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# The Role of Women in Controlling Environmental Crimes with an Emphasis on Community-Based Social Services

1. Seyedeh Razieh. Tabib Loghmani <sup>1</sup>: Department of Criminal Law and Criminology, Bu.C, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran
2. Esmaeil. Abdollahi <sup>2</sup>: Department of Criminal Law and Criminology, Bu.C, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran
3. Abbas. Barzegarzadeh <sup>3</sup>: Department of International Law, Bu.C, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran

\*corresponding author's email: [e.abdollahi@iaubushehr.ac.ir](mailto:e.abdollahi@iaubushehr.ac.ir)

## ABSTRACT

Environmental crimes constitute one of the most critical contemporary challenges, threatening both ecological integrity and human societies. The role of women, as influential actors within society, is of substantial importance in the prevention, reduction, and control of such crimes. The utilization of community-based social services as an effective framework for controlling environmental crimes can transform women into key agents for environmental protection and the realization of environmental justice. This study examines the role of women in controlling environmental crimes with an emphasis on community-based social services. The research adopts a descriptive–analytical approach, and data collection is based on library research and secondary sources, including scholarly articles, authoritative books, and relevant studies. The findings indicate that women, due to their multiple social roles and their cultural and educational influence, can serve as significant agents in reducing environmental crimes. Their participation in social service activities, such as local education programs, community awareness initiatives, and engagement in non-governmental organizations, significantly strengthens social monitoring of environmental behaviors and reduces environmental harm. Moreover, the development of mechanisms such as empowering women at the local level and providing equal opportunities for participation in environmental decision-making processes enhances the role of women in controlling these crimes. The role of women in controlling environmental crimes through community-oriented social services represents a substantial latent capacity which, through appropriate planning, can be transformed into an effective strategy for addressing environmental challenges. Strengthening women's awareness, supporting their participation in decision-making, and improving the quality and scope of community-based social services can sustainably contribute to the reduction of environmental crimes.

**Keywords:** *Women; Environmental Crimes; Social Services; Community-Based; Crime Control.*

## Introduction

The protection of the environment requires the conscious attention and active participation of all segments of society. Among these groups, women constitute one of the primary actors who both influence environmental conditions and are affected by environmental issues. Moreover, the concept of responsibility and awareness thereof can assist women—and subsequently society at large—in protecting the environment and increasing participation in environmentally friendly activities. Social mobilization should be organized in such a way that every individual becomes a supporter and guardian of the environment. Community-based justice is a relatively new field that



emerged in North America during the 1970s, at a time when alternative approaches to the criminal justice system—such as dispute resolution—were transitioning into recognized practices and approaches. This movement emerged alongside the victims' rights movement, which advocated for greater victim participation in the criminal justice process and the compensation of harm (1-3). Given that a substantial proportion of crimes in Iran, including environmental crimes, are confronted with imprisonment, and considering the ineffectiveness of imprisonment in preventing environmental crimes and the proven inconsistency of incarceration with the objective of offender rehabilitation, imprisonment cannot be regarded as an appropriate instrument for the reform of environmental offenders. Furthermore, the inflation of prison populations has intensified the structural problems of prison environments to such an extent that policymakers have been compelled to adopt policies aimed at reducing prison populations (4-6). Therefore, with the growth of cities and the consequent increase in urban populations, numerous environmental challenges threaten urban ecosystems.

Women are the principal agents for transferring environmental culture and environmental literacy to future generations. When environmental culture becomes internalized among women, enabling them to understand the principle of ecological legality, they can effectively transmit this cultural heritage to children and adolescents (7-9). Women play a vital role in reforming consumption culture. Due to their prominent position in household management, they can exert substantial influence in planning and implementing initiatives aimed at improving environmental conditions within the home and their neighborhoods. Moreover, they are regarded as the main pillar for transferring environmental culture and awareness to future generations and play a crucial role in preserving spiritual heritage and traditional environmental knowledge. Women have responded to environmental challenges through diverse approaches, and these experiences have increasingly highlighted local capacities and their empowerment in confronting environmental problems. These capacities are largely formed through practical experience and close interaction with nature rather than exclusively through formal education. This issue is particularly salient in developing countries, where access to formal education may be limited. Understanding that women perceive the survival and continuity of their families as dependent upon the protection of the surrounding natural environment motivates them to undertake effective actions for environmental conservation and protection (10).

