SUPPORTING ECOFEMINISM: WHO PLAYS THE ROLE IN EMPOWERING THE LIVING-ENVIRONMENT CARETAKERS’ FEMALE COMMUNITY IN SURAKARTA?

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Abstract

Living environment conservation has become the attention of government, society and household. All of these parties have important role in conserving the living environment. Women who constitute important element within households haven’t frequently been awarded opportunity to actively participate in environment conservation activities since they are marginalized. Meanwhile women have basic characteristics that can make them stay close to nature through domestic roles they undertake, such as gathering food and firewood, getting some water and looking after their children. Therefore, women frequently form groups in the society to empower themselves through conserving the living environment (eco-feminism movement), such as Kelompok Perempuan Joyosuran (Joyosuran Female Group) and Komunitas Perempuan Kelurahan Kemlayan (Kemlayan sub-district Female Community). The research identifies the roles of Surakarta local government, SPEK-HAM non-government organization (NGO) and families in empowering Kemlayan sub-district Female Community and Joyosuran Female Group regarding the living-environment maintenance in Surakarta. The primary data were collected through interviews with Joyosuran Female Group and Kemlayan sub-district Female Community members, Surakarta local government, SPEK HAM NGO and the families of the community members. The secondary data were collected through library studies. The analysis technique employed is Naila Kabeer’s model to identify to what extent is the role of the local government’s institutions, society and families in the process of women empowerment. The research result shows that 1) Surakarta local government plays the role in budgetary, regulations and supporting programs; 2) families has a role to provide support; 3) SPEK-HAM NGO has a role in forming the living-environment caretakers’ female community, providing fund and infrastructure of the program, becoming the intermediary between the society and the local government, conducting workshops and discussions, and also conducting programs such as trees planting, river reservation, trash sorting and recycling. The research concludes that SPEK HAM NGO has more dominant role in reinforcing Kemlayan sub-district Female Community and Joyosuran Female Group than that of Surakarta local government and families.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, living-environment conservation, family’s role, society role, government role

INTRODUCTION

Since the emersion of Sustainable Development Goals, the importance of environment conservation for sustainable development has become the attention of government and non-governmental institutions such as society, business and household (Guiriba, 2016). One of the Sustainable Development Goals is to achieve gender equality by women empowerment on all areas of life, one of them is environment conservation area. Unfortunately, women who constitute important element within households have not frequently been given enough opportunity to actively participate in environment conservation activities since they are marginalized. Marginalization of women goes hand in hand with the destruction of environment itself (Shiva & Mies, 2005). Meanwhile, women have basic characteristics that can make them stay close to nature through domestic roles they undertake, such as gathering food and firewood, getting some water and looking after their children (Aditya, 2016). The connection between women and nature is also created by their role in public institutions such as Women Farmer Group. Therefore, women frequently create groups (self-help group) in society to empower themselves through conserving the environment. Self-help group is effective to empower women because it stimulates them to act according to conditions.
and situations as well as urges them to be able to overcome all problems they face.

The relation between women and nature is usually known as ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a concept which examines the connection between women and nature, so later on, they can be called as “mother of nature” (Guiriba, 2016). Ecofeminism likens women to the nature itself which is always destroyed, exploited and irresponsibly treated. Ecofeminism sees that the degradation of environment as equal to the degradation of women and the degradation of women is equal to the degradation of family (Guiriba, 2016). This point of view strikes out ecofeminist movement which contributes actively in prevention of environmental destruction. As stated by Shiva and Mies (2005) the ecofeminist assumes conservation action as “world re-assembling” or “scars healing” processes which have been suffered by nature.

Previous research found that ecofeminist movement and women empowerment in environment conservation should be supported by all stakeholders to achieve significant life-change (Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2013; Guiriba, 2016; Seema, 2014). Unfortunately, women empowerment is often performed by only one stakeholder. If this situation happens, the responsibility and public trust in another stakeholder will slowly decrease (Cook, Wright, & Andersson, 2016). For example, when the empowerment is undertaken by non-governmental organization (NGO), since NGOs could possibly mobilize the society especially who is marginalized, they can provide proper education and training, be accurate in allocating resources, represent and make sure women participation, avoid any political interest or profit orientation (Ahamad, Hemlata, & Narayana, 2015; Kilby, 2011). On the other hand, NGOs also have some limitations such as budgeting, that is why the programs and human resource of women empowerment also need government support. Anyhow, government often does not play a role directly which makes the empowerment does not work optimally. Government only performs program socialization without any further movement, so women does not get any benefit. As a result, public trust in government as a policy maker will slowly getting down. Meanwhile, the business sector also has integral role in empowerment by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program (Kumar & Hitu, 2014; Abraham, 2013). So, another research suggests that women empowerment as a way to achieve sustainable development needs all stakeholders role including government, business, NGOs and even family or society (Guiriba, 2016; Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2013; Seema, 2014).

