

3. WOMEN, GENDER AND ICDPS

3.1 LACK OF CONCERN FOR GENDER ISSUES IN ICDPS

Few ICDPs in both Africa and Asia have actively addressed gender issues. Some projects have recognised in hindsight that costly mistakes could have been avoided if gender issues had been better understood and considered during project design and before implementation had begun. Some projects plan to rectify the situation by redoing some of the initial feasibility studies to address gender issues.

However 'adding on' a gender component is not likely to provide as positive results as would have been achieved by integrating gender from the very beginning. Indeed, ICDPs still fail to approach gender issues in any strategic way. Instead they normally rely on addressing problems in an uninformed and haphazard manner as they arise and/or the enthusiasm and concerns of individuals.

A minority of ICDPs have provided gender training for staff. At the field level, the majority of staff act on instinct rather than on a comprehensive understanding of constraints, problems and solutions. Where gender training has been carried out staff tend to take a more comprehensive, informed and successful approach to overcoming problems and inequities. Yet even here, a failure to follow-up and monitor impacts from a gender perspective means that gender issues are often forgotten or side-lined.

This lack of consideration and incorporation of gender differences and issues has resulted in a number of negative impacts which are discussed in more detail in the regional studies. These include:

1. Misunderstanding and mistrust between conservation authorities, development organisations and communities, particularly amongst women.

Because women are marginalised from conservation processes they are unaware of legislation, rules and regulations and do not understand why they have been introduced. They may not be aware of the opportunities that ICDPs have opened up for them. In addition a significant gap can be found between the cultures of development organisations and the cultures of the communities they work with. Conflict has arisen due to ill-informed and badly-advised ICDP interventions.

In addition, men can prove resistant to women's participation in conservation and development. They may feel threatened, or concerned that women's domestic roles and responsibilities will be neglected if they take part.

Several women's projects have been started and then discontinued (for example within the LIRDP, Zambia). This has resulted in increased feelings of insecurity and lack of faith in ICDPs. The reasons for their discontinuation are varied but include a lack of funding, change of staff and a lack of commitment to women's issues.

2. Conflicting needs and priorities and a lack of participation.

The different needs of men and women, together with their different relationships with the environment and natural resources, have been summarised above. These manifest themselves in diverse views and perceptions of the value of resources and the environment, and the costs and benefits of using and/or protecting them. Such views and perceptions are rarely fully understood or incorporated into ICDPs.

Despite existing legislation supporting a more equitable participation of women in decision-making processes concerned with natural resource use, in reality women play little role. Not only are required numbers/quotas rarely met but also the quality of women's participation must be questioned. Many conservation staff see the involvement of women as a mere formality. Their potential contribution is highly undervalued. Women's 'participation' is desirable only as a less risky and more effective mechanism for persuading them to stop resource extraction.

Where such differences and lack of participation have been ignored, adverse impacts have often occurred. Conflicts have arisen during reforestation programmes because men and women prioritise the need for certain varieties differently. In addition, it is more often women who have to cope with increased conflicts with wildlife, for example whilst collecting water or firewood. As a result women have been less supportive of ICDPs and less willing to give up time and resources to contribute to them. Consequently, the success of ICDPs may have been compromised.

Within ICDPs there is little genuine addressing of gender inequities in local communities. Traditional gender-unbalanced structures remain untouched. Marginalised women remain un-empowered and uninvolved. Furthermore, analyses of women's resource needs continue to attempt the separation of women's resource use interests from their wider social relationships and therefore risk further entrenching existing gender inequities.

3. Increased gender inequalities.

Indeed in some projects the exclusion of women or a lack of gender awareness has had very clear detrimental effects on women, not least by increasing the gender inequalities that already existed. For example a number of opportunities have been opened up for men but not women, including increased roles in decision-making processes and access to economic and educational options. As such, men have tended to benefit more directly from ICDPs than women. In addition it is common for women and men to experience different trade-offs and transaction costs when getting involved in, and giving up time for, conservation projects and practices. For women, the costs are often greater than those for men.

4. Overlooking women's roles, rights and responsibilities.

Because gender issues have not been taken into account by many ICDPs, women's roles and rights have been overlooked. Projects have focussed on what have been wrongly perceived to be 'community roles' but in fact tend to be those dominated by men. In addition the dynamic, flexible and adaptive nature of such roles has not been understood or accounted for.

In ignoring women's roles and rights, women's responsibilities have also been marginalised. Indeed few women link rights to resources with responsibilities for them. As such, women's contribution has been highly undervalued and opportunities have been missed for more successful natural resource management and conservation. It should be noted that assuming what men's roles and responsibilities are without a full understanding of them can also prove problematic.

3.2 BRINGING WOMEN INTO THE EQUATION – POLICY AND ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

As the missed opportunities and negative impacts of women's marginalisation from ICDPs have been recognised, conservation and development organisations have, to varying degrees, placed increased emphasis on more equitable development and, in some instances, a mainstreaming of gender into policy and projects.

