'Engendering' Eden

Volume III

Women, Gender and ICDPs in South and South-East Asia: Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared

Fiona Flintan

TITLES IN THIS SERIES

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BOXES

ACRONYMS

ACA	Annapurna Conservation Area
ACAP	Annapurna Conservation Area Project
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
CAMC	Conservation and Management Committee
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management Project
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
DFID	Department for International Development
DGIS	General Directorate for Development Co-operation, Netherlands
DHO	District Health Office
DNPWC	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal
FBSSE	Forest-Based Small Scale Enterprises
FD	Forest Department
FUG	Forest User Group
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHNP	Great Himalayan National Park
HIMANTI	Himalayan Grassroots Level Women's Natural Resource Management Group.
HMG	His Majesty's Government
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Project
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IUCN	World Conservation Union
JFM	Joint Forest Management
KCA	Kanchenjunga Conservation Area
KCAP	Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Project
KMTNC	King Mahendra's Trust for Nature Conservation
MACP	Mountain Areas Conservancy Project
MCP	Mangrove Conservation Project
NACFP	Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	National Park
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NWAB	National Women's Association of Bhutan
PA	Protected Area
PLA	Participatory Learning Appraisal
PPP	Parks and People Programme
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
PRB	Population Reference Bureau
SCAFP	Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project
SCCP	Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee
SRF	Swaminathan Research Foundation
UG	User Group
UMTNR U	Minh Thuong Nature Reserve
UMTNRCCDP	U Minh Thuong Nature Reserve Conservation and Community Development Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VDC	Village Development Committee
WDO	Women Development Office
WID	Women In Development
WU	Women's Unions
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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"[A] gender dimension in biodiversity management has been an area of neglect so far. In almost all government sponsored in-situ and ex-situ conservation efforts, the gender dimension [has] yet to be integrated with the management culture. Only in recent years has gender been acknowledged as an important variable in conservation and management…There is an urgent need for studies on the gender dimension of biodiversity conservation and management"
(SRF, 1997:8).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis placed on linking the conservation of natural resources with the development of local communities through ICDPs (Integrated Conservation and Development Projects) and CBNRM (Community Based Natural Resource Management). At the same time, pressures have increased for a more equitable development process drawing in otherwise marginalised groups such as women. However there is inexperience and a lack of knowledge concerning how to achieve this.

The *'Engendering' Eden* research programme aimed to fill some of the existing gaps on issues concerned with the relationships between women, gender and ICDPs. It aimed to understand what differences and inequities exist within communities and how these affect participation and the distribution of benefits and costs in relation to conservation and development. Lessons concerning how to address gender issues and women's exclusion have been learnt and recommendations made as to how to incorporate them into future work to achieve more equitable conservation policy and practice.

Differences and inequities exist between men and women in all sections of society and communities in Asia. Culture, ethnicity, caste and religion play a dominant part in cultivating such differences. There are few simple or clear divisions in relation to roles, skills and knowledge. In the majority of cases, inequities result in a bias against women.

Women, particularly poor rural women, play a dominant role in natural resource collection, and are often highly dependent upon it for fulfilling household needs and livelihood security. Despite this, in the majority of cases women still have very little involvement in decision-making processes including those that have been set-up for natural resource management, such as forest user groups and conservation committees. They have few opportunities to access resources or opportunities to better their lives. There is a lack of organised platforms for women to express their needs and views, and from which to address gender issues. Where they do exist they tend to be government-linked and are thus restricted in their scope by rules and regulations.

Within South and South-East Asia there has been little exploration or analysis of the impacts of conservation or ICDPs on communities, in a gender-sensitive manner. However there is evidence to suggest that it is usual for women and men to experience different trade-offs and transaction costs when taking part in, and giving up time for, conservation projects and practises. Women's knowledge is often devalued. Family and household responsibilities as well as cultural or caste factors restrict their participation and they lack self-esteem and confidence. In general women have a poorer understanding of conservation processes and the potential opportunities of ICDPs.

This lack of concern for gender issues in ICDPs has resulted in the surfacing of a number of problems (discussed in detail in Section 4.0):

- Misunderstanding and mistrust between conservation authorities, development organisations and communities.
- Differing priorities that can have adverse impacts.
- Increased gender inequalities.
- The overlooking of women's roles and responsibilities.
- Missed opportunities.
- Problems that have arisen due to women being viewed as a heterogeneous group.

Few conservation organisations in the region have developed gender policies and strategies to deal with these problems. This is despite the fact that the majority of governments have national gender policies, some of which are directly linked to natural resource use and the environment. Only on

rare occasions have local communities, including women, been involved in the planning stages of ICDPs. Surveys and the involvement of consultants (including gender consultants) tend to be 'one off'. As a result gender tends to be marginalised as 'more important' and pressing issues arise.

A number of ICDPs have supported 'women's projects'. These include involvement in conservation activities; education and awareness building; income generation; training; employment; improving development in general; raising the social and economic status of women; support for women's networks and groups; establishing alternatives for natural resources; micro-finance schemes; and in a few cases, gender training.

Through these projects some success has been achieved in improving livelihoods as well as women's confidence and self-esteem. For example, credit schemes and education programmes have offered a number of social and economic benefits. Women's groups appear to have been particularly effective in promoting women's participation. Women find a voice and strength through collective action.

However, the roots of the inequities found in local communities have not been tackled to any great extent. Those projects that have focussed on education and the support of women's networks have done so as a means of women's empowerment. Yet deeper issues related to power dynamics tend to be avoided or skirted around. As a result the long-term sustainability of such projects must be questioned. Even in the more development-oriented CBNRM programme – Joint Forest Management in India – where some benefits are realised (including increased income; a building up of the capacity of women; and an increased awareness and promotion of their rights) women are still marginalised.

Pressures, particularly from donors, are placed on ICDPs to achieve short-term results. However if gender inequities are to be addressed there must be some acknowledgement and incorporation of 'larger' and long-term issues such as land and resource rights. In agrarian societies, tribal or non-tribal, land is the critical resource that determines both socio-economic position and political power. Women's exclusion from land rights is typical.

Overall there remains an environment that does not facilitate the participation of women in conservation and development. Information is needed to sensitise the public mass and policy makers about the contribution of women within conservation. Although the advantages of setting up community forests have been emphasised by governments, unless pre-existing socio-cultural inequality is resolved, it will not necessarily bring equal benefits to all but, rather, will widen the gap in terms of access rights and unequal division of labour.

On an optimistic note, the benefits of more positively encouraging the involvement of women in ICDPs are slowly being recognised. However a number of factors (discussed in more detail in Section 8) must be taken into account to achieve this:

- There is a need for considerable human, technical and financial inputs.
- Existing local community norms must be taken into account.
- Continual and adaptive gender mainstreaming and sensitisation is needed.
- Capacity building is vital.
- Networking and working with local NGOs is advantageous.

Attention must also be paid to the development of capable leadership as well as self-governing and self-sustaining institutions to achieve gender sensitive and sustained natural resource management. Those conservation organisations that have been addressing gender issues for some time see their role more as one of working as a catalyst of social change than actually forcing change through themselves. The constraints preventing women from becoming involved in ICDPs and realising their benefits need to be overcome. Ways to achieve this have been detailed in Section 8.7.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE 'ENGENDERING' EDEN PROGRAMME

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis placed on linking conservation and development through CBNRM (Community Based Natural Resource Management) and ICDPs (Integrated Conservation and Development Projects) (Hughes and Flintan, 2001). At the same time NGOs and donors have promoted the need for more *equitable* development that involves otherwise marginalised groups such as women. However there is inexperience and a lack of knowledge concerning how to achieve this. This is particularly true within the conservation context. Furthermore, conservation organisations, due to their technocratic and natural science-based roots, have struggled with such an integration of social issues.

The *'Engendering' Eden* research programme aimed to fill some of the existing gaps on issues concerning the relationships between gender, women and ICDPs[1]. It aimed to achieve a better understanding of the linkages between them and indicate ways forward to achieve more equitable and 'successful' conservation and development processes. The central objective was to provide an assessment of the role of gender for enhancing the social and environmental sustainability of ICDPs and to develop a more empirical understanding of how gender shapes the ways local people participate, invest in and benefit from them.

The programme focussed on six sets of key questions:

1. What gender differences/inequities exist in local communities involved in ICDPs? What other social divisions are important in relation to natural resource use and its conservation?

2. How do these differences/inequities affect the way men and women participate in, contribute to, and benefit from ICDPs?

3. To what extent and how are these gender differences being addressed and accounted for in the planning, implementation and evaluation of ICDPs?

4. Where gender issues/inequities have *not* been addressed, what are the implications for project 'success'? What lessons can be learnt?

5. Where gender issues/inequities have been addressed, which methods have been successful and which have not? To what degree are other social divisions important? What lessons can be learnt?

6. How successful is the ICDP model in addressing gender inequities in relation to poverty alleviation, and biodiversity conservation? Do changes or adjustments need to be made to achieve more successful links between conservation and a more *equitable* development of local communities? How can the ICDP process be more effectively guided and achieved?

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[1] A distinction is made between ICDPs and CBNRM. ICDPs are viewed to be project-oriented and more conservation focussed – usually linking local development with the conservation of a National Park or other protected area. CBNRM is more of a movement or process of increasing community 'ownership' over and use of natural resources in a sustainable manner and which contributes to communities' development. This includes resources that exist outside protected areas and thus is less geographically defined. Enabling legislation must exist for CBNRM to work. This research project focused on ICDPs though important lessons were learnt from CBNRM.

The research programme was carried out over two years, 2000-2002. Two regional studies were made: in Africa, and South and South-East Asia. A number of ICDPs were visited and gender assessments carried out. The results are published in two volumes: this volume, and *'Engendering' Eden: Volume II. Women, Gender and ICDPs in Africa: Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared.* The overall experiences and lessons learnt from the regional studies are synthesised and analysed in the summary document: *'Engendering' Eden. Volume I. Women, Gender and ICDPs.* **It is suggested that this volume be used in conjunction with the summary document.**

1.2 'ENGENDERING' EDEN IN ASIA

This volume: *'Engendering' Eden: Volume III. Women, Gender and ICDPs in South and South-East Asia: Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared*, describes in detail the relationships between gender, women and ICDPs. The first section of this review focuses on the gender differences and inequities that exist in local communities in relation to natural resource use. Women in Asia play a central role in natural resource collection. However they are still marginalised from decision-making processes and tend to have a low self-image and confidence. Though some similarities were found between communities, there also exist many differences that are dependent on cultural, social, economic and geographical contexts. In fact some communities are highly equitable. Thus the importance of understanding gender differences within local contexts is emphasised in section two.

Section three focuses on the impacts of conservation and ICDPs on the gender differences and inequities that exist in local communities. Though there are certainly impacts (both beneficial and detrimental) on men and women, because of women's marginalisation from conservation and development processes and their greater dependence on natural resources for fulfilling daily household needs, the impact on them tends to be more negative. Section four describes the problems that have arisen due to an inadequate accountability and addressing of the more negative impacts and resulting gender inequities.

Sections five and six describe some of the experiences of ICDPs in the region and their variable degrees of focus on gender issues and the inclusion of women. Despite a growing recognition that such issues are important for the success of ICDPs and conservation processes (particularly in forestry), the majority of projects have failed to achieve any ground in thoroughly addressing gender inequities or in promoting a higher degree of women's inclusion and participation. ICDPs, their process and impacts, are still gender differentiated, with men participating to a greater degree and gaining more direct benefits.

The final two sections focus on lessons learnt from the more development-oriented CBNRM projects found in Asia as well as a selection of ICDPs. Ways to overcome women's marginalisation from ICDPs and ensure a higher degree of benefits are explored.

Case study field work which was carried out on the following Projects:
- U Minh Thuong Nature Reserve Conservation and Community Development Project (UMTNRCCDP), Vietnam
- Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project (SCAFP), Nepal
- Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Nepal
- Joint Forest Management, India including a visit to Mendha (Lekha) village, Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra State.

In addition, information was gathered during the facilitation of a workshop on women and natural resource management at the Conference: *A Celebration of Mountain Women*, held in Bhutan, September-October, 2002.

2. GENDER DIFFERENCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Differences and inequalities between the sexes exist in all sections of society and all communities within South and South East Asia. Some of these are more directly linked to natural resource use and the environment than others. There can be a wide variation between countries and regions. The following describes some of the more prominent inequities.

2.1 COLLECTION OF FOREST RESOURCES

In Asia women carry out the bulk of forest resource collection such as fuel, fodder and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). They depend heavily on them for providing food and livelihood security. In Thailand, for example, it is estimated that 50% of women enter forests on a seasonal basis to collect products (McQuistan, 1998) and in and around the Great Himalayan National Park, Nepal (GHNP), herb collection for many is the major or only source of cash income (Tandon, 2002).

Usually these women are amongst the poorest of the communities due to work burden, illiteracy, caste factors, health conditions, and remoteness of their villages and small land holdings, which means they have few livelihood options. Better educated and more wealthy women have less need to go to forests as they are more likely to have their own land and trees (Tanaka, undated). Some suggest that such a close relationship with natural resources means that women, rather than men, are more likely to maintain these resources over time (Shrestha, 1996).

Women tend to collect for subsistence and men for sale (Wickramasinghe *et al.,*1996). However in the Philippines, men dominate subsistence collection including firewood, grass and honey (Padilla, 1997). Similarly in Arunachal Pradesh, India, firewood gathering has traditionally been seen as a *man's* task (SRF, 1997).

In some parts of Asia women and men have been equally responsible for traditional forest management. Often, as found in the more remote areas of Nepal, women have developed their own rules concerning resource use and have mobilised themselves to protect the forest from 'outsiders' (Tanaka, undated).

2.2 HUNTING

In general only men hunt and though in a contemporary context this now occurs on a relatively small scale and usually for domestic consumption., in some areas poaching of larger game for commercial purposes still occurs. However, in some parts women have played and still do play a more active role in hunting (Shrestha, 1996; Elkar and Nathan, 1992). And in Mizoram, India for example women have traditionally held a vast knowledge of hunting techniques and ecological processes (SRF, 1997).

2.3 WETLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS

Gender divisions are also found in coastal and wetland areas, for example where fishing is concerned. In general, men focus their efforts on larger bodies of water and commercial catches; women (and also children) are mainly involved in subsistence fishing in more accessible areas such as streams and paddy fields. Women can also be active in fish processing, net-knitting, marketing (Wilde and Vanio-Matilla, 1995; Padilla, 1997) and in some parts, as in Vietnam, fish farming (Flintan, 2001b).

Women often engage in a number of part-time, seasonal income-earning activities, often in the informal sector, many of which are resource dependent. They greatly value the contribution - particularly economic - that coastal resources provide. Indeed, a study found that women better understood the economic rather than the ecological value of natural resources. When asked to rank the importance of resources in a mangrove area in the Philippines there was little hesitation in identifying the two most economically important sea resources, namely fish and shells. In addition, when asked about resource depletion, women appeared more concerned about the restriction or loss of an economic activity rather than environmental factors (Mehra *et al.*, 1993).

2.4 DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, POWER DYNAMICS AND PARTICIPATION

Despite the central role that women play in natural resource utlisation, they have very little involvement in decision-making, particularly at the village level. In general, both traditional and modern decision-making processes are male dominated. This is also true for those processes related to natural resource use. For example in Nepal, despite the relatively supportive policies found there, women remain underrepresented in community forest user committees and their passive participation has reinforced the dominant male perspective that women cannot contribute to decisions relating to resource management (Shrestha, 1996). Where women are involved, they tend to hold positions such as secretaries and treasurers. At regional and national levels such inadequate representation is even more defined. An exception to this inequity is found in Sri Lanka (Kothari *et al.,* 2000) and in Bhutan (see Box 2.3) where women have a much higher participation in decision-making processes, particularly those related to resources.

Box 2.1 Social Inequities: A Challenge to ICDPs

The disadvantaged position of occupational castes, and of women in general, poses special challenges to achieving sustainable community development and conserving biodiversity. For example, in community forestry women are either underrepresented or have token representation in user communities. Women are unable to express their concerns because they are numerically fewer.

(Shrestha, 1996).

When the use of natural resources is restricted, such as through conservation legislation, women often have little choice but to make attempts to continue utilising the resources as often there are no alternatives. In addition, an increasing absence of male household members for example due to migration for work, may mean more responsibilities for women; emotional stress of family separation; and in some cases anxiety and fear that their absent husbands will bring home another wife. Environmental degradation and resource scarcity may exacerbate the situation and also force women to deplete the environment further in their efforts to secure household needs.

There is a lack of organised platforms to address women's issues in the region, particularly in relation to NRM. This can pose special challenges to achieving sustainable community development and conserving biodiversity. As described, women are either underrepresented or have token representation in natural resource user communities and are consequently unable to express their concerns. However, where support and encouragement is given to women they are usually keen to participate, both in stakeholder organisations whereby they can make their voices heard, and in accessing financial services and alternative occupations.

Due to their often less mobile (see Section 2.9) and isolated position women may have limited knowledge about their local community, as well as the institutions and agencies working there. For example, in Nepal women rarely spend much time in public spaces, such as the ubiquitous tea-shops, where men typically hold many informal discussions and lay the ground for more formal decision-making processes.

2.5 LOW SELF-IMAGE

Women generally have lower levels of self-esteem and confidence than men. For example, in the coastal areas of Pakistan women consider themselves as *jangli-jangle* creatures (Tunio, 2000). For the Yolmu women of Helambu, Nepal, their poor self-image; their awkwardness at communicating in their native language among educated Nepali-speaking men; and their inability to speak English with tourists all contribute to their lack of participation in tourism and conservation development processes (Lama, 2000). There are exceptions however: for instance, amongst the tribal groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, women tend to have a higher level of self-esteem and image compared to men.

It is suggested that in general 'society' has a lower image of women than men; there is a lack of women in local leadership; a general authoritarian and hierarchical attitude within men towards women; a limited legal standing of women; a lack of political will to change; and an acceptance by the majority of women of their status. In addition occupational caste systems can further influence women's position in society. In women-only forest user groups in Nepal, for example, there is a tendency for local elite women to dominate occupational caste women (Shrestha, 1996).

2.6 WOMEN'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Traditionally women's central role is seen to be one of reproduction and the child-rearing members of the family. This is the case in India where, despite the enormous diversity and variation found across and within states:

> *"the common factor everywhere is women's exclusive responsibility for housework and child care."* (SRF,1997:18).

Women generally have multiple daily commitments such as cooking, childcare and agriculture, which often prove to be more labour intensive than men's tasks (Mitra, 1998; Ramprasad, 1999). In Nepal, for example, it is suggested that the total workload of women aged 15 years and over can be as high as 11.23 hours per person per day. Such labour intensive work can have detrimental impacts on women's health (Shrestha, 1996). The work performed by men is accorded a higher status than women's work.

In addition, in many parts of Asia temporary or even permanent out-migration of male community members in search of alternative labour and livelihood opportunities is increasing. In the mountain areas of Nepal and India such out-migration occurs on a regular basis for portering or guiding work, as well as conscription into national or international armies. This inevitably means that women are left behind to manage the household and take on tasks traditionally carried out by men.

