

Gender and the Forestry Situation in Africa: The Way Forward

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Presented at the IUFRO Division VI Symposium:
Integrative Science for Integrative Management
14-20 August 2007
Saariselkä, Finland

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Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction
2. Methodology and Countries Studied
3. Forestry Policies in Relation to Gender Mainstreaming
4. Forestry and Gender in the Formal Sector
5. Forestry and Gender in Local Communities
6. The Driving Forces
7. The Way Forward
8. Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

- Africa is highly endowed with large tropical forests with potential to meet socio-cultural, economic and ecological needs and majority remain poor, threatened by human pressure
- In Africa sustainable development of forests could preserve and sustain forest resources for future use, but this is not the case.
- Forestry policies in Africa have kept the indigenous population away from forest resources leading to misuse and abuse.

1.0 Introduction Cont.

- Forestry has been a multi-dimensional field, but the historical legacy of forestry is such that it has been male dominated.
- The sector has been slow in providing equal opportunities for African women who are critical actors in forestry and natural resources utilization and management.
- For sustainable management of forest in Africa to succeed, it should involve all stakeholders (policy makers, farmers, women, youth, local communities and agents).

2.0 Methodology and Countries Studied

The paper is based on a study carried out on gender mainstreaming and forestry in Africa. The countries covered are: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Tanzania and Zambia under auspices of FAO, IUFRO, CIFOR and University of Ghana.

The objectives of the study from which this paper is derived are:

- Compiling of information on existing national and intergovernmental policies, related to gender mainstreaming in forestry.

2.0 Methodology and Countries Studied Cont.

- Review of gender structures, local initiatives and responsibilities in rural forest communities and households.
- Preparation of a database of women working in forestry
- Identification of issues related to the establishment of networks for women in forestry.
- Making recommendations for potential follow-up activities on gender mainstreaming in forestry.
- Methodologies used for collection of primary data included
 - Interviews
 - Surveys
 - Focus group discussions
 - Participant observations

3.0 Forestry Policies in Relation to Gender Mainstreaming

3.1 Institutional Forestry Policies and Legislations

- Colonial policies and laws had been formulated without reference to the participation and benefits of the people who live in the forests.
- The policies also not formulated with recourse to gender.
- In recognition of this shortcoming African countries revised their forestry policies in the 1990s.
- Forestry policies in Africa now focus on collaborative forest management whose goal is to involve all stakeholders in the management including women.
- Thus underscores the need to make forestry planning and policies integrative.

3.0 Forestry Policies in Relation to Gender Mainstreaming Cont.

3.2 Forestry Policies and Gender Mainstreaming

- In recognition of the role women all countries have integrated women into national development plans according to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).
- Institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming have been established in all the countries. National gender policies have also been adopted, yet forestry policies throughout the study are not engendered.
- The intersection between the forestry sector and gender is imperceptible.
- Meanwhile ministries for women are not adequately supported by their national governments to mainstream gender into forestry.
- Many women still remain outside forestry sector

4.0 Forestry and Gender in the Formal Sector

- Gender inequality in formal forestry organizations is very striking.
- Women are grossly under-represented in all the sectors
- In Ethiopia there is no single representation of women in key management positions.
- The highest representation of women working in forestry is between 10% and 11% in Tanzania and Ghana, mostly at the junior staff grade as clerks and sub-technical staff.

Fig.1: Professional Employees of FNRB in Ethiopia

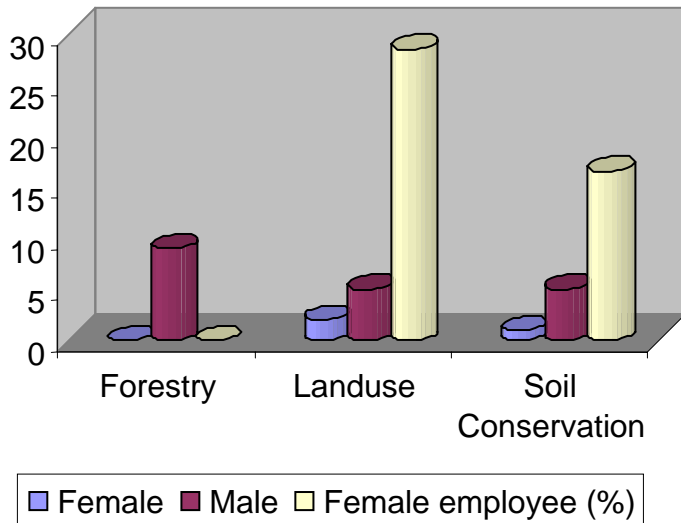
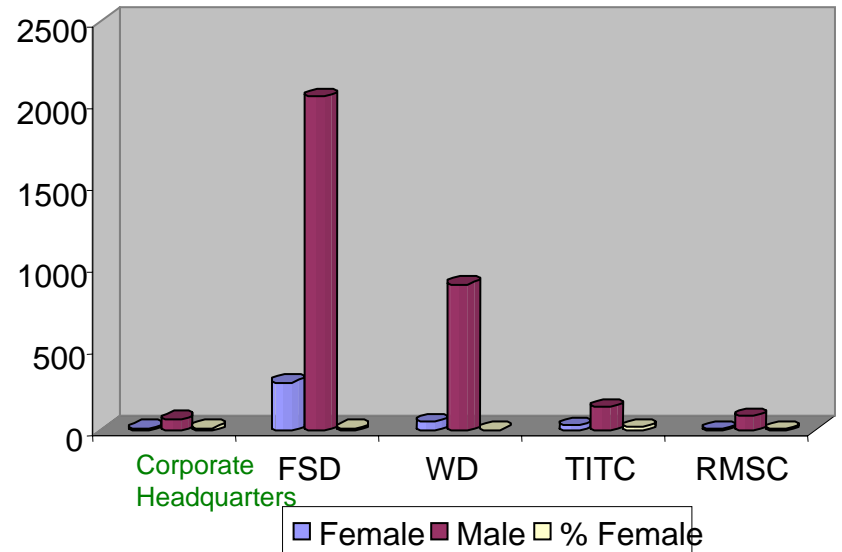


