

Engendering Eden: Women, Gender and 'Integrated Conservation and Development Projects'

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1.1 Background and Objectives

Since the mid-1980s there has been an increasing emphasis on linking conservation and development through 'integrated conservation and development projects' (ICDPs). More recently it has been realised by NGOs and donor agencies that to achieve this, social issues such as gender equity and the marginalisation of women need to be addressed. However, there has been a lack of experience and knowledge in dealing with such issues, particularly within conservation organisations.

The *Engendering Eden* research programme aimed to provide an assessment of the role of gender in enhancing the social and environmental sustainability of ICDPs and to develop a more empirical understanding of how gender shapes the ways that local people participate in and benefit from them. It has focussed on the sharing of information and experiences between projects and people, particularly the women living in the communities where ICDPs have been implemented.

The programme focussed on the following 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 gender differences/inequities affect the way men and women participate in, contribute to, and benefit from ICDPs?
3. To what extent and how are these differences/inequities being addressed and accounted for in the planning, implementation and evaluation of ICDPs?
4. Where gender issues/inequities have been addressed, what has worked and/or not worked? To what degree are other social divisions important? What lessons can be learnt?
5. Where gender issues/inequities have *not* been addressed, what are the implications for project 'success'? 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/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 better guided and achieved?

2.1 Methods

The methodology for the research programme was as follows:

- A comprehensive literature review of recent books, articles and reports (published and unpublished) totalling approximately 300.

- A series of interviews and correspondence with practitioners and policy-makers involved in ICDPs totalling approximately 80.
- PRA training workshops with 2 CARE-supported ICDPs in Vietnam and Zanzibar involving staff and project partners.
- 9 case study visits to:
 - Ethiopia (1 week with SOS Sahel supported Borana Collaborative Forest Management Project and 8 weeks with WWF-supported ICDP in Bale Mountains);
 - Zanzibar (3 weeks with CARE-supported ICDP);
 - Tanzania (3 days with WWF-supported project in Udzungwa Mountains);
 - Namibia (2 weeks with LIFE/IRDNC CBNRM project);
 - Kenya (1 week with WWF-supported Kiungu Marine ICDP);
 - Vietnam (2 weeks with CARE-supported ICDP in U Minh Thong);
 - Nepal (3 weeks visiting several WWF-supported ICDPs and ACAP); and
 - India (1 week visiting a JFM project).
- The case study work involved in-depth research in/with the local communities where the ICDPs are being implemented (see Annex 1 for examples of questions asked). RRA techniques were used throughout. 3 of the case studies were carried out with/by a national partner.
- Additional information was collected at a Conference on Mountain Women in Bhutan, September 2002 where a workshop was facilitated on "Women and Natural Resources".

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Inclusion of gender issues within ICDPs

- Wide differences and inequities exist in local communities involved in ICDPs. Gender represents the most clear cut divide, though tribal, ethnic and religious differences also greatly influence the relationship that people have with the environment and natural resources.
- Despite the recent emphasis being placed on addressing women's issues and gender, ICDPs fail to approach such issues in any strategic way. Instead they normally rely on a haphazard and uniformed addressing of problems as they arise and/or the enthusiasm and concerns of individuals. Conservation organisations in particular have failed to address them. WWF, for example, has yet to produce an organisation-wide gender policy. It has been up to individual country offices (such as WWF-Nepal) to do so. IUCN however has established a gender policy; has set-up a social equity unit at its HQ in Switzerland; and has active regional secretariats. All conservation organisations remain dominated by men - particularly in the field and in managerial positions.
- A minority of ICDPs have provided gender training for staff. At the field level, the majority of staff rely on instinct rather than on a comprehensive understanding of constraints, problems and solutions. Few initially address gender issues in their projects though in time they recognise the importance of doing so. Where gender training has been carried out staff tend to take a more comprehensive, informed

and successful approach to overcoming problems and inequities. Yet even here a failure to follow-up and monitor impacts from a gender perspective means that gender issues often get forgotten and/or side-lined.