Though men and women generally do work together in a complementary way, because labour input for women remains higher, they may face difficulties in finding time to attend meetings and engage in conservation and development processes. In addition men may be unwilling to allow women time to attend meetings, they will not share household responsibilities so that women can do so, and fail to encourage them or build up their confidence to participate in activities outside the domestic sphere.

Box 2.2 Time Constraints

"Time constraints stemming from women's economic and production roles limit their ability to participate in conservation efforts."

(Shrestha, 1996:21).

It is perceived that in the majority of cases, men are responsible for cash generation and 'public' activities, while women are responsible for the domestic sphere. However in many parts of Asia, particularly South East Asia, it is usual for women to take care of the money within the household. But though some take this to mean that women are the household financial managers (Mehra *et al*, 1993) in some countries, such as Vietnam, such a role merely means physically looking after the cash. When it comes to spending the money it is either a decision initiated by the husband, or in rarer cases, a joint decision between husband and wife (Flintan, 2001b).

Gender inequities in Asian societies are particularly clear within education. For example in the Kanchenjunga area of Nepal, while the average male literacy rate is 48%, average female literacy is less than half that. WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) has attributed these inequities to a number of factors:

- *Social* - the general belief that women's work is household work which exposes women to fewer opportunities for pursuing education and skill development activities.
- *Cultural* - while in the Sherpa communities there is a relative balance in female and male status, women are delegated a lower status in the areas close to Kanchenjunga.
- *Environmental* - the greater workload amongst women means they have less time to attend to issues beyond everyday needs (WWF-Nepal, 2002).

Despite this, in mountain areas such as these, where life is difficult and physically challenging for everyone, women are often considered more economically, socially and politically important and achieve a much more equitable status with men than in lowland areas (Flintan, 2003b). For example Bhutan, a predominantly mountainous country, is one of the most equitable of societies in Asia, as described in Box 2.3.

Indeed, suggesting strict gender divisions within the Asian context is too simple a statement. Not only are such divisions dynamic, they are also intricately tied to issues of class, caste, patriarchy, religion, ethnic identity and geographical location. These can also determine the parameters of women's activities. And differences can be experienced between regions, even villages (SRF, 1997).

2.6.1 The Influence of Caste, Religious and Ethnic Divides

In the Rajasthan region, Rajuldevi (*personal communication*, 2001) states that:

> "*the women of scheduled castes are treated like animals*".

Furthermore in Nepal, around the GHNP, the scheduled castes who occupy the bottom of the caste hierarchy experience not only low literacy and employment but also, for women, a low participation in women's collectives. In addition, access to forests and NTFP collection is dominated by higher castes, as in concessional timber distribution. And lower castes are the first to be dispossessed during eviction drives (Tandon, 2002).

Religious divides also prove important in relation to gender. For example large differences can exist between Buddhists and Hindus: the former usually providing a less restrictive social setting for women than the latter, as found in areas of Nepal (Lama, 2000). In addition, particularly in the mountain areas of the country, the majority of the local communities are Buddhist. This has affected people's relationship with the environment and has in fact supported a conservation ethic. The Buddhist faith promotes a respect for nature and the belief that one should not kill any living creature. Around monasteries it is common for trees to be protected (Flintan, 2003b).

Ethnicity also plays a role. For example in the vicinity of Bardia NP the Tharu women in particular lack self-esteem and access to resources. In turn this may affect the collection of NTFPs. Indeed a study suggests that Tharus, rather than non-Tharus, collect the wild fruits and vegetables from the forest areas (Shrestha, 1996). Alternatively, as in areas of Vietnam within the still remaining matrilineal societies such as the Kinh, women play a central role in community decision-making, and the inheritance of productive assets takes place from mother to daughter. Production decisions are taken by the older, more experienced women (Mitra, 1998).

2.7 INEQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

It is clear that the majority of women experience fewer opportunities to better their lives than men. More men are employed in full time employment. Women have less access to information, education and skills. Their lower literacy level, reduced mobility, lesser ability to speak in public meetings, lack of self confidence and fear of being ridiculed are all limiting factors to women and their effective participation in decision making and consultations.

Women in general have limited or no access to financial institutions and support. The shortage of capital is often the main factor cited by women as impeding their economic advancement. This is despite the fact that (as described in Section 2.6) women in many parts of Asia are the recognised 'money managers' in households. Attempts to overcome such constraints are being made and it is often the case that informal money lending or saving (commodity- or cash-based) occurs between women (see the Philippines - Padilla, 1998; Mehra *et al.*, 1993).

Women still have limited income generation opportunities, and because of their lack of education and relevant skills, women are unable to take advantage of new entrepreneurial opportunities such as the Forest Based Small Scale Enterprise scheme that was set up in India in the early 1990s. With low capital, limited free time, restricted range of activities and lack of experience, entrepreneurial risk-taking and strategy-making are just not possible (Campbell, 1991).

However where opportunities do exist, as a project in the Philippines discovered, women are willing to get involved in multiple income-generating activities. For example, one woman stated that she sold fish five times a week; farmed a cassava plot, contributed to planting, weeding, and harvesting even while pregnant; raised pigs; collected shells and travelled to Cebu (an overnight journey) once a month to sell shells; tended fruit trees and assisted her husband in growing vegetables. This was in addition to having six children below the age of 12. The study also showed that marital status and the number of children did not influence the number and type of economic activities that women are involved in. This is partly due to the presence of extended family members such as grandmothers or mother-in-laws who help with child care or other activities (Mehra *et al.*, 1993).

Further, in Vietnam, women are renowned as traders and dominate trading businesses and markets. Around U Minh Thuong NP in the Mekong Delta women work hard to maintain the trading business which depends upon a boating system (often rowed rather than motored) that works its way around a vast system of canals. The traders transport goods to and from the market (Flintan, 2001b).

Box 2.5 Gender Inequities in India

In India there is still widespread and entrenched resistance to women's personal autonomy, choice of marriage partners, matters of child-bearing and so on; to their physical visibility and freedom of movement; to their inheritance of property and land in particular; and to their access to modern knowledge and technical skills. Delicate socio-political questions are also involved in addressing women's strategic needs, empowerment and rights. This is particularly so for certain communities, such as those of the north-eastern states, where there is legal sanction and political support for patriarchal customary tribal practices.

(SRF, 1997:36).

2.8 RESTRICTED MOBILITY

Women have far more restricted mobility outside their communities than men (SRF, 1997). Therefore it may be difficult for women to expand their livelihood opportunities, such as through seasonal labour. Indeed, it is common for women to be left behind after their husbands or sons migrate elsewhere to find work. This aggravates the poverty and burdens already experienced there. Migration in Nepal, for example, has greatly increased since the mid-1990s (Tanaka, undated) and a study of three villages in 1999 found that male migration doubled women's physical work burden (PRB, 2002). Women are rarely able to travel without a male relative, and in many countries may not be able to obtain a passport without the approval of their father or husband.

On the other hand it is usually the women who are forced to move through marriage. Though this may not be far, it does mean that they are faced with a new set of issues and a different relationship with the local environment. New knowledge may be required and it will take time before adequate experience is developed.

2.9 INEQUITIES IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONS

It is suggested that:

> *"the professional infrastructure for biodiversity management is sharply gender-biased and most professionals in these institutions or agencies show little gender awareness [let] alone gendered analysis in their management strategies and programmes. Preliminary observations…show that this is, in fact, even more so in the scientific bodies than in the sectoral services, like agriculture and forestry, which have greater interaction with communities, and have to deal with social problems as well as scientific ones. A part of the problem is the low ratio of women in professional scientific organisations."* (SRF, 1997:23).

Indeed, despite the Indian Forest Service being opened to women in 1980, by 1995, when the most senior women forest officers had completed 15 years of service, there were only 72 women in a total cadre strength of 2,576 - just 2.8%. The ratio of women rangers and foresters is less than 1%. Similarly in organisations such as WWF, though there are reasonable percentages of women in the lower ranks of employment, such as administration, in the high positions such as management, there are very few (*ibid*).

In addition, it is usually the case that the majority of extension workers, such as those in forestry, are men. As such they find it difficult to reach village women with extension advice because in the majority of countries, as in Pakistan (see Warrington, 2000), it is not considered permissible for male members of staff to directly interact with women. It has been suggested that the lack of female extension workers is due to the slow development of expertise and technical outputs as well as the social and cultural constraints on women. Furthermore, in many Parks and surrounding areas, the largely technocratic orientation of the park staff is a limiting factor in promoting community involvement as a whole and especially of women.

3. IMPACTS OF CONSERVATION ON THESE INEQUITIES

Within the region there has been little exploration or analysis of the impacts of conservation and ICDPs on communities in a gender-sensitive manner. The few studies identified through this study that recognise differentiated impacts of conservation between men and women are detailed below.

Where mentioned the differentiated gender impacts of conservation policies and projects have tended to be less favourable towards women and in some cases have been found to exacerbate existing gender inequities. For example, the creation of the RBNP in Nepal has meant a sharpening of gender inequities with reduced availability of fuelwood, fodder and other forest products traditionally used for household maintenance (Shrestha, 1996). And in the Kailadevi Sanctuary, Western India, the decision to ban axes in the village forest (in order to stop the cutting of live trees) which was taken by the all-male village forest protection committees has meant increased hardship for the women because they now have to walk further to collect fuelwood (Das 1997 in Kothari *et al,* 2000).

If they have no alternatives, women will attempt to continue accessing forests and natural resources despite the risk of being caught by authorities. At the Sivapuri Forest Reserve in India, for example, women still go to collect firewood, but now in a group, as they fear the army who have been authorised to protect the forest. Collection can now take 7 hours compared to 3-4 in the past, due to their attempts to avoid detection. Further, at night they risk being attacked by wild boar that were reintroduced into the area a few years ago (Wilde and Vainio-Matilla, 1996).

Indeed, although the advantages of setting up community forests have been emphasised by governments, unless pre-existing socio-cultural inequality is resolved, it will not necessarily bring equal benefits to all but, rather, continue to widen the gap in terms of access rights and unequal division of labour (Tanaka, undated).

Such issues are discussed in more detail in the handbook: *Gender, Forestry and Rural Livelihoods: Seeing the Forest for the People* (Griffen 2002). It includes studies that illustrate major changes in livelihood and gender relations as women lose access to, or control over, forest resources as a result of changes in land legislation and forest policies. Changes have affected women the most, as they have fewer economic options then men. Women are also losing their traditional status and decision-making power in the household and community, while their physical and economic dependence on men is increasing. Women's traditional knowledge and use of forest resources are being lost as traditional productions systems change, influenced by male-dominated forestry products and the impact of an ever-globalising society that forces more men to migrate for work. The book concludes that, unless things change, *"new forms of gender inequality and male dominance and patriarchy will become more entrenched"* (WRM-Website, 2002).

4. PROBLEMS CAUSED BY FAILURE TO ADDRESS GENDER IN ICDPS

Few projects in the region actively address gender issues within ICDPs. For example, referring to WWF-India's Community Biodiversity Conservation Movement in 1989, SRF (1997:34) states that though there is a careful monitoring system to clear project proposals so as to ensure, among other things, the direct involvement of local communities.

> "… they do not seem to involve the community in the planning and design stages [and] *gender is not a specific concern*" (SRF, 1997:34).

This lack of concern for gender issues in ICDPs has resulted in the surfacing of a number of problems:

- Misunderstanding and mistrust between conservation authorities, development organisations and communities.
- Differing priorities, which can have adverse impacts.
- Increased gender inequalities.
- Overlooking women's roles and responsibilities.
- Missed opportunities.
- Problems arising due to women being viewed as a heterogeneous group.

4.1 MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND MISTRUST

Despite rhetorical statements about more inclusive community-based conservation, in reality rifts still exist between authorities, implementing organisations and local communities. This has continued to have adverse effects. In many areas of Nepal for example, there remains a high level of mistrust and misunderstanding between NPs and the local people. Around the RBNP this could have been reduced if people - including women - had been made more aware of, and included in, park activities and decision-making processes. In reality, women - particularly Tharu women - seldom acknowledged the Park or knew any details about it. Most of the them had never been told or approached by the Park about the conservation and development programmes, and had therefore not been given the opportunity to participate in them (Shrestha, 1996).

If women remain excluded from the consultation and implementation processes they will continue to be unaware of rules and regulations. Obviously this makes it difficult for them to practise conservation of resources. As a result, disputes can occur between them, conservation authorities and other users, and the success of conservation initiatives is likely to be undermined.

In addition, when there is a significant gap between the cultures of development organisations and the cultures of the communities they work with, goals of equity can be very difficult to achieve. This is particularly true of mountain societies where the relatively higher status of women is well known and documented, yet development organisations are often dominated by patriarchal value systems common to the majority of societies, such as lowland, caste-dominated societies. The values thus held tend to undermine the status of upland women whether through organisational decisions or individual behaviours of staff who may, consciously or unconsciously, assert their own ideas about the 'proper place' for women. Further, it is suggested that:

"this topic of the gendered nature of development organisations is even more significant in relation to NRM. The professions of forestry, agriculture and water management are heavily dominated by male members and a masculine culture. Women professionals in these fields face difficulties unknown to women working in more traditionally feminine professions" (Gurung, 2001:2).

4.2 DIFFERING PRIORITIES

The needs and concerns for natural resources often differ between women and men, reflecting their divided roles and responsibilities (see Section 2). This is illustrated through the example of a PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) exercise conducted in a rural area of Pakistan that revealed that men and women ranked perceived needs for the community quite differently (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1 Different 'Community' Needs

A WWF project set in the Ucchali watershed in Pakistan carried out PRA exercises within the local communities to initiate local level planning that takes full account of local needs, perspectives, capacities and aspirations. When ranking the management options for the watershed the men prioritised the need for new or alternative land whilst the women prioritised the need for a community welfare package. When ranking the different elements of a possible welfare package the men prioritised the need for a basic health unit and the construction of a link road to the nearest main road. The women placed a much greater emphasis on the need for a supply of water to each household, family planning and a vocational centre for the village women. Indeed further investigation showed that the diminishing water supply in the area is the most serious problem for women. The average woman makes at least 3-4 trips a day to collect water found at a considerable distance.

(Pimbert, 1995).

Differing perspectives can also be seen in a survey of community members in the Philippines. Although both men and women recognised that the environment was deteriorating and resources were becoming scarcer, further probing revealed greater differences. Men tended to describe the problem in terms of fish scarcity and reduced catch, whilst women focused on a wider spectrum of environmentally induced problems, such as sanitation, health, food for their families, and lack of raw marine materials for shellcraft, sale and eating (USAID Office of WID Website, 2001).

Such different perspectives and needs should be reflected in the development and planning of projects and their different focus areas.

4.3 INCREASING GENDER INEQUALITIES

In some projects the exclusion of women or a lack of gender awareness has had very clear detrimental effects on women, not least by increasing the gender inequalities that already existed. One such project is described in Box 4.2, which shows that despite the project having several positive impacts on livelihoods it also had negative impacts, particularly on women.

In addition, it is usual for women and men to experience different trade-offs and transaction costs when becoming involved in, and giving up time for, conservation projects and practice. Two particularly onerous costs that women may incur are harassment and violence from their husbands. For example, in a coastal management project in the Philippines village women were reluctant to participate because their husbands beat them when they

did. Only through interventions carried out by the project leading to public and open discussions in the village about the problem, did men come to recognise that they felt threatened by women's participation causing them to react in this way. Eventually the men came to accept that women's involvement would not diminish their own status (Gambill, 1999:24).

Box 4.2 ICDPs Can Increase Gender Inequalities

The Pagkalinawan, Jala-Jala forest project in the Philippines was set up in 1972. Since its inception it has failed to recognise women's knowledge and the gender divisions of labour in the community and households. For example, with the intention of improving land tenureship, the project issued land use certificates and land titles. Yet these certificates were issued only to men, who thus became the ones to control access to resources. By reinforcing patriarchal values and encouraging gender inequalities, the project allowed:

- Men more opportunities to become representatives in the community and market and to become powerful leaders.
- Men rather than women to establish links with external agencies (eg markets) through the credit facilities of the project.
- Men rather than women to establish links with other economic and educational opportunities.

As a result, community customary rights, land use and allocations have been undermined through the effective 'privatisation' of resources. Gender imbalances have thus been linked to a hierarchical and male model, rooted in dominion and control of nature along the lines of a globalisation 'development' goal.

(Griffen, 2001 in WRM Bulletin 58, May 2002).

4.4 WOMEN'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE OVERLOOKED

Because gender issues have not been taken into account, women's roles and responsibilities have been overlooked. Projects have focussed on what have been wrongly perceived to be 'community roles', but in fact tend to be those dominated by the men, who are better able to express interest and take part in conservation and development processes. As a study of an ICDP in the Philippines suggests, where an emphasis on livelihood activities accentuates men's roles, women's roles, such as in enterprise and development, are often ignored. This is confirmed in Bangladesh where a programme to encourage farmers to plant and maintain trees trained only men in agroforestry. The fact that women were involved in every aspect of farming (except land preparation) and were responsible for the caring of tree seedlings and trees around the home was overlooked (Wilde and Vainio-Mattila in Gambill, 1999).

Even in Nepal, where community forestry policy provides support for greater gender equality, women and their views have often been disregarded. In tourism also, women's role can be marginalised. Indeed, though women routinely manage small tourist lodges serving 20-30 foreign trekkers per day and as many trekking staff, they are rarely seen in village meetings (Lama, 2000). If only these roles were more greatly recognised and seen as a valuable asset, the community as a whole would benefit and provide greater incentives for conservation and investment in more sustainable development.

In addition, the very changing nature of women's roles has not been taken into account. Today, in some parts, there is an increasing pressure on women to become involved in income generating projects as cash becomes a more important element of household economies. This can have a direct effect on their relationship with the environment as well as in local societies. For example in Bangladesh the emergence of shrimp fry collection as a new occupation for women means that they are increasingly absent from the forest. Furthermore, it has introduced new gender issues such as gender violence perpetrated

against women workers by unlawful elements and the increasing use of female child labour in shrimp fry collection (Mitra, 1998).

4.5 MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Failing to involve women to a greater extent in conservation and development has resulted in a string of missed opportunities. Such potential is particularly true for the number of matriarchal societies that still exist in areas of Asia (Ba, 2000). Despite some improvements there remains a general lack of understanding of gender issues within those involved in conservation and development. In most cases (excluding those few listed below) there have been no training courses or awareness raising activities on themes such as resource conservation that targets women as well as men, and especially ethnic minority women.

Ignoring women's roles in project design and implementation can jeopardise the success of projects. As an assessment of two ICDPs in Thailand concluded: if the development activities target the wrong sectors of the community, and especially if they exclude the members of the community who utilise the forest resources (such as women), exploitation and degradation of the forest will continue (McQuistan, 1998). As Singh *et al*. (2000) suggest in relation to India's Eco-development Programme:

> *"most of the community-based projects suffer due to lack of community harmony and non-equity….Gender inequality [is] a constrain[t] to participatory decision-making."*

Eventually recognising this, the Programme now insists on a minimum of three women members on the 16 member-Village Eco-development Committees.

Understanding gender issues, and perhaps initiating a targeting of women, can also have a number of less obvious advantages. Unlike men's income, that of women is often distributed more equitably in terms of improved household consumption. In addition, in NRM projects women have been found to play a definitive role in conflict resolution.