Fig.2: Employment in the Forestry Sector in Ghana



4.0 Forestry and Gender in the Formal Sector Cont.

- Remarkable increase of women's enrolment in higher institutions in forestry due to affirmative action for the past 10 years.
- Female graduates prefer to work in teaching and research institutions rather than as foresters in the field.
- Goodwill of policy-makers at national level but theory seems different from practice.
- Why is it that women's position still remains so low?

Under Representation of Women in Forestry organizations

- Implementation of National Policies on Women in Africa has met with many constraints. These include
- Inability of national governments and NGOs to operationalize the women's policy into implementation packages.
- The domination of designing policies by male officials.
- There is less recognition for female foresters, and women have little chance of being appointed to higher positions and responsibilities with same qualification and experience as male officers.

- Women's status in forestry is influenced by patriarchy and socio-cultural norms. The division of labour between the sexes makes it difficult for women to enter forestry and remain in it.
- Gender stereotyping best describes the environment culture
- Gender imbalance in formal forestry excludes women's voice as an essential input into design, planning and implementation of policies.
- The forestry sector stretches across two or more ministries and institutions, making it difficult to adopt gender perspective in planning and programming.
- Lack of consistency in records and data on gender employment trends over time.
- Lack of gender-disaggregated data and lack of skills for gender analysis for integrating gender.

5.0 Forestry and Gender in Local Communities

- Women's condition in rural communities is strongly influenced by socio-cultural norms and religious conceptions. This is driven by patriarchy, cutting across ethnicity, livelihoods, rural and urban communities, the educated and the non-educated.
- Gender inequality, therefore, affects daily interactions between men and women, who do culturally assigned work in forestry activities.
- Women are excluded from means of production, whilst men are favoured in the allocation of forests, land, water and other productive resources.
- In local forestry initiatives targeted at women, the women hold key decision-making roles. When men are introduced they appropriate the key roles.
- In all, gender structures, limited access to land, lack of mobility and time, information, training, education, credit, labour and marketing information collectively limit women's access to forest resources.

6.0 The Driving Forces

- Low education of women means they do not have requisite qualification for key positions in forestry.
- The work culture does not seem to be gender friendly.
- Men perceived as more capable and their work more valued (patriarchal attitude).
- Training opportunities favour more males.

6.0 The Driving Forces Cont.

- Less career progression, gender discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Multiplicity of women's roles is also a barrier against advancement of women professionals and cannot be compared to that of men, perceived solely as bread winners.
- There is also limited appreciation and resistance to the concept of gender at all levels.
- There has been constraints to mainstreaming gender because national policies are weak and poorly resourced.

7.0 The Way Forward

7.1 This can be achieved at different levels, with time frames taking immediate action.

1. Establishment of Regional-African networks for women in Forestry for exchange of information for a stronger voice(2007-2010)
 - Reorganization and restructuring of existing women in forestry associations.
 - Formation of new women in forestry organizations (forestry, research, teaching, extension).
 - Networking with existing women's associations in natural resources, forestry and related fields.

7.0 The Way Forward Cont.

- Mobilize forestry learning institutions' graduates for membership.
- Development of a database of women in forestry and forestry-related institutions to be periodically updated.
- Development of career guidance at all levels of education.
- Development of women role models and mentoring programmes for girls and young professionals.

2. Data Collection (2007-2010)

- Aggressive gender-disaggregated data collection in all development sectors including the forestry sector should be developed and made available for policy planning.

7.0 The Way Forward Cont.

- Studies on gender in forestry should be widely disseminated and periodically upgraded.

3. Institutional

- International institutions like UN Forum on Forest, UNEP Governing Council should include gender perspectives in their discussions and programmes (2007-2010).
- Development of a critical mass of women to influence decision-making (2007-2015)
- The UN special agencies and development agents should continue to support gender mainstreaming programmes at the national and regional levels (2007).

7.0 The Way Forward Cont.

4. Gender and Forestry Policies

- National governments should mainstream gender in national forestry policies, programmes and institutions (2007-2010).
- National governments should allocate adequate resources to women's machineries to support gender mainstreaming (2007-2010).
- Affirmative action by institutions should continue in secondary and tertiary education and in the employment sector (2007-2010).

5. Capacity Building (2007-2015)

- Training is needed to empower all actors in forestry based on strategic needs assessment.
- Girl child education should be seriously promoted in higher institutions at community level.

8.0 Conclusion

- The constraints faced by the forestry sector in Africa are enormous and multi-dimensional. As forestry policy and management cut across many disciplines and institutions, the approach for promoting forestry in Africa in its various facets, should be to adopt the integrative approach including the gender perspective based on the actions suggested above in order to integrate all stakeholders. When this is done it will help to promote a more equitable and sustainable forestry management in Africa.

- I thank you all for your attention