proposes an ethic of care in place of an ethic of mastery. Drawing on women's experience of sustaining life, while insisting this is a practice anyone can learn rather than a female essence, it values attentiveness, reciprocity, the maintenance of relationships and

responsibility for the vulnerable, and extends moral consideration beyond human beings to the living world.

Ecofeminism is not one doctrine but a family. Cultural or spiritual ecofeminism celebrates women's historical closeness to nature and revalues what patriarchy devalued. Liberal ecofeminism works through equal rights, education and representation within existing institutions. Social and socialist ecofeminisms locate the joint domination of women and nature in material systems, in capitalism, colonialism and the organisation of production, and seek structural change; Shiva's account of 'maldevelopment' argues that a development model treating nature and women's subsistence work as free and valueless impoverishes both, while Mies connects the exploitation of colonies, nature and housewives as three forms of unpaid or underpaid foundation for accumulation. This diversity matters for evaluation: arguments that answer the cultural strand, such as the charge of essentialism, do not necessarily touch the social strand, which grounds its claims in work and property rather than in feminine nature.

The Logic of Domination Explained

The philosopher Karen Warren gave the idea its clearest form. Oppression, she argued, is maintained not only by force and economics but by a characteristic pattern of justification, a logic of domination. It works in steps. First, a difference is identified: women are associated with body and reproduction, nature with wildness and passivity. Second, the difference is organised into an opposed dualism and ranked: one side is defined as higher, the other as lower. Third, a moral bridge is supplied: because the lower is said to lack what makes the higher valuable, reason, self-control, culture, it is claimed to be right and necessary for the higher to subdue, manage and use the lower. Domination then appears not as violence but as order,

improvement and even protection. Val Plumwood's related analysis of the 'master model' adds the mechanisms by which this is sustained: the dominated are backgrounded, treated as inessential support for the master's life; radically excluded, magnifying difference; incorporated, defined only by the master's needs; instrumentalised, valued only as means; and homogenised, treated as an interchangeable class rather than as distinct beings.

My Opinion: How the Logic Connects the Two Dominations

In my opinion, the logic of domination is the most persuasive part of ecofeminism, because it explains a pattern that anyone can verify in ordinary language and ordinary policy. Consider how the same vocabulary serves both dominations. Land is 'virgin' until it is 'developed'; a forest standing unused is 'waste'; a woman without male supervision is 'unprotected' and therefore legitimately controlled. In each case a living reality is first defined as empty, passive or deficient, and the definition then licenses intervention for its own supposed good. Consider also how both women and nature are backgrounded in accounting. A national economy counts the timber a forest yields and not the fuel, fodder, water regulation and food the standing forest supplied, largely through women's collection, just as it counts market output and not the care work that reproduced the labour force. In both cases the foundation of life is made invisible so that it can be used without payment or limit. The parallel is not a metaphor. It is the same bookkeeping, and it produces the same result: exhaustion of the foundation, whether that is a degraded watershed or a depleted, time-poor generation of women.

The connection is also practical and reinforcing in daily life, and here I find the social ecofeminist version of the argument strongest. The system that can take women's labour without wages can take nature's services without cost, and having normalised taking in one

sphere, it defends it in the other with the same phrases: this is how things are, this is necessary for growth, those who object are emotional and against progress. Note how the objection itself is processed by the logic. When women protest a forest's destruction, as at Reni in the Chipko movement, they are cast as sentimental and ignorant of economics: feeling, coded female and natural, is again ranked below calculation, coded male and cultural, exactly as Unit 1's dichotomy predicts. The three units of this course thus form one argument. The nature-culture dichotomy supplies the categories, the logic of domination supplies the justification, and the forest, the settlement and the disaster camp supply the evidence.

My assessment must also record the limits, because an opinion that ignores them is not worth much. The logic of domination describes a pattern of justification; it does not by itself explain every environmental harm, some of which arise from poverty, ignorance or genuine conflicts of need rather than from hierarchy, and poor men who degrade a hillside to feed a family are not enacting mastery in any simple sense. Nor are women automatically exempt from the logic: women in positions of class or state power can and do dominate both nature and poorer women, which shows the logic belongs to a framework and a position, not to a sex. These limits do not, in my view, weaken the central claim. They refine it. The logic of domination is best read as an account of how exploitation is made to seem reasonable, whoever performs it, and its remedy follows: dismantle the ranking framework, count what has been backgrounded, and admit the dominated, women and the living world they speak for in these movements, into decision-making as ends in themselves and not as resources.

