


# Gender and REDD+



*Taking a gender perspective in forestry has nothing to do with political correctness and everything to do with development and conservation effectiveness.*

*Aborvitae magazine, issue 43, IUCN, 2011*

International discussions on REDD+ and climate change have explicitly addressed the needs of indigenous peoples. However, to date, efforts to link REDD+ and climate change activities to the specific protection of rights of women have been very limited. This issue explores how REDD+ planning and implementation can and should enhance the conditions of rural women in Asia and the Pacific.

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## About REDD-Net

REDD-Net is the hub for knowledge sharing and resources on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+). Aimed at Southern civil society organizations and practitioners in REDD+, the network offers the latest information and resources to help build pro-poor REDD+ projects and policies. Led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), REDD-Net's partners include RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), and Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD).

[www.redd-net.org](http://www.redd-net.org)

## From the Editor

Dear Readers,



Civil society continues to level cautions at REDD+, warning that unless rigorous safeguards are in place, the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities may be undermined. This bulletin asks, is it enough to ensure women are not harmed by REDD+? Should we not also ask that REDD+ enhances and improves the condition of rural women in the region?

Drawing from experiences such as community forestry, we propose that REDD+ activities can and should go much further than avoiding harm – they should become an instrument for actively enhancing the rights and position of marginalized groups such as women. Because REDD+ is performance based, it provides us with precisely the tools to do so. Including indicators that require women be involved in the planning and design in a meaningful way and benefit equitably from project payments will catalyze shifts in the way that many regional societies operate.

There is potential for real improvements in the condition of women throughout the region, and yet, to date, the international community, governments, and project implementers appear to be missing the opportunity. As the new USAID report, *Gender and REDD+: An Asia Regional Analysis*, notes, “Current discussions on REDD+ are very weak with respect to the gender dimension and to its impacts on rural women who have few or no options.”

Women should be much more deliberately brought into the design and implementation of REDD+ and recognized as legitimate forest users and stakeholders – if not as an ethical imperative to recognize their rights, then because the success of REDD+ depends on it. Men and women have different experiences, knowledge and strategies for how to manage forests. Failing to incorporate half of the population in forest management has significant implications for food security, poverty alleviation and ultimately the well-being of forests.

**Regan Suzuki**  
REDD-Net Asia-Pacific Coordinator  
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## The Basics of a Gender Approach

The **gender approach** is distinct in that it focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation. It highlights:

- The differences between women and men's interests and how these are expressed;
- The conventions and hierarchies that determine women and men's positions in the family, community, and society at large;
- The differences among women and among men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background, and other factors; and
- The way gender roles and relations change as a result of social, economic, and technological trends.

# A Framework to Protect Gender Rights

Indigenous peoples have been explicitly addressed in REDD+ and international climate change discussions, most notably by linking them to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Decision 169. However, no similar efforts have taken place to link REDD+ and climate change activities to the specific protection of rights of women.

The international framework for doing so does exist though. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is described as an international bill of rights for women.

By accepting the Convention, nations commit to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- Incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal systems;
- Establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- Ensuring elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

An important strategy for supporting women's interests and rights in REDD+ will be the tying of REDD+ projects to United Nations conventions such as CEDAW, similarly to the progress indigenous groups have made in UNDRIP.

## Breaking New Ground for Women at Cancun?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP), held in Cancun in December 2010, took the agenda of women in climate change much further than previous events. The meeting was a watershed event for women, both in terms of substantive gender contributions to the Cancun Agreements and the REDD+ text (in which eight references to women and gender were made), and in terms of leadership and representation (the meetings were led by two women, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres and COP President Patricia Espinosa of Mexico). A highlight of the week was a side event on Women's Leadership hosted by Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland.