With the expansion of environmental crises, many governments have turned toward the formulation and implementation of legal norms and regulations for environmental protection. However, the mere existence of legal frameworks does not guarantee the realization of environmental objectives. In reality, women's awareness and active participation in environmental protection constitute key determinants of the success of sustainable environmental policies (11-13). Furthermore, historical and social evidence indicates that women—due to their central role within the family, their inherent inclination toward care and harmony with nature, and their social capacities for initiating cultural transformation—can play a substantial role in shaping and promoting sustainable environmental behavioral patterns. These characteristics have led environmental experts and social criminologists to emphasize the necessity of harnessing women's capacities in controlling environmental crimes and expanding community-based social services (14-17).

## Literature Review

Alahdadi and Goudarzi (11) demonstrated in their study entitled *Studying the Sociological Role of Women in Urban Environmental Culture (Case Study: Women in Khorramabad City)* that urban environmental culture, as one

of the primary resources of social action, is shaped by a set of social and cultural determinants, including social health, cultural consumption patterns, social trust, health-oriented lifestyles, social responsibility, and media consumption patterns. In this regard, most urban environmental challenges and problems are directly or indirectly reflections and consequences of this environmental culture, as they become manifest through the environmental behaviors and actions of citizens.

Mousavi and Bayat (13) stated in their article entitled *Social Prevention of Environmental Crimes* that the main objective is for society to function as an active institution in environmental protection and to encourage individuals to assume responsibility for behaviors harmful to nature. Their findings indicate that increasing public awareness and social participation can significantly contribute to the reduction of environmental crimes. Consequently, the development of educational programs and cooperation with non-governmental and local organizations in this field is of particular importance. By creating a culture of environmental protection and motivating individuals to fulfill their responsibilities, society can progress toward greater sustainability and health.

Babakhani (16), in the article *Environmental Crimes in the Measure of Restorative Justice: From Policies to Programs*, argued that the restorative justice approach to environmental crimes offers two major advantages. On one hand, it allows for consideration of the multidimensional nature of environmental injustices and focuses on a broad spectrum of the needs of "non-human" victims, including the need for compensation and restoration of past damages in pursuit of restitution, acceptance of responsibility, and participation and cooperation in the process of addressing environmental crimes. On the other hand, restorative processes and programs also provide opportunities for preventing the recurrence of crime and future environmental harm.

Alinejad (12), in the article *Iran's Criminal Policy against Crimes against National Environmental Resources*, emphasized that the principal issue is environmental degradation and the destruction of national resources, and that it is necessary to examine what criminal policy the legislator has adopted for preventive purposes. The study aimed to identify environmental crimes against national environmental resources and the punishments stipulated in the law, as well as to explain domestic environmental criminological approaches. The results revealed that, due to the severity of sanctions lacking deterrent effect and their inconsistency with the principle of individualized punishment, the existing punitive framework is ineffective. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive and systematic planning for utilizing the capacity of civil institutions to advance Iran's judicial criminal policy. In summary, the prevention of crimes against national environmental resources requires a modern legislative perspective and advanced criminological approaches.

Gholami (15), in the article *Analysis of Situational and Social Prevention in Dealing with Environmental Crimes*, argued that given the damage inflicted on the environment by humans, the most important preventive methods are situational and social prevention, which seek to reduce crime through changes in the physical environment and methods of supervision and control. The strategies of these approaches focus partly on eliminating the root causes of crime, partly on environmental modifications, partly on controlling offenders, and partly on protecting victims. In this context, the scope of environmental crimes resulting from pollution is far greater than those involving destruction and annihilation. Regardless of the dual conceptual foundation of these categories, the crimes within each group possess distinct characteristics that must be evaluated separately during analysis.

Kashkulian et al. (18), in their article *Environmental Crimes and Strategies for Their Prevention*, identified major environmental problems, including air pollution caused by industrial activities, contamination of water resources through urban and industrial wastewater discharge, lack of standardization in municipal waste management, and

soil pollution caused by toxic materials and construction debris. They identified environmental crimes such as threats to public health, intentional destruction of trees, overgrazing, and illegal construction. Preventive strategies include legislative reforms, training programs for legal professionals and judges, the use of alternatives to imprisonment, public participation, and the involvement of non-governmental and civil society organizations. They further emphasized that the prevalence of corporate environmental crime necessitates the recognition of criminal liability for legal persons.

