

Ecofeminism in Indonesian Environmental Law: Gender Equality for Sustainable Natural Resource Management

Ekofeminisme dalam Hukum Lingkungan Indonesia: Kesetaraan Gender untuk Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Alam yang Berkelanjutan

Eko Prasetyo

Universitas Islam Indonesia, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Jl. Kaliurang km 14.5, Sleman, Yogyakarta, 55584

E-mail: eko.prasetyo@uii.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intersection of gender equality and sustainable natural resource management in Indonesia, utilizing ecofeminism as a theoretical framework. It examines the significant yet underappreciated role of women in environmental stewardship, particularly within rural and indigenous communities, and how current environmental policies fail to fully integrate their contributions. The study analyzes the limitations of Indonesian environmental law in promoting gender-inclusive policies, highlighting structural barriers, patriarchal systems, and ineffective policy implementation. Additionally, the potential of ecofeminism to enhance both gender equality and environmental justice is discussed, offering recommendations for more inclusive and sustainable natural resource management. The research suggests that empowering women and incorporating their local knowledge is essential for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and social justice in Indonesia.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Ecofeminism, Natural Resource Management, Environmental Law.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi keterkaitan antara kesetaraan gender dan pengelolaan sumber daya alam yang berkelanjutan di Indonesia dengan menggunakan ekofeminisme sebagai kerangka teoritis. Penelitian ini menyoroti peran penting namun kurang dihargai dari perempuan dalam pengelolaan lingkungan, khususnya di komunitas pedesaan dan adat, serta bagaimana kebijakan lingkungan saat ini belum sepenuhnya mengintegrasikan kontribusi mereka. Studi ini menganalisis keterbatasan hukum lingkungan Indonesia dalam mendorong kebijakan yang inklusif gender, dengan menyoroti hambatan struktural, sistem patriarkal, dan pelaksanaan kebijakan yang kurang efektif. Selain itu, potensi ekofeminisme dalam meningkatkan kesetaraan gender dan keadilan lingkungan juga dibahas, disertai rekomendasi untuk pengelolaan sumber daya alam yang lebih inklusif dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menyarankan bahwa pemberdayaan perempuan dan pengakuan terhadap pengetahuan lokal mereka sangat penting untuk mencapai keberlanjutan lingkungan dan keadilan sosial jangka panjang di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Kesetaraan Gender, Ekofeminisme, Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Alam, Hukum Lingkungan.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable natural resource management is an urgent global issue that needs to be addressed, especially in the face of challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and over-exploitation of resources. In Indonesia, a country rich in natural resources, this management has far-reaching implications for community well-being, ecosystem sustainability, and the achievement of social justice. Unfortunately, environmental issues are often viewed from a purely technical or economic perspective, without taking into account the social dimension, particularly the aspect of gender equality. In fact, women play a crucial role in natural resource management, both as users, protectors, and heirs of local wisdom related to the environment.

The connection between environmental issues, gender, and law often receives insufficient attention in environmental policies in Indonesia. Women, particularly in indigenous and rural communities, are often the most affected by environmental degradation, yet their participation in decision-making regarding environmental issues is often limited. For example, the marginalization of women in natural resource management. Women are frequently excluded from decision-making related to resource management, despite their valuable knowledge and experience. Research in Mantangai Hulu indicates that women have a close relationship with peatlands and play a significant role in their management. However, the prevailing eco-developmental mindset has overlooked their contributions, leading to the loss of feminine values in the management of these ecosystems (Warah, 2023). This reflects how women are often marginalized in the decision-making processes related to the environment.

Furthermore, women are often the group with limited access to resources. In the context of social forestry, female heads of households are frequently regarded as vulnerable and dependent. Although the program aims to empower communities, in reality, women often do not receive equal access to forest resources compared to men (Juwianti, 2023). This indicates that, although there are policies supporting women's empowerment, their implementation often fails to reflect these objectives. Additionally, in agrarian conflicts, women are often victims of unjust policies. Ecofeminism theory highlights that women play a crucial role as agents of change in advocating for non-exploitative land management. However, in many cases, their voices are disregarded in the negotiation and decision-making processes concerning land and natural resources (Pradhani, 2019). This indicates that, although women play an important role, their rights are often overlooked in the context of agrarian conflicts.

