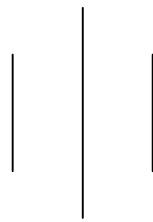


# A Report on the Indigenous Peoples, Gender and Natural Resource Management

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Submitted to the  
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### **I. Quantitative Data**

1. Number of projects/activities Screened – **Total of 8 programs**
2. Number of types of projects screened –
  - a. **Environmental/NRM programs**
  - b. **Gender/Women Empowerment.**
  - c. **Development projects/activities**
3. Number and types of projects activities that include all three aspects? (IP, Gender, NRM)  
**There are 5 programs of RRN and one program of ICIMOD, which include all three aspects.**
4. Types of natural resources included in projects/activities involving all three aspects?
  - A. **Tropical forests**
  - B. **Community Forests**
  - C. **Water**
  - D. **Agriculture**
5. Number of projects/activities that include two of the aspects?
  - A. **Two Regional programs of ICIMOD consists Gender and Natural resource management.**
6. Number and types of implementing agencies.
  - a. **INGO**
  - b. **NGO**
  - c. **Local government**
  - d. **Indigenous peoples**
  - e. **Local community**
7. Types of Donors
  - a. **Swiss Development Corporation**
  - b. **International Development Research Center**
  - c. **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)**
  - d. **GTZ**
  - e. **GEF Trust Fund;**

***1. What is the general assessment of the involvement of indigenous men and women in the NRM projects/activities screened?***

In Nepal there are very few organizations who focused their activities in

remote mountain regions. Because of the remoteness, difficult physical infrastructure and conflict situation most of the NGO, INGO's implement their programs in Low land areas. In this survey, Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) and ICIMOD has been chosen for the study, both organizations are well known for its activities in the field of natural resource management in mountain regions. This study includes three regional programs of ICIMOD and 5 district level programs of RRN. Both organizations have implemented their program on the right-based approach and need based approach and have maintained a gender policy in their plans and programs. From the survey it has been found out that Indigenous men and women actively involves in the program and activities implemented in their area. However still indigenous women seldom hold ownership to land and other property and their participation in decision-making level is almost nil. Due to low literacy rate and very little access to resources have made their status far behind men. However they have made remarkable contributions in the field of natural resource management.

It has been found out that the Indigenous women play an important role in agriculture as they contribute between 50- 80 % of total agricultural labour depending upon geographical and socio-economic variations. They are engaged in the management of dry and wet terraces and land use patterns. They are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and numbers of hours worked. Similarly, **Indigenous women's** role in forest resource management is significant. They are the main collectors and users of fuel wood. So they have an **indigenous knowledge of forest resources planning, management and conservation**. Regarding the efficient use and conservation of water and energy, it was found that Indigenous **women** are actively participating in controlling use of water and in making sanitary arrangements. They apply traditionally gained knowledge and skills in deciding upon sources of water for collecting, carrying, storing and cleaning the environment around the water source. However, **women** are distinctly linked with natural resource management, due to lack of education and technical knowledge and control over land and other resources they are less benefited from natural resources from economic perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to make them aware about new technical knowledge regarding natural resource management for sustainable **development** and they should be benefited from those resources.

Although the issue of gender balanced development has been the subject of numerous conferences, workshops, seminars, publications, and many national policies have been developed, the extent to which this is translated into practice is still limited. In Nepal, gender is a crucial element of sustainable land use, environmental stability, and poverty alleviation. The already heavy workload of indigenous women has more recently been aggravated by considerable male out migration to the plains, urban areas, and beyond in search for better income opportunities. Other common problems of indigenous women are their limited access to social services, credit facilities, and agricultural extension; levels of literacy are low and they have minimum or no control over resources. The overall inequity between men and women was a major reason for ICIMOD and RRN giving gender and development a prominent emphasis in their core

programme.

The Most of the Programmes that were implemented before have failed to address the basic needs of Indigenous Women. Programmes were implemented only on Paper and seminar but the needy users groups have always been marginalized and have never get the access. Despite their active involvement in the programs still, indigenous women participation in decision-making level is almost nil in comparison to their male counterparts. They have played a major role in natural resource management but their contributions are neglected and have not been recognized yet.

## ***2. What are the roles and responsibilities of indigenous men and women in the management and ownership of natural resources?***

The local indigenous people are important stakeholders of biodiversity conservation. There is competition of living spaces and resources between wildlife and indigenous people. There is contribution of the indigenous people to protect the nature. Indigenous Peoples and natural resources cannot be separated. For indigenous peoples preserving, protecting and conserving are important for their survival. Indigenous women are the protectors and conservers of natural resources therefore rich natural resources are found in the area of indigenous peoples. Indigenous women have historically, and continue, to play a fundamental role in the conservation, protection and the sustainable use of the forests, biological diversity and the maintenance of ecosystems.