Tavakoli and Pari Zanganeh (8), in the study *Evaluating the Level of Awareness and Potential of Women in Environmental Protection: Case Study of Zanjan City*, reported that the research was applied in purpose and descriptive-survey in nature. The statistical population consisted of women residing in Zanjan City, and based on Cochran's formula, 400 participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. Data were collected using both library research and field methods (questionnaires). Content validity and reliability, assessed via Cronbach's alpha, were confirmed. Data analysis employed the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and one-way analysis of variance. The findings indicated that higher educational levels significantly improve environmental knowledge and that urban areas with higher welfare and income levels demonstrate greater attention to environmental issues. The results also revealed that spatial urban classifications differ from classifications based on environmental awareness and knowledge, creating challenges for environmental education and public engagement.

Niaghi (7), in the article *The Role of Women and Their Empowerment in Sustainable Environmental Development*, explained that following the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development framework in 2000, countries committed to two fundamental actions concerning women: first, planning and policy development aimed at empowering women and increasing their participation at foundational levels of society; and second, establishing mechanisms for capacity building to enhance effective planning and environmental management. The study examined the relationship between women's empowerment and their role in sustainable environmental development, arguing that gender discrimination—particularly in social and managerial roles and in access to education and employment—significantly contributes to environmental problems. The study concluded that sustainable environmental development is unattainable without increasing women's awareness, facilitating their social participation, and enhancing their managerial capacities on an equal footing with men.

Knust (19), in the article *Environmental Crimes: Steps Toward a More Holistic System of Environmental Crime Control*, provided a comprehensive review of the origins, methods, and potential interventions related to environmental crimes. The COM-B model was applied as a comprehensive behavioral framework to better understand environmental crime and potential crime control strategies by identifying capabilities, opportunities, and motivations that lead to criminal behavior against the environment. The findings demonstrated that a permanent, multi-level, and interdisciplinary network of diverse actors is essential for an effective and holistic environmental crime control system. The collection, integration, and consolidation of data into centralized databases, along with establishing a permanent relationship between law and science, were identified as vital components of an effective environmental crime control system.

White (14), in the article *Environmental Crime and the Harm Prevention Criminalist*, emphasized the role of the "pracademic" in bridging academia and environmental protection. The study examined how evidence-based research and theoretical innovations in environmental crime prevention can be transformed into practical interventions, particularly in the context of illegal fishing. It further explored the importance of integrating academic scholarship with practical experience as part of applied criminology. The article introduced the concept of the "harm

prevention criminalist,” a role combining skills in crime and site assessment, interpersonal communication, collaborative engagement, and horizon scanning as a potentially critical component of future crime prevention strategies.

Lynch et al. (20), in the article *Situational Crime Prevention and the Ecological Regulation of Green Crime: A Review and Discussion*, argued that while situational crime prevention calls for innovative non-penal justice policies, it has not been widely adopted by criminologists focusing on environmental crime control. They observed that numerous innovative environmental social control practices exist outside criminological literature, whereas green criminologists’ empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the ineffectiveness of traditional punitive responses to environmental crime. The authors reviewed the application of situational crime prevention theory by environmental protection criminologists and presented examples of environmental social control policies used by different countries that align with situational crime prevention principles. They concluded that although situational prevention is valuable, it is insufficient alone, as environmental crime is driven by larger structural economic forces.

The present study, entitled *The Role of Women in Controlling Environmental Crimes with an Emphasis on Community-Based Social Services*, demonstrates its novelty by focusing on women’s educational, cultural, and participatory roles as key actors in reducing environmental crimes and by integrating their participation with community-based social services. Unlike previous research, which has largely emphasized general policies, punitive approaches, and prevention theories, this study specifically concentrates on the convergence of women’s participation with social services and the creation of public awareness platforms. Moreover, the application of a multidimensional approach to harness women’s social capacities and its contemporaneity in comparison with prior studies constitute additional distinguishing features. By addressing existing gaps in the literature and offering participatory and educational strategies, this research contributes substantively to the advancement of environmental crime prevention scholarship.

