ANNEX: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Several studies have revealed that women are active users of natural resources in Nepal. For example, the Status of Women in Nepal study has indicated that 66% of the time spent on fuelwood collection is spent by women; 87% of time spent on drinking water collection is spent by women; and women spend more time in agriculture related activities than men (Acharya and Bennett 1981). While these and other findings indicate that women are the active users of forest resources, very little information is available on involvement of women in forest resource management. Women have also been found to be knowledgeable about these natural resources. For instance, women can explain the attributes of trees more clearly than men. They offer valuable information about trees, their fuelwood, medicinal and herbal uses and their growth rates. What is not known is whether these women, who are active users and seem to possess considerable knowledge about trees, are involved in the management of forests.

This study was concerned with understanding a resource management system at the local level and learning if gender specific participation had any valuable information to offer in enhancing the management of a resource. The study sought information concerning the management of a resource and those involved in the management process. There is a general consensus that rural women have been and should participate in decision making regarding local resource management. However, not much is known about the extent to which women have been making decisions in such management. In order to understand the potential involvement of women we must first know their current involvement and analyse whether it has been effective. A research methodology was therefore required to study:

1. Who is responsible for the management of a particular resource?

2. How is a particular resource managed?

3. Have women been participating in resource management?

4. How have women been participating in rural institutions and resource management?

5. Why have they participated or not participated in resource management programmes? and

6. If a resource better managed when women share in the management?

The researcher along with two research assistants and an ICIMOD colleague, visited Hattisunde Mahadevsthan of Ward No. 2, Nalan Village Panchayat, Dhading District with the information that the four settlements of Hattisunde-Mahadevsthan have been protecting a forest resource named Hattisunde Forest. A detailed study of the management system of Hattisunde forest was conducted using this instrument. The team spent 11 days in the field (4-14 August, 1987) studying the details of the management system of Hattisunde Forest. The above report is the outcome of this study.
Research Procedure

The major objective of this research was to study the management system of a resource and the involvement of women in its management. The research design included a one time cross-sectional, exploratory, and descriptive study of sample villages. Four adjoining villages surrounding Hattisunde Forest were selected for the purpose.

The interviewing procedure included participant observation, and direct and structured as well as open-ended questions to individuals and groups of women and men. Answers to structured questions were cross checked with observation. Analysis of information collected includes a description of how a resource is being managed, if women have been participating in local resource management; how women have been participating in rural institutions and rural resource management; if any form of participation is more effective in managing local resources than others; and how the level of women's participation in resource management can be enhanced.

Related Questions and Hypotheses

Whereas all the questions asked in the field were not listed in advance, a check list was developed to collect information on women's current role in rural institutions and resource management. These questions corresponded to those developed for the Case Studies on Organization and Management of Rural Development.

Current Management System

1. Who initiated the management of a resource? What role did women play in initiating this management system?

2. Who are involved in decision making for the management of a resource? Do women have any say in such decisions?

Participation of Women in Resource Management

If women participate in resource management programmes, why do they participate? If not, what are the reasons for their non-participation? The following hypotheses were tested to understand women's self-motivation in resource management and development.

Perceived relative advantage. Relative advantage refers to the degree to which participation in resource development and management is perceived by women as economically profitable and time and effort-saving. Relative advantage also deals with the immediacy of reward and dissatisfaction with other existing alternatives. Women are more likely to participate in resource management programmes that they see as offering benefits worthy of their efforts.

Perceived Relative Risk. Women's participation in rural resource development may be affected by perceived uncertainty of benefit, possibility of loss, or any other type of risk involved in participating in such an activity.

Cultural Compatibility. Compatibility refers to the closeness of a resource management system to other traditional activities of women. In a culture where women express their opinion in informal settings, a resource management system that allows participation in formal organization only will not encourage women's active participation.
**Complexity vs. Simplicity.** Women are more likely to participate in resource management when the issues involved are simple, clear, and easy to understand than when the system is complex and difficult to understand.

**Households Headed by Women.** Women having greater responsibility and independence at home are more likely to participate in decision-making in resource management than others.

**Economic, Ethnic or Caste Factors.** Women from ethnic groups are more likely to participate in decision making than women of caste groups.