Although Indonesia has introduced public participation aspects—almost comprehensively, particularly in women's political participation—their involvement in environmental policies remains highly limited. Research shows that despite women starting to engage in politics, they often do not have significant influence in policies related to the environment (Munggaran, 2023). This indicates a gap between political participation and real influence in environmental decision-making.

On a broader level, the local wisdom possessed by women in natural resource management is often overlooked in development policies. Indigenous communities, including women, hold valuable traditional knowledge crucial for sustainable management, but it is frequently regarded as an obstacle to large-scale development. This reflects how development policies often fail to consider the contributions and rights of women in environmental management.

Overall, the neglect of women's rights in environmental management within indigenous and rural communities is an issue that requires serious attention. Although there are several policies supporting women's empowerment, their implementation often fails to reflect these objectives, and women's voices are still frequently marginalized in decision-making processes related to the environment. Policies supporting women's empowerment are often not effectively implemented, resulting in unmet expectations. For example, first, the policy of economic empowerment through Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM). Many policies are designed to empower women through the development of UMKM. Research shows that although there are supporting programs, their implementation often does not meet expectations. For instance, within the context of the Women's and Family Welfare Empowerment Program (P2WKSS), there are challenges in human resource management that hinder the optimalization of women's empowerment. (Novilasari, 2024). This reflects that, although policies exist, their implementation is often ineffective due to a lack of support in management and governance.

Second, policies on education for women. Policies aimed at improving women's education often fail to reflect the expected outcomes. Research shows that although efforts have been made to increase women's access to education, many still face barriers in accessing quality education (Winarsih, 2024). This indicates that although educational policies exist, their implementation often fails to consider local contexts and the specific needs of women. Third, policies for the protection of women from violence. Policies aimed at protecting women and children from violence are also often ineffective. Despite various programs designed to protect women, their implementation is often hindered by a lack of coordination between different institutions and inadequate resources. Research shows that although there is awareness of the importance of protection, many women still lack access to the services they need. This indicates that although policies exist, challenges in implementation often hinder the achievement of their goals.

Fourth, women's empowerment policies in the agricultural sector. In the agricultural sector, policies designed to empower women are often poorly implemented. Research shows that female farmers frequently do not have equal access to the resources and training needed to improve their productivity. (Amalia et al., 2020). Although there are policies supporting the empowerment of women in agriculture, their implementation often fails to reflect the needs and challenges faced by women on the ground. Fifth, women's empowerment policies in healthcare. Policies aimed at improving women's health are also often ineffective. Despite programs designed to increase women's access to healthcare services, many women still face barriers in obtaining the care they need. (Astuti, 2021). Research shows that although there is awareness of the importance of

women's health, policy implementation often fails to consider the social and cultural contexts that influence their access to healthcare services. (Rodiah, 2024).

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in addressing climate change. The Deputy for Women's Rights Protection, Ratna Susianawati, stated that women play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. This includes the active participation of women in decision-making, policy implementation, and the oversight of climate-related programs (Pristiandaru, 2024). The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) highlights the significant role of women as change agents in addressing environmental challenges. Women are often at the forefront of the climate crisis, both as survivors and as innovators of solutions. However, their access to resources, education, and decision-making processes remains limited, exacerbating the inequality they face and intensifying the impacts of climate change.

To overcome these barriers, cross-sector collaboration is essential in developing inclusive policies and programs that empower women, strengthen community resilience, and mitigate the effects of the climate crisis on vulnerable groups. This effort must include enhancing women's access to resources and opportunities for meaningful contribution. In this context, ecofeminism provides a relevant framework for integrating gender and environmental issues. Emerging from the intersection of feminism and environmental movements, ecofeminism highlights the link between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. This approach asserts that patriarchal systems harm not only women but also accelerate environmental degradation. As such, ecofeminism can help identify legal structures that reinforce gender inequality while promoting fairer and more sustainable natural resource management.

