8 reasons why gender matters to people and forests

1 Livelihoods

People often assume that women are the main collectors and gatherers of forest products. Yet a global comparative study found that men play a much more important and diverse role in the contribution of forests for livelihoods than previously reported, with strong differences across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

2 Tenure

In Nicaragua, national laws promote gender equity, but they do not extend to forests because they are still seen as men’s area. While in Uganda where there are efforts to include women in forest management, women are still shut out of decision-making and rarely have ownership of land or resources.

3 Governance

Across the world, education, inclusive institutions and lower income inequality helps increase women’s participation in forestry institutions. Where women’s participation was higher institutions had less conflict. However more involvement of women did not lead to much change in user groups’ perceptions of fairness of the rules and penalties.

4 Migration

In Nepal, the impact of male out-migration on women who are being left behind can be dramatically different depending on what forest management institutions and social structures they have in their communities.

5 Conservation

A global study found that where women are the majority, forest management institutions have stronger implementation of rules. This has an impact on the forests, as institutions where women had a majority also had forests with higher density of trees remaining.

6 Climate change adaptation

In Mali, male out-migration was a strategy to adapt to the changing climate. But this left women less able to adapt—as women lacked secure tenure and command over financial resources. Women’s workloads also increased significantly in male absence.

7 Climate change mitigation

Research in 77 villages, 20 REDD+ sites across six countries found participation of women in REDD++ processes is often nominal and limited. However pushing for increased participation of women in REDD+ is not enough to protect women’s interests and needs.

8 Land investments

Though a major driver of deforestation, the social and economic benefits of oil palm investments in Indonesia is real. But only certain social groups benefit. Landless women are particularly worse off as they are only able to get work in plantations with low wages, job insecurity and poor working conditions.