THE FORESTS DIALOGUE

Background Paper for the Scoping Dialogue on the Exclusion and Inclusion of Women in the Forestry Sector
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Exclusion and Inclusion of Women in the Forest Sector

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's exclusion from the forest sector

Despite decades of research and the existence of overwhelming evidence of the important role women play in forest use, management and protection, women are largely excluded from the forestry sector on a number of levels. This paper will examine this exclusion and probable causes for it, at the local, professional, institutional and policy levels.

The status of women in forestry in various countries is closely correlated to that of women in the respective societies at large. It is influenced to a large extent by the same cultural, social and historical factors that act as barriers or favor the participation of women in politics and in the labor market in general. Such generic factors include value systems and perceptions of male and female roles, legislation and traditions concerning inheritance, as well as legislation and infrastructure that help to reconcile work with maternity and family responsibilities (FAO, 2006).

Forestry institutions themselves play a critical role, as sites where professional norms are produced and reproduced. A FAO study (2007) on gender in forestry in 10 African countries in 2007 concluded that "gender inequality in forestry organizations in Africa is striking." A report of the UN Economic Commission for Europe on women in the forestry workforce states that the design of policies and management of formal forestry is almost entirely male-dominated (FAO.2006)

Most of the research attention to women and gender issues in forestry has been dominated by studies that analyze women's and men's participation in community forestry initiatives in Nepal and India, and market access in Africa, pertaining to poverty reduction (Yen, Mwangi and Wan, 2011). The importance of forests to rural livelihoods, as well as to conservation and sustainability, is well recognized by the larger community of international organizations, environment NGOs engaged in the design of forestry programs. However, this same community generally does not recognize the differentiated needs and views of women, nor afford them the same attention and respect paid to members of indigenous groups (Gurung, 2011).

On the local level, women's needs and rights as forest users and within management and protection schemes are largely ignored. Community forest management projects are widespread in the developing world, and many projects have rules and quotas related to the inclusion of women in decision-making processes (Agarwal 2001), but this inclusion is generally nominal at best (FAO 2007, Khadka 2010). In Cambodia, for example, less than 10% of community forestry groups have women's active participation (Gurung 2010).

Literature on South and South East Asia shows that the lack of women's meaningful participation in forest protection schemes, both community-led and those led by extra-local actors, leads to negative outcomes for women and their families; without

considering women's needs, protection schemes will "close" forests thus making women's daily activities, such as collecting fuel wood, much more time consuming (Agarwal 2004, Sarin 1995, Gurung 2010). Additionally, a loss of access to forest resources is correlated to a decline in subsistence standards and livelihood options as valuable NTFPs become unavailable (Agarwal 2001). When protection and management schemes do produce benefits for the local community, the benefits are rarely equitably distributed between women and men (Agarwal 2004). With the advent of REDD+, women's forest use may be further problematized as their activities related to gathering fuel wood, fodder and NTFPs may be curtailed, unless women may be included in benefit sharing schemes (Gurung 2010).

Women's exclusion is also evident in the formal sector as a lack of women professionals in forest departments and the forestry industry. A 2006 FAO study of Anglophone and Francophone Africa shows that, for the ten countries studied, there were virtually no women in senior level and policy-making positions within the government forestry department; where women were present, they were in junior-level positions, working as clerks and sub technical staff (FAO 2007). A 2008 report on women in the forestry sector in Nepal showed that only two of 75 districts employed women as District Forest Officers, the highest position taken by women foresters in the government system (Giri 2008). A similar situation is evidenced in REDD+ and PES (Payment for Environmental Services) projects in South and Southeast Asia, where implementing and partner agencies employ very few women (Gurung 2010). As for forest industry, women are often employed in sawmills and plantations, but generally only at the most menial levels. As noted by a World Bank study, women's roles are most visible in this sector in informal employment roles related to sex work and catering in places like forest logging camps (World Bank 2009).

