

Gender Considerations in Environmental Projects of UNDP: Case Study



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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, BHUTAN

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1. CONTEXT

1.1 Gender Situation in Bhutan

Nestled in the eastern part of the Himalayan range, the kingdom of Bhutan has an area of 38,394 km² populated with about 635,000 people. About seventy per cent of the population lives in rural areas subsisting on a farming system, which integrates crop agriculture, livestock rearing and use of natural resources for a wide range of products and services. Majority of the population live in the mountains and valleys of the central belt and in the foothills along the southern frontier. Population in the northern part is very sparse and scattered. People in Bhutan live in harmony with nature in a symbiotic relationship that goes back to untold centuries. The rural community's relationship with environment is reflected in the abundant use of various kinds of plants for medicine, essential and vegetable oil, traditional paper, natural vegetable dyes, etc. Domesticated ornamental plants are also widely known to Bhutan's rural folk.

Unlike most other South Asian countries, Bhutanese society is mainly matriarchal and women have equal status to men not only in the eye of the law. Women inherit parental property including land¹ (about 60% of the land owned by women) and take care of the parents while sons leave the house upon marriage. However present socio-cultural perceptions of both men and women see women as less capable and confident than men especially in matters of governance and interaction with external agencies according to a pilot study² conducted by the Royal Government of Bhutan with assistance from the UN system in Bhutan.

The gender division of tasks in agriculture is not very clear in Bhutan. While some tasks are generally allocated by gender, others may be performed by both men and women, and men and women can to a large extent take over from each other. Bhutanese women are usually engaged in firewood collection, crop cultivation, vegetable gardening, yak herding, traditional weaving using vegetal dyes and other handicraft making. Men, by tradition, are engaged in ploughing, construction, trading and other business or manual activity. Off-farm activities are undertaken by both men and women. Women are traditionally engaged in weaving and petty trade. Cloth weaving is an important economic activity in the central and eastern regions. Basket- and shoe-making, portering and carpentry work are some of the non-farm income earning activities that men undertake. Producing fine bamboo baskets and other containers is a specialty of the people in the eastern districts, which are now becoming very popular among tourists. Bhutan has numerous family-operated traditional paper-making units. In the Bhutanese farming community the system of exchange labour is widely practiced. Both men and women work on another's farm as part of the labour-for-labour exchange. In this system men's and women's work are accounted as equal. Both men and women also take up jobs in road construction, but for unskilled labour men are paid higher daily wages than women³.

1.2 The Gendered Nature of Environment, Energy and Disaster Management Interventions

Any project with the ostensive objective of sustainable management of the environment or natural resources including biodiversity requires the participation of a number of social actors or stakeholders. Stakeholders would include small and big farmers, women and men farmers, national and sub-national government agencies, local authorities, NGOs and others. Meaningful

¹ Tshering, D (2003)

² Gender Pilot Study 2001

³ Sustainable Development Department, FAO (<http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPre0105.htm>)

participation of all these stakeholders particularly to whom the resources are pertinent in design, implementation and empowerment of these stakeholders to participate in decision-making related to the management of these resources is of critical importance for the success of program/project. A vital aspect of any rural development intervention “is that all relevant local groups (including women and disadvantaged groups) must participate in the process of planning and deciding upon measures to be taken”⁴. Foremost it implies using and strengthening the knowledge and practices of women and men living and benefiting from the environment or natural resources with key emphasis on their construct of the environment and its management to inform project interventions⁵. Of interest, the gender relations that condition resource use; how women and men benefit from the project interventions and also the effects (both positive and negative) that project interventions will have on the existing gendered relations.

Biodiversity issues are deeply embedded within all of these gendered domains of activity, access, and responsibility. The nature and extent of people's involvement and participation in biodiversity management depend, for example, on the kinds of environments and resources that women and men control and use (such as forests, rivers, farmlands, roadsides, household gardens). Thus there is a need to consider the differing opportunities of access to and constraints experienced by different groups of people and the ways they are grounded in gender roles and relations operating at the level of the household, community and state⁶. Issues of gender division of labour within work related to biodiversity use and management, decision making, employment and economic factors influencing access to these resources, gendered domain and nature of women and men's rights and strategic engagement in resource management are important to consider in natural resource management projects and interventions.

