Gender inclusivity, a catalyst for decarbonization in the cement industry

It is estimated that the 'built environment' accounts for approximately 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Cement production, as the literal core of much infrastructure and housing, accounts for 9% of global emissions on its own, thanks to the heat needed for kilns, and the chemical reaction from its creation. It is no surprise that cement must decarbonize if we are to make a meaningful dent in global emissions.

We appear to be on the cusp of a revolution, as proven 'greening' technologies are emerging, stakeholders are demanding more sustainable infrastructure solutions, and public spending on those assets is increasing. Several large cement firms have demonstrated the potential of abatement technologies which could take the form of alternative fuels for heating and clinker substitutes, and true technological advances like carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) and carbon-cured concrete. For their part, smaller start-ups are popping up, offering their own engineering advancements.

But what would accelerate the transformation of the cement industry?

We argue that greater gender inclusivity is a catalyst for positive change and could be the key to unlocking a new era for cement.

In some parts of the world like Africa, we see not only natural resources endowment as instrumental to an infrastructure transition, but also women playing a pivotal role in solving problems across the value chain.

Our forthcoming paper explores the rationale for greater gender diversity in the cement industry within the context of pressures on companies to evolve toward cleaner, greener, and safer outcomes.

Of special interest to us is the subject of equitable access to funding and technology for innovation, and arguably, towards the evolution of existing carbon intensive assets, considering the inequitable cost to be borne by societies in the Global South.

We leverage examples from other industries and discuss the interconnectedness of 'women's work' and decarbonization. **Our belief is that technological innovations alone won't be sufficient to create real change within this 'hard to abate' sector.** Our paper explores tangible ways to increase women's participation in the cement industry, as well as best practices with respect to gender-related policies, data collection and reporting.