Finally, we see women's exclusion from forestry at the policy and institutional levels. A recent report by the World Bank, FAO, and IFAD finds that most forestry policy decisions still utilize a gender-neutral framework, created by men, thus ignoring the specific needs of women in all aspects of forestry (World Bank 2009). Policy makers and institutions, at the regional, national and international levels, seem to lack the skills and knowledge to be able to adequately address gender and social inequity (Schalatek 2009, FAO 2007). Furthermore, research indicates that women simply aren't considered powerful actors by policy makers (Khadka 2010), and a bias exists within policy-making institutions that forestry is about technical and biophysical processes, not people. The result is a lack of attention to the needs of women and other marginalized peoples (Khadka 2010). Interestingly, theory about REDD+ and sustainable forest management, in general, envisions women, especially poor women, playing an important role in project design and implementation (Verchot 2010). How this theory will be operationalized, however, is still to be determined, as most current REDD+ projects show little to no inclusion of women's needs in project development (Gurung 2010). According to the recent study conducted by WOCAN for USAID on gender and REDD+ in the Asia region, though the REDD+ initiatives assessed in the study acknowledge the importance of stakeholder engagement in project development and implementation, women were simply not recognized as a major stakeholder group (Gurung & Setyowati 2012).

Themes and topics

Reasons for women's exclusion

There are many overlapping reasons for women's exclusion from forestry on the aforementioned levels. A number of barriers and challenges exist, many of which are posed by the widespread perception that forestry is a male-dominated sector, most suitable for men. The belief that certain jobs are appropriate for one sex is a form of role theory, which states that roles are normative and express expectations of ideal behavior. In much of the world, forestry is associated with men and traits that are masculine, displayed often in forest institutions through norms of dress and appearance. Culturally determined stereotypes and norms prescribe the proper place for each sex, and make it seem natural that they do different jobs. Homosocial behavior, wherein one dominant group places more trust in those like oneself, believing them to be more predictable and understandable, reinforces the stereotypes and makes it more difficult to include women in management and decision making (Gurung 2002). Cockburn (1991) says that organizations are constructed on only a partial understanding, focused exclusively on the male experience. Many men do not see the female world and hence reject its existence.

Professional biases that have historically focused on technical and biophysical processes, specifically those related to timber management, and more recently, conservation, instead of people are also responsible for the blindness to women's activities and contributions for forest management. Insofar as foresters and environmentalists support a conservation approach that restricts human activity, women who rely on forests for livelihood use will be unwelcome actors in biodiversity schemes. This is in contract to the dominant conceptual frame that views Indigenous Peoples as living in harmony and protecting forest resources. These ideologies go largely unquestioned by new generations of foresters educated through prestigious and exclusive forestry colleges, reproducing norms that have serviced the sector for over 200 hundred years.

On the local level, women's activity in forests remains largely invisible, for a number of reasons. Low levels of literacy, mobility constraints and high work burdens also hamper women's abilities to participate in public forestry activities; men in Indonesia voiced their perception that women who could not read and write had no business being leaders of community forestry groups (Gurung, Setyowati and Lebow, 2011). Notably, an explanation that surfaced in Cambodia to explain women's inactivity in forest project activities was the fact that no one had invited them to do so (Bradley, et al 2012). Men in these settings won't necessarily challenge these social norms as they have their own entrenched claims and don't want to cede power (Agarwal 2001).

Finally, women's forest work generally revolves around subsistence activities, or collection of non-timber forest products while men's work is often linked to timber and markets (FAO 2007). Forestry as a field of expertise is defined by timber, thus unrelated activities are termed 'non' timber and thus marginal to the sector. Men and their work are viewed as more valuable (Gurung 2010).

Socio-cultural factors also play a role in the decisions about career paths followed by girls and young women in much of the world. , and thus narrow the number of girls and women who are interested to study forestry. Research from Nepal suggests that many families are afraid to send their daughters to study and work in faraway places, often a requirement for formal forestry employment (Giri 2008). Also, women are seen as physiologically incapable of doing the strenuous work required of forestry professionals (Giri 2008, FAO 2007). Furthermore, the struggle faced by all professional women who juggle the duality of their roles as women (mothers, daughters, wives, etc.) and professionals is particularly difficult for foresters, who are often required to spend long periods of time in forests far from home (FAO 2007, Giri 2008).