Women and children are particularly affected by disasters, accounting for a large proportion of displaced persons. In addition to the general effects of natural disaster and lack of health care, women are vulnerable to reproductive and sexual health problems, and increased rates of sexual and domestic violence. Moreover, gender roles dictate that women become the primary caretakers for those affected by disasters – including children, the injured and sick, and the elderly – substantially increasing their emotional and material work load. Women's vulnerability is further increased by the loss of men and/or livelihoods, especially when a male head of household has died and the women must provide for their families. Post disaster stress symptoms are often but not universally reported more frequently by women than men. In addition, gender inequality in social, economic and political spheres results in vast differences between men and women in emergency communication; household decisions about use of relief assets; voluntary relief and recovery work; access to evacuation shelter and relief goods; and employment in disaster planning, relief and recovery programs, among other areas of concern in disaster relief. Women play a central role within the family, securing relief from emergency authorities, meeting the immediate survival needs of family members and managing temporary relocation. Besides, a “gender perspective can also play a valuable part in highlighting the contributions men and women, as members of communities most susceptible to hazards, can and do play in strengthening resilience to disasters at the local level”⁷. Gender sensitive planning of interventions that seek to address people's vulnerabilities is especially important when working to reduce people's vulnerabilities to climate induced disasters. No one will be immune from the overall impacts of climate change, but it will have a disproportionate effect on the lives of poor people (and the disadvantaged groups including women) in developing countries, where poverty increases people's vulnerability to its harmful effects.

⁴ GTZ, 1993

⁵ Tshering D, 2003

⁶ IDRC, 1998

⁷ Mehta, M, 2007

In many developing countries women play a key role in household energy use. Thus, women are usually the gatherers of fuel wood, charcoal and dung for home cooking and heating. When such fuels become depleted, women tend to bear the greater burden by traveling greater distances to collect it⁸. On the other hand, increasing access to energy supplies such as wood and dung can make a significant difference in women's lives in terms of time savings. By freeing up women's time, they can then pursue other endeavors such as education and income generation. Taking a gender approach is for energy projects is thus necessary as men and women have different energy needs, as a result of their roles in society and within the household. Women also frequently run income-generating activities from home since it enables them to combine productive tasks with reproductive tasks, such as childcare⁹. Further women's micro-enterprises are often heat-intensive (food processing), labor intensive; and/or light-intensive (home based cottage industries with work in evenings) and often dangerous to women's health. As a result, lack of adequate energy supplies for these activities affects women's ability to operate these micro-enterprises profitably and safely.

Women who use wood and other lower grade fuels quite often disproportionately bear the health effects of pollution involved in indoor tasks such as cooking. On the whole, then, energy can have a significant effect on women's lives. Naturally, men and women frequently have different interests in terms of energy use. Therefore, energy initiatives need to be gender mainstreamed. Besides, an area of development work that on the surface can seem gender neutral may have other implications for the relations between men and women. As households access modern energy sources such as electricity, women can then access greater resources for pursuing income generating activities that fit within their household reproductive roles¹⁰ or may in some instances exacerbate existing disparities of workload and distribution of resources.

Careful analysis of gender issues and use of gender analysis into project planning and implementation of activities in biodiversity, energy or climate change projects are as such very important.

1.3 UNDP AND SGP Environmental Projects

UNDP's work in the area of environment consists of helping the Royal Government at the national level through advocacy, policy advice and support for national conservation strategies; piloting initiatives at the local level with local actors; and boosting local community actions through UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme. Environment projects either supported with core UNDP funds and mainly with GEF funds focus on catalysing initiatives in the field of biodiversity conservation, climate change, sustainable land management, renewable energy and disaster management.

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⁹ Clancy and Dutta 2005

¹⁰ Association for Women's Rights In Development, <http://www.awid.org/go.php?stid=422>

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY

2.1 Objectives

This case study has the explicit objective of assessing gender considerations and contribution to gender equality and empowerment of women in the various on-going environmental projects of UNDP and to ascertain ways in which contributions to gender equality and women empowerment have been made by these projects.

2.2 Approach

The case study is based on information collected through a desk review of the project documents, progress reports, evaluation reports, and interviews conducted with beneficiaries and key informants during selected field visits made by a UNDP intern. It covers 10 projects of the Energy and Environment unit and the GEF SGP (table 1 gives a brief description of the projects).