## Theoretical Foundations

### 1. Environmental Crime

Green crime refers to any act or omission that causes severe damage and harm to the environment and seriously endangers human health. The purpose of crimes that lead to environmental pollution is the discharge, dissemination, or mixing of foreign substances into water, air, soil, or land to the extent that their physical, chemical, or biological quality becomes harmful to humans, other living organisms, or plants, or that human-made effects or structures are adversely altered (21).

In general terms, crimes against the environment, considering their nature, are commonly classified into two fundamental categories:

A. Crimes committed against non-human living entities of the environment, encompassing all plant and animal organisms. Under the Law on Protection and Improvement of the Environment, among the duties of the Department of Environment is the prevention and avoidance of any kind of pollution and any form of destructive conduct. Any act that disrupts ecological balance and is detrimental to the environment falls within this scope. In addition, all matters relating to wild animals and aquatic species in internal waters are included. Pursuant to Clause 2 of Article 6 of the same law, the destruction of forests and rangelands is also among the acts that disturb environmental equilibrium and is therefore considered criminal conduct.

B. Crimes committed against the inanimate components of the environment, such as water and air, soil, noise, and chemical pollution (22).

## **2. The Concept of Alternatives to Imprisonment**

Legal scholars, criminologists, and penologists worldwide have critically assessed the practice of sentencing offenders who commit minor crimes to imprisonment. Iranian legal scholars and criminologists have likewise sought mechanisms to replace imprisonment with alternative sanctions for such offenders. Ultimately, following extensive deliberations, the legislator enacted alternatives to imprisonment within the Islamic Penal Code on April 21, 2013 (6). Among the cultural, economic, and political challenges and gaps surrounding alternatives to imprisonment, cultural challenges are the most influential in the implementation of such sanctions. The most important cultural gaps include a relatively prison-centered orientation within the judiciary, a prison-oriented public attitude, and insufficient culture-building. In analyzing the economic gaps of alternatives to imprisonment, shortages in judicial institutions and inadequate facilities and technology constitute the most significant challenges. In Iran, there is no particularly influential or noteworthy political challenge affecting the implementation of alternatives to imprisonment (5).

## **3. The Concept of Community-Based Services**

Today, criminal sciences are witnessing the emergence of a new penology that emphasizes restricting the use of prison to dangerous offenders and employing the capacity of the community to rehabilitate non-dangerous and reformable offenders. This penology is grounded in a “risk management” perspective. Under this view, a conviction is issued not on the basis of the offense or the offender’s personality, but rather on the basis of the “presence of risk,” which enables the expansion of dual control. First, intensified supervision over highly dangerous offenders; and second, lower-intensity, lower-cost control over less dangerous offenders. Accordingly, the theory of “continuous control” replaces the theory of “continuous rehabilitation.” In this way, a new category of sanctions—often referred to as “community-oriented sanctions”—enters the discourse of criminal policy. One of the most common forms of community-based punishment is “community service,” which the Islamic Penal Code enacted in 2013 refers to as “community services.” This sanction, which has now expanded in scope and has become a substitute for other punishments, reflects the ideal of working for the benefit of society within the sphere of human community and criminal justice systems (23).

One advantage of substituting community services for imprisonment in environmental crimes concerns its economic consequences. In principle, it is the performance of the criminal justice system that can, through selecting appropriate institutions aligned with societal needs, reduce negative economic consequences and various economic pressures, or conversely, through inappropriate performance, impose additional costs on other sectors (24). As previously noted, the criminal justice system’s tendency to rely on imprisonment as the primary sanction for environmental crimes has imposed substantial costs on the state and society, such that even the costs of the punishment extend to the family of the environmental offender. At present, in many legal systems, imprisonment has become the most expensive and cost-intensive form of punishment. The economic perspective on punishment has, to some extent, made criminal law more cautious in choosing optimal sanctions and assists it in achieving utilitarian objectives, because the origin of the economic approach to law is utilitarianism; from this perspective, the aim of criminal law is to reduce the social costs of crime (costs resulting from crime and its prevention) (25).

