

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PJW-30

Case Studies of Forestry Activities in Africa

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Dear Peter,

In the past few years, many donors have grown weary of hearing nothing but bad news about the difficulties of promoting development in Africa. Many constituents also wonder if their contributions are being well-spent. "Okay, we know that Africa is subject to famines, droughts, desertification, coups d'etats, corruption, inter-ethnic conflict, and apartheid. Much of the money spent on development efforts is wasted. Is anything working? Where can we spend our money to make a positive difference?"

Many organizations have decided that case studies are needed to document what seems to work in different circumstances. Project evaluations, critical academic analysis of projects, and other literature have provided many useful insights into what went wrong in past projects and what should be avoided in future projects. Such information, however, is often extremely difficult to track down. In addition, many development professionals are looking for positive applied models of what to try, not merely what to avoid.

As interest in grassroots-level development has grown, increasingly people want to know about the successes of small projects, such as those of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots organizations, or village-level co-operatives. This seemingly simple question -- of how these small projects work -- is rather difficult to answer. Many grassroots-oriented organizations focus on promoting development. While their development interventions can be construed as applied research, few of these organizations have the money, time, staff, or expertise to collect data to document or disseminate their findings. Typically they find it difficult enough to collect adequate information to monitor and evaluate their own efforts.

Consequently, numerous case studies have been funded by various donors. Each series of case studies has a different focus, and therefore necessitates a separate study. For forestry and natural resource management in Africa, recent case studies have been conducted on monitoring and evaluation issues (by FAO, CARE, and the Ford Foundation); on agroforestry projects (by the World Bank); on natural resource management in the West African Sahel (by USAID); and on energy issues (by IIED-London and by ILO). Additional studies are underway by ICRAF and other organizations. General discussions of environmental problems include some illustrative case studies, such as The Greening of Africa, Women and Environment in the Third World, and Squandering Eden.

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In recent months, I have been working with colleagues to launch a project on women's participation in forestry activities in Africa. This project also includes a series of case studies. With all the other case studies being done, why do we need another series on women and forestry? We need these studies because none of the other studies available explicitly considers women's participation.

Forestry is a development issue of crucial importance to African women. Despite the growing attention to the importance of trees in African agricultural development and to women's participation in development, to date few efforts have focused specifically on how these two concerns -- women and forestry -- interact.

In recent years, awareness has been growing of the need to consider women's participation in forestry. Women's participation is often crucial to project success and effectiveness. Several researchers have identified constraints that may inhibit women's participation in forestry activities. A good overview of possible constraints is provided in Restoring the Balance: Women and Forest Resources, recently published by the Community Forestry Office of the Food and Agriculture Organizations (FAO) of the United Nations.

African forestry development efforts have not yet been systematically analyzed. Available information, however, suggests that development efforts that take a "user-perspective" and focus on women's specific needs within a larger community context are often more successful than those that focus solely on women or those that try to include women in a supposedly sex-blind, integrated approach (Hoskins 1983, Rocheleau 1987, Williams 1985).

Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson (1988: 57) argue that:

...success comes when new styles of forest management take account of women's needs and ensure their involvement in protection and planting schemes, commercial forest management, and improved social forestry and agroforestry practices. ...These efforts, however, are still few in number and small in scale compared with the appalling and accelerating rate of forest devastation.

While many have increasingly acknowledged the importance of women's participation in forestry and agroforestry development projects, not much attention has yet been focused on the actual means for enhancing women's participation. John Spears and Raymond Noronha note,

At the risk of repetition it must be emphasized that few concrete efforts have been made to involve women in project implementation -- whether as beneficiaries or as extension workers. Where women have been employed, they have been mainly unskilled paid labor. It is time that the lip service so far paid to the importance of women is translated into action (Noronha and Spears 1985: 262-263).

Thus, a large gap remains between this growing awareness of the importance of women's participation in forestry activities and actual development action. The gap between awareness and action is due to a number of causes, such as other priorities, lack of funding, lack of trained personnel, and lack of political commitment and will. One of the most important reasons for the lack of action, however, is the paucity of information.

Detailed information is needed on actual cases where women's participation has been successfully promoted, and how. Such information could improve project effectiveness and social equity. This information is needed at both the grassroots and policy levels.