For example, IUCN has a comprehensive gender policy and work programme for mainstreaming gender throughout the organisation and its work (see Box 3.1). IUCN's Social Policy Unit based at Head Quarters in Geneva (including a Gender Policy Advisor) together with regional offices, such as Meso-American Regional Office - ORMA, has been particularly active in promoting gender awareness and inclusion. ORMA has recently produced a series of practical guides to incorporating and accounting for gender issues throughout ICDPs and protected area management (see Recommended Texts).

However, other conservation organisations have failed to mainstream gender to any great extent. Ironically these tend to be those organisations that are more directly involved in the implementation of projects on the ground. As a result, by overlooking how social relations of gender influence environmental resource use and conservation, policies have failed to match up to the difficulties of involving women in projects ostensibly designed for their benefit. Not surprisingly, projects have often fallen short in implementation and have failed to benefit women as intended. In consequence they have often also failed to meet their objectives of improved conservation.

Indeed, though an external evaluation of TNC (The Nature Conservancy) in the late 1990s stressed the importance of incorporating gender issues, and there is an emphasis on the inclusion of women in some projects, there is no general policy/strategy to guide them (Rojas, undated; Mogelgaard, 2002).

Likewise, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature - International, UK and US) has failed to develop anything substantial or strategic beyond initial discussions on women's marginalisation, a handful of consultations carried out over the last decade (see for example, Field, 1994), and expressions of concern from individuals. Some moves have been made on a more practical level, such as WWF-US' 'Women and Conservation Initiative' launched in 1993, but from an institutional point of view little has been done to take an emphasis on gender forward: no formal policy on gender exists. As a result gender issues tend to be addressed only when problems arise when individuals show particular concern or interest and/or when donors apply pressure. As such this tends to occur in a haphazard and reactionary fashion.

The more development-oriented organisations involved in ICDPs, such as CARE, have, in the majority of cases, well-structured and comprehensive gender policies as well as gender focal persons. More recently CARE has moved towards 'rights-based programming' and application of a gender perspective within ICDPs is stated as a priority (CARE, 2001). Gender and environment linkages tend to focus less on biodiversity conservation and protected area management, but more on development, poverty alleviation and human rights. As such they would appear to be in a better position to address gender issues in a more strategic, planned and, in all likelihood, successful manner. However, to what extent these can aid the sustainable establishment of linkages between conservation and development is not yet clear. From the experience of ICDPs in the past, linking such a strong focus on development and rights issues to the conservation of resources may well prove difficult.

Additionally some national offices of conservation organisations have moved forward in developing their own gender policies. For example WWF Nepal has developed its own policy and strategies which have been valuable in guiding the gender mainstreaming process that is currently being carried out. How well this is achieved and for example, reflected in work on the ground, is yet to be seen.

Box 3.1 IUCN's Gender Policy.

IUCN first began the process of integrating women and gender issues into its policies in 1984, culminating in the endorsement of a Gender Policy Statement (see IUCN Website, 1998a; IUCN, 1998) and the instigation of a Work Programme in 1998 (see IUCN Website, 1998b). IUCN's rationale for integrating gender perspectives and concerns is based on two premises:

“first, the recognition that gender equality and equity are matters of fundamental human rights and social justice; and secondly, the growing awareness that equality - equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women - is a pre-condition for sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources” (ibid).

Each IUCN Regional Office has identified and formally appointed gender focal points who are responsible for taking regional work programmes forward. As part of their Social Policy Programme, IUCN has developed the 'Alliance for Change.' This alliance is expected to help counter the challenges that organisations face when trying to implement gender-based programs, such as:

- i) Addressing institutional dynamics that resist change.
- ii) Understanding gender as a mainstreaming process.
- iii) Lack of skills.
- iv) Limited access to methodologies and tools.
- v) Lack of funding.

By working through this alliance IUCN hopes that gender equity and understanding in the workplace will foster more successful environmental and social projects in the field. Some proposals have been developed to address the linkages between gender, sustainable livelihoods, and demographic strategies at the local level and their implication for conservation and natural resources management. The Alliance for Change seeks to foster gender equality and understanding within the ranks of its own organisational staff, in the hope that this will translate into better, more gender-equitable conservation projects in the field.

(Mogelgaard, 2002; IUCN, 1998.)

3.3 PROJECT PLANNING

The majority of ICDPs have not sought the views and interests of all stakeholders, including women, within their design and planning. Though some socio-economic surveys, and more rarely gender-sensitive surveys, have taken place, these and the involvement of gender consultants tend to be short-term and 'one-off'.

Consequently, though suggestions and inputs might be made at the beginning of a project on issues such as gender, this is not continued through to the project's conclusion. Gender still tends to be marginalised as 'more important' problems and 'more pressing' issues arise. It is more often than not an added-on feature (due to personal interest or donor demand), rather than something strategically planned for and valued.

3.4 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION - 'WOMEN'S PROJECTS'

Despite the lack of strategic frameworks or gender policies, and due to the realisation that women were, in fact, missing out from ICDPs, a range of women's projects have been

initiated that seek to overcome some of the inequities and differences that exist in beneficiary communities.