This article examines the empowerment of the environment caretakers' female community in Surakarta. They are Kelompok Perempuan Joyosuran (Joyosuran Female Group) and Komunitas Perempuan Kelurahan Kemlayan (Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community). Surakarta was chosen because the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community are located in sub-district of Surakarta and they actively participate in environment conservation to overcome environmental problems in each sub-district for almost seven years. The article aims at identifying the contribution of government, business, NGOs and family in supporting the empowerment of the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminisme is a “new concept for an old idea” which grows from many social movement—feminist movement, peace and ecology—in the end of 1970 and in the early of 1980. This concept becomes popular in relation to many protests and activities against environment destruction, which are originally triggered by recurrent ecological disaster (Shiva & Mies, 2005). Ecofeminism is defined as a concept which believes that women have basic characteristics that can make them stay close to nature through domestic roles they undertake, such as gathering food and firewood, getting some water and looking after their children (Aditya, 2016). Ecofeminism also explains why women called by “mother of nature” because women as equal as nature itself which is always destructed, exploited, and irresponsibly treated (Guiriba, 2016). This point of view strikes out ecofeminist movement which actively contribute in prevention of environmental destruction.

In the other hand, this point of view gets some arguments from (Rao, 2012; Murphy, 2013) who asked doubtly, “Is that true that only women are closer to nature rather than men?” since the understanding of ecofeminism could vary in some areas from capitalism to patriarchy social
structure. In addition, not all of women support what ecofeminist movements do. According to Shiva and Mies (2005), some parts of women society, especially the ones who live in urban areas and come from middle-class society, is still difficult to accept and to understand that there is a relation between women’s freedom and nature. So, feminst environmentalist is proposed as a new concept which assumes the relation between women and nature depends on social and cultural background (Rao, 2012). In this article, the author uses the term ecofeminism as a concept which sees women as equal as nature itself which is always destructed, exploited, and irresponsibly treated. The researches about ecofeminism focus on many areas such as the role of ecofeminist movement in environmental conservation (Mukherjee, 2013), the role of ecofeminism in developing country such as Chipko Movement in India (Aditya, 2016) and ecofeminism as a resistant act towards gender inequality such as love canal movement in America (Candraningrum & Hunga, 2013).

Self help group
Self help group is a concept which plays an important role in empowerment especially in rural areas. Since self help group’s majority member are women, the existence of this group increases the effectiveness of women empowerment program. Self help group usually consists of 10 to 20 women and has a regular meeting which is held to conduct experience sharing to overcome problems and issues they face. Self help group has a strong relation with some NGOs which provide education and training to build members’ competence especially in socializing. Self help group is an important tool which helps the rural women to acquire power for their self-supportive life. Empowering women is not just for meeting their economics need, but also for getting more holistic social development which can increase women self confidence. If they have self confidence, the effect of women empowerment will stay longer than merely economic result (Saravanan, 2016). The researches about self help group usually focus on poverty alleviation (Devi & Narasalah, 2017), and women social and economic capacity development (Saravanan, 2016).

Women empowerment
Empowerment means “giving authority” since power means not only “effort” but also “power—control” so that “empower” is not only stands for “able” but also “having a power—control”. Johnson and Redmod (in Wrihatnolo and Dwijowijoto, 2007) assume empowerment as an art “…at last empowerment is about art, it is about value we believe…” which means empowering can not define as an “interruption” or “uniforming” and we have to give some spaces to diversity of abilities development so that empowerment is defined as a natural process.

Wrihatnolo and Dwijowijoto (2007) explain the importance of empowerment. First, empowerment is seen as an answer of the implementation of development program in 1970 to 1990 which tends to be sentralistic. This condition causes the dead of society inovation, creation and participation to understand and to fulfill their needs in the development process. Second, empowerment is an answer to public policies which tend to forget the interests of the grassroot level. Last, empowerment is an answer to society fate which is still dominated by the underdeveloped and the poor ones. So, if we see the empowerment concept from women perspective, it can be concluded that women empowerment is a process, step or even action done to give women not only power but also power—control in various fields such as politics, law, education and economics.