*Unless and until we understand the role that women play in REDD+, there are going to be considerable risks around how REDD+ may disadvantage women whose livelihoods depend on forest use.*

**Jeannette Gurung,  
Women Organization for Change in Agriculture and  
Natural Resource Management (WOCAN),  
USA**

## Why Everyone Needs to Participate

*In Cambodian indigenous and rural communities, there are considerable differences between the NTFPs [non-timber forest products] and forest resources that men and women use. One example is honey collection. Its collection is a dangerous job that involves climbing trees and being skilled in taking the honeycomb without getting stung too many times. The women process the honey and the men then sell it. There is a complementary division of labor.*

**Heng Chinda,**  
Community Based Natural  
Resource Management  
Learning Institute,  
Cambodia

When it comes to management and species selection within forests, there is wide variation. For example, blacksmiths may prefer hardwoods suitable for coal making; religious castes may value species of religious significance; and local healers may seek out medicinal plants. Without a highly participatory and inclusive process, the needs of certain, and often vulnerable, groups will be left out, and this has implications for poverty reduction, food security, and biodiversity.

The case of different needs between men and women is no different. In general, women in the Asia-Pacific region prefer multiple-purpose species, which may fulfill various roles including contributing to household fuel, fodder, and food security. Rather than focusing on timber, they value bushy trees with plenty of branches and varieties that can serve as windbreaks. Given their limited involvement in the sale and processing of timber, women will select trees such as neem, tamarind, medicinal herbs, and varieties that produce non-timber forest products (fruits, nuts, gum, wax, and honey) that the women themselves can process or market. Men in the region, however, tend to prefer high-value timber species such as sal, eucalyptus, pine, teak, acacia, and *gmelia*.

Direct competition can exist between these preferences. Given women's preference for multiple-use forest species, agroforestry is often an effective strategy for forest management. However, REDD+ projects will provide higher value to carbon-dense forests, and lower-carbon agroforests may be less attractive for REDD+ projects. REDD+ risks prioritizing high-carbon forest plantations over more "women-friendly," multiple-use types of silviculture.

### REDD-Net Interview: WOCAN

*Interview with Women Organization for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)'s Executive Director Jeannette Gurung*

**Q: Why does REDD+ seem to be such an important part of WOCAN's current work?**

**A:** The exclusion of women and neglect of gender within REDD+ points to exactly the reason why WOCAN was founded: to fill this gap and bring awareness to the issues. We work to build the capacities of a cadre of women and men champions with technical expertise and knowledge of related sectors to integrate gender and assure that women have a role to play in decision making and benefit sharing.

**Q: Given the findings from the report you recently produced for USAID, Gender and REDD+: An Asia Regional Analysis, what are the most important points for WOCAN to consider in moving forward in REDD+?**

**A:** We see the need to increase the degree of advocacy that WOCAN does within the REDD+ processes. It is also extremely clear to us that pilot projects or programs are needed that can show others how gender issues can be addressed in very concrete ways. We are using the report widely to build awareness of the extreme gender gap in the REDD+ initiatives, with the objective of influencing them to redress this.



To learn more about WOCAN's work, visit [www.wocan.org](http://www.wocan.org).

# The Case for Fuel-Efficient Stoves



If women were more deliberately considered in REDD+ and development projects, the significant potential of fuel efficient stoves for improving their lives and reducing deforestation would make it a high priority initiative.

When considering underlying drivers of deforestation, there is one important – and gendered – factor which gets far less attention than it should. Biomass plays an enormously important role in the lives of the rural poor in developing countries, serving as the primary source of energy for cooking and household heating. The collection of fuelwood is done primarily by women and children, with men's involvement growing only when these activities are commercialized. As forests reduce or become degraded, women and children need to spend increasing amounts of time collecting firewood, leaving little time for other activities such as study for girls.

It is a mistaken assumption that fuelwood collection activities are too small in scale to have significant impacts on rates of deforestation. In Laos People's Democratic Republic, for example, fuel wood consumption is approximately 2.4 million tons per year,<sup>1</sup> compared to logging's consumption of 600–1,000,000 tons of timber annually.<sup>2</sup> In the ASEAN countries<sup>3</sup> overall, energy from biomass such as wood and agricultural residues represents about 40% of total energy consumption.