Conclusion

To conclude, ecofeminism's core philosophy holds that the subordination of women and the exploitation of nature share a conceptual and material root in a patriarchal framework of ranked dualisms, and it answers that framework with an ethic of care, interdependence and diversity. The logic of domination is its analytical centre: difference is hardened into hierarchy, hierarchy is supplied with a moral justification, and control then passes itself off as order and improvement. In my opinion this logic genuinely connects the two dominations, in language, in economic accounting that renders both women's work and nature's services invisible and free, and in institutions that dismiss women's environmental protest as emotion. Properly qualified, so that it names a framework rather than a sex and a justification rather than the whole of causation, it remains one of the most powerful tools this course offers: a way of seeing why the woman carrying water and the watershed she carries it from so often stand or fall together.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Question 3: Chipko and the Green Belt Movement — A Comparison of Women's Grassroots Strategies (20 Marks)

Unit 8 highlights proactive environmental movements led by women. Compare the strategies used in the Chipko Movement in India with the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. What lessons can modern environmentalists learn from these grassroots initiatives?

Introduction

Two of the most influential environmental movements of the twentieth century were led not by ministries or international agencies but by poor rural women defending the conditions of their daily lives. The Chipko Movement, which rose in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, then part of Uttar Pradesh, India, in the 1970s, is remembered for villagers, above all women,

placing their bodies around trees marked for felling. The Green Belt Movement, founded in Kenya in 1977 by Wangari Maathai under the National Council of Women of Kenya, is remembered for organising women to plant trees by the tens of millions, and for growing from that simple act into a movement for democracy, rights and peace that carried its founder to the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Unit 8 presents them as proactive movements: women not merely protesting environmental harm but constructing an alternative. This answer compares their origins, strategies, organisation and relations to the state, and then draws out the lessons they hold for modern environmentalists.

Chipko: Defence of the Forest as Defence of Subsistence

Chipko emerged where commercial forestry met subsistence need. The state forest department auctioned ash trees to an outside sporting-goods company while refusing a local cooperative, the Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal associated with Chandi Prasad Bhatt, permission to fell a far smaller number for farm tools. Villagers concluded that the forest was being managed for distant revenue against local survival. In 1973 and 1974 confrontations followed in Mandal and then at Reni, where, with the men drawn away to the town on a pretext, Gaura Devi led the women of the village to confront the contractors' men, guard the forest for days and win its reprieve. The word chipko, to hug or cling, captured the signature tactic: when axes came, bodies went around the trees, so that felling required violence against unarmed neighbours, usually women. Sunderlal Bahuguna carried the movement's message across the Himalaya and to the national government, articulating its philosophy that ecology is permanent economy and that the rights of hill communities over their forests, soil and water were the precondition of both conservation and justice. The movement's achievements included a long ban on

commercial felling above a certain altitude in the Uttar Pradesh Himalaya and a permanent place in the world's imagination of non-violent environmental resistance.

The Green Belt Movement: Planting as Organising

The Green Belt Movement began from the opposite direction: not defending existing forest but creating new trees, and through them, organisation. Kenyan rural women, consulted through the National Council of Women, reported the same syndrome this course has traced: streams drying, firewood receding, soils eroding, food and income shrinking. Maathai's response was disarmingly simple: pay women's groups a small stipend for each seedling that survived, sourced from local seed, raised in community nurseries. The strategy deliberately connected ecology to livelihood, because a tree that feeds, fuels and earns is a tree that is watered. But planting was the entry point, not the destination. Through civic and environmental education seminars, participants analysed why their environment was degrading and traced the causes upward, to land grabbing, corruption and unaccountable power. The movement consequently moved into advocacy for public land, opposition to the destruction of Nairobi's Uhuru Park and the Karura Forest, voter and constitutional education, and Pan-African networking. Its founder was harassed, beaten and imprisoned under an authoritarian government, and the movement's survival and eventual global recognition restated its own thesis: environmental health, women's empowerment and democratic governance are one agenda, not three.