Sundstrom, Paxton, Wang and Linberg (2017) see empowerment as a multifaced concept which can be defined into some aspects, including rights, resources, options, perception, relation and power. Meanwhile, Janssens (2010) says that empowerment is identically defined as an possesses the capacity to make effective choices that is to translate one's choices into desired actions and outcomes. Regarding to the explanation, it can be drawn that women empowerment is a process to posses women's capacity to make them not only “able” but also “have power—control” so they can achieve equality between them and men (Janssens, 2010; Wrihatnolo & Dwijowijoto, 2007; Sundstrom, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2017).

Longwe finds that women empowerment has five important aspects, such as 1) welfare; 2) access; 3) consciousness; 4) participation and 5) control (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 2010).
Stakeholder role

Role refers to someone's function or action in occupying position in society (Soekanto, 2002). Based on institutional perspective, role is seen as organizational actions towards an occasion. Stakeholder means people or a people or a group who have interest in a policy, program or project. So, it can be said that stakeholder role is an action and function of a person or a group which have interest in a project or program. The stakeholder role includes 1) regulatory role, which means stakeholder role is as a decision maker in form of regulation and law in program implementation; 2) dinamisatory role, which means stakeholder role is as a participation drivers and stability keepers in the program implementation; 3) facilitatory role, which means stakeholder role is as a communicator in the program implementation through provision of facilities and infrastructure (Labolo, 2006).

METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative method. The data collection used in this research are interview and library study. Interview was conducted in community groups (RW) 8 Joyosuran Sub-District. The interviewees are the members of the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community, Departement of Environment of Surakarta, Departement of Women Empowerment and Children Protection of Surakarta, and SPEK-HAM Non-Govermental Organization (NGO). Meanwhile, the gender analysis uses Naila Kabeer's Social Relation Approach. Kabeer develops an analysis model which focuses on gender inequality including five concept, they are 1) development as increasing human well-being; 2) social relation; 3) institutional analysis; 4) institutional gender policies; and 5) immediate, underlying and structural causes. This article only uses third concept—institutional analysis to identify each stakeholder role contribution in empowerment process. The institutional analysis has five basic aspects, they are 1) rules, this may be official rule such as law and this may be unofficial and expressed through norms and values; 2) activities, can be regulative, productive and distributive; 3) resources, whether they are human, money or even information; 4) people, society component who is involved in empowerment process; 5) power, institutions embody relations of authority and control (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ecofeminism in Surakarta

Some sub-districts in Surakarta have already female communities which actively takes part in conserving environment, such as the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community. Those female groups work in self help group form and conducts a regular meeting to overcome environmental problems at sub-district levels. The Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community is a women group in the Kemlayan Sub-District who actively participate in “Sumber Rejeki” Bank of Trash (bank sampah) management program. The idea of environment conservation comes from RW 2 PKK group who does some activities to keep the environment stay clean and healthy through trash sorting. The Kemlayan Sub-District is one of the areas which has littered problems. In 2014, “Sumber Rejeki” Bank of Trash was made to overcome that problems. Nowadays, there are already 25 members of “Sumber Rejeki” Bank of Trash who regulary collect household waste twice a month to be pondered. In the middle of the month, those members deposit anorganic trash such as bottle, paper, cans and plastic wrap to be exchanged with money. The bank activities increase the housewife income in the Kemlayan Sub-District and also supports 80 percent by Kemlayan Sub-District’s gender aware a pre-cooperation.

The Joyosuran Female Group which was formed in 2009 comes from the alliance of many female groups in community societies (RW) Joyosuran Sub-District; Permata Group, Kenanga Group and Cempaka Group. Their environmental problem was appeared when people in the Joyosuran Sub-District used to litter which causes annual flood in Jenes river. Those problems got worse when by Putri Cempo landfill which made the Joyosuran Sub-District environment looked shabby. In 2009, the accompaniment and initiation of SPEK-HAM NGO made those female groups who used to work in community level moved to the female group at sub-district level called the Joyosuran Female Group. The Joyosuran Female Group does many activities to conserve environment such as trash sorting, river reservation, disaster and flood areas mapping, utilization of yard field for food crops,
Institutional analysis who takes a part in women empowerment

