

# Gender Balanced Mountain Development

## The GWG Retreats to Advance !

On 10 February 2000, the nine-member GWG (Gender Working Group) of ICIMOD gathered at Shaligram Apartment Hotel to participate in the one-day Retreat Workshop, facilitated by ODC. The main objective of the day was to reflect upon activities of the past on gender and organisational development in ICIMOD and to develop a Vision and Policy statement for the Centre. Brainstorming and small group discussions as well as plenary sessions were held. There was free and frank sharing of experiences and many issues were clarified. The achievements, concerns, and learning in relation to progress were discussed. The group felt that there was a good degree of gender awareness at the Centre owing to participation by several staff in the regional gender training courses and the sensitisation / orientation sessions held by trainees of the various courses. Despite the awareness, it was felt that "much effort is still required to integrate the gender issues and be applied by organisational members in an active manner." While discussing constraints the group expressed the existence at various levels of the Centre of the traditional thinking of social roles and culture and the tendency "to trivialise the issue of gender and find it difficult to accept that gender issues concern all and not only women." The GWG also felt that the focus of gender sensitisation has been most emphatic within ICIMOD itself, while there is an even greater need to incorporate the issue at programme level while working with partners in the region.

### 'A GENDER VISION FOR ICIMOD'

*"As an international organisation for integrated mountain development, one of the main focuses of ICIMOD's activities shall be to champion the cause of mountain women. In order to further this cause, ICIMOD ensures a gender fair, egalitarian workplace: an organisation tolerant of differences, embracing change and diversity. ICIMOD will strive to ensure that human values in all their diversity are channelled into effective decision-making through participation and teamwork. ICIMOD will strive to be a learning organisation where the questioning of structured values and norms is encouraged. In line with this vision, a gender sensitive leadership, capable of challenging entrenched development orthodoxies, will promote gender-balanced development through horizontal integration across programmes. This approach will ensure that ICIMOD maintains itself as a centre of excellence at the cutting edge of change, where life within as well as outside the workplace is creative, fulfilling, and valued."*

Source: The Gender Working Group of ICIMOD

The task of gender and organisational change and the need to sensibly pace activities in order to have purposeful outcomes and impact on the actual internalisation of the issue is an enormous task. Finally, the group carried out an active exercise on drawing up a comprehensive vision statement for gender in ICIMOD.

A structural recommendation proposed by the Retreat was for the Gender Unit to be merged and made "an integral component part of the Institutional Strengthening Unit (ISU)" from where it can extend the expertise and support to all programmes of the Centre and partners.

The outcome of the retreat was shared with the ICIMOD Gender and Development Committee which endorsed the report, and then fed it into the next step which was to develop a Gender Strategy for ICIMOD which was again done with the help of an external gender expert.

## Shaping up ICIMOD's Gender Strategy

With the Gender programme running into its seventh year, it was time for a fresh look. A gender expert from outside was hired briefly to take a look at the situation and offer options for a revised strategy to assure consolidation of gains made and enable it to make progress in the years to come. So, in July 2000, the complete review and a framework of options for the gender strategy, covering both programmes and the organisation, was shared. The consultant put forth that "ICIMOD is well on its way to becoming a gender equitable organization that contributes to and achieves equitable development results. The journey, however, is on-going. Although good progress has been made in creating gender awareness and capacity, developing women-focused programs and integrating gender concerns, gender equity is not yet fully integrated or even fully accepted within ICIMOD and its partner organisations." It was highlighted that "ICIMOD is now at an important juncture.....The next steps could follow one of two options." The two options proposed were as follow.