While many foresters may understand the importance of promoting women's participation in project activities, they often do not know how to do so. Many assume, for example, that they can just have a sex-blind, "integrated" approach. They may not understand how constraints -- such as land and tree tenure, or work schedules -- will affect the participation of women and men differently. This lack of understanding is hardly surprising, as most foresters have been trained to grow and manage trees, not to solicit broad-based community participation.

Grassroots-level activists need information on successful strategies for two reasons. First, if similar constraints hold, then similar strategies may be applicable. How have other groups confronted this problem, and what strategies have they found useful? Thus, field-level workers need specific information on strategies ^{that} may be transferable, such as puppet shows or live theater to reach the entire community, including both women and men, or women extension agents or village women's forestry committees to reach women.

Second, and more important, grassroots people need information on processes used to identify local constraints and seek locally-appropriate strategies. Learning about the experiences of other African grassroots efforts and NGOs can provide moral support, inspiration, and ideas to stimulate local action.

As specific approaches may vary from place to place, information most needed often concerns the process of identifying women's constraints and opportunities, deciding upon locally-appropriate strategies, and deciding whether external assistance would be useful for overcoming constraints. No magic formula exists for promoting women's participation in forestry -- a unique approach must be developed in each situation.

Nonetheless, much can be learned by studying the efforts undertaken to date, and sharing this information. It is not necessary for each development effort to begin entirely from scratch. This, then, is the purpose of the case studies -- to document different examples of how constraints to women's participation have been identified, and what strategies have been used to overcome these constraints.

As Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson (1988: 56-57) note, this information is also needed on the policy and programming level:

The need for an appreciation of women's role in forestry is more urgent than ever. International plans and programmes to safeguard the world's forests are being launched, the most salient of these being the FAO/UNDP's Tropical Forestry Action Plan, which calls for a doubling of the annual forestry allocation to \$8,000 million, ... The impact of these programmes on poor women and their environment must be considered with great care, and women's input must be sought.

Other major policy discussions touching on these issues include the World Commission on Environment and Development report and the Cairo Plan of Action.

Policy makers also need to better understand how to support bottom-up participation and NGOs to help people find their own solutions to development problems. In so doing, policy makers can better appreciate the types of external inputs useful in overcoming constraints to women's participation. This information can help set programming priorities, and reaffirm the need to focus on women's participation in forest development in Africa.

In 1986, The Environment Liaison Centre and the World Resources Institute co-sponsored a series of meetings on "Expanding the Role of NGOs in National Forestry Programs". At the November 1986 African regional meeting, ideas for this project were first discussed.

At this workshop, several participants proposed a workshop focusing specifically on women and forestry. They agreed that a series of case studies on women's participation in forestry should be commissioned prior to holding the workshop, so that the workshop participants could assess actual progress to date. Some colleagues volunteered to assist with project development, and fund-raising (Williams 1986, Hazelwood 1988).

The project includes three basic components. First, a series of case studies is being commissioned, to document different situations where constraints to women's participation have been identified, and what sorts of strategies have been developed to overcome these constraints. The case studies are being researched and written by local authors.

I am collaborating on the case studies with the Community Forestry Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The funding for the case study authors is being provided by FAO, with support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). SIDA has supported much of FAO's earlier work on community forestry and women's participation.

As a companion activity to the case studies, FAO also hopes to produce a series of audio-visual materials. FAO audio-visual materials are widely used for training forestry and agriculture students, and for presenting issues to policy makers. To date one filmstrip -- a slide show with accompanying audio cassette and booklet for narrating the slides -- has been produced. This filmstrip covers women's participation in the SOS Sahel Community Forestry Project in Sudan (see I(C)A Newsletter PJW-28). FAO would like to produce additional filmstrips based upon other case studies, and perhaps a video that would show women's participation in three or four different projects.

Second, a workshop is being planned, to bring together people working on these issues, to discuss the case studies and other relevant information, and to develop more general consensus on possible strategies and guidelines for action. I have written a proposal for the upcoming workshop, which has been submitted to funders. The bilingual (English-French) workshop will be for approximately thirty participants and will be held in sub-Saharan Africa. A workshop venue has not yet been chosen, but we hope to find a suitable site in West Africa. The workshop is intended for 1989, but the exact date will depend upon when the case studies are finished and when workshop funding is obtained. It will probably take at least six months to organize the workshop.