The institutional analysis which makes gender inequality can not be done in one institution only, but it also needs cross-institution such as household, family, society, government and business. This research identifies the institutions who take a part in empowerment of environment caretakers' female community in Surakarta as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Institutional analysis who take a part in empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Facts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Local Government</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>As a regulator through Environment Department, Women Empowerment and Children Protection Department, and street level bureaucrat in each sub-district. Formulating environment conservation programs such as Integrated Waste Management Program (Pengelolaan Sampah Terpadu), Bank of Trash Program and Management of Open Living-Space Program.</td>
<td>Local government's role has not run optimally yet because they used to do program socialization only without any further actions. Even the socialization was only held once a year, so it made the society participation decreased day by day. In addition, local government tends to have complicated bureaucracy if it deals with budget and monetary thingies. The budget for empowerment is usually given in a small amount.</td>
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<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>As a facilitator to give budgetary support which local government cannot afford. The budgetary support often comes through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).</td>
<td>The budgetary support is given in a small amount so the female groups must take the initiative to obtain funds from the joint actions.</td>
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<td><strong>Non-Governmental Organization</strong></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>SPEK-HAM NGO has double role as facilitator and dinamisator. Female groups could be formed through the initiative of SPEK-HAM NGO. NGO provides training and education in environment conservation field, such as trash sorting, river reservation, mapping of disaster and flood areas, utilization of yard field for food crops, household waste recycling, and tree planting. NGO also conductsa regular meeting once a month to discuss the upcoming program and the progress achieved. NGO provides budgetary support to run female groups' programs.</td>
<td>The capacity of the female groups is build through the activities that NGO provides. Anyhow, there is an authority delegation of local government to help NGO in technical things matter. By so, the local government works &quot;behind the table&quot; only and NGO takes part ini communicating with society. It is a fact that NGO can posibbly mobilize the participation of society in local level, but it cannot be run optimally when local government does not give budgetary support, because NGO also has some resource limitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Family plays dinamisatory role which make sure women to take a part in female groups eventhough the gender ideology is entrenched in society. Family also provides support and motivation.</td>
<td>There are many husbands and children who support women to take an active part in every female groups' activities because they consider those activities as a good movement.</td>
</tr>
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Five aspects of social relation shared by institution

Kabeer develops institutional relation framework towards program’s effectiveness by analyzing five aspects shared by institution, they are 1) rule; 2) activity; 3) resource; 4) people and 5) power (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 2010). The analysis is described as follows:

1. Supporting rules

It regards to “how things get done” which can be formed in institutional law and regulation or even unofficial rule such as norms, values, tradition and culture (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 2010). Local government in Surakarta through the department of environment has a regulation about the bank of trash and environmental programs based on Law No. 28 Year 2008 about Waste Management. Another rule is stated in Mayoral Decree of Surakarta Municipality No. 4/2003 about Society Empowerment Sub-district Organization (Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Kelurahan) which refers to participation of society in every empowerment activities. Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Kelurahan motivates the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community to keep moving forward in empowerment process as their contribution for environment conservation. Besides, there is another rule called Local Regulation of Surakarta Municipality No. 11/2011 about Society Subdistrict Organization (Lembaga Kemasyarakatan Kelurahan). In addition, local government at sub-district level also sets a rule at a down level in form of decree. The Kemlayan Sub-District sets Head of Village Decree (Surat Keputusan Lurah) No 6/V1/2016 to optimize environment conservation through “Sumber Rejeki” Bank of Trash. Meanwhile, the Joyosuran Sub-district also does the same thing to give acknowledgement towards the Joyosuran Female Group.

2. Lack of activities distribution

All activities held by female groups in empowerment process is normatively stated in local government rules. Even though it seems like the local government of Surakarta is active in regulatory activities, but these activities are practically, productively, distributively and actively held by SPEK-HAM NGO. It is proved by their actions to intentionally create female groups, to provide training and education, workshop, regular discussion and initiative of program and activities such as waste management through 3R (Reuse, Reduce, Recycle), 1000 Perempuan Menyapu (a thousand females sweep), Gerakan Cinta Bumi (Earth Love Movement), production of organic fertilizer, and tree planting along the Jenes river. SPEK-HAM NGO can possibly coordinate empowerment activities through their capability to communicate, so it increases society participation at local level. SPEK-HAM NGO has more integrity in empowerment process. Therefore, SPEK-HAM NGO knows every problem faced by the female groups and how to solve them, their upcoming programs and the reality in empowerment program. This fact is strengthened by (Saravanan, 2016) who states that self help group has a strong relation with NGOs more than another stakeholder.

3. Limited resources

Even though SPEK-HAM NGO can possibly coordinate empowerment program at local level, it cannot be optimal without budgetary support from local government. Financially, the empowerment of the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community is already supported by local government through the budget provision (IDR 15 billions). Unfortunately, the funding is not sufficient enough to conduct all female groups’ programs and activities. Based on the interview result, the local government budget is often allocated to the Pos Pelayanan Terpadu (PPT, Integrated Service Center) and another unperforming units, that is why the female groups should propose the budgetary support through CSR program.

