

Conclusions

"All effective projects have emerged from and as a result of the organisation of women for collective action, which is required to confront powerlessness. This is a prerequisite for effective sustainable development" (Wignaraja 1990).

The objective of any development programme is to improve the quality of life, and this is based on two elements: condition and position. The conditions of women's lives can be changed in a relatively short time span, since they are practical in nature and are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water, health care, education, and so on. They do not challenge the gender divisions of labour or women's subordinate position in society. Change in women's position, however, is a greater challenge, based on issues of power and control over resources. Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater equality, alters existing roles, and thereby improves women's economic and social standing in relation to others.

Mountain women themselves identify their practical needs related to their primary roles in family care, farm production, and community management. Planners, who are interested in addressing these same needs, find a unity of purpose with these priorities and claim to have a 'Women in Development' programme. However, the more profound needs for equality cannot be met solely through the design and implementation of women's programmes along these lines. The capacity to confront the nature of gender inequality and women's subordination can only be fulfilled when the bottom-up struggle of women's organisations has been incorporated (Moser 1993). Only when both the practical and strategic needs of mountain women are addressed can governments and development agencies claim that they are meeting the challenge of achieving sustainable development in mountain communities.