Key research findings

Gender analysis in forestry research

What policymakers should know

- **What is gender?** Gender refers to the economic, political and cultural attributes associated with being a man or a woman. These attributes vary between and within countries and can change over time. Gender roles are the socially defined tasks, responsibilities and behaviors that are considered appropriate for women and men in a particular community. It is important to understand the complexity of gender roles as this results in identifying opportunities for improving forest management and for building greater equity. Overlooking gender differences can result in incorrect assessments of the tradeoffs and effects of policies on forest communities.¹
- **Gender influences forest management:** Gender influences individuals' roles in managing forests, their access to forests, and how they use forest resources.¹ For non-timber forest products (NTFPs) there is incredible variation within and between countries in the types of products, and the stages in production where men and women are engaged. For example, in southern Ethiopia, it is primarily women who tap and collect gum olibanum, while in northern and north western Ethiopia these activities are done by men.² Unfortunately, there is a lack of data around women's participation in many forestry activities as well as in large-scale forestry, which makes it difficult to obtain an accurate picture of their involvement. This may suggest that women's roles in the forestry sector are invisible and informal, leading to poor working conditions and lower remuneration.³
- **Women depend on forests for income and subsistence:** According to the World Bank, women in forest communities derive half of their income from forests, while men derive only a third.³ Research by CIFOR's Poverty Environment Network (PEN) found that income from forest activities makes up about one-fifth of total household income for rural households living in or near forests; men contribute more than women because their activities generate an income whereas women are more involved in subsistence activities. While both men's and women's forestry activities contribute to household livelihoods there is considerable gender differentiations in the collection of forest products.⁴
- **Gender and decision making:** Forestry has frequently been considered a sector dominated by men, making it difficult for women's participation in forest management and decision making.¹ Women are often excluded from decision making because of social barriers; logistical barriers; the rules governing community forestry; and male bias in the attitudes of those promoting community forestry initiatives. Recent studies suggest that women's participation is likely when there are less-exclusive institutions, higher household education levels, and there is small economic inequality between genders.⁵ Enhanced women's participation in decision-making committees in community forest institutions has been shown to improve forest governance and resource sustainability.^{6,7}
- **Gender and climate change:** In 2007 the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognized that climate change will have differing consequences for men and women. Climate change has the potential to exacerbate gender inequalities and increase women's vulnerability in a number of ways.¹ For example, rural women who derive their income from forests will find their livelihoods altered by changes that affect the availability of resources. Yet, active involvement of women in managing and conserving forests and other natural resources make them key actors in mitigation and adaptation efforts.⁸ As climate-smart agricultural techniques are identified, these will need to be tailored and disseminated in ways such that both women and men have the opportunity to adopt them.
- **Women and REDD+:** It is important to consider gender in global policies and climate mitigation schemes, such as REDD+. To enable the long-term success of REDD+ on the ground, gender-differentiated needs, uses and knowledge of the forest will be critical inputs to policy and interventions.⁹ The potential risks of REDD+ for women include restrictions on livelihood activities or forest access, which can lead to higher workloads or a loss of income, and exclusions from benefit sharing mechanisms.¹⁰
- **Women and land tenure:** Owning assets, such as land or trees, strengthens the position of women in households and communities¹¹ and provides them with incentives to sustainably manage their resources. However, a narrow focus on ownership overlooks women's access

to, and use of, these resources. While understanding customary laws and *de facto* rights are important, much more focus needs to be paid to 'in-between' spaces that women have access to; spaces that are between men's crops, trees, or on degraded land where women can collect fuel wood or wild foods.¹² Understanding the gender dimension in existing land rights and tenure will lead to more effective and flexible sustainable management policies that safeguard the needs of multiple users.

- **Men and women in sustainable forest management:** There are huge benefits in engaging both men and women in forest management policies.⁶ Involving women in forest-related decision making at the community level has been shown to have positive effects on a range of forest management issues, including the regulation of illegal activities and the capacity of community groups to manage conflict. Women's inclusion in forest management executive committees and effective participation in decision making improves forest governance and resource sustainability. In many forests and countries, therefore, greater gender equity is one of the keys to sustainable forest management.
- **Addressing the gender gaps in research:** There are significant gaps in research aimed at understanding how the complementary roles and responsibilities of men and women could improve sustainable forest management. These include more research on the types of governance that enable more women to make decisions^{13,14}; the distribution of responsibility, benefits and information between men and women in mixed groups; the implication of reforms on women's rights to trees and forest resources; and, the roles and contributions of women and men with respect to collective action and constraints in forestry settings. There also needs to be a closer examination of gender-differentiated impacts of emerging global processes and policies such as climate mitigation and adaptation. Addressing these gaps will be vital to improve forest management policies, in particular, for the equitable allocation of resources and distribution of benefits.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 Manfre, C. and Rubin, D. 2012. *Integrating gender into forestry research: A guide for CIFOR scientists and programme administrators*. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.
- 2 Shackleton, S., Paumgarten, F., Kassa, H., Husselman, M. and Zida, M. 2011. Opportunities for enhancing poor women's socioeconomic empowerment in the value chains of three African non-timber forest products (NTFPs). *International forestry Review* 13(2):136–151.
- 3 World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and FAO. 2009. *Gender and agriculture sourcebook*. World Bank, Washington, D.C. 764p.
- 4 Sunderland, T., Ickowitz, A., Reyes-Perez, V., Babimigira, R. and Achdiawan, R. [In review]. Myths and truths about men, women, and forest resources: Results from the PEN global dataset. *World Development*.
- 5 Coleman, E.A. and Mwangi, E. 2012. Women's participation in forest management: A cross-country analysis. *Global Environmental Change* 23(1):193–205. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.10.005>.
- 6 Agarwal, B. 2009. Gender and forest conservation: the impact of women's participation in community forest governance. *Ecological Economics* 68(1):2785–2799. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2009.04.025>.
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- 8 Djoudi, H. and Brockhaus, M. 2011. Is adaptation to climate change gender neutral? A case study from northern Mali. *International Forestry Review* 13(2):123–135.
- 9 UN-REDD Programme. 2011. *The business case for mainstreaming gender in REDD+*. UN-REDD Programme Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland.
- 10 Gurung, J., Giri, K., Setyowati, A.B. and Lebow, E. 2011. *Getting REDD+ right for women: an analysis of the barriers and opportunities for women's participation in the REDD+ sector in Asia*. USAID, Washington, D.C. 112p.
- 11 Meinzen-Dick, R., Brown, L.R., Sims Feldstein, H. and Quisumbing, A.R. 1997. Gender, property rights, and natural resources. FCND Discussion Paper No. 29. IFPRI, Washington, D.C.
- 12 Rocheleau, D. and Edmunds, D. 1997. Women, men and trees: gender, power and property in forest and agrarian landscapes. *World development* 25(8):1351–1371.
- 13 Acharya, K.P. and Gentle, P. 2006. *Improving the effectiveness of collective action: sharing experiences from community forestry in Nepal*. CAPRI Working Paper No 54. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C.
- 14 FAO. 2007. *Gender mainstreaming in forestry in Africa*. Regional report. Report of a project carried out under the FAO Netherlands partnership program. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.

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