The desk review focused mainly on gathering information on the following questions:

- Is there any mention of gender/gender mainstreaming in project related documents?
- Have gender issues in relation to disaster management, climate change, renewable energy and biodiversity and environment conservation been highlighted in project related documents?
- Have 'gender stakeholders' been involved in the projects and how?
- Is representation in committees or similar bodies formed and activities carried out (such as training) under the projects gender balanced?

Interviews with project personnel and beneficiaries during the field visits were used to triangulated some of the findings from the desk review and also gather additional information.

Table 1: Summary of projects considered for the case study

Title	Main Objectives	Duration
1. Preparatory Assistance for Disaster Management	The project aimed to undertake a study of the existing system of disaster management needs in Bhutan and draft a disaster management strategy for the country.	July – Dec, 2005
2. Programme of Action for Adaptation to Climate Change (NAPA)	The NAPA formulation for Bhutan developed a countrywide program that addresses the current and anticipated adverse effects of climate change, including extreme events. The goal of the NAPA formulation is the provision of a framework to coordinate and implement urgent adaptation activities in the country.	Feb 2004- July 2005
3. National Renewable Energy Policy & Programme (Energy TTF)	This project was conceived with the objective to develop programme and policy framework for renewable energy development.	February – December 2006
4. Linking and Enhancing Protected Areas(LINKPA)	The goal of the project is sustainable conservation and management of the temperate forest and mountain ecosystem in the Thrumshingla National Park.	1 st May, 2003 to May 2009
5. Community Micro Hydro for Sustainable Development	The project's objective is socio-economic development of Sengor community through provision of electricity for domestic purposes and utilization of energy for community based rural enterprises leading to enhanced livelihoods and poverty alleviation.	Aug, 2005- June, 2008
6. Support to Implementation of Micro Environmental Action Plans	The project aimed to build local capacity by supporting implementation of the micro-environmental action plans which include activities as diverse as community tree plantation, construction of solid waste disposal sites, sloping agricultural land technology and conservation of catchment areas	July 2003 – June 2005
7. Biomass Fuel Efficiency Project implemented by Tsirang Women's Group	Address some of the environmental and health problems faced by the rural communities of Tsirang Dzongkhag such as the unsustainable extraction of firewood leading to the destruction of natural forests and smoke related diseases particularly on women and children.	October, 1999- April, 2001
8. Role of women in Environmental Conservation implemented by Phuentsholing Women's Group (PWA)	Create environmental conservation awareness among members of PWA, teachers, students, stakeholders and general public. Make Phuentsholing cleaner and greener. Enhance the skills and capacity of PWA.	February, 2005 to August 2007
9. Community Backyard	Convert waste into valuable compost and in doing so raise awareness on the importance of	October, 2005-

10.	Composting implemented by Thrimsumg Women's Group	environmental preservation and inculcate a sense of individual responsibility for household waste leading to a cleaner and healthier environment.	October, 2006
	Replacement of Naked Kerosene Lamp with Solar Lanterns to reduce CO2 emission	Contribute to environmental protection of Mendrelgang geog in a sustainable manner and ensure health and well being of the community by mobilizing community for environmental conservation, replacing kerosene oil lamps with solar lamps and increasing forest cover.	November, 2003- November, 2004

The case study describes in brief gender considerations and contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment for each of the projects categorised for the purpose of the case study under three categories: disaster risk reduction and climate change; energy; and biodiversity conservation and environmental awareness projects. It also seeks to attempt a synthesis of the various gender considerations common to the projects and list out a few general lessons at the end.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER IN INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

3.1 Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Projects

The only disaster risk reduction project studied was the “*Preparatory Assistance for Disaster Management*”. The project was conceived with the objective to carry out a systematic study of existing disaster management system in the country and draft a disaster management strategy for the country that will among others create a better understanding of disaster management needs and identify roles and responsibilities of various organizations involved in disaster management in the country.

The positive features of the project in regard to gender concerns include its consideration of gender issues in the project related documents such project progress reports where it is explicitly stated during the National Consultative Workshop that:

In the presentation under Budget-UN agencies would support government efforts by providing vaccines, emergency medicines, water& sanitation, food, shelter, human resources, safety of women & children, control of animal diseases.

