

Gender and Forestry – Promoting New Systems of Equal Participation

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The recognition of the importance of gender issues has been increasing over the last years. In forestry, with a few exceptions, there has not been much work applying a gender perspective. The IUFRO Research Group on Gender and Forestry therefore initiated and convened (with partners) a world-wide symposium and elaborated a series of recommendations how to improve this situation.

The Symposium was convened in Mweka, Tanzania (1 - 10 August 2004) and brought together men and women from all over the world to discuss an issue that affects all people: the continuing marginalization of women and girls in many areas. The participants outlined problems women have in access to resources, political and intra-household power, health, education, and workloads. In that context issues of access to forest resources as a means of improving livelihoods as well as a balance between economic development, social development, and natural/forest resource protection were elaborated upon. Additionally, the symposium attempted to promote new systems that could empower women forest dwellers to effectively participate in processes of good governance in the forestry.

As a result the symposium developed a series of recommendations which address the needs for improved implementation of gender-related IFF Proposals for Action. Furthermore, critical needs in four main areas were identified: policy and legislation, awareness and capacity building, sustainable development activities; and research topics. The group consistently stressed the important roles of both men and women in overcoming global gender inequities. The Hon. Prof. Wangari Maathai, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize shortly after the Symposium, was an illustrious keynote speaker. She noted that the biggest challenge in the region was poverty caused by environmental degradation.

The value of the meeting suggests the importance of organizing a similar Symposium with a focus on Spanish speaking countries in the future. As an outcome of the 2nd Worldwide Symposium on Gender and Forestry, recommendations have been proposed for further deliberation and action at the United Nations Forum on Forests V (UNFF), in 2005.

*2nd Worldwide Symposium on Gender and Forestry – an Organization-led Initiative in support of the UN Forum on Forests; Mweka, Tanzania, 1 - 10 August 2004.
Organized by IUFRO RG 6.18.00, IUFRO Special Programme for Developing Countries (IUFRO-SPDC); ENVIROCARE, University of Dar-es-Salaam, Sokoine University in Morogoro; College of African Wildlife Management in Mweka (all in Tanzania); Hedmark University College in Evenstad, Norway; and Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). About 100 participants from 27 countries shared their experiences in 35 papers, a poster session and working groups.*



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File picture 085 (showing Ann-Merete Furuberg)*