Third, after the workshop and case studies are done, the resulting information will be edited and published. Ideally such material will be made available in several publications. A resource guide for foresters and others working on grassroots development efforts will present ideas of different strategies that may be useful for overcoming different constraints. Another paper will summarize issues for policy makers and donors.

This effort to develop a project on women's participation in forestry activities in Africa is turning out to be more challenging, and more exciting, than I had originally envisioned. The process of actually finding and commissioning the case studies has been an interesting one. I sometimes feel like a detective in search of clues. Since women's participation in forestry activities has not been well-documented to present, bits of information are scattered in the development literature. Existing databases on forestry development and NGO activities provide only limited assistance. Sometimes colleagues are able to recommend some leads, which may or may not pan out.

When I ask people about forestry projects or activities that involve women -- not just "women's projects", but any community or social forestry projects where women participate -- I typically get one of three responses. The most common is "I don't know of any". Second most common is, "Gee, it would be interesting to look at women's participation in our project, but no one has ever done that. We could use some help". Rarely do I get the response that I am seeking, "You should go talk to X about Project Y, which has been doing lots to involve women."

In addition to seeking possible case studies, I am also simultaneously looking for local authors who can write these studies. The case study authors are people working in Africa with training in agronomy, forestry, or development studies, and professional experience working with women and forestry, agroforestry, and related development activities. One of the most enjoyable aspects of the project has been having a chance to meet other people working in this area in Africa.

The case studies are written to document what has actually happened in the evolution of a project. Thus, the case studies are narrative accounts, rather than original research. The case studies aim to present information from participants, to show how they perceive the project or activity.

To date, case studies have been written in Kenya and Sudan. A preliminary draft has been prepared for a project in Botswana. Another study is being written for Zimbabwe. I plan to set up at least four more case studies, preferably in French-speaking countries in western and central Africa.

I am appending a copy of the terms of reference for the case studies. Also attached are copies of the abstracts for the Kenya and Sudan studies, which you may find of interest. If you would like more details about the project, please let me know.

If you know of any possible projects or activities that would make good case studies, or possible case study authors, could you please let me know? Please feel free to pass this letter along to along colleagues who may be interested. I would greatly appreciate any assistance that you can provide.

I shall keep you posted as the project develops further.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Williams

Paula J. Williams
Forest and Society Fellow

APPENDIX. CASE STUDIES OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CASE STUDIES ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

The Community Forestry Unit of the Policy and Planning Service of the Forestry Department of FAO has, through support of the FAO/SIDA Forestry for Local Community Development Programme, explored the topic of women in forestry. This focus has resulted in many publications, the most recent being "Restoring the Balance". In this publication the issue of constraints to women's participation in forestry were raised. The case studies to be done will explore instances where the constraints to women's participation were overcome.

The case studies will give a broad, but concise overview of the projects, and of women's general situation in local society, in order to place women's participation in forestry activities in context.

The case studies will stress the local perceptions of women's involvement, priorities, and needs. Information will be presented on how a cross-section of participants view the project. A possible approach here would be to use vignettes, or quotes, from a selected number of interviewees.

Within this general approach, the report will assess the following:

1. local perceptions and local priorities of women's situational constraints to participation in forestry activities, identifying which constraints were perceived to be the most important, and how constraints were identified;
2. what sets of strategies were used to overcome these constraints;
3. benefits derived from women's participation;
4. costs associated with women's participation;
5. which specific groups of women were involved (above), including project personnel;
6. remaining constraints to further participation of women; and
7. possible future strategies for overcoming remaining constraints.

The analysis of constraints, strategies, benefits, costs, and user groups will consider factors that may influence women's participation, relative to the participation of men. The consultant will identify which factors are perceived to be important for each particular project. Project factors influencing women's participation may include, but are not limited to:

- mobility, such as religious seclusion (purdah) or lack of transportation;
- land, such as land shortages or use restrictions;
- tree ownership and use rights;
- other material resources, such as water or tools;
- education, training, skills, including access to extension services;
- cash resources, income, money, and credit;
- formal and informal organizations, such as women's groups or cooperatives;
- labor, such as women-headed households lacking male labor; and
- time, such as where women perform most of the agricultural labor.

The document will address an audience of foresters and other professionals concerned with forestry and related development issues. Each case study will consist of approximately 8,000 to 10,000 words, and will be written either in English or in French.