Finally, at the policy and institutional levels, we see the same cultural biases evident at more local levels. Even in international and multilateral institutions that may be well integrated, gender is not mainstreamed in policy and project design and implementation - a reflection of the cultural biases of the communities and countries in which they work (Gurung 2010). According to the research conducted by Moser and Moser (2005), organizational culture was mentioned by international NGOs and their development country partners as a constraint to successful gender mainstreaming.

Another factor often cited as a reason for women's exclusion, especially as it relates to policy making, is the extreme paucity of disaggregated data, making it impossible to show women's level of activity that is well known at the community level. Throughout Africa, for example, quantitative data showing trends in women's and men's forest-related employment, promotions, and employment constraints is scarce, and few statistics are available from higher education institutions (FAO 2010). Also lacking is data on differences in women's and men's use of forests (Gurung 2010, World Bank 2009). This lacuna contributes to women's invisibility, leading to the inevitable conclusion that women are inactive in the forest sector. Forestry staff who assume that women's activities are reported and represented by 'heads of households' (defined as those who own land) will miss out on the contributions of women, who usually lack property rights and therefore formal status in the eyes of officials.(Gurung 2010, FAO 2007).

Many development institutions feel constrained to implement gender mainstreaming policies and projects. Schlatek (2009), writing on the related topic of REDD financing, remarks, "gender disaggregated data on contributions to and impacts from climate change is missing, and that's often used as an excuse for lack of action, but it really should be a work order for the [World Bank, Global Environmental Facility], UNFCCC, etc. to start collecting the data that could be included in gender guidelines for projects and programs".

Another factor, critical for women's employment in the forestry sector, is a general lack of accessible educational and training opportunities. Giri's study on formal forestry in Nepal reveals that: there are essentially no forestry educational opportunities for poor and low caste women; information about the educational opportunities at the national Institute of Forestry (IOF) is only available in urban areas and near the Institute; the IOF lacks

gender sensitivity at the faculty, staff and student levels; there are few women faculty at the IOF, and there is a lack of career counseling and employment networks for women graduates (Giri 2008). In Ethiopia, the government has been unable to implement on a large-scale policies aimed at improving women's access to education, including forestry education (FAO 2007). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, women's low educational levels are cited as major factors for their lack of representation in the formal forestry sector. (FAO 2007).

A lack of political will and insufficient policy frameworks is also a factor. A key conclusion of the FAO study (2007) of 10 African countries was that though gender inclusion policies do exist, but they simply aren't implemented; the authors write, "Gender equity policies and programs merely represent good intentions unless they are backed up by appropriate legislation and institutional support". Even where gender equity / mainstreaming policies did exist at the national level, forestry policies did not include a gender mainstreaming component. In the few cases where gender was considered in forestry policies, such as in Kenya, there was little evidence of implementation (FAO 2007). This policy and political-will reality stand in stark contrast to inclusive discourses on sustainable forestry management (Khadka 2010).

In addition to special programs for women, the report finds, there's need for anti-discrimination legislation and regulation (FAO 2007). In terms of women in REDD, Gurung (2010) finds that international conventions and laws, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are not known within the environment, forestry and other related institutions that engage in the development of policies on REDD and Payment for Environmental Services. This leaves women, broadly, without the recognition of their rights, even within the 186 countries that have ratified this treaty. WOCAN's recent study shows that in Cambodia there was no evidence that the REDD+ roadmap planners recognized women as significant stakeholder; similar exclusion was recognized in REDD+ processes in other countries in the region (Gurung and Setyowati 2012).

This is in part due to the lack of women's representation and leadership in policymaking, which is still very minimal in the national and global policy making bodies. At the initiation of the REDD Partnership conference in 2010 wherein a pledge of $4 billion was made, for example, only a single representative of a women's group was invited to speak, amongst a group of 54 invited speakers representing groups considered key stakeholders.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are numerous reasons and opportunities to turn women's **ex**clusion into women's **in**clusion at this point in time, for increased efficiency, efficacy and sustainability, as well as those to address basic human rights. Women represent human resources that forest sector institutions have not yet sufficiently acknowledged or used to meet their objectives.