Meanwhile, the female group empowerment also needs sufficient human resources. Local government has already provided it through all the environmental program socialization and counseling activities. Unfortunately, government staffs rarely have intention to take a direct part in those activities because all the technical thingies have already been given to NGO. SPEK-HAM NGO has Division of Sustainability Livelihood to undertake the empowerment activities, but it does not have sufficient personnel to take a direct part in every activity.
4. Society conflict

These conflicts refer to class, gender and social inequality in society. Surakarta is a city which is dominated by Javanese norms so that the empowerment of the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community often collides in those norms and values. Women are considered as a “konco wingking” who has to be “keep silent” in the house, doing domestic activities, taking after their children and cannot actively take a part in social or public activities. Fortunately, family shows up as a motivator who gives support. There are many husbands and children who support women take an active part in every female groups’ activities because they consider those activities as a good movement.

On the other hand, society shows kind of denial action towards the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community. It causes an organizational conflict between the Joyosuran Female Group and PKK group at sub-district level. PKK group assumes that their position as a female group at sub-district level is taken by the Joyosuran Female Group. This is very serious conflict which makes those two female groups never can be sinergized.

5. Power and authority

These aspects refer to institutions embody the authority relations and control towards empowerment process. For about six years, the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community formulate programs and activities based on their own initiative, eventhough those programs and activities should be syncronized with local government programs. Practically, the power and authority in decision making is underlayed in each chairman of the female groups by considering the member’s suggestion which is discussed in monthly meeting and comes democratically. It is formulated based on the problems and issues that they face such as tree planting to prevent annual flood. 70 percent members of female groups have already participated in government organizations whether at sub-district level, parliament, political parties and have actively involved in government development program such as Kota Layak Anak (Children-friendly City). Those are evidences that power and authority in empowerment process are underlayed in each member of female groups.

DISCUSSION

The result shows that ecolfeminist movements in Surakarta (the Joyosuran Female Group and the Kemlayan Sub-district Female Community) reaches high participation level in environment conservation activities, especially in annual flood prevention and trash management activities. Those female groups overcome environmental problems in each sub-district through their own desire and initiative. This result strengthens Shiva and Mies (2005) who define conservational movement as a “healing process” on nature destruction. The Joyosuran Female Group tries their best to prevent annual flood by trash sorting, tree planting, producing organic fertilize and reserving the river. Those activities can be run dispite of deficiencies of resources. As stated by Longwe, the empowerment of female groups can be achieved through five aspects including welfare, access, consciousness, participation and control eventhough the result has not yet reached optimum state because of many obstacles, such as the entrenched gender ideology in society.

The achievement of empowerment process cannot be separated from contribution of stakeholders’ role, they are local government of Surakarta as a regulator, business as a facilitator, SPEK-HAM NGO as dinamisator and facilitator and also family as a dinamisator. Even though all the stakeholders contribute their role in supporting ecolfeminist movement, SPEK-HAM NGO has a major role in empowerment itself. This result is strengthen by Saravanan (2017) who findsthat every self help group has an intimate relationship with NGO rather than another institution because NGO could accomodate and give women capacity building activities better through regular meeting. This result also supports the theories from Ahamad, Hemlata & Narayana (2015) and Kilby (2011) who state that NGO has a major role in women empowerment. Their actions affect women's trust in local government especially at sub-district level since they seemed like having less-participation in environmental conservation program. Meanwhile, in fact, they actually play
a dominant role in overcoming and preventing disasters at sub-district level. As stated by Cook, Wright, & Andersson (2016), this disease shows the decreasing government responsivity as a policy maker.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that local government, business, NGO and family has a different role contribution in empowering the environment caretakers' female community in Surakarta. Local government has dominant roles as a regulator through program and laws formulating. Business plays a facilitatory role through budgetary support in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). NGO has dominant role as facilitator and dinamisator through the initiation of female group forming, program and activities formulating, providing workshop, training, education and conducting a regular meeting or discussion. In addition, NGO also plays roles through fund provision. Meanwhile, family plays dominant roles as a dinamisator who makes sure women participation in ecofeminist movement through providing support and motivation even though the gender ideology is entrenched in society. It can be said that those above mentioned stakeholders are supporting ecofeminism, but they have not worked maximally yet. The institutional relation in supporting ecofeminism have not reached shareholder level because each stakeholder plays their role separately without any cooperation and synergy. Therefore, the empowerment is dominated by one stakeholder; NGO, which has a strong relation with society and can possibly coordinate all the empowerment activities at local level (sub-district). This research suggests gender mainstreaming in every institution whether it is government or non-governmental organization such as business, NGO or even society. By strengthening gender mainstreaming, the gender awareness at central level and local level will increase, so the stakeholder can understand that the existence of women in environment conservation is an important matter and has to be supported by all stakeholders.

REFERENCES