3.1.2 Continuing gender inequities in ICDPs

- Restrictions on resource use (such as the banning of firewood or non-timber forest product collection) due to conservation policies and the impacts of wildlife such as damage to crops, tends to disproportionately cost women.
- Despite existing legislation supporting a more equitable participation of women in decision-making processes concerned with natural resource use, in reality women play little role. Not only are required numbers/quotas not met but the quality of women's participation must be questioned. Many conservation staff see the involvement of women as a mere formality. Their potential contribution is highly undervalued. Women's 'participation' is desirable only as a less risky and more effective mechanism for persuading them to stop resource extraction.
- In areas of large game ICDPs still tend to focus on CWM (community wildlife management). Usually this is linked to men's roles and work. As such CWM targets them rather than women, for example through supporting community game guards. Women's potential and/or actual roles in CWM are rarely recognised and/or incorporated. Men and women often bear different costs from wildlife management practices and perceive the benefits provided differently.
- Where women's roles have been recognised and valued, projects have expanded to incorporate a focus on other natural resources such as plants and trees. The CBNRM programme – LIFE, in Namibia – has been particularly successful in supporting women and bringing them into conservation development processes. However, commercial use of forests and other natural resources tends to take priority over subsistence use. Males tend to dominate commercial enterprises.
- As a result there is little genuine addressing of gender inequities in communities where ICDPs work. The traditional gender-unbalanced structures that exist remain untouched. Women remain unempowered and uninvolves. In addition analyses of women's resource needs continue to attempt the separation of women's resource use interests from their wider social relationships and therefore run the risk of further entrenching existing gender inequalities.
- Both tribal and mountain societies tend to be more gender equitable and this is reflected in their increased involvement in ICDPs.
- Women from different communities, socio-economic strata, tribes and castes may have conflicting interests and priorities themselves. Women of higher caste and/or social strata, as well as those who are better educated or economically advantaged can dominate discussions and decision-making processes.
- Several women's projects have been started and then discontinued (for example within the LIRD, Zambia). This has resulted in increased feelings of insecurity

and ‘lack of faith’ in ICDPs. The reasons for their discontinuation are various but include a lack of funding, change of staff and a lack of commitment for women’s issues.

3.1.3 Achieving the linkage between conservation and development continues to prove difficult

- Achieving sustainable and well-anchored linkages between conservation and development is very difficult but crucial. Where it can be achieved, ICDPs can go some way towards creating sustainable resource management, healthy community development and poverty alleviation. Too little time has been spent on promoting a better understanding of the linkages amongst women. In general women do not associate development support from ICDPs with conservation. The only examples found where women directly make such a link are:
 - (1) Tourism - where the quantity of wildlife is seen to directly relate to the benefits from tourism and sport hunting; and
 - (2) Bee-keeping - where a direct link is seen between the protection of trees/flowers (for nectar) and the quality/quantity of honey produced.
- Women also fail to link participation in ICDPs with increased rights and responsibilities over natural resources. As a result the sustainability of such participation must be questioned, particularly in relation to the continued protection of and investment in the environment. Women are more keen to be involved in ICDPs once they understand that by doing so the long-term sustainability of their communities and environment will be aided.
- There is a conflict between women’s short-term needs for household security and conservation’s long-term commitments and goals.
- In some areas (for example around the Luangwa NP in Zambia) the traditional culture of long-term mutual benefit that was generated through joint responsibility and co-operation over natural resource management has been lost. This has been replaced by feelings of self-centredness, competition and helplessness and/or apathy to one’s future. Women believe that initiative and ability to improve their quality of life only comes from others – men, extension workers, NGOs and donors. Women do not take responsibility for, or believe that they have the ability to, manage natural resources well and/or to improve their position. As a result, improved management does not occur unless it is strictly enforced by those with the power to do so or if external intervention encourages change.
- There are examples of women going to extreme lengths to protect natural resources, whilst or once access to them is available and/or made secure. They will also go to extreme lengths to acquire such access. Women also take great risks to continue illegal resource collection and despite enforcement and protection measurements. This is particularly true when there are no alternatives available. Such flouting of regulations can lead to them being ostracised by their own community.