Some of the shortcomings in the project design include failure to explicitly mention gender considerations in the project document and in related documents such as terms of reference of the consultants hired for project related assignments. Particular emphasis could have been mentioned in the project document about women representation in project committees and other groups formed to guide project implementation. Women's role as the caretaker of the family and their importance in responding to disasters need better focus during such project formulation and design. Necessary support that women would require corresponding to their increased familial responsibilities after a disaster should be captured (or at least mentioned) right from the project design phase.



Fig 1: Women's participation in community meetings have greatly increased in Sengore

The only climate change project considered for the case study (project no 2 in table 1) was the NAPA project. The purpose of the proposed NAPA formulation for Bhutan is the

development of a countrywide program that encompasses the immediate and urgent adaptation activities that address the current and anticipated adverse effects of climate change, including extreme events.

Although the project document does not mention gender specifically it does emphasize on consultations with the local people who “have considerable knowledge of adaptation strategies used in the past” so their perspectives and experiences can be incorporated into the country’s NAPA.

(During the NAPA process) particular attention will be given to including the voices of those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Their participation in NAPA consultations will be useful in supporting the broader development objective of empowering these groups. In addition the project document states that “through the various local government entities, the draft NAPA will be reviewed in a participatory manner through citizen/public meetings”.

3.2 Energy Projects

Four energy related projects were (out of the total 11) included in the case study (projects no 3, 5, 7 and 10 in table 1).

Energy policies affect men and women differently. The availability of electricity at home in the evening hours will definitely improve the quality of life for some members as it will mean illumination for reading and entertainment through televisions and radios. On the contrary it will often mean longer working hours specifically for the women. In comparison to them, men will be the ones who will probably benefit from the former. Electricity is essential for commercial activities like grinding grain, running equipment and preparing food. The renewable energy policy project underscores this importance and describes in the project document that the project will:

Analyze the available information and make recommendations focusing on financing mechanism and subsidy, local capacity and sustainability, linkages between energy, poverty reduction and gender equity

Because of the different ways in which the energy needs of women as primary care givers differ from those of men and the differing priorities that women may thus have as described above the project partners continued emphasis on gender equity and energy project’s potential to contribute to poverty alleviation is encouraging.

This concern of the project partners is exemplified by an excerpt from the minutes of Local Project Advisory Committee (LPAC) meeting of 25 January 2006 where members reminded the project:

To highlight on the contribution of renewable energy to poverty alleviation and gender equity

Projects bringing electricity to rural villages such as the Sengore Micro-Hydro project can greatly expand economic opportunities especially for women and increasing the income for their households through engaging in such activities as weaving. The availability of lighting can also mean that women have more time to indulge in activities like Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes. Potential positive features that could result from access to electricity include: operation of mills for grinding thereby removing the drudgery of grain grinding that usually falls on

women; use of refrigerators for food production and sale increasing their shelf life; increased possibility of activities during evening hours; better lighting facilities with removal of harmful lighting such as kerosene and wood torch lights increasing the general health of the household; and increased access to information via television and other mass communication means for rural household members including women.

Biomass fuels account for 80% of total household fuel supply in developing countries. Most of it is used for cooking, which is done primarily by women. As a result, women and their young children are exposed to high levels of indoor air pollution. The Biomass Fuel Efficiency Project has installed improved stoves and so consequently improved the condition of the kitchens; reduced time spent on cooking and also reduced smoke-related illnesses. This makes a major difference on women's lives as these areas are their domain. The members of the group all received technical training to install the stoves. This is in itself a way of empowering women as it is a form of education.



Fig 2: Women spend most of their time in the kitchen; smokeless stoves can contribute greatly to their health

Recognizing the importance that the project would have on the health and well-being of women, one of the objectives of the project specifically addresses women's empowerment:

To build the technical capacity of the local women to construct, repair and maintain the smokeless stoves

The project in Tsirang that replaced Naked Kerosene Lamp with Solar Lanterns intends to reduce environmental pollution from lighting naked kerosene lamps. The lighting systems in the houses of Mendrelgang Geog will be improved and thereby CO₂ and green house gas emission into the atmosphere will be reduced. The project contributed to the general health of the community especially women and children. Women who usually have to carry out their chores in the smoke filled room benefited immensely from the project. In both projects some women participated

Box 1: Women and Men's Views on the Sengor Microhydro project

The major source of livelihood for both women and men in this village is through the sale of livestock products such as cheese and butter, while weaving constitutes another income source that was mentioned by women. Of less importance are cash crops like potatoes and radish, wages from labor contributions and remittances from people working in other places. Although situated adjacent to the West-East lateral highway it remains off the national grid and the predominant source of energy is wood with women as the main household member involved in its collection helped occasionally by children. Women and men cited wood collection as tedious, tiring and time consuming entailing many hours of walk from the village.