These are based on the assumption that when projects meet women's immediate needs, women are more forthcoming and are able to effectively manage their time to include conservation activities. Such elements of ICDPs tend to emphasise a 'welfare approach' focussing on women in their capacity as mothers and carers - seen as central to social and economic development as well as environmental protection. It identifies women, as opposed to a lack of resources or access, as being the problem. Consequently, projects tend to target women's perceived practical needs as opposed to their strategic needs.

The main categories of women's projects that are implemented through ICDPs are those related to:

- Health provision and family planning.
- Income generation.
- Credit and savings schemes.

In general these project components are considered to be of secondary importance to ICDPs' main activities. Their budget allocation is therefore scarce and few have made any real impact on the achievement of protected area objectives. However they have offered opportunities for women to benefit economically and, in some instances, socially too. As such they have played a role in poverty alleviation within local communities and have contributed to their development.

These projects and their components are discussed in detail within the two regional studies. Here, the key issues have been drawn out, and the lessons learnt summarised.

3.4.1 Health Provision and Family Planning

A number of NGOs have provided support for health provision and/or family planning services through ICDPs. It has proved important to work with local partners such as national health- or gender-focussed NGOs and government agencies. Capacity and technical training have also been provided in the form of improving and expanding local family planning information and service delivery, and the training of family planning practitioners and educators. Such schemes are more popular in Africa than Asia, and may often form part of wider development support.

In addition a number of initiatives (described in more detail in McDonald, 2002) have been set up at an organisation level. These include:

- Conservation International's *Healthy Communities Initiative* initiated in 1997;
- WWF-US' initiative *Taking a Closer Look at Population and Gender* which produced a set of recommendations for action in the population-environment arena, centred on areas such as field action, advocacy, partnerships, and M&E.

There remains uncertainty about the connection between population growth in poor rural communities and resource use, as wealthy populations with low rates of growth tend to have higher rates of resource consumption. Migration also contributes significantly to population growth, though its dynamics are rarely understood.

It is difficult to measure the impacts on resource use and biodiversity conservation of health and population initiatives. However there is evidence to suggest that such projects do not necessarily help communities to make the conceptual link between development (health

support) and conservation. One must therefore question the sustainability of such initiatives, and whether they should be included under the rubric of ICDPs.

3.4.2 Income Generation

Many ICDPs in both Africa and Asia focus specifically on women in their support of income-generating activities with the aim of increasing their economic and social autonomy. Many women tend to be more easily mobilised; be more credit-worthy; have a greater entrepreneurial spirit than men and often make better traders and marketers. In addition, by involving women as a socio-economic classification or unit of the community there tends to be a natural cross-section available that transcends other socio-economic and political divisions. In addition they usually stay in villages year-round and thus can follow through with activities and responsibilities. However, women may face constraints in accessing capital and finding time for activities, and may be handicapped by poor literacy and skills.

Some ICDPs, particularly those in areas of large wildlife, concentrate their efforts on raising income through tourism and sport hunting. The income is then distributed to the local communities. Problems remain in achieving a fair and decentralised distribution of monies, but in general communities as a whole do benefit. However, where income is allocated to community projects women often find that their priorities are not taken into account and thus projects tend to be more focussed on men's needs rather than women's.

The support and formation of women's groups can form an intricate part of income-generating projects. The advantages of such groups will be discussed in more detail below. Their formalisation (e.g. through establishing a selected committee and a constitution) can increase their sustainability.

The importance of training in skills development as well as in business and bookkeeping has been recognised and often forms a complementary component of income-generating schemes. It has been found that women may need a large amount of support and training before such schemes prove successful. Not only may the necessary skills be lacking, but the concept of formal organisation that is required may also be alien. In societies where the involvement of women in business is not common, it may be up to one or two women to act as role models or path breakers and prove the opportunities open to women before others feel comfortable enough to join in.

ICDPs tend to be located in rural areas, often isolated, with few local services and limited access to markets. Where income-generation involves the production of goods such as handicrafts, more investment and time needs to be spent in locating sustainable markets and in identifying ways to add value to goods. In addition a product control system may be necessary to maintain standards and regulate supplies. Where projects rely on the continued use of certain resources, such as palms for making handicrafts, a monitoring system controlling sustainable use should be supported. A good example of such systems can be found in the Namibian CBNRM programme described in the Africa regional study.

It is unclear to what extent such projects affect the reduction of natural resource use. It is suggested that small-scale efforts are unlikely to achieve great impacts except in a few specific areas. Still, enterprise projects can provide important entry points to communities and increase receptivity to conservation messages. But they must be embedded and linked to gender issues if they are to achieve anything more than short-term economic benefits. Otherwise they will be little more than a token gesture to appease donors and/or guilty consciences that have recognised that women are being left out of conservation and development processes.

Though there is evidence to suggest that women do benefit from such projects, exactly to what degree this is true is rarely explored. For example it is unclear how much control women have over the income raised; whether they decide how it is spent or whether their husbands do and what the money is used for. This can be an important factor in women's empowerment. The impacts of commercialisation also need to be better understood and accounted for.

