

FORESTRY RESEARCH PAPER SERIES

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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON FOREST COMMITTEES

A case Study

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Sharmila Prasai

HMG-USAID-GTZ-IDRC-FORD-WINROCK PROJECT

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY IN THE

FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN NEPAL

FOREWORD

This Forestry Research Paper Series is funded through the project, "Strengthening Institutional Capacity in the Food and Agricultural Sector in Nepal," a cooperative effort by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development. This project has been made possible by substantial financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Ford Foundation.

One of the most important activities of this project is funding for problem oriented research by young professional staff of agricultural agencies of the MOA and related institutions, as well as for concerned individuals in the private sector. In particular, funding is provided by the Ford Foundation to support research activities related to the human aspects of natural resource management. This research is carried out with the active professional assistance of the Winrock staff.

The purpose of this Forestry Research Paper Series is to make the results of the research activities related to forestry available to a larger audience, and to acquaint younger staff and students with advanced methods of research and statistical analysis. It is also hoped that publication of the Series will stimulate discussion among policymakers and thereby assist in the formulation of policies which are suitable to the management of the natural resource systems upon which the development of Nepal's agriculture depends.

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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION ON FOREST COMMITTEES

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INTRODUCTION

Nepal depends heavily on its forests for supplying fuel, fodder and timber to its ever increasing population. In recent years the ecological balance has been disturbed and the forest is disappearing fast.

The 1957 Forest Nationalization Act intended to protect forest resources through the Forest Department. It was unsuccessful because the Forest Department found it difficult to implement and there was opposition from local people who felt that their traditional rights of access and use of the forest were being curtailed (Wallace, 1985).

In 1978 HMG tried to reverse the trend by permitting forests to be created on government land. These, plus Panchayat Forest (PF) and Panchayat Protected Forests (PPF), were to be handed over to local people for protection and management. The decentralization regulations introduced in 1984 were intended to further establish and foster local people's and local organizations' participation in the management and development of PF and PPF land. HMG's forest policy places strong emphasis on the importance of people's participation in this effort. The Seventh Plan states: "the situation calls for motivation of the general public to take part in afforestation in a big way. (This) cannot be undertaken only at the government level" (NPC, 1985).

It is now acknowledged by policy-makers that in many villages, both women and men are forest resource users. The need for women's participation in forestry work has been recognized. In its policy for women's development the Seventh Plan states that women's "participation in conservation, development and growth of forests will be increased". However, the plan does not outline specifically how this will happen other than through becoming "more aware of the benefits of well managed forests and through participation in the cooperative organizations".

Efforts have been made to involve women in tree planting on private and communal land, conservation education, professional, forestry positions and lately on forest committees. This study of women's participation on forest committees is an attempt to understand what factors affect their effectiveness and to encourage more women to be involved. What is learned may help others to effectively implement the strategy.

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Table 1. General Information on the Study Panchayats

	Huti	Hikila	Dhikur Pokhari	Armala	Bonch
District:	Darchula	Darchula	Kaski	Kaski	Dolakha
Population:	3005	1901	9200	5483	3750
Caste:	Chhetri(53) Brahmin(29) Kami(17)	Chhetri(75) Brahmin(15) Others(10)	Brahmin(29) Kami(20) Chhetri(17) Others(34)	Gurung(37) Brahmin(30) Chhetri(14) Others(19)	Chhetri(49) Tamang(33) Others(18)
(Parentheses indicate percentage)					
Religion:	Hindu	Hindu	Hindu(87) Buddhist	Hindu(97) Buddhist	Hindu(67) Buddhist
Agri- culture:	(88)	(90)	(97)	(85)	(90)
(Other occupations include blacksmithing, business/trade, and service)					
Crops:	Rice Maize Millet Wheat Soyabean Barley	Rice Maize Millet - Soyabean Barley	Paddy Maize Millet Wheat Soyabean Barley Potato	Paddy Maize Millet Wheat Soyabean Barley Potato Mustard Blackgram	Paddy Maize Millet Wheat Soyabean Barley Potato Mustard
Live- stock:	Cows Buffalo Bullock Sheep Goats Chickens	Cows Buffalo Sheep Goats Chickens	Cows Buffalo Sheep Goats	Cows Buffalo Bullock Sheep	Cows Buffalo Bullock Sheep Goats
Forest Development:	CFP ADO	CFP	CFP RCI		ASC

CFP = Community Forestry Project;
RCI = Rural Cottage Industries;

ADO = Agriculture Development Office;
ASC = Agriculture Sub-Center

Objectives

Concentrating on five panchayats--Huti, Hikila, Dhikur, Armala and Bonch (see Table 1)--the objectives are to:

- examine existing forest committees that have women members and gain an understanding of the processes by which they work, from the formation of the committees to implementation of management plans;
- study the specific role of the women; whether they are active or inactive, what their duties are, and whether they are just nominally included or are important to the operation;
- develop a strategy based on the findings of the study, to effectively involve more women on committees in managerial roles.