3.1.4 Role of donors

- Donors have played a large role in promoting the inclusion of gender issues within project documents and initial stages of project planning. However retaining such inclusion during project implementation and producing positive results has proved much more difficult. Gender issues continue to be given a low priority and tend to be marginalised by other more ‘pressing’ issues. As a result the indication that gender equity is a goal and/or gender issues will be addressed in ICDPs tends to be little more than ‘lip-service’.

3.1.5 Problems in implementation

- ICDPs tend to be located in rural areas, often isolated, with few local services and rare opportunities for income generation beyond the selling of natural resources.
- The use of alternatives to local fuelwood only succeed where the opportunity costs of continuing fuelwood collection have been pushed high enough to make any changes beneficial (for example through restrictions and/or increased time required for collection). The promotion of solar cookers for example is difficult. If there is an adequate supply women still prefer to use fuelwood because they enjoy the experience of going to collect the wood as a group and cooking by solar proves problematic.
- Natural resource ‘user groups’ tend to work best when populations are relatively stable and community members know each other.
- Women are generally more receptive than men to new technologies/practices and conservation messages. They are also more easily mobilised, particularly for group work. However the opportunities that this might present to ICDPs have been undermined as women tend to be less knowledgeable about conservation and the projects and play a smaller role in them due to their continued marginalisation.
- Though elements of population and gender projects in ICDPs appear to be having positive benefits (for example reduced fertility rates and increasing women’s participation in community life), questions remain as to whether the expected environmental impacts are being realised and how to measure such impacts.

3.1.6 Lessons learnt and overcoming problems in ICDPs

- Organisations involved in ICDPs have rarely collaborated with local organisations, for example those focussed on gender equity and/or the promotion of women’s rights. This is despite the fact that where organisations have worked with local partners (for example on health issues) it has been found to be one of the most important success factors, particularly when dealing with the culturally or politically sensitive population and gender interventions.
- Women's high illiteracy rate limits the success and sustainability of women's projects such as credit schemes. Extensive training must be provided prior to the introduction of the schemes and checks must be set-up that ensure that the credit scheme does not result in women (and men) borrowing money and investing in areas that involve a high degree of risk. More innovative and less monetary-

oriented schemes should be considered, such as WWF's 'borrow a cow, give a cow' scheme. This scheme not only aids poverty alleviation but also promotes pride, self-confidence and self-esteem amongst the women, as well as improving the health of the communities.

- Hygiene and education programmes have had a positive effect on household practices as well as opened up a range of beneficial opportunities for women and girls. Literacy development (an element of many ICDPs) has been particularly effective and empowering. More children go to school and more women are involved in social work. Indeed, increasingly, households are sending girls to school as an investment for the future and a long-term coping mechanism. However it is often the case that once girls/women have been educated they want to leave rural areas to make the most of greater opportunities elsewhere. It is important therefore that either ways must be found to open up opportunities in rural areas or encourage the continuation of linkages between those who leave and those left behind.
- A particularly important priority for women is the desire to become self-sufficient in meeting their needs, rather than being on the receiving end of large handouts of money. Education for their children, health care and agricultural extension are further priorities.
- Women are searching for new ways to earn income and/or to expand their control over how money is used. Small livestock production is proving one viable way for women to achieve this. A good institutional base for such projects is vital. Without this there is likely to be a lack of local control and responsibility and the danger of project components being 'hijacked' by more powerful members of the communities.
- Where handicraft production is carried out it is important that high enough standards are maintained to encourage a continued demand for the goods from buyers. A grading scheme may be necessary. Where payment for handicrafts produced are made on an individual basis it may be difficult to encourage women to contribute some of their earnings to community development initiatives. However, where possible this should be achieved as it will improve the acceptability of the project within the community and increase the value of women's contribution and right to participate in community decision-making processes. Key 'mobilisers' who can be trained by organisations in skills such as handicraft production and who then return to their villages to teach other women have been a particularly successful way of promoting development activities. Bringing women together for workshops builds up bonds and reciprocity between them.
- Income-generating projects such as handicraft production must be accompanied by training in business and marketing for the women involved. In addition support must be given to sustainable marketing opportunities for the goods - this is an often neglected element of such projects.