3.4.3 Micro-Finance Schemes

Micro-finance schemes, including savings and credit schemes, have been offered in conjunction with income-generation projects. In the majority of cases these are targeted towards women who are prejudiced against under 'normal' circumstances, for example the need for collateral to which they usually do not have access. Project-supported schemes often revoke the need for collateral and offer more flexible terms of contract. However, they may feel the need to compensate for this by requiring higher interest rates and by tying the loans to terms of condition, such as what the money can be invested in and/or agreements to stop environmentally damaging activities.

Such schemes often assume that women are a better investment for targeted support, as they are believed to be more credit worthy and/or responsible, and more easily mobilised. In Asia in particular, women may be viewed as household financial 'managers'. However, though this may allow ICDPs to capitalise on women's recognised role and to support women with less risk of damaging social relations, it is not clear to what degree this really benefits them. As described above, it is unclear what control women maintain over financial transactions and related decision-making processes. In addition, some have questioned whether women actually prioritise money above other less economic needs.

In fact it has been shown that micro-credit schemes can provide a number of social benefits highly valued by women, often above and beyond 'money'. Most schemes include attendance at monthly meetings which provide an opportunity for women to meet, exchange views, problems and solutions, and often act as a strong means of support. Some women have also stated that the schemes provide some order to their lives, which otherwise tend to be complex and overburdened. Evidence also suggests that women's self-esteem and pride have increased. If it is these benefits rather than the economic that women value, then the emphasis on increasing incomes may be misplaced. And perhaps such social benefits could be achieved through other, more suitable means.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that, rather than solving them, credit schemes in particular can increase poverty and/or household monetary problems. Case study work has showed that in certain schemes, loans had been tied to investment in livestock. This has proved to be high-risk: in Vietnam, for example, the livestock bought died through disease. As a result the borrowers were left with a substantial debt and no capital. Alternative, less monetary-focussed schemes do exist and may be a better alternative. WWF, for example, has initiated quite innovative arrangements such as the 'borrow a cow, give a cow' scheme (see Africa regional study).

In addition other problems may arise. The poorest of the poor are likely to miss out; banking principles and their application are often impractical and alien to many people; economic impacts are often not very positive; and though livelihood integration and conservation of resources should be linked to the savings and credit scheme, usually they are not: the projects stand alone.

Still, in several projects, micro-credit is seen as valuable support for women to create opportunities to diversify their livelihoods, move away from a reliance on natural resources and/or enable them to afford alternatives for essentials such as local fuelwood. ICDPs anticipate that women will understand that the provision of support (by means such as micro-credit) is tied to better conservation practices. However establishing the links between such development-focussed elements of projects and conservation is difficult, even more difficult than elements based more directly on natural resource use. As such, again, one can question whether these projects should actually be called ICDPs or, more realistically, community development projects. Indeed, evidence from this research programme suggests that few beneficiaries of ICDPs understand this link or have changed their attitudes and behaviours as a result of it. Without forging linkages between conservation and development the long-term sustainability of ICDPs is unlikely to be achieved.

3.5 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION - GENDER MAINSTREAMING

“Mainstreaming means paying constant attention to equality between women and men in development, policies, strategies and operations” (Aguilar, 1999:5).

As suggested at the beginning of this section, in recent years ICDPs have moved forward (albeit to a small degree) in developing women's inclusion through gender-focussed, rather than women-focussed, activities. It has been recognised that to do so, men must be involved as well as women. However, many initiatives incorporate gender as a separate component that has no connection to the different areas of the project's basic activities. This can fragment and isolate the issues from the rest of the project and often requires additional resources. It is unlikely that such efforts can have a real impact on addressing gender equity and the relations of subordination that may exist as they allow little room for positive transformation processes.

In addition there remains widespread misunderstanding of the distinction between gender and exclusively women-centred approaches. Even when gender is integrated at a conceptual level, this is not reflected in programme strategies and project implementation. Women are still separated into a 'disadvantaged group', which encourages the belief that their problems are related to their disadvantage - that is, because they are women. Rather, women should be seen as a part of society as a whole. Their problems are social (not 'women's' problems), related to their status in society and their relationship with men. Projects should address both the disadvantage (in the short-term) and the reasons it exists (in the long-term) (Field, 1994).

It should be recognised however that though a gender approach is advocated (ie that which includes both men and women) there still may be cause for singling women out as a group to be targeted, particularly where gender inequities are high.

There is certainly a need for more women to work in conservation and ICDPs, however it should be realised that women (as staff members) do not necessarily advocate and support gender issues any more than men. In fact they may feel under pressure not to appear too feminist and consequently over-compensate by ignoring women's and gender issues altogether. Many professional women do not want to be publicly identified with gender concerns, which they perceive as a sectional agenda, even if they do adopt a more gendered stance in private.

Having said that, where gender issues have been addressed in depth it has often relied on processes being initiated by key supportive and enthusiastic individuals who are, more often than not, women. In fact the most successful ICDPs in terms of incorporating and benefiting women (identified by this research programme), have all been led by women: highly motivated women concerned with promoting a more just and equitable conservation process.