Both men and women expect the provision of electricity through the Micro-Hydro Project benefit them in many ways. For the majority of women, this would mainly mean cooking will be easier with the use of electric cookers. Men interestingly report that their homes would be much cleaner. Women and men feel they would be able to spend more time engaging in activities such as weaving and wool spinning (mainly cited by women), carpentry and tailoring (mainly cited by men), praying, reading, etc. Thus an increase in household income from the sale of these products is expected.

The top two appliances to be procured mentioned by all women and men interviewed were rice cooker and boiler. Other appliances mentioned by both women and men are heater, TV, and telephone. The procurement of computer was only mentioned by men. All women and men respondents mentioned radio as the main source of access to information at present.

Source: Interview records (UNDP intern)

actively in implementing the projects (5 out of 17 were women on the committee). More women could have been included in the capacity building workshops to enhance their knowledge on environmental conservation (50 out of 190 trained)

The project document mentions that as the project replaces fossil fuel with environment friendly light source in 190 households, there will be reduction in indoor air pollution and improvement in health, especially of women and children. The project document has a specific section on gender equity highlighting relevant gender issues taking into consideration women's roles and responsibilities, the impact of socio-economic change on women, etc. It mentions that since women are the ones affected more by indoor pollution caused by lighting naked kerosene lamps, they showed great enthusiasm during the preliminary community meetings. They were so interested in a healthier and efficient replacement for their existing source of light, that they initiated community contribution in cash towards procuring the alternative. During project implementation women were involved in managing the site for placing the solar lamp and the panel and safe keeping of the equipment, as they are the ones looking after the household work and equipments. Women also formed a women's group actively involved in plantation of trees around their farm for easy access to firewood and green fodder. The group also encourages women to engage in income generating activities such as weaving and mushroom cultivation. There is a clear case for developing the capacity of individual women so that they are better able to take advantage of productive uses of energy services generated as a result of project interventions.

The project sought to bring women into the mainstream of community development by improving their social and economic conditions and status and also create awareness in the society about the need to involve women in their own development, as well as in the development of their families and communities. To enable such a process it would be imperative that external agents involved in energy projects at the local level take proactive steps to increase women's participation in energy decision making and energy management.

3.3 Biodiversity Conservation and Environment Awareness Projects

Four projects on biodiversity conservation and generating environmental awareness were included in the case study (project no 4, 6, 8 and 9 in table 1). Of the four, two projects (8 and 9) were implemented by women's groups. Women's groups generally consist of most women members in the community and afford women opportunities for decision-making and participate in community development.

By this virtue women play a major role in these projects. The focus of these two projects thus has been on the capacity building and empowerment of these women's groups providing the women with valuable insights into environmental projects and enhancing their capacity in implementing such projects.

All these projects recognize the roles of the disadvantaged groups like women and children in the utilization of natural resources. These gender-specific projects can achieve sustainable, environmentally friendly development. It also gives a platform for women to express their thoughts and display their capacity for running an organization

Besides general environmental awareness women groups (e.g. the Phuntsoling Women's Association - PWA) under the aegis of these projects are also involved in awareness raising and advocacy around important social themes such as the importance of mental and physical health and HIV/AIDS. Mental illnesses affect women and men differently—some disorders are more

common in women, and some express themselves with different symptoms. Women groups taking the lead in informing others is an encouraging aspect of the project. Besides workshops and seminars involving women and children to develop their campaigning knowledge and skills contribute to women's empowerment. With more women given access to information and the opportunity to participate in local decision- making successful initiatives such as these and more can be expected.

The Thrimsung Women's Group (TWG) encourages and trains women about proper waste management. They are taught to segregate, recycle and compost household waste. In the process the group educates the families on the benefits of a small family and proper methods of contraception. They organize Pap smear sessions for the women. The TWG has also been creating awareness about HIV/ AIDS. Now women are better informed and know that anyone can get HIV/AIDS if not careful. Women have been very active and have taken leadership roles very effectively. Issues related to teenage pregnancy, adolescence and drug abuse are also covered by the group. Maintenance of sanitation and hygiene is an ongoing process as they have weekly clean-up of campus.