- Mutual support amongst women may start with simple arrangements such as the loaning of crockery and/or furniture in times of need (for example for weddings and funerals). These informal self-help groups often evolve and/or can be supported to evolve into more formalised institutions that can play a direct role in community decision-making etc. Women's clubs/groups provide more appropriate opportunities for women than whole community meetings for dissemination of information and provision of support specific to women's needs.
- Where a large number of women's groups result from ICDP activities (such as in the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal), it is proving necessary to create an umbrella organisation to coordinate the activities of the individual groups. This improves the sustainability of such institutions.
- Exchange visits between women's groups have been a useful and empowering way of sharing knowledge and experiences. It has built up a feeling of comradeship, self-determination, self-esteem and pride.
- It is less 'politically' sensitive and disruptive to social 'norms' if the targeting of women is justified in terms of the need to target them because they carry out specific tasks or roles in society such as wood collection rather than because women are marginalised as a group.
- Men may not be fully supportive of women becoming involved in development processes. Thus they must be included in planning and negotiation processes. It has also proved useful to have local men working for the project who are trusted by them and can help influence and persuade those men in the communities who are a little less sure of the benefits of women's participation.
- Many projects have been built around and relied upon key individual strong and educated women from local communities as role models and lynch-pins supporting, encouraging and holding together women's participation. Divorced or widowed women are often particularly independent and confident and can act as useful entry points into women's groups. Role models have been vital for project successes. However continued reliance on them risks future long-term sustainability of ICDPs.
- Existing policy and legislation can be a useful entry point and/or 'back-up' for the promotion of women's rights.
- By maintaining a holistic approach to development and gender interventions, organisations have found it to be much easier to achieve the additional goal of resource conservation. Taking a holistic approach is often even more effective if a project seeks out pre-existing linkages within the target community.
- The relationships between men/women and natural resources and/or conservation are dynamic as culture, communities, environments and local/national political-economies change. Livelihoods are becoming more complex and women are increasingly being drawn into 'productive' economic processes. Such changes and resulting 'windows of opportunities' for women and more gender equitable

processes should be recognised and utilised. A flexible and adaptable approach is vital.

- At the same time the static nature of some communities, particularly where gender roles are concerned, should be recognised and the problems that may evolve understood. Problems are particularly likely in societies that have very clearly defined roles and have been relatively marginalised from development processes, for example within pastoralist groups.
- Increased levels of gender-focussed monitoring and evaluation of ICDPs is vital.

4.1 Conclusion

There is little evidence to suggest that ICDPs have contributed to more equitable long-term development in local communities. Though there are some positive examples of projects and elements of projects that have improved gender inequities, these are few and far between. In general, gender is still seen as an issue that is too political, too sensitive and too time- and resource-consuming for inclusion within many ICDPs.

If ICDPs are to be sustainable then the gender inequities inherent 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.

In addition, there is a continued failure (excluding rare examples) of local communities (women and men) making the necessary link between their development and the conservation of natural resources. This undermines the whole premise on which ICDPs have been built and as such questions the whole ICDP approach. Unless more effort and resources are put into building up this link then ICDPs will not be sustainable.

At the same time ICDPs must not work in a vacuum but understand the relationships and linkages between the projects and 'external' factors including social, political, cultural and economic pressures and/or change. Adaptability, flexibility and a long-term focus is vital. Issues such as gender equity can not be addressed over night but require commitment, time, resources and sensitive, well-informed interventions. Unless this is recognised and addressed then ICDPs will not succeed.

4.1 Dissemination

All the case study work (see Section 2.1) resulted in individual reports or working papers. 4 working papers are available on the website:
<http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD> (see below). A further 3 will be made available shortly.