The majority of governments in developing countries have initiated policies that actively support more equity between men and women. Some have taken this one step further and directly linked such support to women's role in NRM with policies calling for gender equity within resource 'ownership', management and benefit-sharing. Conservation and development organisations should be more aware of such policies; use them as a foundation on which to develop more gender equitable policies and strategies; enter policy dialogues relevant to conservation; and work with and, if necessary, build up the capacity of local institutions to promote the opportunities that they present. Organisations involved in ICDPs, particularly those who are really serious about addressing gender inequities, should play a more active role in related advocacy work that would encourage and support their interventions.

Mainstreaming gender issues still proves difficult, even within more aware and amenable contexts. In Nepal, the community forestry movement has had government support from the early 1990s and from the outset the role of women was recognised. Yet despite this gender issues are still marginalised and women's concerns are usually an 'add-on' element. There is room for optimism however, and lessons learnt from ICDPs that have more positively supported gender issues provide some indication of more successful ways forward. Key focus areas of these projects have been:

- Women's empowerment.
- Education and training.
- Collective action and women's groups.
- Conservation and natural resource management.

3.5.1 Women's Empowerment

“Empowerment is a process whereby people gain increasing power and control over their lives. It involves awareness, self-confidence, broadening of options and opportunities, and increasing access to, and control of, resources. Empowerment comes from 'inside', from the individuals themselves, it cannot be granted by others.” (SIDA, 1997 in Aguilar *et al.*, 2002).

It is only recently that ICDPs have attempted to understand and/or tackle the power dynamics prevalent in communities which may contribute to the inequitable relations found there. This has compromised the long-term sustainability of ICDPs, particularly once implementing organisations have withdrawn. Other opportunities have also been lost – there is evidence to suggest that when access to resources and household food and livelihoods are secure, women (and men) are more likely to invest in conservation activities. Additionally, improving women's status and progress toward gender equity and equality is given as one of the key factors leading to reduced fertility and, by extension, mitigating population pressures on natural resources.

Pressures are placed on ICDPs, particularly from donors, to achieve short-term results. There is not enough time or resources to invest in longer-term issues such as the promotion of women's rights. Often male members of households obtain security but women do not. For example the issuing of land titles (or other titled rights to resources) will, in the

majority of cases, be made to the household heads: usually the men. Gender inequities and their impacts are not addressed or taken into account. This can create a number of problems, particularly in areas where out-migration of males (be it on a temporary or more permanent basis) has meant that women have increasingly been left to manage the land. Without titles and a higher degree of control and security over land their ability or investment in conservation may be undermined.

Box 3.2 The Dynamics of Power

“Power for women is seen as generative, as ‘power to’; power for men is termed as ‘power over’. If men remain reluctant to relinquish this ‘power over’ then women’s attempts at developing their ‘power to’ may ultimately be constrained. The inherent conflict between women’s and men’s experiences of em(power)ment (‘power to’ versus ‘power over’) suggests that the ‘real’ empowerment of women remains a problematic issue.”

(Mercer, 1999)

Indeed a focus of JFM in India (see Asia regional review) has been the promotion of women’s rights and their awareness of them. In some areas of traditional suppression women who have been made more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters has increased their confidence. The ‘empowerment’ of women has also led to their participation in various other social activities and movements such as those focussing on anti-alcohol and the environment.

Household relations including those between men and women, as well as local norms and gender roles, are all part of peoples’ central belief and value systems. These systems are dynamic and constantly adapting to both external and internal factors. However, change should not be imposed from outside. Change is more meaningful and sustainable when it occurs on a community’s own terms, within their time frame and facilitated by internal agents. Women as well as men are these internal agents and outside agencies/organisations can serve to guide and assist them.

Box 3.3 Steps Towards Equality Between Men and Women:

1. Welfare (basic survival).
2. Access to resources (including opportunities for self-realisation).
3. Conscientisation (an awareness of and will to alter gender inequalities).
4. Participation (including an equal role in decision-making).
5. Control (in both the personal and public domains).

A broad distinction can be made between having *access* to a resource, that is the opportunity to make use of something, and having *control* over a resource, that is the ability to define its use. For example, women may have access to employment, but no control over how the earned income is spent. NRM policies have increasingly sought to emphasise the role of community participation in controlling resource use through management. However the rhetoric of decentralisation is frustrated by power brokers (vested interests) at the local level who do not want to share decision-making authority with the community in general, and least of all with women resource-users.

To really begin facilitating the empowerment of women, ICDPs must be prepared to go further than assisting women with their daily needs and survival. Instead they must aim to provide them with skills, knowledge, confidence and social cohesion to determine the

development path they wish to follow and to challenge the structures in society that oppress them. More 'subtle' strategies that do not create wide-spread dissent may be more useful than confrontational ones (Scheyvens, 1998).

Time must be invested in developing an understanding that men's interests need not be diametrically opposed to those of women and that by 'empowering' women both men and women are likely to benefit in the long-term. In addition support should be given to women in order to improve their ability to negotiate their rights and influence management decisions.