Low quality energy supplies and inefficient conversion devices pose health risks due to indoor air pollution, and the women who work closely with the heating and fuel sources are especially vulnerable. In addition, in order to circumvent the lack of fuelwood, women tend to prepare food that requires less heat for cooking. Consequently, nutritious food items such as pulses (lentils) are excluded from diets, leading to malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies, particularly among children. The introduction and promotion of fuel efficient stoves is therefore an initiative that has powerful impacts on the lives of women, as well as on the condition of forests.

*In many rural parts of China women play a major role in forestry management. Since forestry operations, with the exception of timber harvesting and transport, can be undertaken by women and the timing of forest activities can be adjusted to suit women's schedules, it can be undertaken alongside other important family tasks. This can be further streamlined if the REDD payments (or at least a significant part of this) are routed through grassroots women's organizations.*

**Wu Shuirong,  
Chinese Academy  
of Forestry,  
China**

<sup>1</sup> Laos PDR Department of Energy statistics, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Southavilay, T. *Timber Trade and Wood Flow Study*. Lao PDR Regional Environmental Technical Assistance, Poverty Reduction & Environmental Management in Remote Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Watersheds Project (Phase I).

<sup>3</sup> ASEAN member countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

# Lessons From Around the Region

## Nepal: Community Forestry and Co-Benefits from Forests

*According to one study, women in Nepal in some contexts work 4-5 hours more each day than men do.<sup>4</sup>*

*If forests are well managed, women's lives become much easier. Due to multiple factors in Nepal, caste, class, and elite capture is magnified. If carbon sequestration becomes the single and primary goal, the poor and women lose out, not the elite.*

**Basundara Bhattarai,**  
Forest Action,  
Nepal

*While women may appear to be handling household finances, it is not the same as having decision-making power. Class definitely is a factor in that poorer families in which women are required to work outside the home tend to allocate greater degrees of rights and responsibilities to income-earning women.*

**Rama Ale,**  
Himalayan  
Grassroots Women's  
Natural Resource  
Management  
Association  
(HIMAWANTI),  
Nepal



Community forestry has in some contexts been very empowering for women in unexpected ways. Similarly, REDD+ has the potential to bring about positive benefits for women if it is designed well.

As primary users and managers of forests, women in Nepal are heavily dependent on them to meet household and subsistence needs. Women's groups were active in the early stages of Nepal's community forestry movement. They struggled fiercely for equal representation within community forest governing bodies and were successful in securing 50% female representation.

Despite the clear material benefits that women in Nepal receive through community forestry, female members of Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) assert that one of the most significant benefits they receive is the ability to engage in the public sphere. They are able to attend assemblies, join training courses, and participate actively in management activities. For them, it is a chance to get out of the home and pursue personal development. It may also result in income generation, with work outside the home becoming validated and women gaining improved status in the household.

Another positive impact from community forestry has been its contributions to socially responsive and accountable institutions. Its encouragement of equitable inclusion of women, *Dalits*, and poor families normalizes their inclusion within decision-making processes at local and national levels.

With many parallels to community forestry projects, REDD+ projects require transparent and accountable budgeting, carbon monitoring, and overall project management. If implemented well, all of these have the potential to draw women into the public sphere and to create gender-sensitive institutions.

### What Happens if Women Are Not Included?

In many parts of the world, women are often cut out of formal decision-making processes. In one example in Nepal, NGO workers had asked a newly formed CFUG to involve more women in decision making. The CFUG met this request with resistance and argued that women's interests were already being represented by the group's men.

The CFUG then established regulations, which included a rule allowing continued fuel-wood collection but only of dry biomass. The men in the community were not the primary fuel wood collectors and did not make this distinction in communicating the regulation to the women in the community. The women proceeded to collect both dry and wet fuel wood as was their custom. They were promptly arrested. With the women gone, housework was abandoned and dinners uncooked until the men appealed for their release. In at least one CFUG, the consequence of excluding women from forest management was learned.