## **4. Requirements of Community-Based Justice**



Community-based justice is regarded as a new movement within the field of criminology. Since crime wounds the social conscience and disrupts social order, the structure of judicial justice is driven to remedy the damages that have occurred, and the parties are permitted to contribute synergistically to this process. Community-based justice is a process through which all persons involved in a criminal incident come together so that, through mutual participation, they may devise solutions regarding the effects and consequences of the criminal act and the future of the victim, the offender, and the community after the occurrence of the crime (2). By enacting the Criminal Procedure Code in 2013 and the Islamic Penal Code in 2013, the Iranian legislator took serious and new steps toward recognizing the rights of victims and offenders in pursuit of proceedings grounded in community-based justice. Postponement of sentencing, suspension of the execution of punishment, conditional release, mediation, the decision to discontinue prosecution, and similar measures are among the innovations and positive developments introduced by these laws. The theory of community-based justice places the victim at the center and seeks to reform matters, repair relationships, restore damages, address needs, and reconstruct the personal, material, and psychological dimensions of the parties to the crime; therefore, it is suitable for implementation and application. Accordingly, barriers to implementing its processes and programs must be identified, and solutions should be proposed, as far as possible, to remove such barriers (3).

### *Requirements and Barriers of Community-Based Justice*

Community-based justice, as an approach distinct from the traditional structure of adjudicating crime through official authorities, adopts a particular view of the harms suffered by victims of crime. Various definitions and discussions have been proposed regarding the nature of community-based justice; however, on the basis of a core articulation, community-based justice is “a process in which all direct stakeholders of a crime participate together to determine the best method of repairing the harms caused by the crime.” According to some authors, from 1990 to the present, community-based justice has become a social movement aimed at reforming and revising the structure of criminal justice (26). Legal, judicial, executive, foundational, structural, cultural, and other barriers exist to implementing restorative programs. Overall, the culture of implementing restorative programs is not well aligned with the prevailing culture of society, and more importantly, the state and the judiciary have not yet fully embraced community-based justice, and acceptance of its institutions remains highly limited and minimal. Additionally, scholarly disagreements and theoretical critiques of community-based justice have rendered the implementation of its programs uneven, and structural and executive limitations have further intensified these difficulties.

Howard Zehr, relying on the function of community-based justice, explains it in this way: community-based justice is a process for involving those who have a stake in a particular offense; it places the victim at the center and seeks to reform affairs and relationships, repair harms, address needs, and rebuild the personal, material, and psychological dimensions of the parties to the crime; therefore, it is worthy of implementation and use (27).

The Islamic criminal system, drawing upon participatory criminal policy foundations, is considered one of the advanced legal systems in confronting criminal phenomena and responding to them. In the context of community-based justice, mediation creates a space in which the victim and the offender can engage face-to-face, without pressure or direction from the criminal judicial system, to engage in dialogue. The offender speaks about the commission of the crime and its reasons and purposes, and the victim speaks about the harms of victimization, as well as needs and expectations, and the process of reconciliation and dispute resolution proceeds. It is also noteworthy that careful study of the historical traditions and rituals of various nations shows that mediation,

compared with older mechanisms of conflict resolution that emerged in different institutional forms, is a newer process (28).

### *National Criminal Policymakers in the Field of Environmental Crimes*

The effective enforcement of community service sanctions in environmental crimes, as an instance of alternatives to imprisonment, requires the application of mechanisms for individualized sentencing. The philosophy of the principle of individualization of punishment lies in the existence of personality differences among individuals, which necessitates differences in responsibility and punishment; from this perspective, it provides an additional advantage for applying community services in environmental crimes (29). Large cities, with extensive populations and geographical scope, face diverse social and environmental harms and broad needs. Managing such cities is not feasible without serious citizen participation—especially women, who play an influential role in the family, neighborhood, and city. Sustainable urban management requires attention to environmental considerations and the participation of half of the citizenry (women) to protect the environment. Community-based justice programs, emphasizing restorative interventions, seek to secure the rights of victims and, by establishing lasting peace between victim and offender, differ fundamentally from traditional methods such as retributive justice and rehabilitative approaches. Within the foundations of Islamic criminal justice as well, emphasis on compensation and the establishment of peace and reconciliation in environmental crimes is evident.

### **Research Method**

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and, in terms of method, descriptive of an analytical type. Data were collected through library-based sources, including books, scholarly articles, statutes and regulations, theses, and related documentary materials.

### **Findings**

The findings of the study indicate that women's role in controlling environmental crimes through community-based social services not only has a substantial effect on reducing such crimes, but also contributes to strengthening environmental culture and sustaining social participation. This role becomes even more significant in large cities where diverse social and environmental harms are present.