3.5.2 Education and Training

In both Africa and Asia more women are illiterate than men. In addition, although women may have a good knowledge concerning the resources that they use they tend to have a poorer understanding of environmental processes and the long-term impact of unsustainable use. It has been shown that effective participation will only be possible once women have the appropriate knowledge and skills to undertake activities.

As a result a number of ICDPs see literacy initiatives and girls' scholarships as long-term investments in women's capacities, with the conservation pay-offs coming over both the short and long term. These may include increased, effective participation of girls and women in conservation activities and management; better understanding and acceptance of conservation messages and sharing of these messages with children, male partners and others in the community; and for young women, the likelihood of smaller, healthier families. At the same time heightened education can build up women's self-confidence and self-esteem to a degree that they feel more comfortable and confident to participate in community and conservation decision-making .

Increasingly, and especially in Africa, it is being realised that the education of girls is as important as that for boys, if not a basic right. In many cases it is now being considered a worthwhile investment for future household security.

In addition, such initiatives can provide important entry points to the community and useful spaces to disseminate environmental messages. Women have the potential to play a central role in environmental education because their intimate relationship with communities and families provides an ideal conduit for the diffusion of environmental messages. Literacy and scholarship initiatives clearly linked to conservation messages and activities seem to hold great promise for positively impacting conservation.

Indeed, education has proved a powerful tool for increasing women's capacity and, to some extent, empowering them. A key example is found in Nepal where several ICDPs have included literacy classes as a central component. Evidence suggests that many women have benefited from the classes and are playing an increased role in community life and conservation/development as a result.

However it is often the case that once girls or women have been educated they want to leave rural areas to make the most of greater opportunities elsewhere. It is important therefore that either ways must be found to develop opportunities in rural areas that will encourage them to stay, or linkages are established between those who leave and those left behind.

In both Africa and Asia some ICDPs have supported the building of schools. However, local communities rarely recognise the link between such components and the conservation of natural resources. Often people will not know that the relevant NGO has built the school,

and if so, why. Though some might suggest that such anonymity is a good thing, if the objectives of ICDPs are really going to be achieved then communities need to recognise the linkages between development (and support, for instance through school-building) and conservation.

Linking support to schools with conservation can be achieved to some extent by encouraging the establishment of school environmental/conservation- or eco-clubs. A large number of ICDPs have sponsored these through providing materials such as books, day-trips, tree seedlings to establish nurseries and by organising 'conservation' events. Cultivating good relationships between children, the environment and wildlife from early ages can be seen as a long-term investment in environmental protection and conservation.

Training also forms a part of some ICDP programmes, for example in agricultural and forestry techniques, as does capacity building (including forest management, gender sensitisation, leadership building, enhancing decision making capacity and financial and administrative management). As described above, training can also be linked to health and population initiatives, income-generation and credit and savings. However, it can prove difficult firstly to encourage women's attendance and secondly, to find female trainers and/or extension workers. This can be for a number of reasons including a lack of education; lack of mobility; lack of respect; and for health reasons.

The use of village mobilisers is a useful tool - that is, training selected potential trainers who can return to their villagers, carry out further trainings and act as the node for mobilising groups and the link between the communities and the project.

Ideally, education, training and extension services should be demand (client) led and focussed. They should fill the gaps as identified by the potential beneficiaries and their provision should fit in with participation opportunities. This would help to focus the supply of such services in a more gender sensitive manner. In Nepal, for example, the timings of the literacy classes had to coincide with the times when women were free to attend, that is when less busy with household duties or livelihood activities. The technical capabilities of women and their enthusiasm for learning if given the opportunity should not be underestimated.

3.5.3 Women's Groups and Collective Action

Women find a voice and strength through collective action. Promoting women's participation through women's groups proves highly successful. It may be the case that income generation projects by themselves do not necessarily give women control over income earned or increase their access to resources. However, the process of participating in all stages of mobilisation, organisation and attendant meetings can contribute towards an increasing awareness levels; developing leadership skills; facilitating collective articulation of women's interests and concerns; and offers opportunities for a shared capacity to effect change.

In addition there is evidence to suggest that women as a group are more able than individual women to access resources. This need not only apply to mobilising cash and credit, but also in securing access to land. In Tanzania for example, village committees were prepared to grant land, such as one acre tree plots, to women's groups but not to individual women.

Few ICDPs have fully recognised the potential of existing and, where necessary, new women's groups. Many are still in their infancy. As such there is a need for strong capacity-building programmes to enhance their knowledge base and skills. Some groups are already

involved in environmental activities, though the majority (particularly in Africa) focus more on 'self-help' and support for members in time of need, such as weddings and funerals, rather than a more formal mobilisation for specific tasks. In Asia there is a greater history of women's groups being supported and developed by governments. In Vietnam for example, the Women's Unions play a central role in local development including the implementation of a government credit scheme.

It is important that women's groups are more formalised if they are to remain sustainable once projects finish and/or are phased out. Clear policies should be developed by the group to cover, for example, conflict resolution, entry/exit into the groups, and rules and regulations regarding management and linkages.