APPENDIX. CASE STUDIES OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

CASE STUDY #1: Women's Participation in Forestry Activities in Kenya: The Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme, Kakamega District, Kenya, by Noel A. Chavangi

This case study looks at the Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme (KWDP)'s work towards developing a self-sustaining system of tree planting to contribute to fuelwood supplies in Kakamega District of Kenya. Women in Kakamega are responsible for fuelwood gathering, while tree planting activities are dominated by the men. KWDP identified several socio-cultural constraints to women's participation in tree-raising in Kakamega. These include: (1) differences between women's and men's access to, and control of, household resources, including land and trees, (2) the division of labour and responsibilities between women and men and (3) myths, or social taboos, that control women's behaviour, and (4) the role of trees at the household level.

Using the survey findings of agroforestry activities and of the cultural background of the people of Kakamega District, KWDP designed an intervention approach that accommodates the indigenous expertise and traditional beliefs. To encourage women's participation in tree-raising activities in Kakamega, two broad complementary strategies were adopted. One strategy focused on raising awareness of fuelwood issues as a community problem, affecting both women and men, and needing the participation of both to solve. The other strategy sought to increase women's participation in growing trees, by promoting multi-purpose "fuelwood species", which are relatively fast growing, do not yet have cash values, and are not subject to cultural taboos.

A mass media extension approach was developed using first drama and song, supported by pamphlets and posters, then films, and incorporating the farmer-to-farmer extension approach. This aimed to sensitize all community members to the extent of the fuelwood problems, and to stimulate them to use their own indigenous agroforestry knowledge to formulate their own solutions, which might include increased participation of women in tree-planting activities. Men's consent to the participation of women in project activities was essential for the success of the activities aiming to achieving improvement in the fuelwood supply situation.

CASE STUDY #2: Women's Participation in the SOS Sahel Community Forestry Project: Shendi, Nile Province, Sudan, by Rosemary Furfey and Aisha Adam Sidi Osheik

This case study examines the participation of rural women in the SOS Sahel community forestry project in northern Sudan. The project activities aim to combat local desertification problems by establishing tree nurseries, woodlots and shelterbelts in close cooperation with local villages. Community awareness and discussion of these desertification issues has been stimulated by the development of innovative puppet plays.

Historically women in Northern Sudan have been influenced by Islam, local customs, and traditions. In the past women were restricted to their homes and educational opportunities were limited. Women's situation is changing, and more girls now attend school. Clearing of trees for new irrigated agricultural schemes and for fuelwood have placed new burdens on women, who traditionally have been responsible for fuelwood collection.

The women's extension team has worked closely with voluntary women's committees to involve village women. Women made shade mats and prepared seedling pots for the nursery. Due to social constraints on women's mobility, the idea of women's home nurseries was introduced. Women produced seedlings for their own planting and for project activities. Women also planted trees in the women's section of the village woodlot. Women could keep the seedlings they had grown, share them with neighbors, or sell excess seedlings to the project, thus earning income.

These strategies are compared with other efforts used to involve women in forestry projects elsewhere in Sudan. Women's participation is crucial to the success and effectiveness of the SOS Sahel project. In addition, women have now taken the initiative to begin addressing other community development needs.

APPENDIX. CASE STUDIES OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

ABOUT THE CASE STUDY AUTHORS:

Noel A. Chavangi has a bachelor's degree in agriculture. Since 1984, she has been the Extension and Training Manager for the Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme. Her research has previously examined cultural factors that constrain women's participation in forestry activities. Her work focuses on developing extension approaches to involve all community members.

Rosemary Furfey has a master's degree in environmental studies. Since 1987, she has been living in Sudan. She has worked as a forestry consultant to USAID and FAO. She has examined women's attitudes towards forestry in eastern Sudan, analyzing data from a survey conducted for FAO by Afhad University College for Women (Omdurman, Sudan). Currently she works for CARE in western Sudan.

Aisha Adam Sidi Osheik has a bachelor's degree in forestry. Since 1985, she has been an Assistant Conservator of Forests with the Forests Administration in Sudan. She works as the Regional Forestry Extension Officer in Eastern Sudan on the FAO Fuelwood Development for Energy in Sudan Project. She has developed forestry extension activities that include a women's program and that collaborate with other development programs on promoting women's income-generating activities and literacy for women.

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