This research focuses on two main questions. First, how does Indonesian environmental law support or hinder gender equality? Although some policies mention the importance of women's involvement, their implementation often faces obstacles. For instance, environmental restoration programs rarely include clear gender indicators, rendering women's participation largely symbolic. Second, can ecofeminism principles be applied to natural resource management in Indonesia? This article explores the extent to which current environmental policies accommodate gender justice approaches. It also examines the potential adaptation of ecofeminism theory within the Indonesian local context, including through local wisdom and traditional practices that often already incorporate sustainability principles.

This article identifies the connection between environmental law and ecofeminism in Indonesia. Using a normative approach, the study explores how Indonesian environmental policies have considered gender equality, both in formulation and implementation. The research focuses on the role of women in natural resource management, particularly in the context of current national environmental policies.

Additionally, the article provides gender-inclusive policy recommendations. These recommendations aim to be relevant not only to policymakers but also to civil

society organizations, local communities, and other actors involved in environmental management. Thus, this article contributes not only to academic discourse but also to practical efforts to promote gender justice and environmental sustainability in Indonesia.

METHODS

This research uses a normative research method, or doctrinal legal research, which focuses on the study of applicable legal norms, legal documents, and related legal theories. The normative approach is chosen because this research aims to analyze how Indonesian environmental law accommodates the principles of ecofeminism to achieve gender equality in the sustainable management of natural resources.

This research adopts both a conceptual approach and a legislative approach. The conceptual approach is used to understand the concept of ecofeminism in the context of environmental law. This approach allows the researcher to explore the principles of ecofeminism as the basis for a critical analysis of relevant legal norms. In addition to the conceptual approach, the legislative approach is also used to examine environmental law policies in Indonesia, such as Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, as well as related regulations. This approach aims to identify the extent to which existing regulations have accommodated the principles of gender equality.

This research is descriptive-analytical, where a description is made to explain the existing environmental legal conditions, while analysis is conducted to evaluate whether these legal policies align with ecofeminism principles and gender equality.

The data used for this article consists of: (i) primary data in the form of relevant regulations, such as (but not limited to) Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, Law No. 7 of 1984 on the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); secondary data in the form of literature, journals, scholarly articles, and reports from international organizations relevant to ecofeminism, gender equality, and environmental law.

Data collection techniques are carried out through library research. The library research for this article involves gathering and analyzing legal documents, books, scholarly journals, research reports, and other relevant sources. This process includes: (i) identifying and collecting regulations related to environmental law and gender equality; (ii) reviewing ecofeminism theories that serve as the analytical framework of the research; (iii) analyzing literature and previous research that addresses similar issues, both in Indonesia and globally.

Data analysis is conducted qualitatively using normative analysis techniques. The data obtained from primary and secondary sources will be analyzed through the following steps: (i) interpretation, which involves interpreting the legal norms contained in regulations to understand the relationship between environmental law and gender equality issues; (ii) evaluating the alignment of legal norms with ecofeminism principles and

gender equality; and (iii) comparing environmental law policies in Indonesia with international best practices in integrating gender equality into natural resource management. The results of this analysis will be used to identify weaknesses in existing regulations and provide policy recommendations that are more gender-inclusive.

This research is limited to the analysis of positive law in Indonesia. The focus of the research is on environmental law regulations and policies, without involving field research or interviews. However, this research remains relevant as it provides a theoretical foundation and recommendations that could serve as a reference for the development of better policies in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Women in Natural Resource Management in Indonesia

Women play a crucial role in natural resource management in Indonesia, both in social, economic, and environmental contexts. As primary managers of natural resources in many communities, women are often responsible for agricultural activities, water management, environmental conservation, and the education of sustainability values. Unfortunately, this role is often overlooked in public policies and natural resource management practices, despite their undeniable contributions.