#### **1. Restorative Responses and the Role of Women and the Community in Compensating Environmental Harms**

One of the primary missions of the laws and policies formulated in the country is the proper vindication of individuals' social rights, such as the right to education, political participation, employment, and similar entitlements. At present, the manner in which women's social rights are realized, as members of society, is subject to various forms of tension with their significant family responsibilities. Moreover, in the General Family Policies promulgated in 2016, emphasis has been placed on important matters concerning the role of women and the family, which can contribute to a more accurate understanding of existing challenges in this domain. In the first clause of these policies, the formation of a family-centered society is identified as one of the objectives of executive bodies, and an adequate understanding of this concept can substantially shape the direction of policymaking and legislation in the field of women's social rights. The fluctuations in women's status across different historical periods, the formation of multiple movements in this regard, and women's active role—particularly in environmental movements—



underscore the importance of women's position and social status. The relationship between women's roles on the one hand and environmental issues on the other has led to a convergence of interests between supporters of the women's movement and environmental advocates, an approach that is often described as "ecofeminism" (30).

The use of the capacity of community service sanctions—introduced into criminal legislation in 2013—for offenses with an environmental nature does not face a particular obstacle in domestic law. Indeed, judges, in view of the recommendations issued by the new Head of the Judiciary, have sought to replace imprisonment with alternatives to imprisonment, including community service, and have also used this framework in the area of environmental crimes (31).

Article 79 of the Islamic Penal Code provides: "The determination of types of community services, the governmental and public agencies and institutions that receive convicted persons, and the manner of their cooperation with the judge responsible for the execution of sentences and the convicted person, shall be set forth in a bylaw which shall be prepared within three months from the effective date of this Law by the Ministries of Interior and Justice and, upon confirmation by the Head of the Judiciary, shall be approved by the Council of Ministers. The provisions of this Chapter shall be enforceable after the approval of the bylaw subject to this Article."

## **2. Current Legal Domains for Community-Based Justice in Comparative Law**

Article 50 of the Constitution and Clause 5 of Article 156 refer to environmental offenses and public participation in the prevention of environmental crime. This indicates that, as a foundational principle, environmental crime policy is not limited to punishment and repressive measures, but also attends to preventive actions and public participation in protecting the environment.

For example, the criminal policy of England was transformed through the enactment of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which emerged from the "Justice for All" bill, and within this framework, participatory criminal policy approaches to green crime were also addressed. Given that England is considered advanced in participatory protection of environmental rights, international environmental law has consistently sought to offer solutions to environmental challenges through binding and non-binding rules and regulations (1).

In England, ordinary environmental penalties—especially imprisonment—are severe, as effective protection of a fragile and vulnerable environment under current conditions is understood to require decisive measures. Nevertheless, the legal system has faced difficulties in effectively controlling crimes against the environment, and the scale of degradation and the continuity of offenses in many countries suggest that existing suppressive methods have lacked adequate efficiency. The preamble to the European Union directive concerning the protection of the environment through criminal law (2001) expressly acknowledges this point and calls for reform of penalties. In French law as well, Article L216-6 of the French Environmental Code provides for obligating the offender to remedy water pollution (32).

In England, it should also be noted that the sanction of community service was first enacted in 1969 with respect to children and adolescents and entered the domain of English criminal law. Within the English legal system, known as the common law system, the public interest is not separate from private interest; rather, the public interest is realized through the protection and advancement of private interests (33).

## **3. Community-Based Justice, Women, and Victims of Environmental Crimes**

Community-based justice seeks, by creating reconciliation between victims and offenders, to facilitate the repair of harms and the reconstruction of social relationships. In this context, the role of women as key agents of change across different levels of society—from the family to the broader community—becomes prominent. Through their

substantial influence in improving environmental awareness, participating in restorative programs, and pursuing the rights of victims of environmental crimes, women can contribute to the realization of restorative justice and the creation of a healthier environment. This form of community-based justice, by drawing on women's capacities and attending to victims' needs, provides a basis for better management of environmental crime and for social sustainability.