For example, in Nepal a project that sought to resolve local conflicts over water use established different user groups that included men and women. Some women attended training courses whilst others played an important role within the Mediation Group. The older, married women tended to be more cooperative and assertive in resolving local conflicts because of a better ability to understand different perspectives (Upreti, 1999).

4.6 VIEWING WOMEN AS A HETEROGENEOUS GROUP

Finally, not only can problems arise by not taking account of gender issues, but also by not recognising the heterogeneity found within both 'women' and 'men' as selected groups. Distinct differences may exist through age, social standing, ethnicity and religion (as described above).

Such differences can have an impact on people's relationship with the environment and on support for conservation practises. For example, poor and wealthy women in some Gujarat communities in India use different tree species. In some villages, wealthy women violate forest management plans and cut down the trees that the poor, lower-caste women rely on for income. As a result, the poor women prove unsupportive of conservation measures and will often resist the further implementation of management plans (Sarin, 1998b).

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5. EXPERIENCE OF ICDPS

5.1 POLICIES

The policies of individual conservation and development organisations involved in ICDPs are discussed in the summary document: *'Engendering' Eden. Volume I.* Of the conservation organisations, only IUCN has developed a worthwhile gender policy and this influences the work of the regional offices to some degree. However even here gender is not fully institutionalised and the enthusiasm and concerns of key individuals can be seen as the most important factor in taking gender forward to become an issue of concern at project level. Those ICDPs that are implemented by more development-oriented organisations such as CARE have a greater emphasis on the inclusion of gender.

For organisations such as WWF who have no organisation-wide gender policy there is little pressure on projects to address gender issues, particularly in the initial stages of planning and implementation. Generally, only as gender issues arise are they addressed, if at all. As a result, gender is not approached in a knowledgeable, strategic and organised manner, but relies more on a haphazard 'muddling through' and the use of skills and resources available at the time.

In the few cases where gender is approached more strategically, benefits have arisen. For example, as described below, both WWF-Nepal and ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Area Project) have initiated a gender-mainstreaming process founded on knowledge- and experience-based gender policies. Even where such gender strategies have failed to reach and/or be applied in the field, they have influenced a greater emphasis on gender issues overall and a focus on women.

Though the majority of countries in the region have developed national gender policies and strategies on women and gender, few conservation NGOs show an awareness of them. Such policies and strategies could prove an important starting point for addressing gender issues, particularly as some countries have further developed the strategies to link with natural resource use and the environment. In the Philippines for example, a Gender and Development Focal Point has been set up in the Division of Environment and Natural Resources to serve as a catalyst for gender-responsive planning and programming (PRB, 2002). Such initiatives can provide legal and structural support for gender-sensitive planning and implementation of ICDPs.

However, mainstreaming gender thoroughly still proves difficult even within more aware and amenable contexts. In Nepal, though the community forestry movement has had government support since the early 1990s (Tanaka, undated) other official guidelines on the handing-over of procedures on community forests have not clearly addressed gender social/equity issues, and as a result:

> *"women's concerns are still seen as an 'add-on' issue"* (ibid).

5.2 RATIONALE

Those projects that do address gender issues and/or seek to target women within ICDPs express similar rationales for doing so: mainly based on a 'welfare' perspective (Tunio, 2000; Rai, 2001). For example the USAID (later WWF) -funded Cogtong Mangrove project in the Philippines stresses that:

> *"women must be integrated into conservation and development efforts to meet the dual objectives of better management of the resource base and improved community welfare"* (Mehra et al, 1993).

A handful of projects have recognised the vital role of women and their major contributions to project success (Warrington, 2000; KMTNC, 2000). The Mountain Areas Conservancy Project (MACP) in Pakistan sees women having a major role in NRM activities that may affect both biodiversity loss and conservation:

> *"For this reason it is critical for the success of the project to seek appropriate ways of involving them in MACP. Without women's involvement and cooperation, 50% of the project's target group may not be reached and their attitudes and actions towards the environment will remain unchanged. This would reduce the chances of the project contributing to the overall development objective"* (Warrington, 2000:27).

5.3 PLANNING

Experience has shown that it is easier to incorporate gender issues at the programming level than at the policy and the institutional level (Samanata, 2001). It is therefore important that this occurs during the planning stages.

Within more development-oriented NRM projects such as those funded by the ADB (Asian Development Bank) in Vietnam, there are examples of reasonably comprehensive gender analyses being carried out and where context specific socio-economic indicators have been established (Mitra, 1998). In addition, a handful of ICDPs do suggest that women are and/or should be specifically involved within project planning and formulation (CARE-Thailand, undated; Warrington, 2000; NIPAP, undated). In the MACP, Pakistan (a seven year project funded by GEF/UNDP and implemented by IUCN) a gender workshop was held to develop a workable and appropriate gender strategy (Warrington, 2000).

Some organisations have carried out gender-desegregated socio-economic surveys as part of the ICDP process (WWF-International Website, 1996; McDonald, 2002; Tunio, 2000); WWF-Philippines, 1997). However, these surveys and the involvement of consultants, including gender consultants, tend to be short-term and 'one-off'. As a result, although suggestions and inputs might be made at the beginning of a project on such issues as gender, this is not continued through the project's lifetime and gender still tends to be marginalised as 'more important' problems and more pressing issues arise.

However, the majority of ICDPs have not sought the views and interests of all stakeholders, including women, within their design and planning. Nor have they spent time and resources supporting a better understanding and accountability of gender issues. The negative impacts of this are being realised. For example in the Cogtong Mangrove Bay Management Project in the Philippines conflicts arose over the communities' ability to prevent illegal fishing and it is suggested that if more time had been spent understanding gender issues, this might have been averted (Mehra *et al.,* 1993).

5.4 USE OF PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES

It is recognised that RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal), PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) present greater opportunities for planners and

practitioners to better identify gender problems in local communities. In a few cases participatory techniques of data collection have been used prior to the implementation of the projects, for example in WWF's MCP in Pakistan (see Box 5.1) and Mt. Guiting-Guiting ICDP, the Philippines (WWF-Philippines, 1997). Others have carried out socio-economic surveys to explore the issues of poverty and the environment with an emphasis on gender and the environment (Ba, 2000).

Box 5.1 A PLA for WWF's MCP (Mangrove Conservation Project), Pakistan

During the PLAs, needs assessments were carried out through meetings, interviews and surveys. Using these approaches resource maps were identified. In addition, gender dependence on and responsibilities for use and management of these natural resources were determined. The gender planning methodology used by the MCP included a diagnosis of socio-economic gender issues through consultation and participatory approaches. The study assessed the following:

- Women's roles and the advantages to women within the MCP.
- The impact of the MCP on women as direct or indirect beneficiaries.
- Roles in, and advantages for, women in livestock rearing and other income generating activities.
- Gender awareness about natural resource management.
- The potential for development of women's groups.
- Training needs for local women to enhance their skills in natural resource management.
- Current constraints on women, in terms of daily activities and responsibilities for reproductive work, and their possible role in conservation.

Results from the PLA studies concluded that the most effective way to address gender issues in the MCP would be to work within the existing roles and responsibilities of men and women in such a way that they both actively participate in project activities.

(Tunio, 2000).

Another example is provided by the Mountain Institute who, during the establishment of the Langtang Ecotourism project (see Box 5.2) soon realised that a series of participatory planning workshops were needed to encourage women's involvement.

Box 5.2 Langtang Ecotourism Project

"When we first invited the women of Shermathang to the project meetings, they said they could not read nor write, and therefore could not participate. When asked their names, they just giggled. Over the period of two years, through a series of appreciative participatory planning and action workshops and ecotourism training, the situation changed dramatically: a women's group had formed, registered with the District Government, and had established its own office. It now holds regular meetings, keeps minutes, and has raised 30,000 rupees (approximately US$500) with which it provides revolving loans to members to start small enterprises. With the interest from the loans, it has set up a small museum to inform tourists about the women's Yolmu culture. Tourists' donations support the women's volunteer efforts to undertake other conservation and community activities, including regular village garbage clean-ups, literacy classes, and performances of traditional cultural dances" (Observations by Langtang Ecotourism Project staff, September 1996 to October 1998).

(Lama, 2000).

A small number of assessments have been carried out on the *impacts* of ICDPs on women and explored the gender issues present in local communities. Again RRA and/or PRA have proved beneficial in the collection of data. For example, a gender assessment was carried out on the Cogtong Bay Mangrove Management Project in the Philippines five years after its initiation (Mehra *et al*, 1993). Here it was realised that different focus groups – some mixed, some women/men only – provided a range of opportunities for varied discussions and the raising of different issues. Working in groups also has the advantage of being able to provide more comfortable supportive forums in which women in particular may be encouraged to talk about more sensitive issues.

5.5 MAINSTREAMING GENDER WITHIN CONSERVATION

Few conservation organisations themselves have institutionalised gender issues. Though moves have certainly been made by some to address gender inequities, this has mainly happened in a haphazard and reactionary manner. Conservation organisations remain dominated by male members of staff. Efforts to recruit women professionals who might more effectively communicate with local women have often had little success. For example, in Nepal women foresters remain unaccepted by their male counterparts or are reported to encounter unprofessional behaviour from male colleagues. As a result they are unwilling to place themselves in positions that may expose them to such behaviour.

Initiating a process of gender mainstreaming is difficult. It is not just women that encounter problems. For example in WWF-Nepal male staff members experienced concern from their wives and families were that they were in the field with female colleagues. Female members of staff experienced other problems: they felt that their capabilities were questioned because they were women; that they found that people simply were not prepared to believe the truth about gender; and that their suggestions and opinions were often not taken seriously by the male-dominated conservation organisations within which they worked (Samanata, 2001).

WWF-Nepal has now taken some steps to over come such concerns, such as suggesting that partners may accompany members of the staff to the field, especially if they are away from home for some period of time, and women (and men) employees who have no transport of their own are regularly picked up and dropped off by the organisation.

In more remote areas it can be particularly difficult to hire female staff for personal and physical reasons. In the highland areas of Thailand for example, CARE found that female staff were just not able to cope with the toughness of the living and field conditions, such as having to use motorbikes on the rough terrain. The women were eventually replaced by male staff members (Panitchpakdi, *personal communication,* 1999).

However though there is likely to be a range of benefits in increasing the number of women on project teams, it should not be presumed that this will automatically improve an understanding and focus on gender issues. As a gender assessment of the Cogtong Mangrove Management Project found, even though half of the key staff were women, staff responses indicated that they rarely considered gender issues and had never thought that women's roles, for example, may differ from those of their husbands (Mehra *et al.*, 1993).

On the other hand, individuals, particularly females, can have a large influence on the development of interest in gender issues within both policies and specific projects. A study of two ICDPs Thailand found that the project had developed a sensitivity to gender issues as a result of two unrelated factors. The first was the participation of a female Netherlands Government representative on the steering committee. She continuously questioned the committee concerning the project's impact upon women's roles and encouraged the management team to evaluate gender issues and ensure equality in all project activities.

Secondly, the 1996 and 1997 evaluations of the project were undertaken by a female consultant who had the opportunity to visit the project sites several times. On her first field visit she established a strong rapport with many of the women working with the project and this facilitated their input via the evaluation process. Many of the women afterwards stated that they had been encouraged to talk by the consultant but would probably have remained silent if an all male evaluation team had visited (McQuistan, 1998).

6. PROJECTS IN PRACTICE

In many cases, though a given commitment within project documents to address gender issues may be found, turning such commitment into successful practice has proved more difficult. As Padilla (1997) confirms for the WWF Mt. Guiting-Guiting project in the Philippines:

> *"the framework on gender in itself [is] not yet well articulated in the overall framework of the…Project, even [though] there is a commitment to it. The gender framework will still have to be worked out in any of the livelihood and enterprise projects to be conceptualised and implemented."*

Those ICDPs that have attempted to involve and/or benefit women and/or address gender issues have used a number of means to do so, such as supporting representation on relevant committees; health, education and general development; income-generating activities and gender training. The following summarises the different projects, suggests problems and gives examples of best practice.

6.1 WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

A number of ICDPs in the region have attempted to enhance the participation and representation of women in conservation activities (Tunio, 2000; Ba, 2000). And in some, reasonable success has been achieved, including increased female representation on natural resource committees (Padilla, 1999; CARE-Thailand, undated; DNPWC, 1999).

There also appears to have been particular success in some projects in Nepal. Women have become members of Forest User Groups (FUGs) (and may be in charge of them) as well as community development committees. This has been aided by the presence of supportive institutional channels that can be used to enhance women's involvement, including the use of staff from the Women Development Office/HMG and NGOs working with women in community forest areas (Shrestha, 1996).

Furthermore, some FUGs have been controlling illegal timber harvesting and trading in the area with strong leadership from women. The WWF-supported Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project (SCAFP), for example, emphasises the empowerment of local women and capacity building of CBOs such as Women's Awareness Groups and Community FUGs in its education and capacity building efforts. In this way SCAFP continues to highlight the important role that women play in changing local people's attitudes towards conservation (Flintan, 2003b).

Innovative schemes such as the Safe Drinking Water Stations to reduce solid waste pollution from plastic bottles are now completely run by women's groups. Establishment of Women and Environment Groups in villages has aided their involvement (see Box 6.1), and initial financial assistance and skill development training has been given. Each supported group consists of a nine-member executive committee who, together with the members, contribute to the women development programmes (Prakiti, 2001).

Community facilitators have been used in some cases to encourage more equitable participation. However, it is often the case that such facilitators do not go far enough in reaching out beyond the 'power wielders' in the communities and involve more marginalised groups such as women. At the same time questions are raised as to how far such intervention should go in encouraging change and what is the impact of such

intervention. These are questions rarely explored by the organisations involved in ICDP implementation.

Box 6.1 Women and Environment Groups in Nepal

I have been here for three years now. You can't imagine how difficult it was to even get a group of women together to discuss things - some were too shy even to open the door to us in the beginning. Teaching women and children about the basics in health and sanitation is just a start in the wider perspective of women and the environment. Women can earn up to 2,500-3,000 rupees extra a month if they are able to utilise their skills. When we see one woman who has undergone training and she begins to train others, that, for me, is a sign of success and sustainability.

(Statement from Ms. Saraswati Rai Subba, permanent staff member of the Women and Environment Group).

6.2 EDUCATION AND AWARENESS BUILDING

In Asia more women are illiterate than men. In addition, although women may have a good knowledge about the resources that they use, they tend to have a poorer understanding of environmental processes and the long-term impacts of unsustainable use. As a result, some projects are training women in basic literacy and numeracy, with the aim of providing them with skills to participate more effectively in resource management and income generating activities (WWF-US, undated; Flintan, 2003b; DNPWC, 1999; WWF-Nepal, 2002). Such non-formal education classes have also contributed towards building self-confidence and self-esteem and increased women's willingness to participate in community activities (see Box 6.3). Indeed, education is seen as a means to women's empowerment.

Some ICDPs have invested in the building of schools (Flintan, 2001b). Alternatively, student stipends are being provided to socio-economically disadvantaged children, particularly girls. WWF-Nepal has shown such support in many of its projects. The village 'mothers' groups' and local Village Development Committee (VDC) choose the students with the recommendation of schoolteachers. The stipends include clothing, stationary, books and a monthly lunch. ACAP has also supported such schemes (Flintan, 2003b).

In addition women are being targeted for education on development and health issues. For example WWF's MCP in Pakistan aims to raise awareness amongst women about development and its gender-based consequences. This includes subjects such as personal hygiene and preventive health education which has been provided with the introduction of water purification systems to prevent waterborne diseases in project areas (Tunio, 2000).

At the same time such education may often be combined with the provision of information on conservation and its relevance to development. For example, MCP aims to educate and train women in equitable ownership and sustainable natural resource use, and provide better information dissemination (*ibid*). Similar work is being carried out at the community level for both men and women in Nepal by UNDP and DNPWC (Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation) (DNPWC, 1999).

A similar emphasis on conservation awareness has also been implemented in other parts of Nepal: non-formal education and Eco club support; audio visual shows and leaflet dissemination; and capacity building in the form of training, study tours and workshops. Awareness building and waste management led by the local NGO, SPCC has led to increased knowledge about toxics and pollution control. A central aim is to promote linkages between improving the environment and improving health and development. For example

the focus on community greenhouse building attempts to increase opportunities for eating better food as well as intensifying the production process so that less land is needed for cultivation. Likewise, pollution control not only improves the environment but also health and well being (Flintan, 2003b).

Box 6.2 Literary Classes in the Himalayas

As part of SCAFP (see Appendix 1), literacy classes which particularly target women are being supported by WWF. The women who attend are of all ages: the youngest being 12 and the oldest 55. They are run under the Women's Awareness Group and SPCC. When first organised, classes were held 6 days per week, from 4-6pm for 6 months. Unfortunately there was a high incidence of dropouts and irregular attendance due to household workload and negative pressure from male counterparts. It was found that attendance was particularly low during the trekking season when labour demand was high. As a result, the literacy classes are now held at times when the workload is not so high, such as out of trekking season and/or in the afternoons or evenings, so that there are more opportunities for women to attend.

An assessment report of the Project suggested that the *"literacy rate among the women has improved along with conservation awareness [and the] decision-making role of women in CFUGs has noticeably increased"* (Gurung, 1999:8). In addition it was felt that women are taking more advantage of some of the Project elements in comparison to men (Flintan, 2003b).

6.3 INCOME GENERATION

Aid is being given through the identification and development of income generating activities (Tunio, 2000; McQuistan, 1998; CARE-Thailand, undated; DNPWC, 1999; KMTNC, 2001; Flintan, 2003b). In many cases women form the majority of income-generating groups (CARE-Thailand, undated; McQuistan, 1998). However, it has been found that to achieve this women may need a large amount of support and training in business activities. In societies where the involvement of women in business is not common, it may be up to one or two women to act as 'role models' or 'path breakers' and prove the opportunities open to women before others feel comfortable enough to join in (see for example Box 6.4).

Box 6.3 Role Models

Ms Joshi is a member of Rapti Mahila Women's User Group, Nepal, formed in mid-1997. There are 44 members in the group who have saved a total of Rs38,000. The group has formed an organisation called *Srijana Sewing Functional Organisation* with five members. Ms Joshi has initiated a sewing shop/training centre at Jagatpur. In the past, the locals would oppose the sewing jobs as the occupation of untouchables (*Damai*), but now such views are changing. Furthermore, despite problems of competition from Indian vendors and a lack of markets for the goods, the business is doing well. As a result other women are also initiating businesses. Women are becoming more confident and Ms Joshi is hopeful that in the next User Committee formation there will be a better representation of women.

(DNWPC, 1999).

Failure to account for gender differences and realise their potential can result in an increase in the already-present gender inequities. For example, some ICDPs include activities to increase the income of community members through developing alternative employment. Unfortunately, many of the alternatives identified to help women are lower-paying than those developed for men. Many projects for women offer them training in traditionally female activities like sewing and basket weaving and do not take account of women's previous experience in small trades, farming and services. Many projects also do not consider whether the products that they make can be sold or if the skills they are taught will help them get a job. ICDPs should consider carefully what productive skills women can use, and

should research local markets more thoroughly when designing income-generating activities (Gambill, 1999).

