

Mobilising Women

Recognising the key role that women play in managing the environment (and the intensification of their workload that subjects women and their families to enormous stresses), some development agencies of governments and NGOs are of the opinion that women can be strong allies in environmental programmes. This is based on the understanding that women are the first to suffer under conditions of a deteriorating resource base. However, most programmes related to women and their use of the environment are of two types: high investment projects that marginalise women and women-specific projects that are themselves marginalised from mainstream programmes (Pradhan and Rankin 1990). Strategies to assist women are usually peripheral, limited to income and employment generation. The major role of women in agriculture is not yet fully appreciated.

Improving the status of women and enhancing their capabilities and opportunities to participate fully in the development process are the objective of fewer organisations, mainly NGOs. The equity and quality of life concerns of these organisations lead them to search for the means of empowering women, increasing their self-confidence and capabilities. One effective strategy for achieving this is the formation and strengthening of women's groups.