Women can play an important role in environmental protection and in the optimal consumption of resources. However, their role in environmental decision-making processes has not been particularly visible, although in recent years women have assumed a more prominent role in environmental decision-making. Even so, facilitating women's entry into decision-shaping arenas, providing them with necessary education, increasing environmental awareness, and offering information regarding how they can influence their surrounding environment can, at least at the level of everyday living environments, contribute to reducing degradation and environmental harm. Environment-related transformations produced by human activity, although they began long ago, have never attracted as much attention as in recent years, nor have they provoked comparable levels of concern among human communities. This is because rapid industrialization, alongside globalization, has subjected the world to profound social, economic, and political transformations. The emphases in green criminology and, consequently, in eco-criminology, demonstrate that environmental protection—particularly in the study of large-scale and transnational environmental crimes—has become such a moral and social value that both penal and non-penal support appears necessary. In Iran, although the number of laws enacted to support the environment and, consequently, the victims of such crimes is relatively large, these laws generally provide penal protection of the environment. In contrast, in international instruments—except in armed conflicts—actions against the environment are commonly addressed through non-penal enforcement mechanisms (17). On this basis, the core nature and rationale of community-based justice, and especially the role of women, emphasize the use of less formal instruments for achieving justice.

In view of women's role in the field of environmental crimes, four principal categories of restorative processes that may be used can be identified: offender conferences, group dialogues and family group conferencing, sentencing circles, and community reparation boards or community impact boards. In *Juliana v. United States*, unless and until the defendants acknowledge their wrongdoing, the community-based justice pathway cannot be pursued. The reason is that community-based justice requires offenders to accept responsibility for their actions and cooperate with victims in finding solutions to repair the harm caused. In cases where defendants admit the offense and both parties agree to pursue a community-based justice process, such an approach may even be followed from the early stages of proceedings. If one or both parties opt for the traditional legal system track, the community-based justice framework may still be used at later stages of adjudication as a tool associated with sentencing (4).

Within the policy-making challenges, one of the most important challenges in this area is the absence of a women's economic empowerment index, which in turn leads to arbitrary program implementation and weakness in monitoring and evaluating outputs. Another challenge concerns the weakness of a shared discourse between policymakers and implementers in this field. Individual, cultural, structural, economic, social, and legal challenges—each explained through specific categorizations—are among the further challenges derived from the analysis of this study's data. The most important solutions that can be proposed for policymaking in this area include a gender-sensitive approach by policymakers, gender mainstreaming in legislation, comprehensiveness, and attention to

dimensions such as skills training, access to resources, decision-making power, self-confidence and self-efficacy, voice, leadership power, and women's agency, which can be pursued through relevant policies in this domain.

#### **4. The Tension Between the Imperatives of Environmental Criminal Law and the Role of Women in Criminal Justice**

Attention to women's rights in the contemporary era has consistently been one of the most prominent issues on the global agenda, and this concern is particularly pronounced with respect to Islamic states and the manner in which criminal and law enforcement institutions interact with women. The religion of Islam provides its own distinct legal and normative framework for dealing with women and explicitly does not disregard women as victims of crime (34).

Environmental criminal law, aimed at protecting natural resources and preventing environmental degradation, has continuously faced challenges such as prioritizing between legal and executive imperatives. The tension between coercive approaches and restorative perspectives on environmental crimes underscores the necessity for reconsideration in this field. In this context, the role of women in criminal justice can play a significant part in establishing balance between these imperatives. Through their educational, cultural, and participatory roles within the family and society, women are not only effective in preventing environmental crimes but also play a crucial role in supporting restorative justice policies and promoting public awareness. Harnessing women's capacities can therefore contribute to the effective integration of criminal law imperatives and the realization of environmental justice.

#### **5. The Role of Women in Controlling Environmental Crimes**

The role of women in controlling environmental crimes, with an emphasis on community-based social services, is undeniable due to their extensive influence within the family and society. On the one hand, women, as educators of future generations within the family, play a fundamental role in teaching and reinforcing environmental values. Continuous education of children and emphasizing the importance of environmental protection can have long-term effects on the environmental behavior of future generations. On the other hand, women in urban and rural communities, as active social agents, can enhance public awareness and exercise social oversight over environmentally harmful behaviors through participation in environmental groups and organizations. Moreover, in many cultures, women serve as household managers and play a decisive role in the consumption of natural resources such as water, energy, and food. This role can transform them into key agents for pollution reduction and resource conservation. Women's participation in community-based environmental initiatives, public monitoring of industrial and urban activities, and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles are among the measures that can yield tangible results in controlling environmental crimes (35).