<sup>4)</sup> Nandini Azad. 1999. *Engendered Mobilization – The Key to Livelihood Security: IFAD's Experience in South Asia*. Rome: IFAD.



## Afghanistan: Using REDD+ to Empower Women

The long history of civil war in Afghanistan has resulted both in a severely degraded environment and particularly adverse conditions for the rural population, in particular for women. Of the estimated 36% of population in Afghanistan living in poverty in the late 1990s, more than 70% were women and girls.<sup>5</sup> At least 70,000 households are headed by women, mostly widows, in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> Firewood is the primary source of household energy in Afghanistan, but with forest cover reduced to 1.5% of land, there is a crisis of meeting basic energy needs. Women and girls, traditionally responsible for household energy needs, are disproportionately on the receiving end of this crisis.

REDD+ is well placed to contribute to both the environmental and social challenges being faced by Afghans. It can provide the framework to support rural Afghan women in replanting degraded forest areas and wastelands for the primary purpose of providing household energy. The tasks associated with this, such as establishing and maintaining tree nurseries, and contributing to the management of forests, are all activities that could be compensated under REDD+ or Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) activities.

Most importantly, tree planting is considered a morally superior activity in Islam, and women's role in meeting household energy needs is culturally endorsed. Thus far, none of the conflicting factions in Afghanistan have opposed women's tree cultivation. The involvement of women in reforestation and afforestation is a win-win situation in Afghanistan.



## India: A Day in the Life of a Rural Woman in Orissa

What does a day in the life of a rural Indian woman during rice-sowing season look like? Should a REDD+ project come along, what does this mean for accommodating activities to her daily schedule? Here is an example of a typical day for an Orissa farming woman:

3.30 am	Waking up and cleaning oven
3.45 am	Making coffee
4.15 am	Cleaning the farmyard and sprinkling with cow dung water
4.45 am	Cleaning the cattle yard
5.15 am	Preparing food
6.05 am	Leaving for field with food, begin sowing
8.15 am	Taking breakfast in the field
8.30 am	Sowing
1.00 pm	Taking lunch and resting in the field
1.30 pm	Sowing
4.30 pm	Returning from field
4.45 pm	Taking care of animals
5.15 pm	Drawing water from public well
6.00 pm	Preparing food
7.00 pm	Taking dinner
7.30 pm	Making preparations for next day's work
8.30 pm	Going to sleep

<sup>5</sup> FAO. 1997. *Women's Participation in National Forest Programmes*, Economic and Social Development Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

<sup>6</sup> Hassan, Z. and P. Kant, 2011. *REDD in Afghanistan: Empowering Women and Increasing Access to Energy*. IGREC Working Paper 20.

# Recommendations for Gender Incorporation Within REDD+<sup>7</sup>

1. Incorporate gender mainstreaming tools (including gender analysis and strategic planning) in all REDD+ readiness and implementation stages.
2. Develop gender monitoring and evaluation systems that incorporate gender indicators into existing standards and guidelines for REDD+.
3. Raise awareness about the need to view women as a separate stakeholder group.
4. Build technical and leadership capacities of women to become “champions” of the empowerment of women.
5. Strengthen women’s organizations to enable them to negotiate the terms of their engagement with REDD+ projects (namely obtaining loans and technical assistance).
6. Mandate at least 30% women’s membership in governing bodies.
7. Address tenure issues in an effort to secure official recognition of women’s rights to forest products and carbon.
8. Develop systems of benefit distribution that recognize and reward women’s contributions.
9. Implement pilot projects that use Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) approaches to reward women for their knowledge and roles as forest managers.
10. Develop and analyze of innovations from pilot projects for forest-carbon income generation for rural women.

For more information please visit [www.redd-net.org](http://www.redd-net.org).

<sup>7)</sup> Based on recommendations from the 2011 working draft *USAID Gender and REDD+: A Regional Assessment* by Jeannette Gurung, Kalpana Giri, and Abidah Setyowati.

