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*IUFRO Spotlight is an initiative of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. Its aim is to introduce, in a timely fashion, significant findings in forest research from IUFRO officeholders and member organizations to a worldwide network of decision makers, policy makers and researchers.*



iufro2019  
Curitiba • Brazil

*IUFRO Spotlight issues up to September 2019 will primarily focus on the XXV IUFRO World Congress that will take place on 29 September-5 October 2019 in Curitiba, Brazil.*

*Individual Congress sessions will be highlighted in order to draw attention to the broader Congress themes, the wide variety of topics that will be addressed at the Congress and their importance on a regional and global scale.*

*Visit the Congress website at <http://iufro2019.com/> or [https://www.iufro.org/events/congresses/2019/!](https://www.iufro.org/events/congresses/2019/)*

*IUFRO Spotlight #65 / May 2019*

## Tying up loose ends in gender equality in forestry

“In recent years gender equality in forestry has received a lot of attention – or lip service, anyway – but that’s not good enough. There exist a lot of loose ends at the practice and at the policy level,” said Dr. Purabi Bose, author, social environmental scientist, filmmaker and deputy coordinator of the IUFRO Gender and Forestry Research Group.

That’s the theme of a session – **Women and Forests: Promoting Gender Equality Connecting Research, Public Policies and Forest Management in the Tropics** – that Dr. Bose and Dr. Ana Euler, of Embrapa, are organizing and presenting at the IUFRO World Congress in Brazil this fall.

“Our session will address some of those loose ends,” said Dr. Bose. “And, what makes our session different is the platform. For the first time the IUFRO Congress is being held in Latin America and, being one of the oldest and most relevant congresses related to forests and tree science, we’ll get a diverse range of stakeholders from across the globe as well as Latin America, to share their evidence-based work.”

Dr. Euler noted that even though gender equality may not be a new subject worldwide, that’s not true in Latin America. “It just isn’t being widely discussed within the forest sector here.”

In her opinion, one of the major challenges is getting women to the decision-making tables where they can be part of the discussion. “To be present, is step one. To be heard and respected would be the second,” she said.

Dr. Bose said: “We talk about gender equality, which is the end goal. But to reach that end goal, I would argue the need to work on ‘equity and social diversity’. Many fail to understand these nuances of gender dynamics.

“Even today ‘gender’ is often mistaken for women and-or feminist things. Researchers often assume they are talking about gender while, in reality, they are only assessing the role of women,” she continued.

“The biggest challenge, as I see it, is the risk of putting gender in a separate box rather than accepting that gender dynamics exist – in different strata of societies, in diverse landscapes, at different degrees.



*Social movement by indigenous women (temporarily) stops mining inside community forest in Odisha, India  
Credit: Landing Together Film/Purabi Bose, date 28/08/2016*

“The categorization of ‘women’ as a homogenous group is a big obstacle. We need to create a level playing field for indigenous women from the global south vs. urban women in developed countries,” Dr. Bose said.

Dr. Euler added: “We want to avoid ‘gender roles’ and the concentration of women in (limited) specific sectors. That means women can, and should, play central roles in research, public policies and forest management in the tropics and elsewhere.

“This will be an important moment to discuss and evaluate the bottlenecks and challenges that are still present in the forest sector,” she said. “As an example, until last year there was no organization dedicated to the promotion of gender equality in Brazil’s forest sector and that encouraged the creation of the Rede Mulher Florestal (Forest Women’s Network).”

“We need to understand the existing gender roles,” said Dr. Bose, “which in many indigenous communities have been relatively better than in urban or rural context.

“My research work with indigenous communities in the tropics shows that men and women play an equitable role in forest conservation, yet implementation of policies are often gender biased.” As an example, she pointed to India’s recent draft National Forest Policy, which fails to mention terms like gender or women.

There have been some successes, Dr. Bose said. “Women have been in the forefront and often the media fail to highlight the success. In fact just a short while ago we saw indigenous women from the Brazilian Amazon successfully protesting for forest rights. And in Asia and Africa there have been some shifts in forest policy toward providing women access rights to collect non-timber forest products.”

But so far it has been local social movements that have primarily led to these achievements. Now, she said, it’s time for the international community to step up and show support.

Fernanda Rodrigues, president of the Board of Directors of Rede Mulher Florestal, who will be a panel member at the session, added: “Because there will be women representatives from northern countries, it will certainly make the Congress discussion even more interesting in terms of exchanges of experiences and proposing a positive agenda going forward.

“This Congress session will help us better understand the position of women in the forestry sector, especially as it relates to entrepreneurship, public policy and networking,” Ms. Rodrigues said. “And also in helping to build a collaborative women’s tropical forest network, engaging professionals and students from the different forestry sectors.”



*Women are discussing community development indicators for the Açaí fruit production chain in Afuá, Pará State, Brazil.  
Credit: Ana Euler; date 14/05/2019*

Dr. Euler pointed out, “we don’t have a lot of information about gender equality successes in the tropics but the Rede Mulher Florestal is going to launch a public call to receive and disseminate such successes. And the Congress will help by providing a platform.”

“Ana (Euler) and I have only met through Skype so far,” said Dr. Bose. “But we’ve learned by working together on this session that we are both trying to achieve the same goal – to learn and share knowledge on gender and forestry in the tropics.

“We’re looking forward to building a strong collaboration involving our panellists, our audience and other networks. I think our session could be seen as a stepping stone to shape the next-gen issues under gender and forestry,” she concluded.

**See you at the IUFRO 2019 World Congress!**

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