Table 2: Chipko and the Green Belt Movement compared

Dimension	Chipko Movement (India)	Green Belt Movement (Kenya)
Origin	1970s, Himalayan villages resisting commercial felling of forests they depended on	1977, Nairobi; response to rural women's reports of drying streams, fuel scarcity and erosion
Central action	Defensive: physically protecting	Constructive: planting and nurturing new trees through

	existing trees and forests	community nurseries
Signature strategy	Non-violent body blockade; moral witness; fasts and marches by leaders	Small payment per surviving seedling; women's groups; civic and environmental education seminars
Leadership	Local women such as Gaura Devi in action; Gandhian organisers Bhatt and Bahuguna as public voices	Founded and led by Wangari Maathai within a national women's organisation
Relation to the state	Protest against forest policy; won felling bans and policy debate	Began cooperatively, became a pro-democracy challenger; founder persecuted, later globally honoured
Frame of meaning	Forest rights, subsistence and Gandhian non-violence; ecology as permanent economy	Tree planting as entry to rights, governance and peace; environment-democracy-development nexus
Durable legacy	Global symbol of grassroots resistance; influenced forest policy and later movements such as Appiko	Tens of millions of trees; model of women-led restoration linked to civic empowerment

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Similarities and Differences

The similarities run deeper than the shared presence of women. Both movements began from subsistence, not from abstract wilderness values: the trees mattered because fuel, fodder, water and soil depended on them, and women led because the gender division of labour made them the first to register the loss and the least able to buy substitutes. Both used methods available to the poor and formally powerless: the body, the group, the nursery, persistence and moral authority, and both practised disciplined non-violence that made repression costly and sympathy easy. Both connected the local act to a large philosophy, Gandhian in one case, democratic and ecological in the other, which allowed a village dispute to speak to national and world audiences. And both treated women not as victims to be represented but as organisers whose knowledge of species, water and seasons was technical expertise.

The differences are equally instructive. Chipko was fundamentally defensive and reactive, mobilising at moments of threat, whereas Green Belt was programmatic and continuous, building an organisation that worked between crises. Chipko's public leadership remained substantially male even where its foot soldiers and decisive actors were women, a division that later feminist accounts have rightly questioned; Green Belt placed a woman and a women's council formally in command from the start. Chipko pressed the state from outside for policy change within forestry; Green Belt built parallel capacity in nurseries and seminars and only later confronted the state over land and democracy itself. Finally, their theories of change differed in emphasis: Chipko trusted moral witness and community rights to restrain extraction, Green Belt trusted incentivised action plus political education to transform the citizens who would then transform policy.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Lessons for Modern Environmentalists

Several lessons follow for contemporary practice, including climate adaptation and restoration programmes. First, start from livelihoods: people protect what sustains them, and environmental action framed around fuel, water, food and income will outlast action framed around distant abstractions. Second, pay for survival and results, as Green Belt's per-surviving-seedling stipend did, rather than for activities performed; incentives aligned with outcomes convert planting days into forests. Third, treat women as organisers and knowledge holders with budgets and authority, not as beneficiaries or volunteer labour, and examine honestly who receives public credit for their work. Fourth, build organisation in quiet times: movements that exist before the crisis, with groups, funds and education programmes, can act when the contractors or the floods arrive, while purely spontaneous protest usually cannot. Fifth, connect

the local to the structural: both movements won because they followed the chain from the tree to the policy, the land grab and the constitution, and taught their members to follow it too. Sixth, keep methods non-violent, replicable and cheap: hugging a tree and raising a seedling require conviction, not capital, which is why both travelled across the world. A final caution is also a lesson: neither movement should be romanticised. Chipko did not secure all the forest rights it sought, restoration movements can be captured by funders' targets and tree counts that ignore survival and species, and charismatic leadership creates succession risks. Modern environmentalists should copy the method, local knowledge, women's leadership, livelihood logic and civic education, while building the rights, monitoring and institutions both movements still needed.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chipko and the Green Belt Movement are complementary halves of a single grassroots education. Chipko shows how to stop destruction: organise those who depend on the resource, put disciplined non-violent bodies and moral argument between the axe and the tree, and force policy to answer subsistence. Green Belt shows how to build the alternative: pay for surviving trees, organise women's groups around nurseries, and use environmental work as a school of citizenship that eventually confronts the governance failures behind degradation. Their common core is the conviction of Unit 8, that rural women are not the passive victims of environmental change but its most experienced analysts and most determined opponents. Modern environmentalists facing climate change, which will be survived locally or not at all, could do worse than to begin exactly where these movements began: with the women who carry the water, asking what the trees mean to them.