Research questions concerning these perceived motivational attributes were as follows:

1. Do women think they benefit from participating in a resource management system? What do they think they achieve more resources for household use, time saving, effort saving, etc.?

2. Do women put themselves at risk by participating in a resource management system? What do they think they lose? What type of risks do they have to take?

3. Is the current resource management system compatible with women’s other traditional roles? If so, in what way? If not, in what way is it not compatible?

4. Are women clear about the current resource management system? Do they think it is easy or complex to understand? In what way is it complex? How can it be made more simple?

5. Is there a link between women’s decision making role in their homes and their level of participation in resource management?

6. Are women of any specific ethnic, social, or economic group more actively participating in resource management?

**Rural Institutions and Interest Groups**

Sometimes limited resources bring a group of people, men and women, rich and poor together. If there was a group formed around a resource in a village, the form of its organization, etc., was studied. Questions such as the following were asked:

1. Is there a women’s group formed to share the common gains from a resource? How do they operate?

2. Under what type of rural institutions is the existing resource management system functioning? For example, formal and informal rural institutions involving women only, involving both men and women, and involving men only?

3. Have some institutions been more effective than others in involving women in resource management? If so, why are they more effective?
Social Support

An important issue to be aware of is that rural women consciously or unconsciously seek support for their actions from their family and friends. The *Status of Women in Nepal* study also emphasizes that "most Nepali women gain their support from, have their sphere of influence in and share their economic resources with their families" (Hoskins 1982). Nepalese women seek satisfaction from their families. Whyte and Whyte, (1982), in their study of rural Asian women, also mention that Asian women seek greater satisfaction by aspiring towards higher family status and more family happiness instead of aspiring towards individual goals. Hence, family-focused activities are likely to be more effective in involving women in resource management and development activities.

Further, often women do not participate because men professionals alone conduct the meeting. On such occasions, husbands do not encourage the participation of their wives in the meeting. Hence, questions such as the following were raised:

1. What type of local institutions is socially acceptable for women's participation? Are there any such institutions in the village that are involved in resource management?

2. What type of institutions are not amenable to women's participation? Why? Are there institutions of this type?

Emergence of Innovative Behaviour

Sometimes, users of a particular resource system decide to form a resource management system that is more suitable to them. Local people may take such actions for various reasons. For example, dissatisfaction with the existing management of the resource may be one of the reasons why local people look for a change. At other times, local people may be willing to change their behaviour because of the intervention of external agencies. If such action had taken place around a resource management system, questions such as the following were asked:

1. What circumstances made local people look for a change? Did women have any role to play in causing such action? If so, what role did women play?

2. How are these changes affecting women? Do they like or dislike the new ways?

3. Why do women prefer or not prefer a particular change?

User Group Identification

It is essential to know who uses a particular resource and if they are involved in its management. Frequently, even though women are more often users of forestry resources, very few women are consulted or involved in its management. Often it so happens that some villagers are involved in resource management just because they are political leaders. While it may be important to have a political leader playing an active role in resource management, the actual users always tend to be better managers of a resource. Hence, the user's representation must be sufficient enough so that they have a say when a resource is not being managed well or if a better means of management is adopted. Regarding this, the following questions were asked:
1. Who are the actual users for a particular resource? Do women use that resource in any form?

2. Who manages this resource?

3. How are users involved in planning, supervision and implementation of the management of that resource?

4. If women share a resource are they involved in its management? How are they involved?

**Diversified Need Identification and Area Specific Programming**

It is not feasible to generalize on the understanding generated from a programme or from a village to another programme or a village without knowing the needs and problems of another village. Needs of women may vary from village to village, from ward to ward, from Panchayat to Panchayat, and from District to District. Needs of women can also differ among castes and among ethnic groups. For example, the women of a village may utilise the products of a particular forest to different degrees. Women may have to depend on that forest for all the fodder, fuelwood, and grass. Other women may require forest products only for part of their needs and the remaining resources are obtained from their own land. Still another other group of women may be able to obtain all the forest-related products from their own private land. This differing degree of need from a particular resource was observed in Lamidanda, Chhatre-deurali, Jibanpur, and Kebalpur Panchayats. For instance, most women of Gairi Gaun (Ward No.8) of Kebalpur Panchayat rarely used Simpani Ko Ban for fodder, fuel, and grass collection. They have fodder and fuelwood trees on their private land. A few women had to collect some fodder and fuelwood from Simpani Ko Ban. On the other hand, women of Sarki Gaun (ward No. 8), Kebalpur Panchayat, had no choice but to collect all their forest resources from Simpani Ko Ban. They own very little land and cannot depend on their private land for fuel or fodder. The following questions were asked to assess the differing levels of need:

1. What is the intensity of need for a particular forest resource? How have women been using these resources? Are these resources available in abundance or are they scarce?

2. Have women taken any steps on their own with the support of a village institution, or with the support of an external agency to manage and better utilize these resources?

3. Have external agencies, involved in the development of a village, been able to assess the differing levels of need for a particular resource among the villagers? If so, how have these external agencies been approaching the differing levels of need among villagers?

**Exploitation of Women in Development**

Sometimes development programmes have disrupted unintentionally women's traditional culture or created additional work without increasing benefits. It is, therefore, essential to know if an agency should follow a specific strategy for reaching local people. Women unknowingly may have been exploited by an intervening agency. In order to avoid such circumstances, a development agency must know what is happening in the field. On the other hand, some other form of intervention may have strengthened women's ability to manage their scarce resources. For instance, women in Ward No. 8, Kebalpur Panchayat, were encouraged to plant fodder and fuelwood trees on their private land as the local forest land was demarcated as, Panchayat Protected Forest and Panchayat Forest. They were given seedlings free of charge. Villagers were also provided with guidelines on where and how to plant each species. Planting of such fodder
and fuelwood trees on their private land has reduced women's dependence on public forest resources. The most used public forest, Simpani Ko Ban of Kebalpur Panchayat, is now a Panchayat Protected Forest. The following questions about the impact of local and external institutions on women were asked:

1. Have intervening agencies made a difference to women's lives?

2. Has there been any exploitation of women as a result of the intervention of external agencies?

3. How can intervention of an agency correct and upgrade resource management systems without leaving women worse off?

4. Are some types of rural institutions more exploitative of women than others? How and why?

5. How can an external agency strengthen women's role in resource management? How should the external agency intervene?

Remuneration and Equal Pay

1. Are external agencies and local rural institutions giving equal pay to men and women for comparable work in resource management?

2. Do women think their participation in resource management will increase if they are paid at par with men for comparable work?

Recognition of Women's Contribution in Resource Development

Often local men assume that women do not have much to contribute in rural development activities. Local men assume that women are less travelled, less exposed to the world outside their own villages, and illiterate. They tend to associate travel, education, and attending local meetings with knowledge. While this may be true in some ways, women do know a lot more about local resources through experience. When the researcher was gathering information on improved stoves in Dhading District, men would always reply first. Very often when a question was addressed to a woman, her husband, her son, or even a man from the neighbourhood sitting nearby would confidently provide an answer. However, it is important to talk to a woman and get her view as well. Such actions will not only boost the morale of women but also give them confidence that their views are important in development work. The researcher thinks that one of the major reasons rural women are lagging behind in Nepal is because of their lack of confidence. They are unsure if they should express their problems or about whom they should express them to. Often the researcher has heard rural men asking their wives not to talk since they are ignorant of the issues. The task of researchers and development workers is to let these men know that women have valuable information to offer. This can be done by helping women participate in the meetings, by letting them talk, and by listening to their needs, problems and their suggestions. Raising the consciousness of rural men and women about the contributions women can make in development activities is itself a part of development. To understand this perspective the following questions were asked:

1. Are women's contributions to resource management recognized in some form or other by the existing rural institutions and external agencies? If so, how have they expressed this recognition? What steps have the external agencies taken to demonstrate that women are
valuable in developing an effective resource management system? How can women's contributions to resource management be made more productive, more effective, and more visible?

2. Do local people feel that women have a role to play in resource management? Have local rural institutions been able to show this by involving women in resource management? If so how?