In Nepal, the formation and support of 'mothers' groups' has proved a central component of most ICDPs. They are well structured with committees and management plans. It is believed that supporting and institutionalising the mothers groups or *Ama Samuha* or *Ama Toli* will enhance women's capabilities to improve their economic status and raise their participation in managing and conserving the natural resources. The 'mothers' groups' are so called regardless of the women's marital status. The word 'mother' is a less politically and socially contentious word than 'woman'. A gender assessment of a WWF-supported project there suggests that because of the Groups:

"the unity of women has increased and strengthened their own self-image as they now feel that they can achieve what they intend to do on their own. The members felt that they [have] a place to share and express their experiences and difficulties...now they are confident to talk with others freely and are able to voice out their opinions" (Samanata, 2001b:5).

3.5.4 Conservation and Natural Resource Management

Some projects, and particularly forest projects, have made constructive attempts to involve women as well as men in NRM. Women-focussed activities include working in nurseries and reforestation projects. However much of this work may be mundane, labour intensive (such as the re-potting or planting of seedlings), whilst at the same time foster pre-defined and socially entrenched gender roles. It is uncommon for women to be supported in breaking free from such roles and for example, become forest managers. Therefore thought should be given as to whether such work/activities should be encouraged.

Women have also been the focus for alternative fuel projects, in an attempt to encourage households to move away from a reliance on wood. However for such schemes to really work, evidence suggests that the benefits of moving to the alternatives must outweigh the costs of continuing wood collection. For example in areas of Nepal where livelihoods are reasonably secure and income regular, the benefits of using alternative fuel such as gas, though expensive, outweigh the labour and time costs needed for wood collection.

Conversely, in parts of Africa with a higher level of poverty, where solar cookers have been introduced, they have done little to stem the use of fuelwood. Women rarely use the cookers as the cooking time is lengthy and the process still alien; the original investment in the cooker is high; the cookers need to be watched to prevent disturbance from animals; and the positive social aspects of food preparation and fuelwood collection (such as cooperation and time to talk) can be lost. In addition, though the collection of wood may be difficult, an adequate supply is still available, so there is little pressure to change. It remains to be seen whether as availability of firewood decreases, the benefits of moving to alternative fuels are better realised.

In Asia, women have traditionally played a more dominant role in the protection of forests and other natural resources than in Africa. There is a longer history of community participation in conservation activities and control over natural resources. This is particularly true in tribal or mountain areas where ethnic and cultural norms, as well as their socio-geographical context, have encouraged more gender equitable societies. Natural resource user groups tend to work best when populations are relatively stable and community members know each other.

Those projects that have progressed to a point where they have realised the need for increased community 'ownership' over, and involvement in, natural resource management processes tend to be those projects that have also recognised that 'community' is not equitable or homogenous. That is that *all* the community's contribution is important and that special efforts must be made to include marginal groups (including women).

The debate continues as to how best to achieve this, for example to what extent should women's inclusion be made a special case, and whether positive discrimination should be encouraged. Often traditional institutions are biased against women and thus, though they may certainly offer benefits e.g. for sustainability and utilising indigenous knowledge, from a gender equity perspective, they may not be the most suitable vehicle for community representation and decision-making.

Where women have been given long-term support, encouragement and opportunities to take a more active role in decision-making processes, they have slowly taken up the challenge. This has often been assisted by key role-models who have led women's participation, as well as a reliance on group power – that is women going to meetings as a group and once there, sitting together. In addition, time and effort are needed to establish when and where meetings concerned with NRM should be held to most positively encourage women to attend. Further incentives can prove useful such as providing child-minding services or combining meetings with other activities.

By focussing on user groups as the means for mobilising communities in conservation and NRM, some of the social constraints that inhibit women's participation can be overcome. For example it can prove less politically sensitive to bring women together because they are a user group (such as fuelwood collectors), rather than because they are women.

Reasonable success has been achieved in increasing the number of women on committees and in groups involved in conservation-related activities and decision-making processes. Particularly, this has been found to be the case in Asia where there is a longer history of more formalised community involvement and management of natural resources including forests. However, numbers do not necessarily equate to quality participation, and it has often been the case that although women appear on conservation committees, for example, they fail to participate to any extent as they lack skills and confidence to do so. Therefore, if women's representation is to be adequately achieved, support for their presence must be combined with support to build up their capacity to participate.

Few women are employed within conservation organisations and/or as ICDP staff in Africa or Asia. Where women are employed they remain in positions of lower status and/or in those which are of an administrative nature. Few work at a management level or in the field. It remains the case that conservation is still dominated by men: it is seen predominantly as men's work. Few women have the necessary high level of dedication or know how to overcome such bias and discrimination. Even where efforts have been made to recruit

women professionals they have had little success because women feel marginalised and uncomfortable working in such a male-dominated environment.

3.6 PROJECT ANALYSIS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation within, and of, ICDPs, particularly during project implementation. As an ICDP evaluation describes:

“Little hard data is available to measure the socio-economic and conservation impact of ICDPs. Project managers often postpone monitoring and evaluation because they believe it is too donor driven, too complex and too time consuming, and rely instead on anecdotal information and intuition” (WWF, 1995: v).