The commercial development of small-scale enterprises can be difficult and the benefits may be unevenly distributed between men and women. As such, care must be taken to understand and attempt to predict the impacts of commercialisation, particularly those that involve enterprises that have been traditionally women's work or means of income generation. From experience in India, Box 6.5 suggests a number of points to consider if more equitable development and opportunities from such commercialisation are to be achieved.

Box 6.4 Commercialisation of Small-Scale Enterprises

Experiences from the commercialisation of small-scale enterprises using forest products in India and in relation to uneven impacts on men and women, suggest that:
- Household and location-specific socio-economic factors play a key role.
- Commercialisation stimulates competition, attracts men and may sideline women.
- Increasingly organised collection restricts access to raw materials (e.g. with more middlemen confining women to marginal roles. Products tend to be auctioned or sold in bulk and women can not afford this investment).
- Changes in technology, particularly mechanisation, may displace women because, for example, men are more likely to have capital for investment.
- Institutional support and training frequently favour men.
- Centralised processes mean basic products have to be carried further e.g. to factory.
- Increasing utilisation threatens the natural resource base.

(Campbell, 1991).

6.3.1 Range of Activities

Types of income-generating activities aimed at women include weaving (CARE-Thailand, undated; Pratt, 1996); sewing and tailoring (KMTNC, 2001); paper-making (Padilla, 1998); bee-keeping (Padilla, 1998); herb farming (DNPWC, 1999); silkworm raising (McQuistan, 1998); mushroom rearing (McQuistan, 1998; Prakriti, 2001); vegetable farming (Prakriti, 2001, Gurung, 2000; Rai, 2001; KMTNC, 2001); poultry keeping (Padilla, 1998; McQuistan, 1998); pig raising (CARE-Thailand, undated; Prakriti, 2001; Rai, 2001;); goat rearing (Prakriti, 2001; Rai, 2001;); other animal husbandry (KMTNC, 2001); and handicraft production (CARE-Thailand, undated).

In the Philippines, it was recognised that women, despite their lack of technical skills, are much better than men in the marketing aspect of economic processes. Furthermore, women tend to have a high level of initiative and entrepreneurship and the ability to overcome severe economic constraints. It also appears that a higher percentage of income from women's activities rather than men's tends to be spent on basic needs of the household. As a survey of women in the Philippines shows, they spend their income on the following (in order of priority): food; utilities; education; medicine; clothing; household things; leisure; and livelihood implements (Padilla, 1998). Animal and vegetable income-generating projects have the added opportunity of improving the dietary intake of local residents. In general, it is found that women's involvement in income generating activities is due to their need to improve their livelihoods, as well as helping their husbands and, for example, supporting their children through education.

It is suggested that if activities are to be established at the village level they must first cater for the current demand within the village. Only when self-sufficiency at the village level is achieved should expansion and external marketing be considered (McQuistan, 1998). In addition it should be recognised that production and supply varies due to a number of

reasons including geography, levels of employment and the availability of local skills and resources. Important lessons can be learnt from small-scale enterprises that have been operating for some time within a development context, particularly those that have been based on the use of forest products (see Box 6.6).

Box 6.5 Participation in Forest-Based Small-Scale Enterprises (FBSSEs)

In Karnataka, India, women engage in a range of different FBSSEs. Census data in 1983 indicated that levels of female participation varied and was based upon features of the women and their enterprises:
- Rural women participated significantly more often than urban women.
- Women participated more frequently when they were self-employed and when the unit of production was small: either household and family-based or a non-household cottage industry.
- Women dominated FBSSEs in which employment was seasonal or temporary.
- Participation rates were highest for FBSSEs that work with non-timber forest products and involved local skills and local collection, extraction and processing technology.

(Campbell, 1991).

It has been found that in some of the more development-oriented projects, including those using tropical forest products, 'hijacking' of women's projects by men may occur. For example in India, a project supported and helped commercialise the collection and processing of 'uppage' (*Garcinia combogia*), a fruit used in the production of substitutes for ghee, and rinds in substitute for tamarind in fish curries. The women in the local communities were the traditional and primary collectors of the fruit. Increased markets for the fruit led to commercialisation, which also led to more men collecting fruit and taking over all of the trading and marketing positions, where maximum profits could be made (Campbell, 1991). Though similar examples have not yet been cited by ICDPs it seems likely that such a situation might occur and thus the means to prevent it should be supported.

Community tourism in many parts of Asia is a growing industry. In the mountain areas of Nepal for example, the trekking routes rely heavily on locally run hotels and guesthouses, which women play a dominant role in running. Several ICDPs such as ACAP have included training for women in such as accounting, English and health and hygiene, as part of the development programmes (see Appendix 1). In addition the local communities, including the children, have been encouraged to carry out village clean-ups and trail repairs.

Though ACAP is being cited as one of the most successful ICDPs in the world, it has experienced a number of problems, and continues to do so. For example, due to the Project's success and the increased tourism in the area, people are becoming relatively rich. This has made some people greedy, and they are putting their own priorities above those of the villages and communities as a whole. For example, there is an informal agreement within villages that buildings should be built in the local style. Increasingly greedy hotel and guesthouse owners are building in non-traditional materials such as concrete. This problem is likely to increase in proportion to wealth. ACAP is encouraging the local communities themselves to take responsibility for controlling it.

In addition, because the Project so far has very much focussed on tourism, it has been criticised by a number of community members who suggested that not everyone in the communities can benefit, particularly directly. It was felt that in the future there should be an increased emphasis on agriculture. The vast numbers of tourists to ACA are also making an impact. Though their contribution to the local economy is certainly great, they are putting pressure on the local environment, particularly for fuelwood. Further, it is estimated that an average trekking group of 15 people generates about 15 kgs of non-biodegradable and non-burnable garbage in 10 trekking days (Flintan, 2003b).

6.3.2 Marketing

Marketing support to sustain income-generation activities can be a neglected area of concern. Marketing of products outside the local area is vital but involves much value addition before the products become competitive and problems of arranging sufficient funds or marketing assistance persist in many areas.

When marketing support is provided together with training for income-generating alternatives, the benefits can be great. For example, development projects around the Makalu-Barun NP, Nepal that supported both training in weaving skills and marketing of the cloth, have almost doubled women's revenues and wages. The initial 'producers club' that was facilitated has produced three new sub-clubs that involve imcreasing numbers of women in the production of the valuable cloth (Pratt, 1996).

6.4 TRAINING

Training does form a part of a number of ICDP programmes, for example in agricultural and forestry techniques in Vietnam (Mitra, 1998; Flintan, 2001b) and 'capacity building' (including forest management, gender sensitisation, leadership building, enhancing decision making capacity and financial and administrative management) in Nepal (KMTNC, 2000).

However, it is difficult to firstly encourage women's attendance and, secondly, find female trainers and/or extension workers. This can be attributed to a number of reasons including a lack of education; lack of mobility; lack of respect; and for health reasons. Indeed, in Asia as a whole it is estimated that only 7% of extension workers are women (SRF, 1997). As a result problems arise with male instructors, who have to maintain a distance from women because of cultural constraints and are therefore unlikely to fully realise or understand women's needs and how they can be supported. As in Nepal, though women may be free to speak to male extension workers, they will speak much more freely with female agents (Wilde and Vainio-Matilla, 1996).

In addition some extension programmes state literacy to be criteria for participation: where women are less literate than men this negatively discriminates against them (Flintan, 2001b).

Training centres have been set up by the NWAB (National Women's Association of Bhutan) to teach traditional weaving practices and promote local handicraft production. The project also helps locate markets and assure good returns for the women's products (WWF-International Website, 1996a). In Thailand, silkworm and mushroom-rearing training courses have been organised with village women's groups, which, incidentally, many men also attend (McQuistan, 1998). And in Nepal FUG members (of which a large proportion are women) have participated in various specialised training programmes including banana and sunflower cultivation, bicycle maintenance, herb farming, bee-keeping, bidi making, pumpset repair, greenhouse gardening, smokeless stove use and sustainable resource use (Flintan, 2003b). Further, some women have been trained as trekking guides as a need was expressed for women guides from female tourists.

However in other parts, experience has shown that where training is particularly technical, for example in handicraft work, it tends to focus on the men in the communities even though women might have the necessary skills or experience to learn. For example, in Karnataka state India, scheduled caste Hindu women in rural villages and Muslim women in

semi-urban areas traditionally practised the production of lacquerware. Increased commercialisation of the product (including the introduction of electric lathes) progressively marginalised the women because any accompanying training was given to the men in the communities. In addition, the increasingly factory-based nature of the more commercial export-market based products meant that women were not able to work due to their lack of mobility and household responsibilities. As a result many women were forced to abandon lacquerware in favour of less highly skilled household-based enterprises or find alternative but less well paid employment (Campbell, 1991).

In Thailand, income-generating cooperatives were developed through training courses. Women dominated the cooperatives because they appeared to be more interested in alternative opportunities. Most of the men saw their role as the family income-earner and therefore would not risk a novel approach that might or might not provide adequate support for their family (McQuistan, 1998).

6.5 EMPLOYMENT

In some instances women have been employed as staff within project activities. However, this does not always result in expected successes. For example, in Nepal, the forestry project (then supported by UNDP and FAO) employed women as nursery labour, filling seedling containers, watering seedbeds and planting. However, it is suggested that this work neither increased women's participation in decision-making nor increased the awareness of other village women about project activities (Molnar, 1987). In addition, as found in Nepal, though tourism can offer new opportunities for women's employment, for many women tourism only adds to the daily duties they have to carry out without any direct benefits (Lama, 2000).

Day care centres initially sponsored and established by conservation organisations and linked to ICDPs are proving a popular way of overcoming the constraints of women's large workload. Several have been set up in Nepal. The children receive pre-school education in a formative environment, and a wholesome mid-day meal. The parents contribute to the establishment of these centres and provide food for the children. Though an initial grant is given by the conservation organisations, the centres are expected to become self-financing. However, so far this is proving problematic and suggestions have been made that, for example, endowment funds should be initiated both from the contribution of local communities and the project so that the centres become sustainable more quickly (Samanata, 2001b).

6.6 IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL

A number of projects are aiming to link the conservation of natural resources with the general improvement of development in the local communities by working with women. For example, in Vietnam, CARE has supported the digging of wells (Flintan, 2001b), and WWF's MCP in Pakistan aims to establish

> "networks supporting women to secure basic requirements (e.g. safe drinking water, preventive health measures and provision of alternatives for fuel) to reduce community vulnerability" (Tunio, 2000:2) (see Box 6.8).

Although in Nepal PPP has a more general 'community' focus, women are very much seen as active participants. In many areas women now have a major role in farming activities because

the majority of men have migrated to India in search of employment. PPP has promoted community participation and women's self-reliance. In addition the project is working with PACT/Nepal on the implementation of women empowerment programmes for 12,000 women living in the buffer zone of the Terai's protected areas (DNPWC, 1999).

However establishing the links between such development focussed elements of projects and the conservation of natural resources is difficult: even more so than elements based more directly on natural resource use. As such one can question whether these projects should actually be called ICDPs or, more realistically, community development projects. Indeed, within the UMTNR ICDP in Vietnam, supported by CARE, local communities expressed no understanding that the support that CARE was providing was actually linked to the conservation of natural resources and primarily the Reserve (Flintan, 2001b). Without achieving linkages between conservation and development, the sustainability of ICDPs is unlikely to be achieved.

6.7 RAISING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

Other projects specifically aim to raise the social and economic status of women. For example, the main objective of the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project's (NACFP) forest management programme was to raise the social and economic status of women in the project area by involving them directly in community forestry activities. In NACFP the post of Women's Coordinator was created, and women were recruited as nursery workers and forest guards (Shrestha, 1996). Similarly, PPP Nepal believes that by introducing opportunities for women to benefit in the buffer zones of NPs, for example through the reduction of time for household chores, education and the gaining of some level of monetary independence, it will open up other opportunities that will reduce their reliance on natural resource use.

Also in Nepal, WWF's Kanchenjunga Gender and Development Project (described in more detail in Box 6.6) has attempted to achieve a mainstreaming of gender issues with a central objective of empowering women and opening up opportunities for them. Similar programmes have been initiated in other parts of Nepal (see Appendix 1).

6.8 SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S NETWORKS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

In some parts of Asia, particularly South East Asia, there are well-established women's networks, support groups and/or Women's Unions. However, there is room for their capacity to be enhanced and opportunities that they offer for furthering women's issues developed. Support for these and the building up of their capacity is proving a central element of several ICDPs (Ba, 2000; Mitra, 1998; Tunio, 2000; Shrestha, 1996).

The ACAP and other KMTNC and WWF projects in Nepal rely heavily on the mobilisation of women's groups or 'mothers' groups' for conservation and development activities (WWF-Nepal, 2002; Prakiti, 2001; Gurung, 2000). It is believed that by supporting and institutionalising the 'mothers' groups' or *'Ama Samuha'*, it;

> *"will enhance women's capabilities to improve their economic status and raise their participation in managing and conserving the natural resources"* WWF-Nepal, 2002:2).

The Mothers' Groups are so called regardless of the women's marital status. The word 'mother' proves to be a less politically and socially contentious word than 'woman' (see Appendix 1).

To aid conservation and improve local forest coverage, organisations encourage and assist the mothers groups and FUGs to establish and manage forest nurseries for both public and private plantations. At the same time the capacity of the groups is built up "for developing, implementing, managing and monitoring gender development programs" (see Boxes 6.8 and 6.9). This is achieved through the provision of secretarial equipment, training in group management and savings/credit programmes; constant monitoring and support by project staff; and the conduction of study (exposure) tours to other areas of Nepal (Flintan, 2003b). A gender assessment of the WWF project suggests that because of the Groups:

> *"the unity of women has increased and strengthened their own self-image as they now feel that they can achieve what they intend to do on their own. The members felt that they [have] a place to share and express their experiences and difficulties…now they are confident to talk with others freely and are able to voice out their opinions"* (Samanata, 2001b:5).

WWF's MCP in Pakistan (Box 6.7) is providing aid through the creation of women's organisations with the aim of providing better-organised platforms for development and conservation activities. It is stressed that:

> *"since gender consultation and participation cannot begin unless organisational structures exist (for both men and women), the MCP began developing men's and women's groups taking into account the cultural norms of Pakistani rural coastal society"* (Tunio, 2000:3).

Some community forestry users have instigated user groups/networks themselves. The Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal (FECOFUN) has coordinated a regional women's network called "HIMANTI" which has been active in a struggle against a FINNIDA

forest management plan in the Terai area (Agarwal, 1997). A further example illustrates women's efforts towards self-reliance through the establishment of a female FUG (see Box 6.8).

Box 6.7 Establishing Women's Groups in Pakistan

The following steps were followed in the formation of the women's groups in Pakistan:
- Rapport building and meeting with the community (both men and women).
- Informal dialogue with women to organise women's groups.
- Orientation/motivation on development issues.
- Identification of village women leaders through socio-metric test using participatory representative techniques.
- Active support to organise informal women's groups in villages.
- Orientation of women's groups on gender roles in village development and issues related to conservation.
- Active support for women's groups in identifying priority needs and actions.
- Capacity-building and training workshops.

(Tunio, 2000).

6.9 ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF NATURAL RESOURCES

6.9.1 Social Forestry Programmes

In Asia social forestry programmes are a primary focus of ICDPs and include projects in Bhutan (WWF-US, undated); Thailand (McQuistan, 1998); and in Nepal - the PPP further described in Box 6.10 and the WWF-supported Projects (see Appendix 1 and Flintan, 2003b). Today such projects appear to have realised that though both men and women need to be involved in projects they may have different needs, be able to offer different skills, and as a result, have different roles.

Box 6.8 The Social Forestry Programme in Nepal

In Nepal, NP authorities and conservation organisations have been forging links and partnerships with local FUGs and Committees which have been supported through enabling legislation since 1990. During 1999 alone, 1,896 new UGs were formed (67.7% of the total UGS formed by that time), of which 980 (48%) were male, 975 (47%) female and 59 mixed (5%) UGs. In total, 58,709 new members joined the UGs in 1999 - 50% female, 50% male. Since 1995, the DNPWC and UNDP have been supporting the Park People Programme (PPP), which aims to support the local people by shaping them as self-governed community based organisations. Realising the importance of financial capital for a self-reliant organisation, an effective mechanism to generate community capital through weekly saving has been mobilised.

By the end of 1999, the total community capital generation had reached Rs 23.99 million. In addition, the Area Conservation Facility, a portfolio of the Programme to support UG members to establish 'green' and micro enterprises, was disbursed to 2527 members that amounted to Rs 12.66 million. Training and education programmes have also been carried out as well as tree planting and approximately 750 bio-gas plants have been installed to reduce fuel wood consumption in the bufferzones of National Parks

(DNPWC, 1999).

Upreti (2000:3) suggests that gender sensitivity has increased in many areas of Nepal mainly because of the participatory forest planning and management practices established and adopted. He suggests that micro projects are a powerful strategic and methodological approach to address gender concerns, and the participatory forest inventory methods used are also contributing to raising gender awareness. Women's leadership is increasingly developed, as is representation in CFUG committees and VDCs, several of which are now chaired by women. In addition he suggests that:

- Technical and managerial ability of women in forest management has increased.
- Local institutions and political parties are softening towards the gender concept due to mass scale awareness.
- Gender Working Groups have been formed.
- Culturally resistant patriarchal society is gradually changing and recognising the roles of women in society.
- The workload of women is decreasing.
- Women's access to, and control over resources is gradually increasing.
- Women's vulnerability to poverty and violence and subordinate position is decreasing.
- The relationship between men and women is, in some cases, transforming to an equal status.

Upreti (*ibid*) states that it is also interesting to note that not only the project staff but also the staff of partner organisations are much more sensitive to gender, poverty and equity concerns. The most remarkable positive impact has been observed in gender sensitisation. Because of gender awareness, not only are there a number of women in CFUG assemblies and committees, but also the quality of their contribution has increased through heightened self-confidence and self-esteem. The roles of women facilitators from local NGOs and female staff of projects are greatly contributing to encourage and empower women users, as well as to sensitise male members on gender issues.

6.9.2 Other Projects

A small number of projects have focussed on alternatives to wood, especially fuelwood. For example in Nepal, PPP's installation of bio-gas plants aims to utilise alternative fuel sources: slurry material from stall-fed cattle. In 1999, it was suggested that:

> "*this has made a significant impact on the people's lives as the technology has tremendously reduced fuelwood consumption as well as the burden of fuelwood collection and improved [the] indoor environment. And in terms of time, each household has been saving 3-4 hours just from cooking which they are utilising mostly for other productive works like kitchen garden, health and sanitation*" (DNPWC, 1999: 30).

Similarly WWF's SCAFP and the ACAP Project in Nepal both support alternative fuel use, for instance through gas depots (see Appendix 1). Additionally, MCP in Pakistan is providing alternative fuel-efficient stoves to reduce fuel wood requirements (Tunio, 2000) and in the Philippines, both women and men are involved in mangrove afforestation, mariculture training and installation of artificial reefs (Mehra *et al*, 1993). Providing alternatives to fuelwood use not only reduces the destruction of forests but also can save women time and physical energy that can then be invested in other activities such as income-generating projects or perhaps conservation.