The major activity of compost making by the TWA involves the whole family and this activity is mainly initiated by the women. It starts with segregation at the respective houses. The women are given full support from their male counterparts. The group is now working on waste management where men have showed great support by building the compost pits (*pers. Comm. Tirtha Rana - 2006*). Majority of the women reported that they would be able to generate their own income from sale of manure as well as using it themselves. Extra income earned from the sale of the compost is expected to increase women's economic empowerment and thereby their self-confidence and social status. Women members also reported that the project has been informative teaching them new things and encouraged them to be active and enterprising. It is also interesting to note how the project has contributed to the change in role of the women in the household and the community as an informer and knowledgeable:

"We now have a lot more things to share with our children and husband at home on things like environmental awareness and health issues. Our knowledge about sanitation we got from the project contributed to this change in our role at home. We are also able to share a lot of these ideas with our peers." (*Member, TWA*).

The importance of involving women in environmental awareness and concerns could not be stressed enough. Given the opportunity and resources, women are effective as resident monitors of environmental cleanliness. They can do this by walking regular rounds in the immediate neighborhood to check whether the waste collection services have done their work well and properly. Women, as immediate neighbors, may also encourage each other to maintain cleanliness around the house and in the street, or to pay for waste collection. They may begin to see this as a shared concern through participation in a program of dialogue- oriented environmental health education.¹¹

The project document of the biodiversity conservation project with the Thrumshingla National Park (LINKPA) has specific mention to consider gender equity in its activities particularly the Integrated Conservation and Development (ICDP) activities:

(The project) will ensure participation of men and women in all its relevant activities such as development and implementation of ICDPs, management and use of natural resources, and, capacity development considering gender differentiated needs of the communities living in Thrumshingla Park and the biological corridors.

¹¹ Maria Muller and Anne Schienberg: Gender and Urban Waste Management

The project document also mentions the need to provide particular emphasis in gender mainstreaming in all project activities by further analyzing gender roles and constraints in the communities in the project sites and to take adequate measures. Moreover, it states that in mid-term and final evaluations of the project, particular emphasis will be made to gender issues and project impacts considering the important role that the women play in biological resource management in the communities.

According to the mid-term review report¹² of the project although there are no gender directed activities in favour of women except for a grant support extended to the *Yathra* Weaving Association operated by women. However, some of the general schemes carried out by the park management as well as through other government operated schemes have some bearing for women in the communities. In Chungphel, the park has extended a fund support of Nu.50,000 to the women involved in *Yathra* Weaving Association. The funds helped to buy yarns which were distributed among women to weave. The finished product is then collected by the association and sold out by the *Tshogpa* who serves as the secretary to the association. While the revenue from sale is ploughed back into association fund, weavers are paid for their services to produce the products. One of the finding was also that the association had been able to sell only half of the finished products and that there was a need thus for strengthening the management and marketing skills of the association. The park support to supplying the households with CGI roofing has helped women; in particular, women headed households.



Fig 3: Weaving constitutes a major source of income for park residents

Traditionally houses are roofed with wood shingles which have to be collected from long distances. The jobs require skills to slice the log into thin shingles and carrying them over long distances involving night halts in the forests. Therefore such tasks are usually done by men. When a family has no male, it is almost a nightmare for women-run family to find labour. Shingle production is usually done through exchanged labour system where labour hired for the family is paid back in labour only. When a family has no male members to participate, then it becomes very difficult to get labour to produce and collect shingles unless one can afford to pay heavy wages. Shingles have to be replaced every three to six years depending on the type of wood used. The park's support with CGI roofing materials has also helped very poor families run by single women.

The higher the school enrolment, the better are the chances for greater alternative livelihoods. School enrolments in schools within the park were relatively low. The dropouts were especially high at the time when students graduate from their local community schools. It was nothing but the family's poverty pressure holding back their children to send off to distant schools. The park recognizing this as a major constraint, introduced the rural scholarship program to support poor but better performing students. The initial idea was to support poorer families comprised of 75% scholarships awarded to girl child. In practice, this has not been adopted, perhaps for some practical reasons. The MTR report recommends that the rural scholarship be extended more to the girl child on a preferential basis for greater gender equity.