Furthermore, increasing women's participation in environmental policymaking and criminal justice can lead to the design and implementation of more effective mechanisms for preventing environmental crimes. Due to their constructive and educational perspectives, women can also assume an active role in restorative programs and community-based justice initiatives. This is particularly important in addressing environmental crimes, which—because of their complexity and extensive impacts—require the direct involvement of all citizens. Especially in large cities, women can play a decisive role in reducing environmental harm by joining local environmental movements, contributing to pollution and waste reduction efforts, educating other citizens, and supporting sustainability initiatives. In fact, women's social participation not only contributes to environmental protection but also lays the foundation for cultivating a broader culture of responsibility within society (9).

In conclusion, empowering women and enhancing their environmental awareness, together with providing the necessary conditions for their active participation in environmental management and criminal justice programs, can yield substantial achievements in reducing environmental crimes and achieving a sustainable society. Strategies such as public education, strengthening women's civil institutions, and supporting their role in high-level policymaking constitute effective pathways toward this objective.

## Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to explain and analyze the role of women in controlling environmental crimes, with an emphasis on utilizing the capacities and mechanisms of community-based social services. In this regard, the study first examined the theoretical foundations of community-based justice and environmental criminal law, explored the position of women within this framework, and then proposed practical mechanisms for women's active participation in the prevention, control, and remediation of the consequences of environmental crimes within the structure of community-based social services. The results of the study clearly demonstrate that women, as half of the population and as key actors at the levels of family, neighborhood, and society, possess vast potential to influence environmental behavior and prevent environmental crimes. Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on punishment and coercive measures, this study, by adopting a community-based justice perspective, highlights the proactive and constructive role of women in preventive and restorative processes. The findings indicate that community-based social services, by emphasizing collective participation and utilizing local capacities, provide an appropriate platform for women to play an effective role in controlling environmental crimes. Given their educational role within the family, women can transmit environmental protection values and knowledge to future generations and thereby contribute to long-term crime prevention. Active participation of women in civil institutions, local groups, and environmental workshops can also enhance public awareness, promote effective monitoring of environmentally harmful activities, and strengthen public advocacy for the enforcement of relevant laws and regulations. Moreover, community-based social services can create opportunities for women to participate in restorative and rehabilitation processes for damaged environments, thereby helping to reduce the negative consequences of environmental crimes. Within this framework, women can actively engage in environmental cleanup projects, the restoration of degraded habitats, and educational programs for environmental offenders, thereby contributing to the realization of restorative justice.

Therefore, it can be concluded that any effort to effectively control environmental crimes and achieve sustainable development will be unsuccessful without recognizing and activating the capacities of women and making use of community-based social services. Investment in women's education and empowerment, the creation of appropriate platforms for their participation in environmental decision-making and implementation processes, and the promotion of community-based justice approaches constitute fundamental strategies for achieving a healthier and more environmentally sustainable society.

## Recommendations

1. Organizing educational courses and workshops to raise women's awareness of environmental crimes and their impact on society and daily life can play an effective role in increasing women's knowledge and encouraging their active participation. These programs should focus on the principles of community-based justice and methods for preventing environmental harm.

2. Creating equal opportunities for women in decision-making arenas related to environmental management—such as local councils, municipal institutions, and other civil groups—will increase their influence in environmental crime prevention and control programs.
3. Women's participation in practical initiatives such as cleanup campaigns, tree planting, and projects for restoring damaged habitats, in addition to reducing environmental harm, will foster social cohesion and strengthen community bonds.
4. Women, as primary agents in the upbringing of children and youth, can play a decisive role in teaching proper environmental behavior to future generations. Designing family-based educational programs with a focus on women can contribute to the formation of a strong environmental culture within society.
5. Establishing specialized associations and women's groups in the field of environmental protection and related crimes is an effective measure to facilitate more structured and goal-oriented participation by women in this domain.
6. Reforming and strengthening laws with an emphasis on the role of women in preventing and controlling environmental crimes—such as supporting women environmental activists and creating effective oversight mechanisms—can enhance women's motivation for participation in this field and ensure the security and success of their role.

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### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

### **Transparency of Data**

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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