6.10 MICRO-FINANCE SCHEMES

A number of projects have instigated micro-finance schemes, either for all the community as in the Philippines (WWF-Philippines, 1998) or specifically targeting women as in Bhutan (WWF-International Website, 1996); Vietnam (Flintan, 2001b); and Nepal (Shrestha, 1996; Prakriti, 2001; Flintan, 2003b). Some of these state that the money raised should be invested in specific activities such as livestock; purchase of agricultural tools; and weaving materials. Some have other strings attached, for example loans provided as part of an ICDP in the Philippines were dependent on the agreement of the borrowers that they would

refrain from environmentally damaging activities such as illegal logging and/or fishing (WWF-Philippines, 1998).

Women may be specifically targeted because they often prove more capable of handling money issues than men, and in many rural areas women have proved themselves to be more credit-worthy. Women tend to be more careful and responsible about managing money from schemes and use the profits for family needs rather than personal use. In some cases projects have linked with indigenous local or national institutions that may have already been involved in such schemes or been set up with support from conservation organisations.

Micro-credit schemes can provide a number of social benefits beyond economic. Most schemes include attendance at monthly meetings, which provide an opportunity for women to exchange views, problems and solutions, and often act as a strong means of support. Some women have also stated that the schemes provide some order to their lives, which otherwise tend to be complex and overburdened. In Nepal, for example, it has been found that as a result of such schemes women have shown increased self-esteem and pride in their work (Samanata, 2001b).

In the Eco-Development zone of the GHNP in Nepal it has been recognised that reducing poverty has to begin with the poorest, and that the poorest are often women. A local CBO was set up - SAHARA - which planned an intervention aimed at enhancing the income of poor women along with social and political empowerment through an instrument called 'Women's Savings and Credit Groups' (see Box 6.11). The support was particularly targeted at the lower scheduled castes in the area. The GHNP authorities with SAHARA have been working together in the area since late 1999 (Tandon, 2002).

Box 6.9 Women's Savings and Credit Groups

The members of the women's SAHARA savings and credit groups were expected to save a minimum of Rs 1 per day. Today a number of groups are saving at the rate of Rs 2 per day. Women were particularly keen to save if the perceived poorest women in the village also became members. Each group elects one literate member as the group 'animator' who is expected (and trained) to keep group accounts and meeting records. This work is voluntary, though the group members are expected to pay an honorarium, e.g. *per* meeting. The average group size is less than 10, which has contributed to stability and regularity of meetings and almost full attendance is achieved. As the women's groups have become stronger they are playing an increasingly involved role in local politics and some of the women have been elected either as members of local Panchayats or even as Presidents.

The introduction and success of an income generating activity appears to be crucial to group stabilisation. The production loans taken by most groups were used for starting vermi-composting pits using earthworms, as the Park authorities and the Forest Department purchase the compost. Other income generation activities that have shown promise include apricot seed sale and oil extraction, and hemp based handicrafts. A longer term (2-3 years) income generation programme involves the planting of high value medicinal herbs on forest land that is allocated to one group. Presently 19 ha of forest land involving an equal number of groups has been planted up at the rate of 22,500 plants per ha, and the first harvest is expected to begin at the end of 2002.

(Tandon, 2002).

In any micro-credit scheme it is important to provide technological backstopping and training. Suitable technology can enable small-scale farmers to produce marketable surpluses and entrepreneurs with the capital to start trade and micro-enterprise. Women's understanding of technology should not be underestimated and thus training and support in such areas should accompany any financial schemes.

However, a reliance on monetary-oriented programmes can be problematic. In Vietnam a micro-credit scheme has been supported as part of a CARE-funded ICDP in the U Minh

Thuong Nature Reserve (UMTNR). As the scheme progressed a number of problems arose including loss of investments which resulted in an increase in debt rather than improved financial security (see Box 6.12).

6.11 RAISING AWARENESS AND SHARING EXPERIENCE OF GENDER ISSUES IN GENERAL

The WWF-US funded Women and Conservation Grants Program has supported a number of projects in the region including the WWF-Indochina Programme working in Vietnam. The aim of this programme is to expand women's participation in conservation activities, to raise awareness of gender and conservation issues throughout the WWF network, and to generate a pool of learning experience for the organisation (Ba, 2000).

In addition there are a number of organisations such as SRF in India and ICIMOD in Nepal that actively encourage an exploration, better understanding and incorporation of gender issues and, if necessary, a focus on women within both their work and in that of similar organisations.

6.12 GENDER TRAINING

Very few projects were identified that carried out gender training and/or orientation for staff or within local communities. However there is good support for this in Nepal from WWF who have carried out a series of gender sensitisation workshops for their staff (Samanata, 2001a), as well as the PPP (DNPWC, 1999) and other forestry projects (Upreti, 2000; Molnar, 1987). There are several examples in more development oriented NRM projects (see the ADB-funded projects in Bangladesh and Vietnam - Mitra, 1998). The training seems to have had an encouraging effect on the staff's incorporation of gender issues and for example, members of WWF's workshops mentioned that there had been a positive change in project implementation as a result (Samanata, 2001b).

However, it would appear to be an area that is sorely lacking in ICDPs despite a general recognition that gender issues are important. As a result gender issues tend to be addressed in a somewhat haphazard way and/or rely on external expertise, which is only likely to be available on a short-term and 'one-off' basis.

Box 6.10 Working with Women's Unions for Credit and Saving, Vietnam

The CARE supported UMTNRCCDP (U Minh Thuong Nature Reserve Conservation and Community Development Project) initiated a credit and savings scheme coordinated and run by the local Women's Unions. There were 41 credit groups altogether, the head of each being paid by the government. A group leader was charged with responsibility for approximately 10 borrowers.

By 2001 the all-female community groups had dispersed a total of US$35,000 (or 550 million dong) in small loans (averaging $50 - $125 each) to over 380 women. This loan was supposed to be used for the purchase of fruit or vegetable trees, pigs, chickens, ducks, fish and/or investment in businesses such as handicrafts and cake or bread making. However, some was directed to every day household needs. The rate of interest on the loans was 1.5%, which was later reduced to 1.3%. This was higher than the government credit programme which gave larger loans (c.US$150) and a lower interest rate (0.8-1%). However, the Government scheme expected greater collateral than most villagers held, and it was therefore not available to most. The higher rate of interest charged under the CARE scheme paid for administrative costs and contributed towards costs incurred through non-repayments.

The loan should be paid back over a period of 12 months. A number of respondents suggested that this should be longer and perhaps made more flexible as it did not take into account the variability of income throughout the year. 98% of the first loan tranche was paid back to the Women's Unions. One household that had borrowed for two consecutive years had managed to make a profit of 600,000 dong through pig production. However, the majority of repayments of the second round of loans had been more problematic. The crops invested in had not been very successful and a large number of livestock had died (possibly due to adverse weather conditions). If women cannot repay the loan then the repayment time is extended. Often she and/or the rest of the family will have to sell their labour to raise the cash.

The credit groups meet once a month. Problems are discussed and help is provided to solve them. In general, husbands were happy that their wives were borrowing money. This was likely to be due firstly to the fact that women have traditionally looked after the money in the household, and secondly, because the money borrowed was benefiting the household as a whole.

A number of women were still waiting for loans. Indeed, there had been some reluctance by members of the Women's Unions to provide loans to the very poor households who, they speculated, would be unable to repay the loan. However, the Project sought to improve the livelihood of *all* poor households and was, at that stage of the project, willing to forego returns on investment if necessary. Therefore the project had recommended a second, parallel, loan programme that would target the poorest households and dispense smaller sized loans with a longer pay-back period.

Many women stated that they felt they obtained more than just economic benefits from the scheme. The regular meetings, support and training offered important opportunities for women to meet, learn and exchange views. For the majority it was the only opportunity they had, besides visiting neighbours and family, to meet other women. However, few made any immediate connections between the Credit Scheme, CARE and the Reserve. In fact, some thought that the Scheme was run by the Government.

(Flintan, 2001b).

7. LESSONS LEARNT FROM CBNRM PROGRAMMES IN ASIA

The CBNRM programme described here - JFM (Joint Forest Management), India - is more development oriented than the ICDPs that have formed the central focus of this study. CBNRM programmes can be seen to be more of a movement or process initiated nation-wide to allow a greater level of community control over natural resource use in rural areas, supported by enabling legislation. Alternatively, ICDPs tend to be more 'project' based and are usually linked to a specific National Park or other protected area. Despite their differences important lessons can be learnt from CBNRM that are extremely relevant for ICDPs and their success.

Despite legislation supporting a greater degree of gender equity in JFM processes and practises, women continue to be marginalised. For example, the rules of the GOI Order of 1991 specify that at least two women should be on every village management committee in the JFM programme, yet women are still excluded. This is partly because in many states the JFM Committees are formed after the proposal has been accepted by 50% of the population. Invariably this 50% are the men in the village as women rarely participate in the preliminary meetings. Additionally, in their JFM resolutions, 8 out of 21 Indian states make the households the basis for participation in JFM Committees, with the result that women become members only if there are no men in the family. Some individual states have made exceptions: for example in Uttar Pradesh the resolution mentions including *all* the adult men and women in the JFM Committees.

Further reasons for the lack of participation of women in the JFM programme can be summarised as follows:

- A lack of information provided to women on JFM.
- The attitude of the FD staff, who often fail to see the importance of women's participation other than as a mechanism for persuading them not to use resources.
- A lack of female staff.
- A lack of resources to devote to women/gender issues.
- The notion that women's views are not worth considering: women's knowledge concerning natural resources is not valued by many men.
- Family and household responsibilities that constrain their active participation.
- Social and cultural restrictions - generally non-tribal women face more restrictions than tribal women.
- Women's frequent lack of confidence.
- Lack of provision to ensure security for the women taking active part in the conservation activities. Indeed, instances have been noted where women have been insulted or attacked by powerful men having vested interests that conflict with women's use/conservation of the forests.
- Women's lack of direct benefits, despite the high cost of resource-use restriction.
- Class and caste issues which cause divisions within communities and women as a group can be a limiting factor in bringing women together and/or mobilising them as a single unit.

A number of strategies have been used to promote the involvement of women:

- While developing Haryana's JFM programme from 1989, to ensure that all women and men were able to express their rights to participate in JFM, all resident adults were made eligible for the introduced Hill Resource Management Society (HRMS) membership. In addition the acceptance of women's independent eligibility by village men was made a pre-condition for members of the HRMS and their participation in JFM.

- NGOs have played a facilitating role in encouraging gender equity. For example, in Gujrat under the pressure of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme it was made mandatory for all the villages in the programme to support women extension volunteers. This was so that women's involvement in JFM would increase and women could participate in tasks that had hitherto been the domain of men.

- However, external facilitators are not always necessary and an excellent example of where a high level of participation and relative gender equity can be achieved through self-mobilisation is found in the village of Mendha (Lekha), as described in more detail in Appendix 1. Through time, self empowerment and participatory learning processes, villagers became stronger and self-confident, yet sensitive to gender and equity issues. Further, in parts of Uttar Pradesh women themselves have not only mobilised themselves to improve their own socio-economic condition but also to protect the forests more effectively.

- In some parts the FD has actively encouraged the participation of women. In the Bankura district of West Bengal the FD encouraged the formation of 'all women' FPCs in the district, mainly in the places where male dominated FPCs had earlier failed. This has proved that given equal rights, responsibilities and some authority women participate actively and are confident and sincere in their work.

However, women in general pay greater costs than men as a result of JFM. When restrictions are put in place they often have to face severe hardships by walking long distances and often assault or abuse for extraction of the woody bio-mass that they need. Often women will have no choice but to continue to attempt to collect firewood and NTFPs despite risks of arrest and harassment. Even in cases where women themselves have taken a decision to conserve the resources, in the initial stages they manage with great difficulty. Women who have to spend more time in forests are less able to give attention to the family and children, which may then affect their physical and social health.

Box 7.1 Self-Mobilisation of Women to Protect Forests in India

Approximately a decade ago, under the encouragement of an NGO, women in the village of Dulmooth in the region of western Uttar Pradesh came together and took charge of the Panchayat forests, which were previously managed by the men, predominantly for timber and paper production. Under the men the Panchayat was a much less effective institution because it was answerable to the local administration and dependent on government funds for any activity and/or labour in the forests.

The women, however, believed in *shramadan* (voluntary labour) for any activity that they carried out in the forests, thus saving resources and having more control over the administration processes, such as taking action against offenders or conducting their meetings. In addition they have effectively controlled grazing and illegal felling through, for example, extracting fines based on the economic status of the offender, rather than following the prescribed law.

Today, these forests have greatly regenerated, meeting all the NTFP, fodder and fuelwood requirements of the women as well as other benefits including reduced travel to collect these products. With the help of an NGO they have also been able to procure smokeless *chulhas* or cooking gas at subsidised rates, and they have found time to grow nutritious vegetables and grains, which has not only improved family health but also increased family revenue substantially.

(Godbole, 2002).

In India a large number of families depend on forests to fulfil their subsistence and other livelihood needs. Because they do not own any productive assets, many of these women collect NTFPs for survival income for their households when no other employment is available. However, they receive abysmally low returns for their labour. Silvicultural practices

may affect the availability of NTFPs adversely. For example, increasing the height of protected *sal (Shorea robusta)* trees can lead to useable new leaves growing beyond women's easy reach, reducing the number of leaves that they are able to collect.

In addition the regeneration of degraded forests is often less expensive, more successful and more beneficial to women than plantations are. Regenerated forests are more biologically diverse and provide a variety of resources throughout the year. Yet in most areas emphasis is being given to the planting economically important tree species, rather than those that provide other benefits.

Box 7.2 "What Shall We Eat ?" - The Women Headloaders of Bihar

A study of 20 Village Forest Protection and Management Samitis in Santhal Parganas in Bihar found that forest protection in most of them had collapsed within a year of them being set up. In all cases, women headloaders had the same question: "*what shall we eat?*" They wanted alternative employment to be able to stop cutting firewood, and marketing support to increase their income from the sale of NTFPs.

(Satya Narain *et al*, 1994 in Godbole, 2002).

Despite the problems, gains have also been accrued through JFM. These include:
1. *Financial benefits* – the JFM programme has created employment opportunities for the local people. In some instances the FD will favour women for forestry operations, such as nursery raising, though in general they are usually paid much less than men.
2. *Building the capacity of women* – despite the continuing inequities, through JFM, women have gained capacity and knowledge to manage local resources, which in turn increases their confidence. Particularly active women gain social recognition and financial independence. This gives them increased power and the encouragement to be more assertive about their rights and responsibilities. There are examples where increased awareness through programmes such as JFM has led to women educating themselves and motivating other women to do the same.
3. *Awareness of rights* – JFM has played a role in promoting women's awareness of their rights. In areas of traditional suppression women who are more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters increases the confidence of women. Empowerment of women also leads to their participation in various other social activities and movements such as the anti-alcohol and environmental movements.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

Women often play a significant role in the protection and conservation of natural resources. As such they are more likely to be directly affected by forest protection measures and/or the degradation of natural resources. Yet still, in general, they are excluded from the planning and implementation processes that are structured by formal institutions to control such resource use. Such marginalisation may grow as the formalisation process progresses. Where the participation of women has increased there still remains a failure in linking such participation to increased rights and responsibilities. In addition the changing nature of gender roles is neither taken into account nor incorporated into the management processes. As a result the sustainability of such participation must be questioned.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

8.1 THE POSITIVE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING WOMEN AND ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES WITHIN ICDPS

Those projects that have addressed gender issues have realised the advantages of doing so. Where possible, women have taken responsibility for conserving resources, including those on which they are dependent. A more inclusive community participation is proving more sustainable and effective.

The Langtang Ecotourism Project (LEP) in Nepal for example found that:

- By involving women as a socio-economic classification or unit of the community, there tends to be a natural cross-section available that cuts across other socio-economic and political divisions.
- In many village cultures, generally women are not as active in local politics as men and are therefore less swayed and biased by political power manoeuvring.
- Women stay in the villages year-round and thus can follow through on management responsibilities.

As a result, a study of the project concluded that:

> "enhancing women's roles in community-based mountain tourism is proving to be a key factor in conserving the Himalaya's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage" (Lama, 2000:237).

There is little evidence supporting the long-term benefits of involving women in ICDPs however. Firstly, any evidence of long-term benefits of ICDPs and their linkages is in itself difficult to obtain or, as yet, impossible to measure because the majority of projects have not been established for a long enough period. Secondly, it is only in recent years that gender and women's issues have been specifically addressed. As such, a concerted effort should be made to monitor and evaluate women's participation and the benefits (or costs) that result.

8.2 NEED FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

It has been recognised that considerable human resource inputs (both technical and financial) are required to enhance women's participation and promote gender equity. Addressing sensitive issues such as gender takes time. For many communities, and indeed project workers, the concept is new. Therefore long-term support should be planned for, and adequate resources made available. A common complaint amongst projects (see for example Box 8.2) is that there are insufficient resources, training and staff available.

It is suggested that projects must find solutions that utilise women more effectively, for example as extension workers to help spread the conservation message. A commonly cited fault in NRM is that women are not provided with enough information to make educated decisions concerning resource use. If the experience with women's programmes in Nepal and elsewhere is indicative, this will require special tailoring of training, job descriptions, supervision and support systems. For example, women will need help in establishing initial contacts in their client villages. When lone women are required to travel and to stay overnight in strange households, they may be the subject of gossip. Forestry extension

workers who already have contacts with individual women in the villages where they intend to work, and have respectable places to stay, are more easily accepted by the local society.

Box 8.1 Lack of Resources

Ram Kumar, a male community forest extension worker in Terai area of Nepal, states:

I never realised how important women were for the project until I was transferred to another district with a really exceptional district officer. He made me realise that the women provided a different perspective on species preferences and forest usage. We also lost many seedlings in private homesteads because only men came to the nurseries. They planted the trees at home, but since their wives never knew they have been planted, the trees were trampled by cattle or children. When we organised forest committees in participating villages to select village staff, allocated land for planting or protection, and decided on forest management strategies, we were told to be sure that at least one woman was elected to the committee. But the women selected seldom said anything in committee meetings. And I had no idea who the influential or dynamic women were in the village so I could suggest that a different woman join the committee. Supervising planting, allocation of forest land, running the nurseries and planning project activities take most of my time anyway. I oversee four villages, and they are each about a three hours' hard walk away. It is hard for me to do enough extension work with the men, much less the women. Maybe if there were some special courses for us during the two-year training, I could have done a better job.

(Molnar, 1987).

The CFUGs in Nepal have been particularly successful in including women. Upreti (2000) suggests that this is because sufficient time and effort has been invested; proper facilitation and rapport building with communities has taken place; and a transparent, democratic and participatory process has been followed. This illustrates the need for adequate resource input and support.