In the agricultural sector, women play a significant role in ensuring food security and managing agricultural land. They are not only involved in daily activities such as planting and harvesting, but also in decision-making processes related to sustainable agricultural resource management strategies. Research shows that women make substantial contributions to ensuring the efficiency and sustainability of agricultural management, which is the backbone of the family economy in many rural areas. (“Ketahanan Pangan Di Kabupaten Tasikmalaya: Peran Perempuan Melalui Kesetaraan Gender,” 2023). In addition, in water resource management, women are often the most knowledgeable about the needs of households and communities. Their knowledge of efficient water distribution for agricultural and domestic purposes is crucial, especially in the face of challenges such as climate change and water scarcity. Women’s involvement in water management is essential for ensuring the sustainability of both family and community livelihoods, as they are typically responsible for managing daily water use and ensuring its availability for various needs (Mulyono, 2019).

Women also play a crucial role in environmental conservation, particularly in indigenous communities. They are often the guardians of traditions and local knowledge related to natural resource management. In Mantangai Hulu, for example, women have a close relationship with the peatland ecosystem. They actively contribute to preserving this ecosystem through sustainable management practices. Their deep understanding of the environment, based on generations of knowledge, allows them to implement strategies that protect and restore the land, ensuring the long-term health of the ecosystem for future generations (Warah et al., 2023). This role demonstrates that women are not only key economic managers of their families but also effective agents of environmental

conservation. Furthermore, women often serve as agents of change in agrarian conflicts. In many cases, they advocate for land rights and resources to be managed in a non-exploitative manner. This role not only highlights the importance of women's presence in environmental advocacy but also showcases their ability to lead change, ensuring both social and ecological justice. Their active participation in these areas underscores the vital contributions women make toward sustainable development and the protection of natural resources (Pradhani, 2019).

However, despite the significant contributions of women, their participation in decision-making related to natural resource management remains limited. Research indicates a gap between women's knowledge of the environment and their involvement in management practices, such as domestic waste management. This disparity reflects a broader issue where women's expertise in environmental stewardship is often overlooked in formal decision-making processes, despite their critical role in sustainable resource management at the community level. Bridging this gap is essential to ensure that women's perspectives and expertise are adequately integrated into policies and practices that affect environmental sustainability (Chaesfa & Nurmala K., 2013). Structural barriers, such as social and cultural norms that limit women's roles, are key factors hindering their full involvement. Additionally, the lack of access to education and information on natural resource management further exacerbates this situation. These barriers not only restrict women's participation but also prevent them from fully utilizing their knowledge and skills in managing natural resources. Overcoming these challenges requires targeted efforts to dismantle discriminatory norms, improve access to education, and provide platforms for women to actively contribute to decision-making processes related to environmental governance (Irma et al., 2022).

In the legal context, women actually have opportunities to actively participate through the foundation provided by Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management. Article 70 of this law states that society, including women, has the right to actively engage in environmental protection and management. However, its implementation is often not optimal and does not fully empower women. Beyond their roles in local communities, women also have significant potential as environmentally conscious consumers. Women are often the primary decision-makers in households, including in choosing eco-friendly products and educating family members about the importance of sustainability. They are able to instill sustainability values in future generations, making them crucial environmental educators. Therefore, integrating women into decision-making processes and recognizing their pivotal role in both the community and family can enhance the effectiveness of environmental policies and practices. (Azizah & Kesumah, 2023).

Women's involvement in sustainable development programs also demonstrates their potential to influence public policy. Various initiatives have been designed to empower women in natural resource management. For instance, in the context of the UN-REDD+ program, women play a crucial role in forest management, emission reduction, and increasing carbon reserves. This demonstrates that women not only have a local impact but also contribute globally to achieving sustainability goals. However, to

maximize the role of women, existing challenges must be addressed. Social, cultural, and structural barriers need to be reduced through inclusive policies and empowering education. In the context of climate change, for example, women are often the most affected, but they also possess extraordinary abilities to adapt and develop effective mitigation strategies.

The recognition of the importance of women's roles has also been highlighted by international organizations such as the United Nations. Various global conferences have emphasized the need to involve women in all aspects of natural resource management. This approach will not only strengthen environmental sustainability but also create better gender equality. In other words, the role of women in natural resource management in Indonesia is highly strategic. They are managers, educators, conservation agents, and advocates who play a crucial role in environmental sustainability. Therefore, it is essential for the government, society, and the global community to provide greater support to women, enabling them to actively and effectively participate in natural resource management for a more sustainable future.

