

# Why include women in community forestry?

## To include differences or make a difference

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### Women and the environmental debate

Including women in local forest management has become an essential part of the rhetoric surrounding community forestry. In Nepal and elsewhere. However, the rationale behind women's inclusion is often poorly defined.

A wide range of ecological, economical and social reasons are used for positioning women's role in natural resource management.

The wide range of reasons to include women often leads to a lack of clarity as to what framework will allow achieving them, so that disparate and isolated measures are implemented.

### The context

In Nepal, Community Forestry Programme represents a continually evolving participatory programme where management and use rights to local groups have dramatically expanded, with a clear recognition that women's participation in community forest management is essential and important.

Women are identified as the real users of the forest, but the reasons for and the implications of their involvement in forest management has not been poorly understood.

### 'For the differences, metaphor in community forestry

Women are different (to men) and thus need to be included:

- To promote ecological management by integrating women's specific, local knowledge about forest resources and thus, improving the ecological sustainability.
- To promote ecological management by integrating women's specific, local knowledge about forest resources and thus, improving the ecological sustainability.
- To reduce the transactions costs and increase economic sustainability as women provide a large share of the labor involved in silvicultural operations of community forestry.
- To reduce differential access and control to use of forest resources by women.



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### Include women to make differences

- Gender equity is understood to embrace not only distributional justice of access and control to forest resources, but also capacity-building and empowerment.
- We need a nuanced understanding about the factors that are supporting and those that are constraining participation.
- We need to understand how women perceive and use the factors.
- The qualitative aspect of women's participation beyond institutions and in everyday lives is to be identified and incorporated into policy and practice.
- Women's participation in community forest management is to be understood as a socially just change process that is both reflexive and adaptive to the changing social context and is transformative against discriminatory power relations
- Equity, capacity and empowerment has to be the guiding principles.



#### Further information:

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