- One which doesn't involve any overtly proactive nor controversial, organisational change. The Centre would continue to develop and strengthen the existing integration capacity, tools, and procedures, allowing the practice of gender integration to take hold where it will - where there is most support and most visible presence of women. Commitment and application would spread gradually

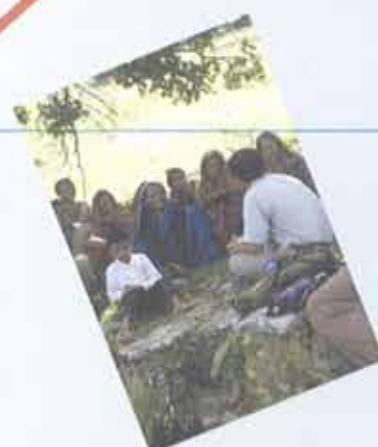
# HIGHLIGHTS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING 1995-2000

## Programmatic

- Increase in number of women/gender-focused projects
- Increase in inclusion of women in events/projects
- Increase in gender sensitisation of partners
- Gender staff and work of PARDYP
- Gender in RCP II activities:
  - women entrepreneurs
  - labour-saving options for women
  - formation/strengthening of women's forest users' groups' network
- Briefs/guidelines for gender and NRM
- New projects proposed on 'Capacity Building and Communications for Empowerment', 'Celebrating Mountain Women in IYM'

## Organisational

- Gender analysis and planning skills developed for 58 staff of 24 partner organisations plus 16 staff of ICIMOD
- Action Plans implemented in 25 organisations
- Training and Change agent skills developed for 13 staff of 8 partners plus 4 of ICIMOD
- Gender trainers conducting training for ICIMOD staff and staff of other organisations
- Monitoring indicators for gender and organisational change developed
- Manual on Gender and Organisational Change
- Active Gender Working Group (GWG) and Gender Task Force within ICIMOD
- 3 full-time gender staff at ICIMOD
- Gender awareness is widespread, attitudes have changed
- Gender vision statement and policy framework of GWG



### Partner Institutions:

Bangladesh - 3    Bhutan - 1    China - 5    India - 4    Myanmar - 4    Nepal - 6    Pakistan - 2

throughout the organisation with growing familiarity, peer persuasion, and demonstrated successes.

- One in which gender equity mainstreaming is proactively promoted. This would call for changes in organisational culture and practice so that ICIMOD thinks, writes, acts, and allocates resources according to what it sees through its gender equity lenses!

Under gaps and issues, it was noted again that *'Attention, integration and perhaps commitment to increased gender equity in ICIMOD is not even or systematic; Gender equity is not integrated into all programmes, projects or divisions; there is no systematic process of incorporating gender concerns in planning and design of programs and projects, or of screening.*

Among the main elements highlighted as part of the Gender Strategy in order to significantly contribute to mainstreaming gender integration in ICIMOD were:

- a) formulation of a Gender Equity/Equality Policy and Implementation Plan,
- b) development of a gender-sensitive personnel policy, and
- c) review of function, location, and effectiveness of existing gender integration support bodies, viz., the GAD Committee, GWG,

Role playing: 8  
March at ICIMOD



Gender Specialists, Gender Resource Centre, etc.) and revise if needed.

The list of recommendations had two options related to structure, for a more strategic location of the gender unit. The first being - the centralisation of the gender integration function by locating the gender unit under / in the ISU and second - a decentralised approach by having a gender officer in each division in each division.

## Strengthening Women's Entrepreneurship Activities in Bhutan

As part of its capacity building efforts for women entrepreneurs of the HKH region, ICIMOD was able to launch a small project focusing only on women entrepreneurs of Bhutan in 2000, with financial assistance from Aus-Aid, the Australian Agency for International Development. This initiative was a national-level follow-up to recommendations made in the earlier regional workshop of 1999 when women entrepreneurs from the mountain areas of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan came together for a few days to discuss issues / constraints as well as to share success stories. It was at this regional gathering that, across the board, the group of women expressed a lack of gender sensitivity in the policies and programmes of support institutions such as the chambers of commerce and industry, financial institutions, sector specific line agencies, ministries of finance, trade, industry, and export promotion bureaus - and the need to coordinate in this area.