Box 8.2 Overcoming Constraints in BICP, Nepal

Before BICP [Bardia Integrated Conservation Project], it was as if nothing was being done. I was at home, in the fields. I still am, but with a lot more in my head than before. I have learnt that if we conserve the jungle we can get facilities from it that will last. Before, whoever was the stronger could take as much as possible from the jungle. Now it's all well divided and everyone has a chance to take wood and grass with permits and rations. People used to take and take until there was nothing left. I'm happy - I run this small vegetable shop. I did some training related to vegetable produce. I also participated with one other woman and 32 men on a 'user communities tour' outside Bardia. It was incredible that I was able to do this - being a woman, in days gone by, the whole village would have made an outcry!

Mrs Balkumari Khadka, User Committee, Bethani (Rai, 2001).

However though the CFUGs are credited with improving forest cover in a number of areas, whether such impacts can be sustained over the longer-term as population pressures from high fertility and migration increase in the Eastern Himalayas is an open question. User groups tend to work best when populations are relatively stable and community members know each other. How they will work as migration patterns change communities' composition is unclear (McDonald, 2002).

8.3 TAKING ACCOUNT OF EXISTING AND LOCAL COMMUNITY NORMS

It is vital to take into account existing and local community norms and social institutions within conservation and development strategies, which may be extremely sensitive and complex. This is particularly true if moves are to be made to draw women further into natural resource management processes in communities that are traditionally patriarchal. As SRF (1997:36) confirm:

> *"delicate socio-political questions are… involved in addressing women's strategic needs, empowerment and rights. This is particularly so for certain communities, such as those of the North Eastern states [of India], where there is legal sanction and political support for patriarchal customary tribal practices."*

Sensitivity must also be given to divisions other than gender, within local communities and within 'women' as a group. For example, the modulation of gender by class and caste or tribe must be recognised, particularly in the Asian context. In the SAHARA micro-finance scheme in the GHNP, Nepal, it was found that caste proved an important factor in the participation of the women. Separate caste women's groups often had to be formed to avoid internal conflicts. In other cases mixed caste groups worked well (Tandon, 2002).

Values, beliefs and trusts are other factors that affect the performance of solutions. Vertical social strata, created by the Hindu caste system and the subordinate position of women in Nepal, exerts enormous influence on community forestry and inhibits the empowerment of the poor and especially women. Only through effective facilitation is the cultural resistance weakening and culturally affected groups of people becoming more empowered (Upreti, 2000).

In addition, class and age can be important factors. For example,

> *"across India the work load of older women is increasing because young men and women are getting educated and alienated from the resource base. [As a result] any biodiversity management programme which is not specifically targeted by age group will only increase the burden of labour for older women"* (SRF, 1997:42).

However, although one needs to adopt a culturally and religiously aware and sensitive approach to working with communities, especially in relation to the involvement of women, this must not be used as an excuse to indulge in cultural stereotypes or generalisations. It is therefore important to recognise that every local situation is different and project staff must try to remain objective and rational in relation to this area of work. In addition, it should be recognised that societies and culture are not static but are continuously changing and adapting to both external and internal pressures and influences.

Change does occur but not always for the best. For example, in the Central Highlands of Vietnam the matriarchal system is giving way to a more male-dominated society and the knowledge and experiences of women are increasingly being considered backward and insignificant. The implications of such change and how to mitigate its impacts have been ignored by the conservation and development programme there (Ba, 2000:11). This is likely to have adverse effects. Indeed, any programme should take into account such changes, be aware of the consequences and/or ensure the presence of a flexibility that allows adaptation to them.

Household relations including those between men and women as well as local norms and gender roles are all part of peoples' central belief and value systems. Change should not be imposed from outside. Real, meaningful change will only occur on a community's own terms, within their time frame, and an outside agency can only serve to guide and assist them through this process of change.

Unfortunately, many current development efforts are based on the perceptions of outsiders who have a relatively poor understanding of issues at the local level. To enhance the

possibility of success in implementing different development options, it is very important that trust is established between project interventions and the community. Assessments should be based on community input since they are in the best position to identify their needs, and communities must feel that they have 'ownership' over any changes that occur.

Indeed, the community acceptance of the CBO SAHARA group (working in GHNP, Nepal) can be attributed to the fact that all their staff (group organisers and director) are locally rooted and live there. Most of the group organisers are women. Furthermore, where women have brought in money either through daily wages or from income generating activities connected to the project, many report willingness on the part of their husbands or other family members to share household work and facilitate their attendance of meetings (Tandon, 2002). Similar experiences are found in the Philippines where the use of local community facilitators is proving advantageous as they can more easily integrate into the communities (WWF-Philippines, 1998).

Box 8.3 Accommodating Change

Any changes in the relations of power among different sections in a society are deeply disruptive. Changes in class or caste relations that alter the social fabric are always fiercely opposed. Progressive changes in gender relations are even more subversive than any other kind of change, because these affect not just the public domain, but the private domain of household and family: both are interlinked. Changes in the economic, social and political roles of men and women have a bearing on the household and on community resource management. Similarly, changes in the external environment and new management practices affect gender relations in the household and community.

(SRF, 1997).

8.4 NEED FOR CONTINUAL GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND SENSITISATION

People still consider the promotion of gender and an engendering process to be being strongly linked to the feminist movement (Samanata, 2001). In addition, though:

> *"gender is now commonly used as a term of discourse at various levels (both popular and academic)…the concept has not been grasped. There is widespread misunderstanding of the distinction between gender analysis and exclusively women-centred approaches…Even when gender is integrated into analysis at a theoretical and conceptual level, this is not reflected in programme strategies and project choice and implementation. Projects tend to be purely 'women's' projects, ignoring men altogether…[In addition] the majority of…projects are targeted at women's practical gender needs for fuel, fodder and water supply (which do need attention), but ignore women's strategic gender needs for greater autonomy and decision-making power within the household and community. Therefore, traditional gender roles are reinforced, but rarely challenged"* (SRF, 1997:42).

Where women's involvement within communities is generally greater, it may be the case that without being specifically targeted, they will become actively involved in project activities. For example, in the Philippines, the Cogtong Bay project found that without any deliberate planning on the part of the project designers or staff, women became actively involved in the fisherman's associations set up by the project. However, though they were certainly active within the project, they failed to receive the same benefits as their husbands such as access to credit and land 'ownership' (Mehra *et al*, 1993:22).

Indeed, a question often experienced by those working within ICDPs and wishing to encourage women's participation in activities, is whether to single out women as a specific

group or not. The experiences of the projects described here have been varied. For example, Upreti (2000, in Nepal) advocates the design and promotion of strategic procedures (for example compulsory involvement of women in planning and decision making process) to ensure proper representation of the targeted population (the poor, disadvantaged and women). Experiences such as those described in Box 8.4 also suggest a need to address men's and women's issues separately, at least on a temporary basis.

However, in the WWF Indochina programme in Vietnam, Ba (2000) describes that though the initial idea of working with *mixed* community groups proved somewhat controversial, the project persevered. The results proved beneficial and it was found that:

> *"despite the dominance of male participants with NRM background at times, this mixture created a sense of collaboration amongst these different groups and a good team spirit between male and female participants. The mixture also forged links and formed a strong mechanism for exchanging knowledge and experience".*

Box 8.4 Targeting Women to Promote their Participation

As part of a pre-project gender analysis in India, a general meeting was arranged in a particular village to hear what the villagers thought of the proposed project. The meeting was held in the open air at a central place and was attended by both men and women. Not unexpectedly, men dominated the discussion. They were very eager to discuss the project since they had many questions and critical remarks about the proposal. When the research team noticed this, they split the group into two: the male team members continued the discussion with the men while the female team members accompanied the women to a neighbouring house for their own discussion. The men barely noticed that the women had left whereas the number of women in the house grew gradually

(UNIFEM, 2000).

It is often assumed that the mere presence of women as staff members means that gender issues are being addressed. However, this need not necessarily be true. Women can just as easily ignore gender issues or not fully understand their implications. In India, though women have been able to join the Forest Service since 1980, they have been more interested in using the forum as a means to further their careers than to become involved in and/or promote gender issues. Indeed, it was found that many women scientists and foresters do not show any greater awareness or sensitivity to gender, unless these concern their own personal and professional lives (SRF, 1997).

In addition the tendency of many organisations, including international agencies, to identify a woman staff member as the 'gender focus' can be resented by the woman herself. Many professional women do not want to be publicly identified with gender concerns, which they perceive as a sectional agenda, even if they do adopt a more gendered stance in private. In addition those involved in and/or employed to address gender inequities tend to be women from higher groups in society and who have not experienced such discrimination themselves. Further, though women (and men) may be strongly motivated to address gender issues, once they start working for NGOs and donors their ideas and motivation may be taken over by those of the institutions for which they work. These ideas, beliefs and values of NGOs and donors may not necessarily be specifically applicable to the local context and therefore their success is questionable (Shrestha, *personal communication,* 2002).

Likewise the presence of women on committees does not necessarily mean that they have authority to influence decisions. For example though the DNPWC (1999) in Nepal states that the formation of separate women UGs has been very effective in empowering and mobilising women, Shrestha (1996:22) argues that:

> "membership in user committees does not necessarily imply that women have the authority to influence decisions regarding resource use".

SRF (1997:40) suggest that:

> "when a gendered perspective is integrated into a project from the very beginning…women need not just [be] involved in raising nurseries and planting trees, but a range of practical and strategic gender needs can be addressed. Managerial skills, representation on official local bodies, increased decision-making power, and greater self-esteem are important long-term gains. And it is this kind of empowerment that could provide the basis for gender-equity and benefit-sharing within the community".

Indeed, gender mainstreaming should not be seen as a one-off element and/or project: it should be supported as a continuing process. In addition it should be adaptive enough to take into account changes that take place. Gender relations are dynamic rather than static. In Nepal both WWF and ACAP have realised the importance of taking a more gender-focussed approach. They are working with local NGOs with gender expertise to mainstream gender throughout the ICDPs and related institutions (see Appendix 1). This aids a clearer understanding of the issues. In addition it helps to promote the sustainability of the projects and continued resource use in future. There is also a need for well-considered and achievable exit strategies for the supporting institution(s) to be in place from the beginning of the projects. This may have to change to accommodate aspects such as local capacities and changed legislation.

8.5 CAPACITY BUILDING

It is stressed that effective participation will only be possible once women have the appropriate knowledge and skills to undertake activities. As local institutions, especially women's groups, are in their infancy, there is a strong need for capacity-building programmes to enhance their knowledge base and skills.

Education has proved a powerful tool in increasing women's capacity. However finding the right time and place for education classes can prove difficult. The WWF-Nepal projects for example, found a high drop-out rate from their classes within the first year or so. On investigation it was found that this was due to the classes conflicting with the start of the trekking season and/or the agricultural planting times. As a result classes were re-scheduled for less busy periods (see Appendix 1).

Women find a voice and strength through collective action. Promoting women's participation through women's groups shows promise. It may be true that income generation projects by themselves do not necessarily give women control over income earned. However, the process of participating in all stages of mobilisation, organisation and attendance at meetings contributes towards an increasing level of awareness: develops leadership skills; facilitates collective articulation of women's interests and concerns; and offers opportunities for a shared capacity to affect change. It is important that women's groups are more formalised if they are to remain sustainable when projects finish or are phased out. Clear policies should be developed by the group to cover, for example, conflict resolution; entry and exit into the groups; and rules and regulations regarding management and linkages.

However, it should be realised that when a formalisation of natural resource consultative institutions occurs, there may be a shift in the *de facto* decision-making processes that

women already hold and/or are involved in, such as a move to more formal committees dominated by men.

In some areas, training workshops with project workers and their 'partners' on the role of women in nature conservation using participatory training methods have been carried out (Ba, 2000, Flintan, 2001b). However these often occur away from project sites. It has been suggested that an even greater contribution could be made to the conservation work if this training could be conducted actually in the villages and communes that are adjacent to nature reserves, or where the project sites are located.

The presence of 'power wielders' within local communities should be recognised and ways explored to encourage them to reach the more marginal members of society. It should not be assumed that such power wielders are always men: often certain women within communities hold excessive degrees of power and, if recognised, can prove a good entry point for addressing gender issues. For example, in the village of Silum in the Philippines a wife of a 'barangay' official was an extremely influential woman in her own right (especially amongst other women) and a provided a good bridge over which to reach her husband (Padilla, 1998).

In addition, it may often be the case that one 'role model' can heavily influence the rest of the women in the local community. Again, in the Philippines, there was one female 'barangay' official who owned a store in the village and acted as money lender and trader. Her energy was admired by many in the village and she was able to encourage many women to become involved in additional livelihood activities (*ibid*). However, over reliance on individual, key role models can be dangerous and undermine the sustainability of ICDPs, and thus should be avoided where possible.

As well as building up the capacity of women and local communities to initiate, adapt to and/or accommodate change, it is also necessary to increase the capacity of local institutions to do so. Indeed, it is realised that concrete gender sensitive, equity-based and poverty focused community-based conservation and development is hard to achieve without institutional capacity building and collective learning. Therefore, attention must also be paid to the development of capable leadership and self governing and self sustaining institutions to achieve gender sensitive and sustained natural resource management (Upreti, 2000). Those conservation organisations that have been addressing gender issues for some time now see their role to be more one of working "as a catalyst of social change in the context of gender equity" rather than actually forcing change through themselves (Samanata, 2001).

8.6 NETWORKING AND ALLIANCES

Some projects are working with local groups who have had experience in women's and/or gender issues. For example, WWF in the Philippines (Sabilla, 1998) and a number of projects in Vietnam including those implemented by WWF and CARE, work with local Women's Unions (WUs) (see Ba, 2000; Flintan 2001b; Mitra, 1998;). Indeed the WUs of Vietnam are an extremely strong force within the country and are extended throughout rural areas at district, commune and village levels. In 2000 there were 38,000 members, 80% of whom lived in rural areas. Ba (2000:8) suggests that:

> *"working with the WU is possibly the most effective way of integrating gender and conservation in Vietnam."*

Often national, regional and local departments of agriculture have schemes to support women. In Minol in the Cogtong Bay area, a group of women belonged to a 'rural improvement' club organised by the Department of Agriculture, which was designed as a counterpart to the fishermen's association. The objective of the club was to train and educate women to help their husbands earn a living (Mehra *et al*, 1993:22).

In Nepal, WWF works closely with NGOs including those that are gender-focussed. It has also formed partnerships and alliances with relevant government departments, including the Ministry of Population and Environment. WWF increasingly sees its role to be one of facilitator between the different stakeholders and parties involved with the central aim of increasing women's involvement and supporting the other elements of the Project (see Appendix 1).

Despite these few examples however, ICDPs in the region could put a much greater effort into linking with local groups and organisations, as well as working with those who have more experience in addressing gender issues and encouraging a better participation of women. Such linking would have the advantage of making a better use of scarce resources; encouraging the acceptance of the conservation/development organisation at the local level; ensuring better accountability and transparency; and in all likelihood, meaning a better chance of success for the projects.

8.7 OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS ON WOMEN AND ENSURING BENEFITS

Ensuring that women receive benefits from development has proved a constant challenge for the ICDPs in the region. Though the participation of women has been relatively high, motivation remains low and the links between conservation and development are rarely understood or incorporated into ways of thinking and carrying out every day activities. If women are going to be involved in, and benefit from, ICDPs to a greater extent then the many constraints that prevent women from doing so need to be overcome. Lessons learnt from the ICDPs studied as part of this research programme indicate some ways that offer more positive outcomes and ways to overcome the constraints on women's participation.

These are:
- Accounting for women's lack of mobility.
- Addressing lack of time to attend meetings and become involved in conservation activities.
- Working with cultural and traditional customs.
- Overcoming a lack of self-esteem and belief in women's capabilities.
- Encouraging a balance of power.
- Resolving the conflicts between women's short term needs and the need for longer term environmental management.
- Building on the foundation that enabling policy offers.

8.7.1 Accounting for women's lack of mobility

Projects need to take account of the fact that often women are not able to travel far from their villages. Therefore meetings, for example, should be organised in a manner that women can attend. To understand how this can be achieved projects must directly interact with women at the village level.

The constraints on women's mobility also restrict the work they can carry out when employed by conservation organisations. Often it is not culturally acceptable for women to

stay away from home at night and certainly not for long periods of time. In addition it may be difficult for them to travel, for example on public transport.

Where income generation projects are concerned, small-scale enterprises may be ideal for women if they allow work to be carried out at home and when time allows. In addition, the concerns of placing too great an emphasis on commercialisation of such enterprises have been discussed above (6.3.1) – working from home may help overcome such problems.

8.7.2 Addressing lack of time to attend meetings and become involved in conservation activities

Other problems can also occur when trying to organise meetings, particularly if the presence of women is to be encouraged (see Box 8.5). Time can be major constraint. Often it may be necessary to organise separate meetings for the men and women to account for different availability, priorities and capacities.

However, even then problems may occur. It is therefore vital, during the initial dialogues, to establish appropriate times and places for women to gather and participate in meetings and what facilitation elements would work best for them. This issue is important for projects as a whole, as they will have a better relationship with communities if they demonstrate courtesy and respect towards them. It is vital to plan meetings in advance, and give communities sufficient time to ensure that everyone who should attend is able to do so (Warrington, 2000). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that when projects meet women's immediate needs they are forthcoming and are able to manage their time effectively to take part in conservation activities including on a voluntary basis (see Appendix 1).

To reach all community members with information, programmes need to consider how to inform the different groups in the communities most effectively. In many developing areas, men and women obtain information through different sources and at different times of the day. Effective outreach programmes need to incorporate these differences to ensure that both men and women have access to information they need to make informed decisions. If attendance at meetings proves difficult, other forms of communication should be used. One useful and often under-utilised form is radio. However, as experience from a community forestry project in the Philippines shows, men and women listen to different stations at different times of the day so projects must target the messages to fit men's and women's preferences (Gambill, 1999).

Box 8.5 Low Attendance at Meetings

Views from male members of communities found within the WWF Indochina Programme, Vietnam, in response to the question of why so few women attend meetings:

- Sometimes, I ask my wife to participate in community meetings. She refuses, using having too much household work as an excuse. Now I just go without even asking her.
- The children only eat when their mother is around. Communities meetings always take place during or after dinner. Women are not free at that time.
- As a tradition, all the men in our village go out in the evenings after dinner. So when meetings are held in the village, we often go without the women.
- Women think that they are not capable of understanding the new cultivation techniques. Only men attend agriculture or forestry extension training.

The women are not encouraged to go to meetings. There are no incentives for them to participate.

(Ba, 2000).

8.7.3 Working with Cultural and Traditional Customs

As described above cultural and traditional customs are often cited as constraints that prevent women from taking part in NRM. Additionally, class and caste issues which cause divisions in communities and women as a group can be a limiting factor in bringing women together and mobilising them as a single unit. Such culturally entrenched issues are difficult to overcome. For example in Pakistan:

> *"the transformation of women from objects of reproduction to autonomous persons in their own right, will entail a fundamental change in perceptions and attitudes"* (Mutaz, 1993:8).

However a number of ways have been found to overcome or lessen such constraints, which show a need to adapt to, rather than attempt to change local conditions. For example in Nepal, membership in women's groups has proved a socially acceptable platform for women to socialise, exchange information and increase their knowledge in natural resource management. As described in Appendix 1, however, it was deemed more socially and politically acceptable if these groups were called 'mothers' groups' rather than 'women's groups' even though not all members were mothers. A division by 'role' was more acceptable than a division by sex.