WhatsApp Orders: +92 324 5836626

Question 4: The SEWA Movement — Women's Empowerment, Environmental Management and Community Resilience (20 Marks)

Analyze the role of the SEWA Movement in India. How does the empowerment of self-employed women contribute to better environmental resource management and community resilience?

Introduction

The Self-Employed Women's Association, SEWA, founded in Ahmedabad, India, in 1972 by the labour lawyer Ela Bhatt, organises the women whom conventional economics and conventional trade unions alike had written off: street vendors, home-based piece workers, agricultural and construction labourers, waste pickers, artisans and others who work without an employer, a workplace in law, social security or a fixed wage. SEWA's founding insight was that these women are not marginal to the economy but central to it, and that their poverty is produced not by lack of work, they work incessantly, but by lack of organisation, assets, bargaining power and public services. From a trade union it grew into a family of cooperatives, a cooperative bank established in 1974, and services in health, childcare, insurance, housing and training, now reaching millions of members across India. Unit 8 studies it alongside Chipko and the Green Belt Movement because its environmental significance, though less obvious than tree planting, is profound. This answer analyses SEWA's role and explains how empowering self-employed women improves environmental resource management and builds community resilience.

SEWA's Model: Organisation, Assets and Services

SEWA's structure answers the specific disabilities of informal work. As a union it bargains and campaigns: for vendors' right to space and licences, for minimum wages and recognition of home-based workers, for legal identity for occupations the state preferred to treat as encroachments. As a movement of cooperatives it builds women's ownership of the means of

work: producer, artisan, dairy, service and waste-recycling cooperatives in which members are simultaneously workers and shareholders. Through its bank, women who were considered unbankable gained savings, credit and insurance in their own names, converting scattered daily earnings into assets that banks and husbands could not casually absorb. Around these economic institutions SEWA layered the services that make sustained work possible: community health care and health cooperatives, childcare centres that follow the hours and places of mothers' work, insurance against illness, accident and asset loss, housing and infrastructure support in informal settlements, and legal aid. The Gandhian frame is explicit: self-reliance, non-violence and the dignity of labour, directed at what Bhatt called the working poor's need for work, income, food and social security, organised by the women themselves through elected leadership drawn from the trades.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

How Empowerment Improves Environmental Resource Management

The connection between this model and the environment operates through the resources self-employed women handle every day. Consider water, fuel and waste in the informal city, the terrain of Unit 3. A vendor, home-based worker or domestic worker manages household and occupational water, fuel and refuse under conditions of scarcity, and her practices, multiplied across a settlement, are its real environmental management system. SEWA's housing and infrastructure work, including support for slum upgrading with water supply, individual toilets, drainage, paving and electricity in partnership with municipalities, directly improved that system, and its significance lies in who negotiated it: organised women residents able to specify where taps and toilets must go, to contribute, to maintain and to hold authorities to account.

Facilities designed and overseen by their users get used and repaired; facilities delivered to passive beneficiaries decay, a contrast this course has met repeatedly.

In rural areas the same logic runs through natural resources. SEWA's organising among agricultural labourers, gum and salt workers, forest-produce collectors and dairy producers gave resource-dependent women collective bargaining over access, prices and conditions, and supported cooperatives through which they could manage and benefit from the resources they gathered rather than surrendering them to contractors at distress prices. Organisation changes the time horizon, and the time horizon is an environmental variable. An isolated collector facing hunger sells today at any price and gathers destructively because tomorrow's stock is not hers; a cooperative member with credit, storage and a negotiated stake in the resource can afford to leave regeneration standing, because the future yield is partly hers. Credit and insurance perform the same conversion at household level: a woman who can borrow against a shock need not strip assets, sell livestock into a fodder crisis or over-exploit a commons to survive the month. SEWA's promotion of cleaner energy and labour-saving technology, from improved stoves to solar lighting through its energy initiatives, reduced both the fuel burden on local biomass and the smoke burden in women's lungs, while its waste-pickers' cooperatives turned an environmental liability, the city's refuse, into sorted recycling streams and a recognised occupation, improving urban material flows while dignifying the women who performed them.