### **Indigenous women and Forest Resources**

According to Rural reconstruction Nepal (RRN), In rural areas, Indigenous women have much knowledge about forest resources such as fuelwood, fodder and medicinal herbs because women are the main collectors of these products. They have an indigenous knowledge about forest resources and its efficient use. Indigenous Women exploit several different forests and numerous areas within the forests. They travel from low hills to high forests as far as six hours walk above their village. During spring and autumn Indigenous women go to the lower forests, visiting higher forests in the winter, not only to collect firewood, fodder, food and herbs- which are almost solely a women's responsibility, but also to cut nigalo, the bamboo group, for men in the village to work with. Thus, rural indigenous women have the knowledge of identification of species, knew species name, its uses, geographic location, reasonability and availability and conservation of the natural resources.

**Role of Indigenous women for forest resource management in Nepal can be seen in the following activities:**

- **Indigenous Women** are the members of community forest user's groups in most of the villages.
- **Indigenous Women** participated in forestation programs.
- **Indigenous Women** and their families are associated in the leasehold forest management.

- **Indigenous Women** took part in the community soil conservation service.
- **Indigenous Women** support for the pre-requisite **development** works.
- **Indigenous Women** directly or indirectly participate and contribute to the National Parks and Wildlife Reserve conservation and area management.
- **Indigenous Women** participated in the skill-oriented training organized by the forest sectors.
- **Indigenous Women** participate in the plantation, management and conservation of agro-forestry and fodder trees.

### **Indigenous Women in Water management**

Water resources are considered one of the main resources of Nepal. The potential of this sector to contribute significantly to the alleviation of poverty of the people has been well recognized by all at present. Water is needed for drinking, domestic purposes, personal hygiene and sanitation, farm use, and many processes involved in food production and craftwork. Indigenous peoples have a strong relationship to water. As a scarce resource, water has traditionally been subject to many rules and rituals that are mainly geared towards respecting its role in all aspects of life.

Indigenous **Women** are the primary end-users of water in domestic sector. They are responsible for collecting water, carrying water, controlling its use and also overseeing the sanitary arrangements. **Women** have to bear the drudgery of ferrying water over long distances and also have to face the embarrassment of defecating in open areas.

**The Role of Indigenous Women in Water management can be describe and linked with the following aspects:**

- Management of water sources
- Collection of water
- Fetching of water
- Transportation /carrying water to destination
- Storage of water according to need and efficient use of water

**Nepalese Indigenous women's** contribution for making the environment sustainable is significant. They play a **crucial role in environmental management as farmers, as stockbrokers and as suppliers of fuel and water** and they interact most closely with the natural resources. However, integration of technological approach to manage and conserve those resources is equally important and for this it is necessary to create awareness among **Indigenous women** and educate them regarding the new approaches for better sustainability of natural resources. Besides, Indigenous women should be empowered, if they are to participate fully.

Indigenous women have the sophisticated knowledge to manage a multiplicity of roles and small production systems to adapt and survive in a fragile environment; their opinions and suggestions remain unheard, undermining the development and implementation of appropriate management strategies. Limiting sociocultural factors include most obviously workload as well as barriers against land ownership, cultural roles, secondary status, and division of labour. Women are rarely encouraged to attend meetings or to speak out when formal decisions about resource management are made.

**Indigenous Women seldom hold ownership and tenure rights to land, trees, water and other natural resources.** While women contribute most of the labour for

agriculture, they rarely have formal control of land or ownership of animals. Indigenous women's lack of control over productive resources means they cannot raise collateral for bank loans, and hampers efforts to improve or expand their farm activities and earn cash incomes. Traditionally, most extension services have been devoted to farmers who own land and who are able to obtain credit and invest it in inputs and technological innovations. Since Indigenous women often lack access to land or other collateral, extension services bypass them.

At the same time Indigenous Women's reproductive role and responsibility for childcare naturally limit their mobility and therefore access to information. The extremely low literacy rate of indigenous women in the mountain areas coupled with the non-availability of written information in remote hill areas make it difficult to extend knowledge through printed materials. Traditional beliefs about women's roles, social and cultural restrictions, and sometimes limited involvement in decision-making largely confine women's activities to the home and farm, often compelling them to forego opportunities for training, for instance, on topics of interest to them.