**Specification of Women's Role at the Agency and Local Level**

To encourage the involvement of women in resource development activities, one must provide a suitable atmosphere for their participation. Studies have indicated that programmes, that are meant to involve women, seldom encourage the involvement of women. When a hands-on training programme, on the maintenance of systems, in Taple Panchayat, Gorkha district was organized in early 1984, the water management committees of the Resource Conservation and Utilization Project, were told that women should be encouraged to participate. When all the participants at the training site turned out to be men, it was learned that the training site selected was too far away for women to attend and that men were thought of as better water maintenance persons than women.

Hoskins (1982) pointed out that "...Women are not recognized as having special needs and they seldom have an opportunity to develop leadership roles or to participate in either making decisions or in receiving the benefits of development activities". A need to specifically target women in development activities was also recognized in evaluation reports of the Small Farmers Development Programme (CWD/UNICEF 1986). On the other hand, "when development activities are designed for women only, they are poorly funded and tend to be out of the national development main stream" (Hoskins 1982). One should therefore be careful and yet be able to focus on women's involvement in development programmes. Related questions concerning the specification of women's role in resource management were basically, although not limited to, the following:

1. Have the project policies, planning documents, local institutions and resource management systems specified how women should participate in rural resource management? If so, what are their specifications?

2. Have these specifications helped women's participation? For instance, if there was a locally managed forest, is there a written or a verbal understanding that emphasized how women should participate in its management?

**Time, Patience, and Convenience**

Women want to participate in planning, supervision, and implementation of development projects. However, in many development-related dialogues, women do not participate due to many reasons. For example, meetings are held at the wrong time of the day, wrong time of the month, wrong time of the season, too far away from home, or women are not informed about such meetings. When the researcher was carrying out a stove survey in Dhading District this year, women were available at almost any time of the day until the third week of April. Then one day, the monsoon arrived, and, from the next day on, women were busy planting corn. From then on, women were usually available at home in the evenings and in the mornings. These incidents emphasize how women may not be able to participate in many development activities
because of their busy schedule and heavy work burden even if they know that their presence in the meeting is important. It is, therefore, essential for researchers and development workers to be conscious of the season and the time of the day in carrying out field research. The following questions provided a guideline for studying this aspect:

1. Do local people organize meetings to discuss issues concerning rural resource management? If they do, how do they decide when and where they should have a meeting? What time of the year, month, or time of the day do they usually meet. Do they consult with women and find out if a particular time and location are acceptable to women? Are these times suitable for women?

2. Are the meetings organized within accessible distance, for women, from the village or away from the village?

3. Are women expected to attend? Do women believe that their presence in such meetings will make a difference? Do other men in the meeting listen to women?

**Appropriate Technology**

1. What has been the role of women in the following aspects?
   - Upgrading the existing technology
   - Adapting or correcting defective technology
   - Introducing new and relevant technology

2. Are some indigenous knowledge systems better than others in involving women? If so, what makes them better? Do women prefer a certain type of resource management system? Why and what are they?

**Family Decision**

Sometimes, women give their opinions through male members of the household. While men attend the meetings, women's concerns may be relayed through men's involvement in decision making. The researcher tried to verify if this mechanism is really at work in the villagers.

**Future Research Orientation**

The study addressed a number of issues in detail concerning the participation of women. It has not been possible to include the details of these in the current discussion paper because they require more detailed investigations the broad as well as the particular sense. Based on preliminary observations, a number of hypotheses for future research, are however, formulated:

1. The higher the exposure of men to the outside world in comparison to women, the lower the participation of women in decision making.

2. The higher the educational level of men in comparison to that of women, the lower the participation of women in decision making.

3. The more diverse the socioeconomic status among people in a community, the lower the participation level of the entire community in a community project.
4. The more homogeneous the economic status of villagers, the higher the cooperation among the villages in community projects.

5. The higher the level of participation of women in forest management, the more effective is the forest management system.

6. The more the species grown is perceived to be valuable, the higher the participation of people in forest management.

7. The higher the perceived social and economic advantages from a forest, the greater the participation of women.

8. The higher the confidence among women in securing the benefits of a forest project, the greater their participation.