The initiative in Bhutan was to discuss the integration of women's entrepreneurship into the overall development processes. A one-year project with effect from May 2000, it was implemented jointly with the Entrepreneurship Promotion Centre (EPC) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Bhutan. Under the project, a participatory assessment of present policies, programmes, and institutions related to the assessment of women's enterprises and promotion of women's entrepreneurship in Bhutan was carried out. Partnerships were established with institutions that hold the relevant mandates and the assessment was carried out with their active participation.

The existence of an enabling environment in the host country was an important factor for the success of the small initiative. Directly or indirectly this also contributed to capacity building of participating institutions. The lead partner institution - the EPC - networked and identified the key collaborating institutions with whose help we could come up with a much broader based assessment of the situation. The four other institutions identified by EPC were (i) The National Women's Association of Bhutan, (ii) The Ministry of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Unit, (iii) The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce & Industry and

## **WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY PRODUCTS**

### **Present situation**

- Active involvement by women in production and their lesser role in post production (e.g., marketing, processing)
- In forestry products participation varies depending on the product (i.e., almost the same in cane and bamboo products and more in mushroom and herb collection)
- Lack of information, awareness, motivation among women
- General move away from agriculture after education
- Usually training taken by men, though women play an important role
- Limited knowledge due to lack of concrete data

### **Problems and constraints**

- Physical constraints and limited accessibility to market and market information
- Lack of confidence and awareness and sense of dependency/lack of initiative among women
- Most training taken by men as the timing and location of training may not be 'women sensitive'
- Complicated credit facilities
- Lack of continuity and follow-up on programmes
- Lack of post-harvest facilities like storage, preservation, and so on
- Linkages within the agricultural sector are weak (e.g., producers, exporters).

### **Suggestions/recommendations**

1. Financing
  - (i) Flexible financial packages
  - (ii) More publicity to inform the public
2. Increased mechanisation
  - (i) to do away with physical disadvantages and
  - (ii) for labour and time saving.
3. Exposure/awareness
  - (i) More literacy programmes for women
  - (ii) Training and seminars/study tours to show women success stories to motivate them
  - (iii) Training timing and locations to be made more accessible to women.

(iv) The Bhutan Development Finance Cooperation. While the five major thematic areas of enterprises, where women are substantially participating, to be scouted and assessed were identified as the following.

- i) Traditional crafts and handicrafts, including weaving and other religious crafts such as stone carving, wood carving, and so on
- ii) Market-oriented agriculture (high-value vegetable and horticultural crops and livestock-based enterprise activities) and non-timber forest products
- iii) Tourism-related enterprises such as hotels and lodges and travel / trade related activities
- iv) Credit
- v) Policy, programming, training, and capacity building.

A national-level workshop was organised in Bhutan in late 2000 to provide a forum for the women entrepreneurs to meet, discuss, and express freely their constraints and needs. The workshop also provided them with an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other as well as to learn about policies, credit, training, and other enabling support systems that are often not known of by most rural entrepreneurs under normal circumstances.

The final output of the project will be a strategy document for Bhutan which will suggest ways to address the needs and gaps identified by the women and will incorporate ways to promote and support enterprise development in general with a particular focus on women-run enterprises and women's entrepreneurship in Bhutan.

### **From the workshop floor !**

Vision Statement  
*"Bhutan as the ultimate destination for tourists in the world"*

Mission Statement  
*"A vibrant, qualitative, dynamic and sustainable tourism service by WOMEN Entrepreneurs in Bhutan".*

The National Workshop  
in Thimphu: 29 Nov. -  
1 Dec. 2000



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE POLICY AND PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

Under the Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Course women participants are especially encouraged to attend. They are given equal support in seeking loans under the special Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme(EDP) loan scheme and in the follow-up and extension services. Of the total of 42 concessional loans under the scheme provided by the financial institutions, 12 have been accessed by women entrepreneurs.

In vocational training courses conducted, over 30% of the trainees have been women.

In basic haircutting and advance haircutting courses, 70% of the participants have been women. Under the cottage industry support programme, women have been the primary beneficiaries. The easier access to huge loans and training provided a big boost to women and helped make many of them self-reliant.