Limitations of Environmental Law in Realizing Gender Equality

Gender equality is a critical element in achieving fair and inclusive environmental sustainability. However, in Indonesia, environmental law still faces numerous limitations in supporting gender equality, despite the significant contributions of women in natural resource management. Various interrelated factors contribute to these limitations, ranging from the structure of legal frameworks to the lack of public policies that favor women.

One of the main challenges is the lack of recognition for women's roles in environmental policies. Women often play crucial roles as stewards of natural resources in local communities, yet their contributions are rarely acknowledged in formal policies. Women are frequently marginalized in decision-making processes related to environmental management, despite their valuable knowledge and experience. Existing policies tend to be gender-neutral, failing to account for the specific needs and perspectives of women (Warah et al., 2023). The absence of a gender-based approach creates a significant gap between the roles women play on the ground and their involvement at the policy level.

On the other hand, the patriarchal legal structure also serves as a significant barrier to achieving gender equality. Indonesia's legal system, which largely remains rooted in patriarchal values, often overlooks women's rights in the management of natural resources. As explained by Nurlatifah, the existing legal system tends to favor men's interests, both in terms of access to resources and participation in decision-making processes (Nurlatifah et al., 2020). This structure creates deeply rooted inequities, where women not only lose access to resources but also miss opportunities to advocate for the needs of their communities.

Moreover, the limited access women have to education and relevant training is a critical factor that exacerbates this situation. Women often lack adequate access to

information and training on natural resource conservation. For instance, in the management of fishery resources, many women are unaware of their rights and responsibilities, making it difficult for them to contribute effectively to resource management. This lack of education not only hinders women's participation but also reinforces their dependence on an unjust system. (Pelani et al., 2019).

The lack of support from public policies also poses a significant barrier. Although various regulations have been designed to promote gender equality, the implementation of these policies is often ineffective. Despite the existence of legal frameworks aimed at empowering women, practical support is frequently unavailable. The insufficient allocation of budgets and resources for inclusive programs highlights the government's weak commitment to this issue. As a result, women remain marginalized in the management of natural resources, while environmental policies often fail to address their needs (Marsel, 2023).

Corruption and non-compliance in law enforcement are additional factors that exacerbate the limitations of environmental law in achieving gender equality. Although Indonesia possesses relatively robust environmental legal instruments, law enforcement often proves ineffective due to corrupt practices (Jazuli, 2015). This situation not only undermines environmental protection efforts but also exacerbates gender inequality. Women, who often bear the brunt of natural resource exploitation, frequently lack adequate legal protection. The limitations of environmental law in achieving gender equality in Indonesia represent a complex and multidimensional issue. Structural barriers, including the lack of recognition for women's roles, patriarchal legal systems, limited access to education, weak public policies, corruption, and resource constraints, create a significant gap between women's potential and their actual contributions.

Addressing this issue requires a holistic and collaborative approach. The government, civil society, and international organizations must work together to establish more inclusive legal frameworks and policies, ensure women's access to education and training, and strengthen the enforcement of fair laws. These steps are crucial for achieving gender equality in environmental management, fostering a more equitable and sustainable environment for all.

The Potential of Ecofeminism to Enhance Gender and Environmental Justice

In her book “Le Féminisme ou la Mort”, Françoise d'Eaubonne introduces the concept of ecofeminism, which combines the struggle for gender equality with efforts to preserve the environment. D'Eaubonne highlights that the roots of both the oppression of women and the exploitation of the environment lie in the dominant patriarchal system, where both nature and women are treated as objects of exploitation. Therefore, ecofeminism calls for the integration of gender perspectives in natural resource management (NRM) to create ecological sustainability while also ensuring social justice.