¹² Brodnig, G. and Dorji, N. (2006). Mid-Term Review of LINKPA

4. TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

From the standpoint of the various initiatives, interventions and efforts to consider gender equity concerns in the project design and implementation of various cases we have seen in the preceding sections, some common elements become apparent.

The need to mainstream gender considerations right from the project design, implementation to evaluation (the whole project cycle) can never be stressed enough. If gender considerations are not mentioned in the project document, good intentions sometimes alone are not sufficient. However this must be backed by conscious efforts to ensure that good intentions are implemented in reality and that they don't just remain on paper. Incorporating a gender perspective in the project document and timely monitoring with the use of gender sensitive indicators to see if these mentioned gender issues are being taken into consideration and addressed during implementation can go a long way in achieving a gender mainstreaming approach to project management.

Recognizing gender considerations, more specifically the role of women and other disadvantaged groups in project management functions is critical to the empowerment and for bettering the livelihood of these groups. Targeted approaches and activities backed by inclusive participation in all such activities to generate new and innovative economic opportunities are required to be explicitly addressing the cause of increasing the income of women through activities such as the compost making by the TWG and Yathra weaving of the LINKPA project. Besides, such activities as evident in the preceding sections will contribute to strengthen women's capacities as economic agents in their own rights by involving such project activities as planning, budgeting and monitoring of activities through "learning by doing". However all these must be done keeping in mind that it is also critical to promote women's *control* of the income generated by them and the need to ensure a balance between the already heavy workload on women and the extra work that these activities would entail. Collective action as demonstrated by the PWA and TWG are of paramount importance in empowering women to promote social change and gender equity.

The case study offers a panorama of experiences that detail more gender mainstreamed projects to those that are gender neutral. This is typical of many environmental and natural resource management projects. The difference that matters is also an outcome of careful considerations of gender perspectives by the project partners right from the project conceptualization. It is therefore fair to assume a correlation between the gender consciousness of these partners and the ability to pursue gender considerations in project management. The much repeated appeal for greater capacity building and sensitization also holds true in this case.

Few general lessons can also be drawn from the case study:

- Project interventions that seek to manage the environment or natural resources sustainably would do well to consider the multiple perspectives (and importantly) gender perspectives based on a sound analysis of gender and social issues. **Gender analysis is essential, for project success**¹³. It is the starting point for effective gender mainstreaming. Therefore, gender analysis should be incorporated when collecting relevant information during project design, monitoring and evaluation.
- It is common experience to come across projects where men dominate the decision making process and thereby access and control project resources. While sponsoring the use of

¹³ See also Vernooy R and Linxiu Zhang, 2006

participatory approaches such as participatory planning, participatory monitoring and evaluation together with proper identification of disadvantaged groups, and women, based on some social variables (land holding, sex of the head of the household, wealth, access to resources etc) can go a long way in remedying this, proactive efforts on the part of project partners would be required to sustain this in the long run.

- Project beneficiaries would more likely own the project activities and outcomes when they have been involved in the project formulation and later actively accounted to for the project activities. **Meaningful participation can be strengthened to achieve greater project success** through creation of various platforms for the analysis, discussion and decision-making about the project and its activities. It is also important to promote gender balanced participation in projects activities and in committees/groups/or similar bodies formed under the projects -to the extent possible of course, and promoting collaboration with relevant 'gender stakeholders' such as NWAB, NCWC, gender focal points, women's groups
- **The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment also requires involving and educating the men.** In many cases men, when properly educated on the imperative need to involve women and the greater benefits of it, actually come out to support women's activities and their role in household activities.
- The need for greater awareness on the importance of incorporating gender perspectives and the ability to do so among the project developers and implementers is crucial. **Capacity building in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming** of project personnel remains important
- It is clear that there is a general lack of information on gender concerns and issues in the area of environment in Bhutan and of disaggregated data on issues relevant to sustainable environment. **Availability of such information and data is vital** if we are to design adequate strategies/interventions and to measure progress/impact of the projects on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **TORs for project personnel and consultants need to be gendered with** explicit mention of gender knowledge/experience and need to analyse gender issue so that international and national consultants hired for project related assignments and of working groups/taskforces formed under the project will ensure that good intentions at the design phase (whether or not mentioned in the prodoc) are considered throughout the project.
- To allow for appropriate monitoring and ensuring gender accountability, **identification of gender sensitive indicators to allow measuring project's impact** on the gender situation over time is important.

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