

Gender and Natural Resources Management

Improving Research Practice



- Natural Resource Systems Programme (NRSP)
- ‘Delivery of new knowledge that can enable poor people who are largely dependent on the natural resource base to improve their livelihoods’
- Research and development/‘action’ component
- Improve environmental management and tackle poverty

- Report into gender in NRM projects (Magnus, 2003)
- gender issues incorporated only unevenly
 - gender conceptualised differently between projects and between different people working on the same project
- Many projects demonstrated awareness of the importance of gender issues and an initial commitment to them, but the concern often slipped during the project cycle

Short studies, NRSP projects in India and Ghana

- Some lack of consideration for gender issues at all
- Others built on assumptions and generalized gender stereotypes
- India: men - 'natural partners' for field-based activities; women for group work, credit and savings, income generating activities
- Ghana: women 'petty' income earners; men breadwinners

Why?

Debunking of ecofeminism and its essentialising stereotypes

New uncertainties about how to work with gender – complex and political - but how to do it?

Gender has been mainstreamed and therefore 'dealt with'

Return to older stereotypes

Studies

- Peri urban India: Hubli-Dharwad, Karnataka (R8084)
- Peri urban Ghana: Kumasi (R8090)
- *Forest agriculture interface Ghana: Brong Ahafo (R8258)*

Peri urban research

- New knowledge, technical, scientific programme - Front Line Demonstrations (FLDS)
- Social organizational and institutional programme – self help groups '*sangha*'
- Carried out by natural scientists and social scientists
- Researchers and NGO workers

- Field-based activities - male
- It [FLD] is a crop demonstration, and it is mainly done involving men because they are the ones who look after the fields. Women's involvement in FLD is rare and I have not come across any FLD involving women. In the peri-urban area we have given 89 FLD in five villages... Here women are not involved directly, but they come and work as labourers for weeding and likewise jobs.

- In the implementation of the action plans for the natural resources management with regard to agro-forestry, horticulture and tank restoration, it is usually men who are participating more in these activities. Women participate more when it comes to weeding or to any other income-generating activity. In most of the field operations men are the ones who are participating.



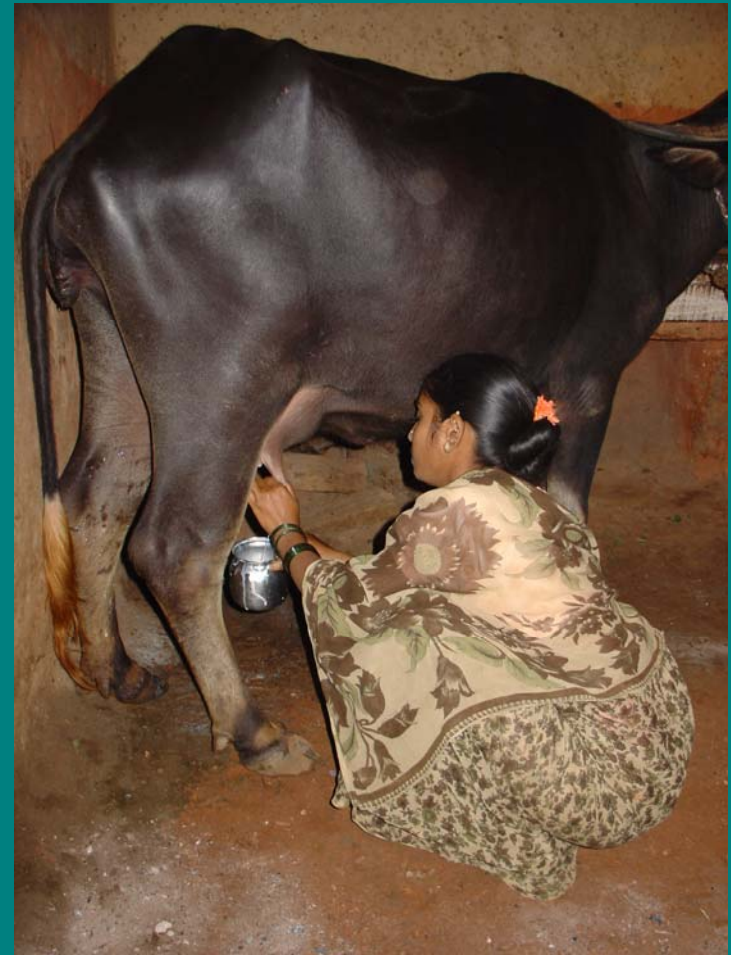
- In agriculture, 50% of the work is done by women. When the people plan cropping, men and women plan together. A woman's participation is a routine thing and there is nothing special about it. Her participation is actually more. Men just plough the land and harvest. According to me women spend more time in agriculture than men. If we see all the activities, she participates in the planning, planting, weeding, harvesting, and so on.

- Once the team had a meeting with women regarding natural resources management. We said that natural resources management is meant for the landed, what can the landless people do? Agriculture is the basic activity. Landless people take up supportive activities... Through agricultur[al development], many people can be benefited by [their participation in] service activities. If natural resource management is enriched, then landless people will also benefit.

- Women are the natural resources users, not the decision-makers
- The land is in the hands of men... All assets are in the men's names. Tradition cannot be broken... All the major decisions with respect to the environment are made by men.

Limitations:

- Building on complementarity?
- Fails to recognise variability
- Fails to recognise work women do



- Equates formal tenure rights with decision-making power
- Does not recognise other less formal rights and less visible practices carried out by women in natural resources management
- Misses women
- (misses landless)

Why?

- Disciplinary gaps
- Multi-disciplinary not inter-disciplinary
- Social and power issues devolved to (female) gender specialists
- Monitoring to 'Community Workers'
- Natural science methodology? Committed to social change – but to identifying problem and solution, applying knowledge and technology, not engaging with messy politics



- NGO worker commented that, in hindsight, 'in natural resources activities women could have been more involved. But it did not strike me at the time. In most places the men were so enthusiastic about getting involved that there was no time to make this decision. It would probably have been better to involve the women, but we did not have time to think about it.

Lack of basic information

Gendered nature of natural resources management, women's practices or knowledge

Gendered nature of poverty

Why?

- Reliance on PRA methods
- Pressure from communities to get on with 'action' components
- Devolving responsibility for 'nitty gritty' to Community Workers
- Project set up – lack of follow-up; log-frame

Recommendations

- Time – monitoring less visible processes
- Using participatory processes more carefully
- Recognising roles (and politics?) of Community Workers
- Dedicated and detailed research

- Dialogue – between disciplines with own values and assumptions
- More explicit discussion of aims with regard to gender issues – frequently seen as too complicated, too political, a matter of tradition or ‘beyond our remit’