

Brief on Gender and Forest Resources

Significant divides exist between women and men involved in forestry and forest resource management. Men and women often play different roles in planting, protecting or caring for seedlings and small trees, as well as in planting and maintaining household woodlots and plantations on public lands. These differing roles impact gender relations in the household as well as in the community. Gender is also central when considering access to forest resources. Men and women often have differing rights and uneven access to land, trees, branches, leaves, and other tree products such as fruit. These discrepancies in rights and access affect what knowledge is tapped and utilized in research endeavours, project implementation and policy-making. This further influences the decision-making capacity for practicing and professional women in forestry. Forestry tends to be a male-dominated field that privileges the experiences and knowledge of men. While the male-experience is important, it is crucial that women in forestry and forest resource management are also valued and acknowledged for the wealth and diversity they currently bring to the field. This shift must occur in both policy and practice, within organizations and field level activities.

Women and Forestry groups have been established within several agencies and countries.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) has a Gender and Forestry Unit that in 2005 adopted a Ten Point Plan as a means of acknowledging and advancing the role of both women and men in forestry, to increase the strength, richness and diversity within all those bodies that work with forestry. A team of specialists on Gender and Forestry in Europe, CIS and North America that evolved as an outcome of the Women and Forestry Seminar in Portugal 2001, has been working on gender structures in forest organisations and forest ownership, and gender and the perception of forests. They sponsored an international seminar on Gender and Forestry in Sweden in June 2006, and a symposium on Gender and Forestry: Challenges to Sustainable Livelihoods and Forestry Management in 2004 in Tanzania.

As a focal point for the Major Group WOMEN in the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), WOCAN has played an active role in advocating for women and gender in sustainable forest management by participating in the UNFF conferences, meetings of experts, and country-led initiatives, and organizing side events on HIV/AIDS and Forestry, Women in Forestry, etc. WOCAN has worked to develop a collaboration with other Major Groups within the UNFF, and to build bridges between governments and civil society to further its goals.

For more information:

- WOMEN at the UN Forum on Forests Fifth Session (May 2005): Triumphs and Tribulations
- IUCN Fact Sheet
http://www.generoyambiente.org/admin/admin_biblioteca/documentos/Forestry.pdf
- UN Forum on Forests: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

- CIFOR: www.cifor.cgiar.org
- IUFRO Ten Point Plan:
http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/docs/_ref/research/governance/ten_points.htm
- Discussion papers submitted by Major Groups: Women, (in six UN languages)
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/248/76/PDF/N0524876.pdf?OpenElement>