3 publications will be shortly produced - 2 regional studies (Africa and Asia) giving detailed results of the research including comprehensive summaries of the case studies; and 1 overview document - *Engendering Eden: Gender, Women and ICDPs* - which will summarise the key findings of the research and give recommendations. Both will be published and ready for dissemination in February, 2002. They will be disseminated to approximately 300 persons/organisations (already listed on a database) working with ICDPs and other interested parties.

UNPUBLISHED REPORTS PRODUCED FOR THE 'ENGENDERING EDEN' PROJECT:

Barnes, H. (2000), *Women, Wood and Wildlife - The Role and Involvement of Women in CBNRM in the Luangwa Valley, Zambia*. Working Paper No 3 for the Engendering Eden Project. Internet: <http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/index.htm>

Flintan, F. (2002), *Flip-flops and Turtles - Women's Participation in the Kiungu Marine Reserve ICDP, Kenya*. Working Paper No 5 for the Engendering Eden Project. *Forthcoming*.

Flintan, F. (2002), *WWF and Gender Mainstreaming in Nepal*. Working Paper No 6 for the Engendering Eden Project. *(Forthcoming)*.

Flintan, F. (2001), *Women and CBNRM in Namibia. A Case Study of the IRDNC Community Resource Monitor Project*. Working Paper No 2 for the Engendering Eden Project. Internet: <http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/index.htm>

Flintan, F. (2001), *A Gender-Sensitive Study of Perceptions & Practices in and around Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia*. Working Paper No 1 for the Engendering Eden Project. Internet: <http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/index.htm>

Flintan, F. (2001), *Gender Issues and the UMT Nature Reserve Conservation & Community Development Project, Vietnam*. A report for CARE-Vietnam for the study carried out between 31st July and 9th August, 2001. Unpublished report.

Flintan, F. (2001), *Gender Issues and the JCBCP (Jozani Chwaka Bay Conservation Project), Zanzibar*. A report for CARE-Zanzibar. Unpublished report.

Godbole, Girija (2002), *Joint Forest Management and Gender*. Working Paper No 4 for the Engendering Eden Project. Internet: <http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/index.htm>

Tapia, E. and F. Flintan (2002), *The Borana Collaborative Forest Management Project from a Gender Perspective*. Working Paper No 7 for the Engendering Eden Project. *(Forthcoming)*.

ANNEX 1

Examples of questions asked in local communities:

Male/Female?

What is your name?

What is your age?

What is your religion?

How many wives do you have? OR How many wives does your husband have?

How many children do you have?

Do your children go to school? If yes, where do they go to school?

What is your religion?

Do you read and write?

How long have you lived here?

What crops do you grow?

Where do you grow your crops?

How much livestock do you have – cattle, sheep, goats, chickens?

Do you sell your livestock and crops? If yes, when and why?

How far is the market from here?

Do you sell things in the market? If yes, what do you sell?

Do you make handicrafts? Do you sell the handicrafts?

Do you have any other trade/employment/business?

What work do you do during the day?

What work does your wife/husband do?

How often do you go to Zanzibar Town?

How often do you go to the mainland of Tanzania? For what reason do you go?

Who makes the decisions in the household?

Do you go to village meetings?

Do you speak at village meetings?

(If speaking to a woman - Where do you meet other women?

(If speaking to a woman) - Do you belong to a Woman's Association?

(If speaking to a woman) - Do you belong to a 'self-help' group? If yes, what does the 'self-help' group do?

Where do you collect water and fuelwood from?

Do you know about the protected forest?

Do you think the protection of the forest is good or bad? Why?

Do you get any benefits from the protected forest?

Do you use any other resources from the protected area (forest), for example plants?

Do you have any problems with your crops/livestock and wild animals?

Do you know about the Jozani Chwaka Bay Conservation Project run by the organisation called CARE?

If yes, what do you think about the project - is it good or bad?

Why is it good or bad?

Do you receive any benefits from the project? If yes, what are they?

Does your husband or wife receive any benefits from the project? If yes, what are they?

Do you plant any trees?

What changes have you seen happen here in last 50 years?

What would you like in the future for you and your children?