Building up the capacity of such groups takes a long period and several training sessions may be necessary. It may be the case that expatriate women forestry workers have an important role in identifying some of the problems and constraints in reaching local women and providing a strong role model to villagers and staff. Because they are foreigners they are often more able to move freely with little criticism about the suitability of their role. However, one can argue that local facilitators can play an equally, or perhaps more, productive role especially if they are trusted and respected members of the local community.

8.7.4 Lack of Self-Esteem and Belief in their Capabilities

Women's lack of self-esteem and self-belief can be an important reason for their lack of involvement in conservation and development activities. This is partly a result of the low value given to women's roles and knowledge. It is a difficult constraint to overcome, not least because it may take a long period of time and also involves changing attitudes of both men and women.

As described above, role models can contribute greatly to the enhancement of contemporaries' confidence and self-esteem. However, reliance on them can be dangerous and risk the long-term sustainability of projects. Also, the ethics of 'using' such individuals, particularly beyond a level that they feel comfortable with, to further the cause and goals of conservation and development, can be questioned.

A starting point can be to show examples of other projects where women have succeeded in becoming more involved and have benefited by doing so. This can encourage women to try to succeed themselves. Exchange visits are a useful way of facilitating this, as well as providing opportunities for information exchange and creating solidarity. Targeting extension services to women can also build up their confidence and belief that their role is valued. In addition, means should be found for promoting the value of women's knowledge.

ICDPs can also build upon the recognised positive strengths of women in the local communities. For example in the UMTNP, Vietnam, women would often come together to try and resolve community or local problems, such as arguments between neighbours. Women were recognised as good mediators and peace-builders. This could be used as a basis on which to build women's involvement in other community activities (Flintan, 2001b).

Indeed, Lama (2000) suggests that helping communities to value women's roles and contributions is the first step towards enhancing them and ensuring they receive benefits from community based conservation and development (see Box 8.6).

Box 8.6 Encouraging a Better Recognition of Women's Roles and Contributions

Some methods being used to increase a better recognition of women's roles and contributions within the Langtang Ecotourism Project in Nepal:

1. Holding open discussions with the whole community.
2. Participatory planning and learning exercises.
3. Appreciative inquiry through, for example, asking questions such as "what is it that you are proud of in your village". These questions build up a picture of value and a shared vision for the future.
4. Well planned study tour exchanges.
5. Women's representation and participation in all project activities and committees.
6. 'Women-friendly' techniques that are culturally sensitive:
~Workshop organisers might suggest that the community arrange for childcare during daylong, evening, or away-from-home programmes to allow women with children to fully participate.
~When women must travel to another village they should plan to travel together, so avoiding social stigmas and being 'kidnapped' into marriage.
~Discussions can be held with village men about the importance and investment value of building women's capacities and confidence to encourage men to step back and give women a chance.
~When women are hesitant to speak in mixed forums, separate meetings can be held.
~Where women are not fluent in a common language, discussions in the local dialect can be facilitated or pictures used.
7. Gender sensitive participation selection criteria can be used based on women's skills and responsibilities rather than a gender quota.
8. Women's quotas are sometimes necessary.
9. Women's empowerment can be improved through better communication. Often women strive to be literate to reduce their dependency on men and, as such, training courses can be held.
10. Female role models prove extremely empowering and particularly strong or influential women can be engaged as partners, participants and managers in projects.

(Lama, 2000).

8.7.5 Attempting to Create a Balance of Power

Understanding and addressing issues of power within communities can be difficult. Most conservation and development organisations consider them too sensitive and political and merely skirt round them or avoid them altogether. However if the goal of more gender equitable development is to be achieved in any meaningful way it is important that such issues are, at the very least, accounted for.

Women, like men, need direct access to resources and control over them to achieve project goals. As Shrestha (1996: ix) suggests:

> *"unless women develop a sense of ownership and a feeling that the resources belong to them and that they have rights…they are not likely to be…stewards of the environment."*

A focus of JFM in India (see Section 7) has been promoting women's awareness of their rights. In areas of traditional suppression women who are more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male-dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters can increase the confidence of women. Empowerment of women can also lead to their participation in various other social activities and issues such as the anti-alcohol and environmental movements.

The issues of power are wide and varied. However, other than seeing education and literacy as a means of women's empowerment (see Section 6.2), such issues do not appear to have been tackled to any great extent within the projects found in the region. Most ICDPs have approached gender issues by establishing 'women's projects' and in doing so have not looked into issues of power in any depth. As a result the long-term sustainability of such projects must be questioned. For example, because women may fail to hold enough power within community structures, it may be necessary to continue outside facilitation to ensure that women's needs and control are supported and not undermined.

8.7.6 Resolving the Conflicts between Women's Short Term Needs and the Need for Longer-Term Environmental Management

There is a conflict between women's relatively short-term priorities to fulfil household needs and the longer-term goals of conservation and sustainable development. It is suggested that linking resource management efforts to income-enhancing activities that yield short-term demonstrable results allows women's economic needs to be met while longer-term goals such as educating them about the need for conservation and resource management are pursued (Mehra *et al.,* 1993). Further, opening up a variety of opportunities for women means that they are given more choice to become involved in those elements they feel are most suitable for them at any given time.

Molnar (1987) suggests that women will support a project when they can see tangible results. For example in community forestry projects, because it takes a long time for trees to mature, early positive results such as increased grass production, or village nurseries stocked with tree species of known value for farm planting, will help elicit women's support. In addition, Shrestha (1996) suggests that women's participation in conservation activities has been seen to increase when programmes meet their critical need. In addition economic independence has fostered a greater participation of women in decision making processes.

Pressures, particularly from donors, are placed on ICDPs to achieve short-term results. However if gender inequities are to be addressed there must be some acknowledgement and if possible some incorporation of 'larger' and more long-term issues such as land and resource rights. As SRF (1997) confirm:

> *"more problematic even than gathering of forest produce, is the question of women's rights to land. In agrarian societies, tribal or non-tribal, land is the critical resource that determines both socio-economic position and political power".*

Women's exclusion from land rights is typical in South Asia. Land is usually inherited through the male line. Women's legal rights are rendered ineffective by both traditional customs and government programmes. As such, if long-term sustainability of ICDPs including the achievement of a greater degree of gender equity is the goal, then such issues must be addressed.

8.7.7 Building on the Foundation that Enabling Policy Offers

The majority of governments in the region are now pursuing more gender-equitable policies and strategies, and in some countries these have been established for some time. For example in Bangladesh women's programmes have been included in all National Development Plans since 1972. This has resulted in strong positive discrimination in some sectors. In the Bangladesh Forestry Sector Master Plan it is stated that women and poor

people who do not have a land based source of livelihood will be employed on priority basis in nurseries, plantations, forest management, harvesting and industrial work (Mitra, 1998).

However, such policies do not always reflect an adequate response to gender equity. For example, despite Nepal's relatively gender-equitable supporting policies, particularly in reference to natural resource management, some perceive gender division in Nepal to be worse than other South Asian countries. Though the present constitution has adopted reformative attitudes of equal rights and for example VDCs should be at least 33% women, in reality women are still discriminated against.

Despite the negative aspects, however, ICDPs should be aware of such policies; use them as a foundation on which to develop more gender equitable policies and strategies; and work with, and if necessary build up the capacity of, enabling institutions to forward the opportunities that they present.

8.8 CONCLUSION

Differences and inequities exist between the sexes in all sections of society and all communities in Asia. Culture, ethnicity, caste and religion play a dominant part in cultivating such differences. As a result there may be no simple or clear divisions by sex of roles, skills and knowledge within the Asian context. Instead, they can vary greatly and are intricately tied to socio-economic, cultural and environmental influences. In the majority of cases such gender inequities result in a bias against women.

Women, particularly poor rural women, play a more dominant role in natural resource collection than men, and are often highly dependent upon such activities for fulfilling household needs and livelihood security. However, such roles are not strictly adhered to and men also collect natural resources, such as firewood. As such, one can conclude that each local situation and context for individual projects will be different. They must be treated as such and include room for adaptation and flexibility.

Despite the central role that women play in natural resource management, they still have very little involvement in decision-making at the village and/or household levels. Women's multifarious gender roles are derived from the gendered relations in the household and community, and involve those of dominance and subordination. It is usual for women and men to experience different trade-offs and transaction costs when taking part in and giving up time for conservation projects and practices. Women's knowledge is often devalued. Family and household responsibilities as well as cultural or caste factors restrict their participation. In addition women lack self-esteem and confidence.

Both traditional and modern decision-making processes remain male dominated. This is also true for the new institutional structures that have been set-up to control natural resource management, such as forest user groups and conservation committees. There is a lack of organised platforms for women to express their needs and views, and from which to address gender issues. Where they do exist they tend to be government-linked and thus are restricted in their scope by rules and regulations. In general, though women have a good knowledge about the natural resources that they use, they tend to have a poorer understanding of conservation processes and the potential opportunities of ICDPs. These issues pose special challenges to achieving sustainable community development and the conservation of biodiversity.

The issues of power are wide and varied. However, other than seeing education and literacy as a means of women's empowerment (see Section 6.2), such issues do not appear to have been tackled to any great extent within the projects found within the region. Most ICDPs have approached gender issues through establishing 'women's projects' and as such have not looked into issues of power thoroughly. As a result the long-term sustainability of such projects must be questioned. Because for example, women often have less power within community structures, it may be necessary to continue outside facilitation to ensure that women's needs and control are supported and not undermined. This is especially important if a 'women's project' becomes relatively successful and as a result attempts are made by more powerful sections of society (usually the men) to take it over. Such possibilities need to be taken into account and action taken to mitigate any adverse consequences.

Box 8.7 Sustainability and Security

The sustainability of biological resources is greatly dependent on ensuring livelihood security for men and women. The lack of gender equity undermines both livelihood security and the conservation of diversity. Women's mobility, rights to land, access to markets, value-addition and skills training are important dimensions of biodiversity management

(SRF, 1997).

Despite supporting policy that should facilitate women's greater participation in NRM and conservation, in the majority of countries in the region women's involvement remains undermined. Even in the more development-oriented CBNRM programme – Joint Forest Management in India – where some benefits are realised including increased income; increasing the capacity of women; and an increased awareness and promotion of their rights, women are still marginalised (see Section 7.0). Similarly in Nepal, although there is certainly some evidence of success (see for example Section 6.9.1) there is still room for improvement. WWF Nepal has in fact developed its own gender policy, which has been valuable in guiding the gender mainstreaming process that is being carried out through the organisation's projects, as well as work in the field. Both WWF and ACAP have realised the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout their work. How well this will be achieved in the future is yet to be seen.

The lack of concern for gender issues in ICDPs has resulted in the surfacing of a number of problems (as described in Section 4):

- Misunderstanding and mistrust between conservation authorities, development organisations and communities.
- Differing priorities that can have adverse impacts.
- Increased gender inequalities.
- The overlooking of women's roles and responsibilities.
- Missed opportunities.
- Problems that have arisen due to viewing women as a heterogeneous group.

For most projects in the region it is too early to measure the overall impact of ICDPs on poverty reduction. In addition there has been little exploration and/or analysis of the impacts of conservation or ICDPs on communities in a gender-sensitive manner. Where this has occurred, the differentiated gender impacts of conservation policies and projects have tended to be less favourable towards women and in some cases have been found to exacerbate existing gender inequities. However, there is some indication that livelihoods have been improved as well as women's confidence and self-esteem strengthened. For example, credit schemes and education programmes have offered a number of social and economic benefits (Section 6.0). Women's groups appear to have been particularly effective

in promoting women's participation. Women find a voice and strength through collective action. And, as described in Section 6.8, if given some support, women will grasp the opportunities presented to them to mobilise themselves and promote their interests, rights and needs.

Projects in the past have tended to emphasise a 'welfare approach', focussing on women in their capacity as mothers and carers, which is seen as central to both social and economic development. It identifies women, as opposed to a lack of resources or access, as being the problem. As a result projects have targeted women's perceived practical needs as opposed to their strategic needs. This has developed into a greater emphasis on women's empowerment and, more recently, an emphasis on a 'rights-based' approach.

Pressures, particularly from donors, are placed on ICDPs to achieve short-term results. However if gender inequities are to be addressed there must be some acknowledgement and, if possible, some incorporation of 'larger' and more long-term issues such as land and resource rights. In agrarian societies, tribal or non-tribal, land is the critical resource that determines both socio-economic position and political power. Women's exclusion from land rights is typical in South Asia. Land is usually inherited through the male line. Women's legal rights are rendered ineffective both by traditional customs and government programmes. As such, if long-term sustainability of ICDPs including the achievement of a greater degree of gender equity is the goal, then such issues must be addressed.

Indeed a focus of JFM in India (see Section 7) has been promoting women's awareness of their rights. In areas of traditional suppression women who are more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters increases the confidence of women. Empowerment of women also leads to their participation in various other social activities and issues such as the anti-alcohol and environmental movements.

Where women's involvement within communities is generally greater, it may be the case that without being specifically targeted they will become actively involved in project activities. However they are likely to still miss out on benefits unless gender differences are accounted for.

Overall there remains an environment that does not facilitate the participation of women in conservation and development. Information is needed to sensitise the public mass and policy makers about the contribution of women within conservation. Although governments have emphasised the advantages of setting up community forests, unless pre-existing socio-cultural inequality is resolved it will not necessarily bring equal benefits to all but, rather, will widen the gap in terms of access rights and unequal division of labour. This will detract from, rather than contribute to, social transformation to a more equitable and democratic society.

Very few projects were identified that carried out gender training and/or orientation for staff or within local communities. This appears to be an area that is sorely lacking in ICDPs despite a general recognition that gender issues are important. As a result gender issues tend to be addressed in a somewhat haphazard way and/or rely on external expertise, which is only likely to be available on a short-term and often 'one-off' basis.

On an optimistic note, the benefits of more positively encouraging the involvement of women in ICDPs are slowly being recognised. However, a number of factors (discussed in more detail in Section 8) need to be taken into account to achieve this:

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- There is a need for considerable human technical and financial inputs.
- Existing local community norms must be taken into account.
- There is a need for continual and adaptive gender mainstreaming and sensitisation.
- Capacity building is vital.
- Networking and working with local NGOs is advantageous.

Attention must also be paid to the development of capable leadership as well as self-governing and self-sustaining institutions to achieve gender sensitive and sustained natural resource management. Those conservation organisations that have been addressing gender issues for some time see their role to be more one of working as a catalyst of social change, rather than actually forcing change through themselves. The constraints preventing women becoming involved in ICDPs and realising their benefits need to be overcome. Indications of ways to achieve this have been detailed in Section 8.7. Finally, a well-thought out, sustainable and viable exit strategy for donors and/or supporting NGOs is vital.

APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN NEPAL

(Flintan, 2003b).

In most areas of Nepal women are discriminated against. Within mountain areas this is less so as the societies tend to be more gender equitable. However, women still remain relatively marginalised. This is despite the large amount of women-headed households (due to temporary male out-migration) and their important role in natural resource use. A number of projects have supported the continued development of the women from these areas and their increased involvement in decision-making processes, particularly those related to the environment. Two such projects that have been successful in targeting women are described below:

a)   The WWF-supported Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project
b)   The Annapurna Conservation Area Project.

In collaboration with a local NGO – SPCC (Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee), WWF initiated the **Sagarmatha Community Agro-Forestry Project (SCAFP)** in 1996. It was set up to address the issue of increasing deforestation in Chaurikharka Village Development Committee (VDC) (locally known as Pharak). It is an area that has gained prominence as the gateway to the Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) and Everest: visited by 25,000 tourists as well as twice as many support staff every year. The Project's goal is to increase forest coverage area and to strengthen local capacity for sustainable management of their natural resources through integrated conservation and development programmes.

Amongst its achievements the Project has:
* Institutionalised 5 FUGs (forest user groups).
* Established 7 community nurseries.
* Planted approximately 150,000 seedlings.
* Trained 421 local residents (250 women and 171 men) in sustainable resource management and income generating activities.
* Trained 13 women and 11 men in greenhouse management as well as constructed 54 greenhouses, distributed seed and established a vegetable cooperative.
* Organised literacy classes for 502 adults (482 women and 20 men).
* Awarded 24 stipend scholarships to girls.

Other Project activities have included the mapping of community forest blocks and plantation sites; study visits (for example to the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project and the established kitchen gardens, fruit farms and poultry farming); agro-forestry including greenhouses, horticulture and kitchen gardening; alternate energy including back-boilers, kerosene depot, peltric sets and a gas depot; and detailed design and estimate of micro-hydro projects.

In addition an emphasis has been placed on conservation awareness: informal education and Eco club support; audio visual shows and leaflet dissemination; and capacity building, consisting of training, study tours and workshops. SPCC has also led awareness building about toxics and pollution control and waste management.

A linkage is promoted between improving the environment and improving health and development. For example the focus on community greenhouse building attempts to increase opportunities for better eating as well as intensifying the production process so that less land is needed. Likewise, pollution control not only improves the environment but also health and well-being.

The literacy classes supported by WWF specifically target women. The women who attend are of all ages from 12 to 55 years old. They are run under the Women's Awareness Group and SPCC. When first organised, classes were held 6 days per week, from 4 until 6pm for 6 months. Unfortunately there was a high incidence of dropouts and irregular attendance due to household workload and negative pressure from male counterparts. It was found that attendance was particularly low during the trekking season when labour demand was high. As a result, the literacy classes are now held at times when the workload is not so high, such as out of trekking season and/or in the afternoons or evenings so that there are more opportunities for women to attend.

There has been some resistance to the Project from a number of stakeholders, particularly those who have more commercially-focussed vested interests in the area. For example the communities, under the support of the Project, have brought the illegal logging in the area between Lukla and Namche under control. The rich and politically influential who were previously involved in illegal logging are not happy and have spread rumours that the NP will take over the community forest area. Indeed local communities feel that they do not have enough control to prevent

'outsiders' and certain powerful groups in the communities (including some Committee members) from taking their wood.

Lessons can be learnt from the experience of the Project:
- The literacy classes have been a useful forum for improving awareness of conservation issues.
- Working with local NGOs such as SPCC and for the women's awareness workshop - HIMANTI - Himalayan Grassroots Level Women's Natural Resource Management Group proved more useful and produced more sustainable results.
- A gender policy has proved vital for the promotion of gender issues within the organisation and its projects.
- The Project found it less politically and locally sensitive to name the women's groups 'Mothers' Groups' even though not every member was a mother and even included young girls.
- There are inequitable distributions of benefits within the local communities in and around the National Park. For example, most tourists stay in Namche Bazaar, rather than in the smaller villages en route. As such, more benefits are realised in Namche than elsewhere.
- Political factors can have a large influence on the Project. During the time of this visit a 'state of emergency' had been declared which banned any public gathering/meeting. This meant that mothers' group meetings could not be held.

ACAP (Annapurna Conservation Area Project) was first tested as a pilot programme in the Ghandruk Village Development Committee in 1986. CAMCs (Conservation and Management Committees) and sub-CAMCs have been formed and are the main local institutions to identify, coordinate, implement and manage conservation and development activities in the area.