D'Eaubonne also underscores the importance of involving women in decision-making processes related to natural resource management (NRM). Women often serve as

custodians of tradition and local wisdom, playing a significant role in environmental sustainability. Their knowledge of traditional farming methods, water conservation, and local forest management offers community-based solutions that are more adaptive to climate change. By providing greater opportunities for participation, women can contribute to the creation of more inclusive policies. González emphasizes that such involvement not only yields ecological benefits but also strengthens women's positions within society (González, 2021). Moreover, the capitalist system, with its focus on economic growth, often exacerbates gender inequality and environmental degradation. This system promotes excessive consumerism, which not only harms ecosystems but also marginalizes women in terms of access to resources. D'Eaubonne advocates for a transformation toward a more equitable and sustainable economic system. She proposes a new paradigm that integrates sustainability values with gender equality, positioning women as key agents of change.

To support this vision, strategic measures are essential. Education and training should be prioritized. Providing women with access to training in conservation and sustainable management practices can enhance their capacity as primary actors in natural resource management (NRM). Programs such as training in eco-friendly agricultural techniques not only empower women but also ensure the sustainability of local ecosystems.

Recognition of traditional knowledge is also a vital element. Women's knowledge of local ecological practices is often overlooked in modern policies, despite its potential to serve as a foundation for more effective sustainability solutions. Therefore, integrating local wisdom into formal policies can create a more holistic approach to natural resource management (NRM). Additionally, collaboration between women, local communities, governments, and non-governmental organizations is crucial to strengthening NRM efforts. Such collaboration fosters synergies that ensure women's voices are heard at every stage of decision-making. Inclusive and gender-sensitive policy support is also essential to protect women's rights in accessing and controlling resources.

Awareness and activism serve as other important tools. Campaigns that emphasize gender and environmental issues can enhance public understanding of the importance of involving women in NRM. Women's activism in environmental matters often becomes a driving force for policy changes that are more gender-responsive and environmentally friendly. Finally, economic empowerment is a key factor. Providing women with access to economic resources, such as capital and business training, can help them become more self-reliant and increase their contributions to NRM. Economically independent women tend to have greater bargaining power within society, enabling them to participate more actively in sustainability efforts.

Through these measures, women's roles in NRM can be optimized. The ecofeminist approach, as envisioned by d'Eaubonne, offers a transformative vision that not only advocates for gender justice but also ensures ecological sustainability. Involving women as leaders in NRM is not just a strategic step but also an urgent necessity for a fairer and more sustainable future.

CONCLUSION

The role of women in sustainable natural resource management in Indonesia is crucial, yet often overlooked in public policy and legal frameworks. Women, particularly in indigenous and rural communities, play a significant role in preserving ecosystems, managing resources, and ensuring food and water security. Despite this, they face systemic barriers such as limited participation in decision-making processes, insufficient access to education and resources, and the persistence of patriarchal legal structures. These challenges hinder their ability to fully contribute to environmental management. Moreover, current environmental laws in Indonesia, though supportive in principle, often fail in practical implementation, further marginalizing women's contributions.

Ecofeminism, which highlights the connection between the exploitation of women and the environment under patriarchal systems, offers a valuable framework for addressing these issues. Integrating ecofeminist principles into Indonesian environmental policies could help bridge the gap between legal provisions and the lived experiences of women, ensuring more inclusive and effective resource management strategies.

To ensure a more inclusive and sustainable approach to environmental governance in Indonesia, it is crucial to strengthen gender-sensitive policies by explicitly incorporating gender perspectives into environmental laws, including clear indicators for policy design and implementation. Women's participation in decision-making processes related to environmental management must be enhanced, providing platforms for them to share their local knowledge and experiences. Educational programs in natural resource management should be tailored to empower women, particularly in rural and indigenous communities, while ensuring equal access to resources, training, and technologies. Cross-sector collaboration between the government, civil society, and international organizations is essential to dismantle patriarchal barriers and create inclusive policies that empower women. Furthermore, integrating ecofeminist principles into legal frameworks can promote equitable and sustainable natural resource management by addressing the intersection of gender and environmental justice. These recommendations collectively aim to advance gender equality and environmental sustainability by recognizing and supporting women's vital contributions to managing Indonesia's natural resources.

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