

Internet Forum on Common Property Regimes
Thematic Discussion #2: Gender and CPRs

The literature on CPRs often looks at rights holders as an undifferentiated group of individuals or households. This approach, however, can mask socio-economic differences among rights holders, in particular between men and women, who may benefit in different ways from CPR activities. For example, it is unclear in most cases how a CPR considers activities conducted by its female members for their own benefit or disposal, especially if they are not, as in many cases, included in the decision-making processes governing the CPRs.

There is also a gender difference in use of technology or specialization within the general access to the commons, but also the rules to manage the CPRs affect men and women differently. Even though women are often the main users of CPRs they are typically excluded from accurate information and decision-making processes.

The scarce information on gender dynamics within the communities of rights holders to CPRs is a fact to consider when defining any national or local policy, as this may have unexpected consequences within the community and the households.

The next 10 days of discussion will focus on this theme of Gender and CPRs giving special attention to **mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion**, and looking at how **attention to gender can foster more sustainable use and management of CPRs**:

- A. *What (formal and informal) mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion exist? Do these differ for men and women?*
- B. *What factors affect women's participation? (e.g. rules of entry, social norms and perceptions, differing priorities, roles, personal and household endowments, time constraints, etc.)*
- C. *How are activities, access, and control patterns shaped by structural factors (demographic, economic, legal, and institutional) and by cultural, religious, and attitudinal ones?*
- D. *How can women negotiate for inclusion rights in CPRs and can statutory law play any role in supporting equitable access and use to CPRs by men and women?*
- E. *What are the efficiency implications of women's lack of, or limited, participation? If women are included in use and management, but excluded from decision-making what consequences does that have for sustainable management of the resources?*
- F. *Is there a gendered division of labor in CPRs (in terms of roles, decision-making, management, etc)?*

Examples from the case studies and literature review include:

- Although community participation exists the process is not necessarily tolerant of dissenting views, or sensitive to gender dynamics. For instance, in a Ugandan case, women who cared most about fuelwood suggested that fast-growing trees be planted, so their fuelwood needs could be met. This received little attention, and instead the focus was on commercialization of forest resources, purportedly for community benefit.
- In the Gao Region in Mali, development programs are encouraging people to invest in communal lands and establish small-scale irrigation systems. Distribution of land is done on an egalitarian basis, whereby each household who participates in the establishment of these irrigation systems receives access to $\frac{1}{4}$ ha of land, which provides an opportunity for landless households, including many female headed households, to access land.
- Several leasehold forestry groups in Nepal are made up entirely of women. This not only provides a chance for them to influence management of common property resources, it also creates opportunity to organize other social activities, e.g., literacy work or micro-savings, that can empower women in other ways.
- In Campesino communities in Peru, women have become the primary agricultural producers, but do not have much say in the collective decision-making, despite recent progress in gender equality in other aspects of social life in these communities.
- In Cameroon customary rules provide that only male children inherit the land, whereas women are granted use rights, without say in community decisions. Although women cultivate most of the fields and sell their products on the market to feed their families, they continue to be discriminated when land is distributed. The national legislation in place does not counter this tendency, but reinforces it stating that women cannot inherit land.
- Village forest committee in Saigata, India - introduced in the late 1970s - has provision for gender balance, with 3 men and 3 women sitting on the committee. This has helped to gradually reduce gender disparity in decision-making.