

## Gender Makes the Difference

- Forests are home to 300 million people around the world and they contribute to the livelihoods of many of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty.
- More than 1.7 billion people live in 40 nations with critically low levels of forest cover; nearly 250 million people in 20 countries are experiencing the negative effects of forest reduction and resulting freshwater scarcity.
- Nearly three billion people worldwide rely primarily on wood for home heating and cooking. Half of the wood harvested in the world is used as fuel, mostly in developing countries.
- Between 1990 and 1995, the area covered by primary and secondary forests in developing countries decreased annually by more than 11 million hectares. Deforestation of tropical rain forests could account for the loss of as many as 100 species a day.
- Millions of poor families rely on non-timber forest products for their survival. In the wooded areas of Thailand, 60 percent of all food comes directly from the forests, including leaves, seeds, nuts, mushrooms, saps, gums, forest animals and insect species.
- In Zimbabwe, over half of the 800,000 farm families living in communal areas are headed by women. In these areas, women's groups manage forest resource and development projects through woodlot ownership, tree planting, nursery development and woodlot management.
- Collecting, extracting and processing the kernels of the babassu palm fruit provide an estimated 25 percent of household income for 300,000 families in Brazil's Maranhão State.
- In Uttar Pradesh, India, a study showed that women obtained 33 to 45 percent of their income from forests and common land, compared with only 13 percent in the case of men.

Gender relations influence many aspects of forest management and governance. Some of these are:

- Roles and responsibilities:** Men and women often have different productive and reproductive roles with regard to forest resource management. Men and women often play different roles in planting, protecting or caring for seedlings and small trees, as well as in planting and maintaining homestead woodlots and plantations on public lands. Men tend to play a greater role than women in extracting timber and non-wood forest products for commercial purposes. Women typically gather forest products for fuel, fencing, food for the family, fodder for livestock and raw materials to produce natural medicines, which help to increase family income. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, a study showed that women collected: 18 different animal species, 37 different types of food, and 68 different medicinal products.
- Access and control over resources:** Economic, social, cultural, political and legal environments affect the rights of women and men to control forest resources and own land. Even where women have ownership rights to land, their access to forest products and opportunities for forest-generated income may not be ensured. Different members of the community may have established informal rights to use of different parts of the forest or even of a tree – women may have access to the leaves but not to the wood. This differentiation by gender has major implications for the ownership and usufruct rights to the forest and its by-products, it affects the decision process in the selection of species for new plantings, and it affects management of the forest.



## FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC CAN BE FOUND AT:

IUCN-Gender and Environment  
[www.genderandenvironment.org](http://www.genderandenvironment.org)

Gender and Forestry: A Bibliography.  
Forestry Library, Faculty of Forestry  
Sciences, Sweden  
<http://www.bib.slu.se/bibliotek/skogs/genus/genderandfor.pdf>

Women's Environment and Development  
Organization (WEDO).  
<http://www.wedo.org>

Gender in Agriculture: A World Bank  
Learning Module  
<http://www.worldbank.org/gender/module/index.htm>

FAO, About Gender Analysis and Forestry  
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/forestry2/index.jsp?siteId=3521&siteReelId=10587&langId=1&geolId=0>

## SOURCES:

Asian Development Bank.  
**Gender Issues in Forestry and Watershed Management.**  
In Gender Checklist: Agriculture. 2003.

Food and Agriculture Organization.  
**Gender and Food Security: Forestry.**  
<http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/fore-e.htm>  
Rome, Italy. 2004.

Food and Agriculture Organization.  
**Women's Participation in National Forest Programmes.**  
Rome, Italy. 1997.

Sass, J.  
**Women, Men and Environmental Change: The Gender Dimensions of Environmental Policies and Programs.**  
Population Reference Bureau,  
Washington D.C., U.S.A. 2002.

World Bank.  
**Gender in Agriculture: A World Bank Learning Module.**  
Washington D.C., U.S.A. 1996.

- c. **Knowledge base:** Gendered knowledge may vary by class, age, and ethnicity, underscoring its complexity. For instance, tribal women in India have been found to know medicinal uses for almost 300 forest species. In other parts of the world, an older man from an indigenous group may have different practices for the sustainable use of forest soil and trees than a young man living outside his native community. Understanding the wide spectrum of knowledge possessed by women and men in different socioeconomic circumstances helps to determine appropriate and sustainable forestry policies.
- d. **Decision-making:** Public participation in forest management is vital to sustainable forestry policies. Yet, women's involvement in the formulation, planning, and execution of policy regarding forestry remains low at all levels. In India, women who recognized the link between deforestation and recurring floods and landslides formed the Chipko Movement. By placing their own bodies between trees and loggers, they impeded tree felling and created pressure on the government to investigate and eventually impose a 10-year ban on logging in the affected area. In addition, failure to take into account women's and men's activities in forestry issues and to include both in the related decision-making process may lead to the establishment of policies that criminalize activities (such as illegal collection of fuelwood and non-timber products), without changing behavior patterns that have a negative environmental impact.

## WHY GENDER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IN SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Gender-responsive forestry policies and programs are those that seek sustainable forestry practices, while explicitly taking into account the opinions, needs, and interests of both men and women. Incorporating gender issues into sustainable forest management helps to:

- Enhance the effectiveness of sustainable resource management policies and projects and drive the equitable distribution of benefits.
- Increase food security, employment opportunities, household income and health of families. Household food security has improved when programs addressed subsistence strategies to handle collected wild products (*e.g.*, bush-meat and foraged food).
- Avoid potential conflicts among competing uses of forests and their by-products and to ensure that women's and men's traditional and indigenous rights to forest use are not diminished with the implementation of new projects and policies.
- Promote equal access of women to land ownership and to other resources necessary for effective socio-economic participation (*e.g.*, land, capital, technical assistance, technology, tools, equipment, markets and time).
- Train both women and men in methods to increase their productivity through new forestry technologies, including nursery techniques, site selection, selection of species, land preparation, planting, weeding, and maintenance.
- Train female forestry extension agents and increase their awareness to the prevailing patterns of women in the use of forest resources, including their particular needs and constraints.
- Enhance awareness in men and women to the value of forests and sustainable forestry management.
- Ensure support for women's craft and home-based forestry industries, through credit utilization, business management, and marketing.
- Enhance women's participation and cooperation in community groups or forest resource management committees created for project management.

## TO CONTACT US:

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