A plethora of recommendations exist related to improving inclusion of women in forestry. In terms of local level inclusion, recommendations include:

- Governance structures of community management schemes should define membership as open to all adults, both women and men, as opposed to using the household as a single unit (FAO 2007, Sarin 1995).
- Forest departments should require that forest management projects include significant women's participation, with a 30-50% meeting quorum of women (Sarin 1995).
- Forest departments must ensure that women's entitlements from community management projects are separate from men's. (Sarin 1995).
- Women's groups should receive training on literacy, leadership and communication skills in order to enable them to participate actively in forest user groups, articulate needs and contribute meaningfully to management decisions (Bradley, et al 2012)

Many recommendations exist for increasing women's participation in the formal forestry sector:

- Educational institutions, governments and NGOs must work to build regional women-in- forestry networks (FAO 2007, ECE),
- Educational institutions must adopt gender sensitive policies that lead to increased allocation of seats for women at forestry schools and more women faculty and administrative staff (Giri 2008, FAO 2007).
- Government, educational institutions and women's organizations should develop career guidance programs for women (FAO 2007).
- Forest departments and forestry industries should be required to adopt mechanisms to attract and retain women professionals, including on the job training, mentoring and opportunities for advancement (FAO 2007).

At the policy level, recommendations include:

- International and aid institutions must include gender mainstreaming in their forestry intervention priorities (FAO 2007).
- Multilateral institutions, in an effort to glean lessons learned, should undertake a study of examples where women have used community forestry or agroforestry to improve the wellbeing of their families (Verchot 2010).
- Governments must link national gender equality policies to forest policy (FAO 2007).
- Regional and national governments, development and aid institutions and NGOs must develop and make available gender disaggregated data related to the forestry sector (FAO 2007)
- National governments should address property rights and land tenure inequality between men and women (Schalatek 2009, Gurung & Setyowati 2012).

Recommendations specific to REDD that could be applied to many non-REDD contexts include (Gurung 2010). :

  - REDD project governance should pay particular attention to assure women's inclusion in aspects of Participation, Capacity Building, Governance and Benefit Sharing;
  - REDD+ projects should identify local gender expertise that can be called on to provide guidance and technical assistance;

- Women in forestry meetings should be organized to provide a forum to share lessons learned and best practices.

This list of recommendations is not exhaustive, but it nonetheless addresses major issues related to women's exclusion in forestry. However, in order to understand why so little progress has been made within the last few decades, and why such recommendations have not been implemented, it is critical that we develop a better understanding of the root causes.

Potential Fracture Lines to be explored:

After presenting the scenario of the exclusion of women in forestry sector we can explore the following fracture lines during the Forest Dialogue:

- Institutions are sites where norms of 'proper' behaviors and ideologies are communicated, learned and contested, yet institutions themselves are almost never the objects of reflection and are taken for granted. Are there norms that are common to forestry institutions around the world? Which of these support or obstruct women's inclusion?

- Women's inclusion and gender equality may not be seen as relevant to projects related to forest and environmental management, and so are provided low priority. Are projects in sustainable forest management that focus on women's roles and needs, or include women more likely to succeed than those that do not?

- Why has research and knowledge on women's roles in forest management not been effective in bringing about their inclusion in the forestry sector?

- Is it possible to follow "Do No Harm" principle when there is a wide gap between women and men's abilities to benefit from forestry/environment projects? If exclusion persists, will the gap be widened by the input of investments in new forestry/environment projects?

- Is it more effective to address women's exclusion through gender mainstreaming approaches (fostering the transformations of norms, policies and practices within institutions related to natural resource management) or by designing women-specific project activities? How can we move beyond acknowledgement to action of mainstreaming gender in forestry sector?

- Indigenous Peoples have enjoyed a relative high amount of attention to their interests within the forestry sector. Why have women not been able to convince these same institutions of the need to provide the same level of attention to their interests?

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