Table 3: SEWA institutions and their environmental significance

SEWA institution / action	What it changes for women	Environmental and resilience effect
Trade union and campaigns	Recognition, bargaining power, legal identity	Users of commons and urban space gain a voice in the rules governing them

Cooperatives (producer, dairy, waste, services)	Ownership, fairer prices, collective marketing	Longer time horizons in resource use; recycling systems; sustainable harvesting becomes affordable
Cooperative bank, savings, credit and insurance	Assets and protection in women's own names	Shocks absorbed without stripping natural assets; investment in cleaner technology and housing
Housing and slum-upgrading support	Water, toilets, drainage and electricity negotiated by residents	Healthier settlements; facilities sited, used and maintained according to women's knowledge
Health care and childcare	Time, health and continuity of work	Care infrastructure frees women's time and protects the household during illness and crisis

Empowerment and Community Resilience

Resilience means a community's capacity to absorb a shock, adapt and continue, and SEWA's contribution to it is best seen under stress. When earthquake struck Gujarat in 2001 and when floods, riots and later the pandemic disrupted informal livelihoods, SEWA's pre-existing organisation, its member lists, cooperatives, bank and local leaders, functioned as response infrastructure: assessing losses trade by trade, channelling relief without the exclusion errors described in Unit 6, restarting work with credit and tools, and pressing women's specific losses, of stock, equipment and home-workplaces, onto recovery agendas that would otherwise have counted only formal damage. This is the general principle Unit 6 reaches from the disaster side and SEWA demonstrates from the development side: resilience is not created during the emergency; it is the emergency use of capacities built before it. Savings are resilience. Insurance is resilience. A cooperative that can meet, decide and act is resilience. A woman with documents, a bank account and an organisation behind her can claim relief, resist eviction and

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

restart her trade; an isolated woman with none of these is recorded, if at all, as part of someone else's household.

SEWA also builds the quieter forms of resilience that determine ordinary years. Childcare raises the next generation's health and schooling while freeing mothers' earning time. Health cooperatives reduce the medical shocks that are the commonest single cause of descent into destitution. Training and leadership development move women from membership into elected office in cooperatives, local bodies and the movement itself, normalising women's public authority in exactly the forums where environmental and municipal decisions are taken. Even SEWA's limitations teach by contrast. Organising informal workers is slow, membership does not abolish caste and communal divisions inside the workforce, and a movement dependent on negotiation must constantly defend gains against changing governments and markets. Its model also travels imperfectly: it presumes organisers of exceptional patience and a legal space for unions and cooperatives that not every country provides. For Pakistan, the transferable elements are nevertheless clear: organise resource-dependent and informal women before offering them projects; give the organisation financial instruments of its own; bundle credit with services, childcare, health and infrastructure; and measure success in assets, voice and continuity through shocks, not in loans disbursed.

Conclusion

To conclude, SEWA's role has been to convert India's self-employed women from an invisible workforce into an organised economic and civic force, through the combined instruments of union, cooperatives, bank, insurance and services. Its environmental contribution follows from that conversion. Women who hold assets, credit and collective voice manage water, fuel,

waste, land and forest produce on longer time horizons, negotiate infrastructure that fits their knowledge, adopt cleaner technology and recover from shocks without liquidating the natural base of their livelihoods. Empowerment, in other words, is not a social programme running parallel to environmental management; for the resources that pass daily through poor women's hands, empowerment is environmental management, and the organisation that produces it is also the infrastructure of community resilience. That is why Unit 8 places a trade union beside two famous tree movements, and why the placement is justified.

Question 5: Government of Pakistan Initiatives on Gender and Environment — Achievements and Implementation Challenges (20 Marks)

Evaluate the Government of Pakistan's initiatives regarding gender and the environment as discussed in Unit 9. What are the current challenges in implementing gender-sensitive environmental policies at the provincial and national levels?