In 2001, 290 'Mothers' Groups', 20 lodge management committees and 14 electrification management committees had been supported by the Project. To reduce the pressure on forest resources, back boilers, solar heaters, space heaters and improved stoves have been installed at private lodges and households. Additionally kerosene and LPG depots have been established together with micro-hydro projects and over 2,000 pressure cookers and 1,200 thermos flasks have been distributed. Under the community development programme the Project has invested in and/or supported numerous drinking water schemes, health posts, community toilets, schools, irrigation schemes, trails, bridges and care centres. All these are now being managed by the CAMCs.

In 2001 ACA saw 70,000 visitors each paying 2,000 Nepalese Rupees. The Project is now financially self-sustaining. However, though ACAP would like to hand the Project over to the people, the majority of the local communities are not yet capable of fully managing the Project and ACAP will therefore continue to do so for another 10 years. Its aim has always been to set up a sustainable community-based project that can eventually be entirely run and controlled by the local communities.

The Project has a number of elements that have particularly targeted women due to their important role in natural resource use yet their marginalisation from decision-making processes and livelihood diversification opportunities. In 1990 a programme called 'Women in Conservation and Development' was initiated. 'Mothers' Groups' (*ama toli*) were formed and women were encouraged to become involved in income generating activities, development and conservation works. Each ward now essentially contains a mothers' group. With five executive members (i.e. chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, vice-secretary, treasurer), one person from each household is represented through a member in the general committee of the mothers. Meetings are held once a month where discussions on various issues take place.

Performance of cultural dances at feasts, festivals, and to visitors raises the majority of funds. These are utilised to build and repair trails, water taps and other small-scale conservation and development works. In a number of villages ACAP has set up a day nursery. Increasingly these are being run and financed by the women themselves. Credit and savings groups have also been set up with seed funding from ACAP. Though problems have been experienced due to a lack of financial and technical expertise amongst the women, training has helped many to control the groups. Not only do these groups encourage material benefits but also social benefits, such as providing information and communication links and a forum for women to focus on their needs and priorities. The groups also act as an informal mutual support network, for example by providing help in times of need.

Adult literacy classes are organised for the interests of women. Basic adult literacy classes are run for six months, followed by advance classes for five months. Primarily these classes are meant to make the women literate, increase their confidence and ultimately lead them to become active members in decision-making bodies within their communities. By 2001, 7,267 local women had attended adult literacy programmes and 473 girls had received scholarships. Project and private nurseries had been set up; health and family planning programmes initiated; tourism information facilitated, for instance, through information centres, and over 500 local lodge owners had been trained. Every year Women's Day, in which almost all mothers' groups of ACA take part equally, is celebrated on March 8th to promote and strengthen their activities.

Lessons can be learnt from the experience of the Project:

- Though the Project had success in encouraging women into development and decision-making processes by targeting them specifically, it is has now been recognised that a more gender-focussed approach is necessary. In addition there is still a need for positive discrimination for women on committees etc.
- Local gender focussed development NGOs have provided vital assistance in 'gender mainstreaming' within ACAP.
- The large focus on tourism has meant that a large percentage of local communities have so far been excluded from Project benefits.
- It was important to recognise and accommodate existing cultural constraints in relation to gender issues. Innovative thinking was needed to find less sensitive and more politically correct ways of encouraging women's involvement.
- Rights to benefits and resources must be linked to responsibilities for maintaining them.
- Exposing women to a variety of opportunities means that they are given more choice to become involved in those elements that they feel are most suitable for them.
- Education has proved an important factor in empowering women and increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The mothers' groups have provided a forum for women to come together on a regular basis to exchange information and ideas and provide an informal network of support and solidarity.
- Institutional structures must be sufficiently flexible enough to adapt to changes if necessary.
- An exit strategy for the supporting institution(s) must be in place from the beginning of the Project. This may have to change to accommodate local capacities etc.

Conclusion.

Though many of the societies found in the mountainous areas of Nepal are relatively gender equitable, women are still prejudiced against and marginalised. This is despite the fact that due to male out-migration (generally on a temporary basis for work) there are many female-headed households.

Project activities have been highly interlinked with rights to the use of, and responsibilities over, natural resources. Therefore local communities have been able to understand the importance of utilising resources sustainably. However, some communities feel that they do not have enough control over the resources in their care, for example to stop the illegal logging that still occurs, albeit on an irregular basis.

Education has proved an important factor in empowering women and increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Classes have also been a useful forum for improving awareness of conservation issues. In addition the mothers' groups have provided a forum for women to come together on a regular basis to exchange information and ideas and provide an informal network of support and solidarity.

There is increasing pressure on conservation organisations from donors to address gender issues. As a result there is the temptation to state vociferously that gender issues are being accounted for when in reality they are not. However, both WWF and ACAP have addressed gender in a reasonably strategic manner and as a result have steadily achieved the mainstreaming of gender throughout the institutions and projects.

Indeed both ACAP and SCAFP have realised the importance of a more gender-focussed approach. As a result WWF has established a gender policy that acts as a basis for a more strategic addressing of gender issues. Working with local NGOs involved in gender work aids a clearer understanding of the issues. In addition it helps to promote the sustainability of the projects and continued resource use in future. There is a need for well thought out and achievable exit strategies for the supporting institution(s) to be in place from the beginning of the projects. These may have to change to accommodate aspects such as local capacities, political aspects and changed legislation.

CASE STUDY 2: JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

(Godbole, 2002)

Joint Forest Management (JFM) emerged as a result of the 1988 Forest Policy. It requires forests to be protected and managed through partnerships between Forest Departments (FDs) and local people. It is estimated that there are currently 10.24 million hectares (ha) of forestlands being managed under the JFM programme, through 36,075 committees in 22 states (GOI, 1999). JFM can be defined as the:

> "*sharing of products, responsibilities, control and decision making authority over forest lands between forest departments and local user groups, based on a formal agreement. The primary purpose of JFM is to give users a stake in the forest benefits and a role in planning and management for sustainable improvement of the forest condition and productivity. A second goal is to support an equitable distribution of forest products*" (Hill and Shields, 1998).

Women Kept Out Of The Formal Institutions

On an everyday basis women often take the initiative to protect forests and their resources, realising the long-term benefits of doing so. However, in reality examples illustrate that in spite of their contribution to resource use and development, women are kept outside the formal institutions set up by JFM such as the Forest Protection Committees (FPCs). Women and their needs remain outside the decision-making processes. Often no alternatives are available to fulfil their needs once restrictions on resource use have been established. As a result many women are forced to violate restrictions to meet the needs of their families. For this they are looked down upon by their own community and sometimes ostracised.

For example, Harimari village in Midanapore district in West Bengal has been protecting 100 ha of forests under a JFM agreement for a number of years. Traditionally, Harimari and other surrounding villages have been dependent on these forests and the collection of dry twigs for fuel is still carried out by women. Villagers regularly patrol the forests and fine offenders. Women occasionally accompany men during these patrols. Yet none of the women in the village is a member of either the JFM GB (General Body) or the Executive Committee (EC) of the FPC. Some women are not even aware of the possibilities of their participation in JFM. They occasionally attend the meetings of the EC but do not participate for fear of being openly dismissed by the men.

Consequently men make all decisions regarding the management and benefit-sharing of the forest. In addition, the proceeds from the sale of timber are distributed to the men who have also been selling fuelwood generated by the occasional thinning of the forests, instead of allowing their wives to use it. Recently however, in order to overcome the problem of theft of fuel-wood from the neighbouring villages, men are beginning to consider the involvement of women in the Committee more seriously. Women on the other hand feel that there should be no question about their involvement as it is their 'right' to be included in the processes.

Factors Affecting The Participation Of Women

The rules of the GOI Order of 1991 specified that at least two women should be on every village management committee in the JFM programme. However, women are still excluded from JFM for a number of reasons. In many states the JFM Committees are formed after the proposal has been accepted by 50% of the population. Invariably this 50% are the men in the village as women rarely participate in the preliminary meetings. Furthermore, in 8 out of 21 Indian states the JFM resolutions make the households the basis for participation in JFM Committees. In these cases women become members only if there are no men in the family. Some individual states have made exceptions, for example in Uttar Pradesh the resolution discusses including *all* the adult men and women in the JFM Committees.

Further reasons for the lack of participation of women in the JFM programme can be summarised as follows:
- *A lack of information* - women seldom know about the provisions, roles and responsibilities of JFM programmes. Furthermore there is *a lack of clarity* about the applicability and gains of JFM, which often leads to a lack of interest.
- *Attitude of the FD staff* - FD staff generally consider the involvement of women a mere formality. Very rarely are special efforts taken to understand women's point of view and to seek their active participation. Women's 'participation' is desirable only as a less risky and more effective mechanism for persuading or coaxing them into stopping resource extraction. In addition, *inadequate training and orientation* of the lower FD staff ranks has left them unaware of the ways and means of facilitating women's participation. Pressures of *time* are also important.
- *The notion that women's views are not worth considering* - many men do not value women's knowledge concerning natural resources.

- *Family responsibilities* - due to domestic and other chores women find it extremely difficult to find time for meetings, which are often organised at times and venues inconvenient to women.
- *Social and cultural restrictions* – culture restricts women's participation and position in local communities. Generally, non-tribal women face far more restrictions than tribal women. In addition women often *lack confidence.*
- *Lack of security* - there is no provision to ensure security for the women taking active part in the conservation activities. Indeed, instances have been noted where women have been insulted or attacked by powerful men having vested interests that conflict with women's use or conservation of the forests.
- *Very few direct benefits* - direct benefits to women are seldom discussed in the FPC meetings and are consequently not prioritised. For example, the focus is generally on timber and not on fuelwood and fodder, both of which are crucial to women.
- *Lack of female staff in FD* - there is a general lack of female staff in the FD, particularly at the field level. This gives added reason for the marginalisation of women's's issues. Where more women staff have been present, for example in Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, the participation of women within JFM has increased considerably.
- *Class and caste issues* - It is normally the poorest and most marginalised constituent groups within communities and households who are most dependent on forest resources. Yet, due to the dynamic hierarchy of social and power relations, it is often the better-off more powerful non-forest dependent groups who have the greatest visibility and voice. In addition the caste system severely divides community groups, including women. This can be a limiting factor in bringing women together and mobilising them as a group.

Some Of The Strategies Used To Ensure The Involvement Of Women

Being state agencies, FDs are in the advantageous position of being able to introduce progressive changes in traditional attitudes, practices and organisational norms by insisting that priority is given to gender and equity concerns in all aspects of JFM. By creating legitimate space for women and other marginalised groups within local institutions, they could not only minimise the danger of ignoring women's needs, but also initiate a progressive transformation of traditional all male, often elite dominated, community institutions.

This approach was in fact adopted while developing Haryana's JFM programme from 1989. To ensure that all women and men were able to express their rights to participate in JFM, all resident adults were made eligible for the introduced Hill Resource Management Society (HRMS) membership. In addition, the acceptance of women's independent eligibility by village men was made a pre-condition for members of the HRMS and their participation in JFM. This was supplemented by a combination of strategies to increase women's actual participation in the day-to-day interaction with the HRMSs.

A number of JFM areas have made some positive moves to promote a greater degree of gender equity, which can be facilitated by the support from NGOs. For example, in Gujrat the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme has played a major role in JFM. Under their pressure it was made mandatory for all the villages in the programme to support women extension volunteers so that women's involvement in JFM would increase and women could do tasks that had hitherto been in men's domains.

However, external facilitators are not always necessary and an excellent example of where a high level of participation and relative gender equity can be achieved through self-mobilisation is found in the village of Mendha (Lekha). As described in Box 9.1 this example illustrates how through time, self empowerment and participatory learning processes, villagers have become stronger and self-confident, yet sensitive to gender and equity issues.

In some parts the FD has actively encouraged the participation of women. In the Bankura district of West Bengal the FD encouraged the formation of 'all women' FPCs in the district, mainly in the places where male dominated FPCs had earlier failed. This has proved that given equal rights, responsibilities and some authority, women participate actively and are confident and sincere in their work.

Women's efforts in Dulmooth village in the region of western Uttar Pradesh is perhaps a more unique example of how empowered women cannot only improve their own socio-economic condition, but also protect the forests much more effectively. In this village, approximately a decade ago and under the encouragement from an NGO, the women got together and took charge of the Panchayat forests, which were previously managed by the men and mainly for timber and paper production. Under the men the Panchayat was a much less effective institution because it was answerable to the local administration and dependent on government funds for any activity or labour in the forests. The women however believed in *shramadan* (voluntary labour) for any activity that they carried out in the forests, thus saving resources and having more control over the administration processes (such as taking action against offenders or conducting their meetings) by being independent of local authorities. In addition they have effectively controlled grazing and illegal felling through, for example, extracting fines based on the economic status of the offender rather than following the prescribed law.

Box 9.1 Forest Protection Efforts in Mendha (Lekha) Village

Mendha (Lekha) is a small village of 300 inhabitants, all belonging to the Gond tribe, in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. The village has been conserving their forests for the last twenty years. The villagers realised that factors such as legislation to protect their forests and ways to institutionally support such protection might affect their lives, and have taken steps to empower themselves with information and knowledge. With the help of outside friends (NGOs and individuals) they established study circles in the village. Through the discussions in these study circles they were able to rid the village of various vices such as alcoholism, and achieved milestones in issues such as gender and class equity. They also became the first village in the state where JFM was extended to standing, dense, natural forests because of the insistence of the villagers. Since there is no provision in the state to include standing forests in JFM there now exists an informal understanding among the villagers and the FD. As a formality the village has set up an Executive Committee (EC) to make decisions about the forests, although in reality the decisions are taken through the consensus of the *gram-sabha* (village general body), which includes all the adult members in the village and meets more than once a month to discuss various issues. There is equal participation of men and women in such meetings. Men often encourage women to speak out and express their opinions. The villagers ensure that all the sub-committees formed to execute the various plans and programmes also have equal numbers of women and men. Women also have their own *mahila mandal* (women's group), which handles issues specifically pertaining to women, including saving schemes, alcoholism, and the protection and monitoring of the forest.

Personal observation, 2002; Pathak & Gour-Broome 1999.

Today, these forests have greatly regenerated, meeting all the NTFP, fodder and fuelwood requirements of the women. The women benefit in other ways, such as having to travel less far to find these products. With the help of an NGO they have also been able to procure smokeless *chulhas*, or cooking gas, at subsidised rates, and they have found time to grow nutritious vegetables and grains, not only improving family health but also increasing family revenue substantially.

Impact of JFM

Women in general pay greater costs than men as a result of JFM. They have to face severe hardships by walking long distances and facing assault or abuse for extraction of the woody bio-mass that they need. Even in cases where women themselves have taken a decision to conserve the resources, in the initial stages they manage with great difficulty. Women who have to spend more time in forests are less able to give attention to the family and children, which may then affect their physical and social health.

In India a large number of families depend on forests to fulfil their subsistence and other livelihood needs. Because they do not own any productive assets, many of these women collect NTFPs for survival income for their households when no other employment is available. However, they receive abysmally low returns for their labour.

Silvicultural practices may affect the availability of NTFPs adversely. For example, increasing the height of protected *sal (Shorea robusta)* trees can lead to useable new leaves growing beyond women's easy reach, so reducing the number of leaves that they are able to collect.

A study conducted in Midnapore district of West Bengal indicated that JFM has failed in many areas due to the desperate nature of the poorer women in the communities, who depend entirely on the sale of firewood for subsistence. Today, FPCs often appoint women as forest watchers to prosecute women offenders instead of trying to understand the roots of the problems and help women to find alternatives. This leads to exasperation amongst the women (Box 9.2). Policing may solve the problem in the short term but ultimately will lead to deprivation in some sections of society and subsequent resentment similar to that held against the government exclusionary conservation schemes. Yet, neither at the policy level nor at the local level, has any effort been made to understand the problems of the women and their reasons for resisting the enforced protections.

Box 9.2 Need for Alternative Employment

A study of 20 Village Forest Protection and Management Samitis in Santhal Parganas in Bihar found that forest protection in most of the protected areas had collapsed within a year of being established. In all cases, women headloaders had the same question: "*what shall we eat?*" They wanted alternative employment to be able to stop cutting firewood and marketing support to increase their income from the sale of NTFPs.

Satya Narain *et al*, 1994.

Gains Accrued Through JFM

Financial benefits
In some areas the JFM programme has created employment opportunities for the local people. The FD can favour women for some forestry operations, such as nursery raising, but they are usually paid much less than men.

Regeneration more beneficial than plantation
Regeneration of degraded forests is often less expensive, more successful and more beneficial to women than plantations. Regenerated forests are more biologically diverse and provide a variety of resources throughout the year. Yet in most areas emphasis is being given to the plantation of economically important tree species.

JFM can help to build capacity of the women
In addition there are certain social benefits that women receive through involvement in the programme. They gain the capacity and knowledge to manage local resources, which in turn increases their confidence. Particularly active women gain social recognition and financial independence. This gives them increased power and the encouragement to be more assertive about their rights and responsibilities. There are examples where awareness through programmes like JFM has led to women educating themselves and motivating other women to do the same.

Furthermore, in areas of traditional suppression, women who are more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters increases the confidence of women. Empowerment of women also leads to their participation in various other social activities and issues such as the anti-alcohol and environmental movements. However, while it is often assumed that women's presence in itself is enough to guarantee representation of their interests, male members of the villages often continue to dominate village politics 'behind' their wives or other women who have been elected into position. Care should be taken therefore to ensure that 'participation' is truly meaningful.

Conclusion

Women often play a significant role in the protection and conservation of natural resources. As such they are more likely to be directly affected by forest protection measures and/or the degradation of natural resources. Yet still, in general, they are left out of the planning and implementation processes that are structured by formal institutions to control such resource use. Such marginalisation may increase as the formalisation process progresses. FDs and local authorities remain prejudiced to women and men still dominate the decision-making processes. Although in the JFM programme there is provision for the participation of women, due to a variety of factors they remain, in general, at the periphery. Where the participation of women has increased there is still a failure to link such participation to increased rights and responsibilities. As a result, the sustainability of such participation must be questioned.

As such, JFM programmes should be more gender sensitive to ensure the active involvement of women. Meetings should be organised at times and places convenient for women to attend, and their participation encouraged and supported. The different gender roles and their impacts on the use and conservation of resources must be recognised and incorporated into programmes and processes. It must also be recognised that such gender roles are in a state of flux as attitudes, culture, environments and the socio-economics of communities change over time and from place to place. It is therefore important that JFM programmes are flexible enough to accommodate such changes and the site-specific needs of local communities and the different groups found within them.

If JFM is to be sustainable then the gender inequities found in communities and institutions must be recognised and addressed. Though this may mean tackling sensitive issues such as 'power relations', it may be the only way forward to move beyond the 'lip-service' paid to addressing women's needs, rights and responsibilities that has been seen so far. The impacts of JFM have not all been negative and in certain states and localities examples can be found where women's participation has proved more fruitful. These examples should be recognised as positive contributions to more equitable conservation and development processes and built upon to take such positive processes further forward.

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RECOMMENDED TEXTS

GENERAL TEXTS ON ICDPS AND CBNRM INCLUDING GENDER

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