**3. *What are the constraints/problems in applying a women's perspective or a gender perspective in projects / activities with IP and NRM?***

**The major constraints in applying a gender perspective in activities regarding natural resources management**

a) within IP communities/organisations:

**Major Constraints :**

- Influence of male Dominated Patriarchal Norms and Values
- Influence of Hindu tradition and culture.
- Indigenous women are poorly represented on the Indigenous Peoples Organizations.
- Social stratification which exists in communities which are translated into NRM groups

**b) within Field and management staff:**

- Lack of trained Human resources in Local area
- Lack of gender sensitiveness
- Lack of adequate capacity building training.
- Male dominance in the organizational structure of IP communities.
- Funding unavailability

Bahun-Chhetris ( Non- Indigenous groups).

- Exclusive power structures of Gov't ignore the participation of Indigenous Peoples.
- Patriarchic laws and codes imposed by the state.
- Conflict situation in the country.
- Difficult physical infrastructure (Remoteness)
- Limited budget allocations for the development of High land areas.

**4. *What are the positive and negative lessons learned of projects / activities that include IP, gender and NRM?***

**Positive Lessons :**

- **Ensuring people's participation at all stages.** People's participation is vital at all levels of the biodiversity project cycle, including the key stages of planning, implementation, and monitoring
- Indigenous Peoples actively participates in the program implemented from the organizations.
- Indigenous Women's social status has been increased.
- Indigenous women have gained independency.
- Indigenous women's participation in programs is increasing day by day.
- Awareness and capacity build up training would help women to increase their involvement effectively.

**Negative Lessons learned:**

- Implementing organizations are not aware and sensitive about the traditional rights of Indigenous People.
- Most of the NGO's in Nepal are lead by non-indigenous groups.
- Women have difficult in logging and harvesting (silvicultural) activities.
- Women literacy rate is comparatively less than men.
- ILO convention 169 has not been ratified by the government
- Indigenous Women are less benefited from natural resources from economic perspective, since men control marketing of production.
- Indigenous Women are not involved in decision-making process for natural resource management and conservation.
- Indigenous Women lack education and technical knowledge on proper use of resources



**5. According to your experience what is the best way to secure gender/women's perspectives in projects / activities related to IP and NRM? In other words what advice could you share with us with a view to secure both indigenous men and women's knowledge, relationship to natural resources and involvement in NRM project/programmes?**

In order to secure a gender/women's perspectives in projects/activities related to IP and NRM, it is recommended to :

- Ensure opportunities for indigenous women, to participate in environmental decision-making at all levels, including as managers, designers and planners, and as implementers and evaluators of environmental projects
- Proper implementation and monitoring of CBD especially article 8 (j) which states equitable benefit sharing and prior informed consent
- Facilitate and increase women's access to information and education, including in the areas of science, technology and economics, thus enhancing their knowledge, skills and opportunities for participation in environmental decisions;
- There is a need of gender sensitisation training among IPO's, government in order to protect gender sensitive policies and measures to empower women as equal partner with men, especially in terms of women's equal access of land, ownership and control over natural resources.
- Lobby and advocacy campaign with the GO's and NGO's to take urgent measure to avert the ongoing environmental and economic degradation in developing countries that generally affects the lives of Indigenous women.
- Involve Indigenous women in more tree plantation, land consolidation, environmentally favorable farming system, multipurpose forestation in marginal land, community participation and cash crop production.
- Involve Indigenous women in forest protection, cutting of branches, wildlife conservation, construction of dam and wall, and pasturing of cow and pet animals.
- Provide education on techniques of land and forest conservation, small canal, collection of rainwater, sanitation, fishery, safe use of dispose of pesticides, systematic management of domestic and small scale and cottage industrial waste.
- Provide education on efficient energy use practices, use of improved stove and renewable energy technology.
- Provide formal and informal education to make them aware on importance of conservation of natural resources.
- Set up of environmental information centers in each district, which provide Information, Education and Communication materials on



environmental protection as posters, pamphlets and visual aids to schools and related GOs, CBOs, and NGOs for mass awareness.

- Pressurize the govt, to recognize the customary laws of the indigenous peoples for the protection of natural resources, items, and IP skills.
- Lobbying advocating and raising awareness GOVT. INGO's, NGO's and Media.
- Research and Documentation.

6. *What relevant written or electronic documentation of useful experiences could you recommend and how can others get access to it?*

In order to get an access to the information related with the Biodiversity conservation in Nepal please visit the following pages.

[www.mtnforum.org/library](http://www.mtnforum.org/library)

[www.rrn.org.np](http://www.rrn.org.np)

7. *Any other comment that you wish to make.*

I would like to thank the organizers for giving me an opportunity to explore the knowledge in the field of NRM and IP among INGO and NGO leaders and learn more from them.