Introduction

Pakistan faces environmental pressures of the first order, water scarcity, deforestation, air pollution in its cities, glacial melt and flood risk in a warming climate, while its women carry the daily management of water, fuel, food and care that makes them, as this course has shown throughout, the population most exposed to environmental failure and least represented in environmental decision-making. Unit 9 turns from movements and theory to the state, examining what the Government of Pakistan has undertaken at the intersection of gender and environment and why implementation lags behind commitment. The pattern the unit describes is familiar in Pakistani governance: a respectable architecture of policies, laws, commissions and

programmes, repeatedly renewed, resting on thin budgets, weak coordination and social norms that the policies name but do not by themselves change. This answer evaluates the principal initiatives, then analyses the current challenges at national and provincial levels, and closes with the conditions under which the gap could narrow.

The Policy and Institutional Architecture

Pakistan's environmental framework was built in layers. The National Conservation Strategy of 1992 first placed environment within national development planning after the Rio Earth Summit era, and the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act of 1997 created the legal basis for environmental protection, impact assessment and provincial environmental protection agencies. Climate policy followed with the National Climate Change Policy, first adopted in 2012 and later updated, and institutions including a dedicated climate change ministry and, subsequently, authorities and councils for climate governance. Large programmatic initiatives have included the Clean Green Pakistan Movement launched in 2018 and the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme launched in 2019, which sought mass afforestation, employment in nurseries and planting, and expanded protected areas. On the gender side, the state maintains the National Commission on the Status of Women, provincial commissions, women development departments, reserved seats for women in local government and national commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 13 on climate action. Social protection through the Benazir Income Support Programme, which pays cash transfers to women, also belongs in an honest evaluation, because it builds the female-held financial identity and resilience on which environmental adaptation partly

WhatsApp Orders: +92 324 5836626

depends. Planning documents and several project designs now routinely include gender components, consultation requirements and, in climate policy, explicit recognition that climate change affects women disproportionately.

Evaluation: What the Initiatives Achieve and Where They Fall Short

The achievements are real and should not be dismissed. A legal and policy vocabulary now exists in which a gender-sensitive environmental claim can be made inside government: impact assessment law can be invoked, climate policy concedes differential vulnerability, tree programmes have employed large numbers of rural people including women in nursery work, and protected social payments reach women at scale. Representation mechanisms, however imperfect, have placed women in assemblies and councils where environmental budgets are approved. Pakistan has also developed genuine technical capacity in areas such as flood forecasting, and its negotiators and civil society are active in international climate forums, including on loss and damage, where the country's 2022 flood experience gave it moral authority.

Set against need, however, the record is thin in precisely the places Units 2, 3 and 6 would predict. Environmental policy and gender policy still live in separate ministries with separate budgets and reporting lines, so 'gender and environment' is everybody's theme and nobody's programme. Gender appears most often as a paragraph, a consultation event or a target for participation counts, rather than as land rights, water entitlements, credit, technology and seats with authority. The big afforestation effort illustrates the ambiguity: planting employment for women is valuable, but it does not by itself give women tenure over the trees, a voice in species choice or a share in the carbon and fruit value created, and survival and benefit-sharing

matter more than seedling counts. Urban environmental governance, sanitation, water and air quality in the settlements of Unit 3, remains chronically underfunded relative to visible infrastructure. And adaptation planning reaches documents faster than it reaches union councils: local governments, the tier closest to women's daily environment, have been repeatedly dissolved, delayed or starved of funds, leaving no stable institution to convert policy into maintained taps, drains, shelters and early warnings.