When surveys are carried out in local communities the collection of gender-desegregated data is now reasonably common. However, they tend to rely on the collection of quantitative data rather than qualitative. This is a reflection of the continued dependence on quantitative indicators for measuring project success.

Qualitative data is certainly more difficult to obtain and measure, however it is vital in providing a better understanding of the inequities present in communities, and during project assessments - the more subtle benefits and/or costs that may arise from any interventions. Women, for example, may not see economic benefits as the only or primary benefit that they obtain from a project - there may be more important ones such as feelings of pride, wellbeing, contribution, self-esteem or control of one's own life and future. There is little indication that these are factors that are measured and/or explored in current monitoring and evaluation programmes. As such, the establishment of suitable indicators and monitoring mechanisms that can measure the impacts of ICDPs on gender equity – from a qualitative perspective as well as quantitative – is required.

In addition, inadequate effort is made to provide comfortable spaces for women to contribute to data collection. During surveys information is often collected in the presence of men, so women may be wary of speaking out. They lack confidence to express their views and may risk reprisals if they do not agree with their husbands. Women are often short of time, particularly during the day when it is more common for projects to carry out monitoring and evaluation work. Evaluation teams are usually headed by men, and though the importance of having at least one woman member of teams is recognised, it is often difficult to find one who is available, skilled and, for example, can speak local languages.

Thorough, adequate gender analyses are rare. Few have been carried out during project planning, implementation or evaluation. Those few identified through this research have been listed in the Recommended Texts at the end of this document. In general, these tend to be one-off and conducted by external gender consultants, who have no further linkages with the project or the local communities.

Though these assessments can certainly be useful in indicating gaps within project activities and processes, and exposing staff and stakeholders to gender issues, they do little to contribute to a long-term understanding of gender and change within the local communities. Indeed, rarely does monitoring and evaluation track longer-term impacts. Changes in gender perspectives, roles, responsibilities etc. can only be truly measured in the long-term, especially if attempting to measure the impacts of supported initiatives on biodiversity conservation.

Clear indicators need to be developed (preferably through a process of local community design) that can be used for measuring change. Though proxy indicators (such as number of women directly involved in project activities) can be valuable when assessing impacts, qualitative and more deeply embedded indicators are also necessary for assessing less visible change, for instance in attitudes and personal development. Such systems will, of course, have to be affordable, and collection of data feasible.

On an optimistic note, gender is increasingly being seen as a necessary variable in more integrated and holistic approaches to conservation, such as in ecoregional planning. Indeed, McDonald (2002:16) suggests:

“gender as a variable within broader ecoregion analysis (stakeholder analysis, socioeconomic assessment, root cause analysis) is likely to be more effective than standalone gender research in identifying the ways gender dynamics are (or are not) relevant to conservation and suggesting entry points for interventions.”

Where project analyses have taken a more participatory approach, they do appear to have been reasonably successful in including, and taking account of, women’s views, perspectives and knowledge. Opinions differ as to whether data should be collected in mixed male and female groups, or in segregated groups. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. One must conclude that it will depend on the local context and circumstances.

However, though some ICDPs state that they use participatory approaches for data collection and analysis, these usually extend little further than activities such as community mapping. A number of projects suggest that they use PRA (participatory rural appraisal) when clearly they do not. Though participatory research techniques may be used, the process does not support the true elements of PRA such as long-term empowerment, community control or ‘ownership’ and the initiation of a process of reflection and change.

Indeed many current development efforts are based on the perceptions of outsiders who have a relatively poor understanding of issues at the local level. To enhance the possibility of success in implementing different conservation and development options, it is very important that trust is established between project interventions and the community. Assessments should be based on community input since they are in the best position to identify their needs. In addition this would encourage communities to feel that they have ‘ownership’ over any changes that occur.

But, in practice, if data is collected for monitoring and evaluation purposes, rarely is the information properly analysed and time allowed for good reflection and stakeholder input. Even if this is achieved then the quite formal and rigid structures of ICDPs allow little room for flexibility, adaptation and response to the data. From a gender perspective, as a result, even less time and space is given to the exploration of inequities and their impacts.

3.6.1 Community Monitoring

A small minority of ICDPs have begun to explore and support community monitoring, for example of natural resources. A particularly successful example of a CBNRM project that has initiated a women’s monitoring system is the Community Resource Monitors (CRM) project in Namibia (described in detail in the Africa regional study). This project focuses on women’s monitoring and control of resources that are used by themselves and other community members. Similarly, in Asia there are several examples of women being involved in participatory forest inventories.

By undertaking monitoring work, women can gain knowledge about, and a higher level of control over, resources associated with ICDPs while at the same time ensuring that environmental practices are followed. They can also introduce more sustainable management techniques and enhance the economic returns by encouraging less wastage or loss. It can be a valuable way of promoting linkages between conservation and development processes, as well as rights over and responsibilities for, natural resources and their management.