### Promoting Grassroots' Women's Empowerment in the Eastern Himalayas

Women in the mountain areas of the eastern Himalayas are the pivot of the family unit, bearing the major responsibility for agriculture, forests, and other natural resource management as well as for the well being of their families. The primary managers of agricultural and forest lands, with the sophisticated knowledge to manage a multiplicity of roles and small production systems to adapt and survive in a fragile environment, their opinions and suggestions nevertheless go unheard, undermining the development and implementation of appropriate management strategies. Women must therefore understand and acknowledge the benefits of collective action and learn to raise their voices on crucial issues such as saving and conserving existing forest resources.

A Workshop on 'Strategies for Grassroots' Women's Empowerment in Natural Resources Management' in North East India was therefore organised by the North East Network in Shillong, Meghalaya, in collaboration with ICIMOD, from the 26th - 30th April 2000. The North East Network is a women's activist network conceived with the conviction that women's collective action can pave the way for social progress. Its primary objective is to empower the women of N.E. India around the issues of livelihood, reproductive health, and environment, and to change the development perspectives of the region from 'needs' to 'rights'.

The Workshop provided a common platform for grass roots' 'women who share common struggles and constraints, giving them opportunities to arise as leaders. It aimed at empowering the women in natural resource management, building their perceptions and indigenous knowledge, and starting a network of grass roots' women in North East India under the auspices of HIMAWANTI, the Himalayan Grassroots' Women's Natural Resources' Management Network, which has been aiming to promote solidarity among grass roots' women of the region since 1995.

The objectives of the Workshop were as follow.

- To provide a forum for sharing experiences
- To coordinate and strengthen communication and alliances among rural women of North East India who are involved in the conservation and management of natural resources
- To increase the leadership and decision-making capacity of rural women in natural resource management, protection, and use
- To discuss policies, rules, and regulations regarding natural resource management in North East India
- To evolve strategies to enhance women's access to decision-making regarding natural resource management
- To develop a strategy and action plan for strengthening the North East Network's activities and reach in North East India

The Workshop brought together 81 participants from six states of N.E. India - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Nagaland, as well as Sikkim and West Bengal. The participants were divided into eight groups state-wise, to discuss various issues. They were initially asked to identify the natural resources found in their areas, the type of work local women's groups were doing, and their awareness of government policies regarding natural resources. Next, they were urged to work together to identify the causes of their problems with natural resources and to chalk out plausible suggestions and strategies for solving them. They were also to consider and recommend the kind of forum they want to establish at the state and regional levels in order to improve their local situation. By the conclusion of the workshop, each state-based group had developed a specific action plan and recommendations.

### **ACTION PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>State</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Assam	Conduct awareness programmes at the village level on natural resource management and start a campaign against the timber mafia	Government policies should be made more transparent
Meghalaya	Retain private or community land rights' pattern and oppose take over by government forest departments	Finding alternative means of fuel for domestic uses
Arunachal Pradesh	Lobby with forest departments and circulate information about the natural resources from the village level to various women's groups	Wide circulation of the government forest policy draft
Manipur	Documentation of herbal medicines in consultation with village elders and networking with UNC, students, and human rights' activists.	Ensure that the government forest policy does not affect the traditional tribal land systems; inclusion of women in decision-making roles in land management issues
Mizoram	Safeguard traditional knowledge; circulate and disseminate information on natural resource management; conduct an awareness campaign in collaboration with the North East Network	Preserve knowledge about medicinal and herbal plants as far as possible
Nagaland	Create awareness on natural resources and saving traditional knowledge through the Village Development Board, Women's Organization, and the Church.	Women should be included in the decision-making body at the village/district/state levels
North Bengal	Share information learned from the Workshop with other women's groups; acquire more knowledge about government policies and disseminate this knowledge in the village	Increase knowledge on natural resource management through training
Sikkim	This group decided that they would collaborate with HMAWANTI and did not think it necessary to present and plan at this juncture.	



Inauguration participants lighting 8 candles symbolic of 8 North East States in India