Challenges at the National Level

The first national challenge is fragmentation after devolution. The Eighteenth Amendment transferred environment substantially to the provinces, a democratically sound step that nonetheless produced uneven provincial laws, standards and capacities, and recurring friction over who sets and who enforces. Coordination bodies exist, but environmental governance competes poorly for attention and money against security, energy and macroeconomic crises, and climate institutions have been created, merged and renamed with changes of government, destroying continuity. The second challenge is fiscal: environment and women development together command very small shares of public spending, gender budgeting is not systematically applied to environmental programmes, and donor-funded projects, which supply much of the gender content, end with their funding cycles. The third is data: without routine sex-disaggregated statistics on resource access, time use, disaster losses and programme benefits, gender-sensitivity cannot be managed or audited, and policy flies blind while claiming to see. The fourth is enforcement culture: impact assessments of uneven quality, agencies short of staff, laboratories and legal support, and courts left to supply through public interest litigation the pressure that administration should supply itself. The fifth is political economy: land, water,

WhatsApp Orders: +92 324 5836626

forests and urban space are governed by entrenched interests, and gender-sensitive reform, which implies redistributing access and voice, meets resistance that a purely technical framing cannot overcome.

Challenges at the Provincial and Local Levels

Provincial challenges compound the national ones. Capacity differs sharply among provinces, and districts differ within them; environmental protection agencies concentrate on industrial point sources while the diffuse problems that dominate women's exposure, household water quality, waste, indoor smoke, sanitation, receive less regulatory attention. Provincial women development departments are typically among the weakest in cabinet, with small budgets and little leverage over the powerful line departments, irrigation, forests, local government, health, whose decisions determine women's environment. Forest and irrigation bureaucracies retain colonial habits of dealing with recorded male owners and water users, so women's customary use remains administratively invisible even where policy concedes it in principle. Social norms then do the rest of the work: women officials are few in field formations, community consultation is conducted with male elders by default, mobility and purdah conventions restrict women's attendance, and reserved-seat women councillors, when local governments function at all, frequently lack funds, training and committee power. Climate shocks intensify every weakness: the 2022 floods showed provincial and district systems overwhelmed, relief registration bypassing women-headed households, and recovery housing and compensation following male title, exactly the failure sequence Unit 6 analyses, in a country whose policies already contained the vocabulary to prevent it.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

A cross-cutting challenge deserves separate statement: the treatment of gender as welfare rather than as rights and resources. Programmes reach women as mothers and beneficiaries, with awareness sessions and small grants, far more readily than they transfer assets, titles, technology and authority. This is administratively comfortable and politically safe, and it explains the recurring evaluation finding across sectors: high reported participation, low measured change in control over resources. Until a gender-sensitive environmental policy is judged by who owns, decides and earns, rather than by who attended, the implementation gap Unit 9 describes will reproduce itself under successive policy titles.

What Would Narrow the Gap

The remedies implied by the unit and by this course are structural rather than rhetorical. Join up the machinery: a standing federal-provincial mechanism on gender and climate with budget authority, mirrored in provinces, and gender focal functions inside forest, irrigation, water and municipal departments with power to clear designs. Fund it: apply gender budgeting to environmental programmes, protect local government finance, and tie transfers to maintained services and disaggregated results. Build the data system: routine sex-disaggregated environmental, time-use and disaster statistics, published. Transfer rights: joint titling, women's names in water-user and forest bodies with quorum and office, compensation and housing grants payable to women, and social protection linked deliberately to adaptation. Staff it: recruit and promote women in environmental field services and disaster authorities, train male officials with accountability, and work with women's organisations as implementing partners rather than audiences. None of these steps requires a new policy document; all of them require treating the existing documents as obligations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Government of Pakistan has built a credible formal architecture on gender and the environment: conservation and climate policies, environmental law and agencies, mass afforestation and clean-up programmes, women's commissions, reserved representation, international commitments and large-scale cash transfers to women. Evaluated against the standard this course supplies, who bears environmental costs and who holds environmental power, the implementation falls short in consistent ways: fragmented and underfunded institutions, devolution without equal provincial capacity, missing data, enforcement weakness, welfare-style programming and social norms that keep women users invisible to the departments that govern their resources. The challenges at national level are coordination, money, data and political economy; at provincial and local level they are capacity, weak women's machinery, bureaucratic habit and the instability of local government itself. Unit 9's lesson is therefore sober but not hopeless. Pakistan does not primarily lack policies on gender and environment. It lacks the joining, funding and rights-transfer that would make the policies describe reality, and until those are supplied, each new initiative will continue to be evaluated, as this one must be, as a promise substantially ahead of its proof.

AIOU LIBRARY aioulibrary.com

WhatsApp Orders: +92 324 5836626