There are various strategies involving women in community forestry, such as planting trees on private land or employing them as nursery foremen, but they are beyond the scope of this study. It is limited to women's involvement in the management of community forestry. It concentrates specifically on management of PFs and PPFs.

Implementation

Eight key points were identified at the beginning of the study:

- Why and how was the committee formed?
- What is the composition of the committee?
- What is the role of the committee?
- What are the working procedures?
- What motivates the women?
- What authority do the committees have?
- Are committees needed?
- How effective are they?

Information was collected from the panchayat offices, the committees, and local leaders, using questionnaires and interviews.

Problems Encountered During the Study

A limitation is inherent in a study that studies a process rather than the end product of the process. The formation process of the committees in most cases took place over a few years, but the study team only visited the areas to collect information on one occasion. There are no official records of the process of formation so information had to be requested from committee members, rangers, District Forest Controllers (DFCs), and in the case of Huti, Hikila and Bonch, volunteers with the Volunteer Service Overseas Organization (VSOs). Data from these sources reflected personal perspectives.

The conceptual framework agreed upon at the start was found to be unworkable half way through the study period. The original framework was divided into two parts: one dealing with a "study" area composed of panchayats where there were established Forest Committees (FCs), and a "problem" area where there were no FCs, but women's groups. The idea was to apply methods that were effective in the study area in the problem

areas. However, it failed to take several factors into account.

In the problem area women join the women's group primarily to improve their literacy or gain an income, whereas women are included on FCs if it is felt they have the ability to represent a major user group.

The study area committees were organized by the Forest Department, as stipulated in the Forest Acts, to manage the PFs and PPFs that the Forest Department had handed over. The women's groups were organized by the local people. They do not automatically have the backing of the Forest Department.

The study area committees and the Forest Department prepare a management plan together, signed by them and the local panchayat. No such plan exists in the problem area. Without the backing of the Forest Department no plan could be produced.

The women's groups in the problem area were composed of young, unmarried women. They eventually marry and leave the panchayat. Young women are not experienced enough to be placed in managerial positions and they do not inspire enough confidence in the villagers to make them effective leaders and decision makers.

On the basis of these factors it was more beneficial to narrow the study down to areas where the people are trying to organize effective user-based (including women) committees for forest management. Studies of three out of an original eight panchayats were thus abandoned.

Forest Resource Situation

Forest land refers to extensive tracts covered by trees and undergrowth. It has been categorized into government forest, PF, PPF, and private forest (Table 2). Over the last 20 years, in all the areas studied, forest resources, especially fuelwood, have become less easily available. It takes much longer now to collect firewood, timber, fodder and leaves (Table 3), because local forest reserves are depleted so the people have to go much further to find what they need. Other reasons include restrictions on cutting in the local forest, having to pay for timber, and a local forest coming under the jurisdiction of another panchayat when boundaries were altered.

 Table 2. Area (ha) and Types of Forest

Type of Forest	Huti	Hikila	Dhikur Pokhari	Armala	Bonch
Government Forest (GF)	101	NR	150	75	500
PF	40	52	45	21	-
PPF	40	90	125	-	35
Private Forest	-	3	30	5	-
	---	---	---	---	---
Total	181	145	350	100	535

NR = Not Reported

Fodder collection depends on the type of forest and its present condition and in many places dependence on alternative fodder sources has also increased. These sites will also eventually suffer.

Table 3. Time Taken to Collect Forest Products

Collection Time	Huti	Hikila	Dhikur Pokhari	Armala	Bonch
20 years ago	4-6 hrs	1-3 hrs	¶ 6 hrs	1-3 hrs	1-3 hrs
Present	24 hrs	24 hrs	¶ 6 hrs	¶ 6 hrs	¶ 6 hrs

Source: Field Survey

Forest Management Practices

Before degradation of the forests became acute access to forest products was relatively free and was allocated among communities on the basis of proximity and traditional patterns of use. Traditional management systems arose spontaneously in places where forests were under greatest pressure. In Armala more than 50 years ago, people began to register areas of forest as private in return for royalty payments for felled timber. They protected these areas themselves. In other areas cutting restrictions were enforced by a local watcher paid with grain donations from local households. This system existed in Huti, Dhikur Pokhari and Armala. In Huti the watcher was answerable to an informal Forest Committee. In Dhikur Pokhari and Ward 6 of Armala, he was answerable to local leaders.

In many cases nationalization did little to change access to or use of forests despite the introduction of a permit system for cutting timber and green fuelwood. Where no restrictions existed, forests such as those in Hikila and Bonch became badly degraded. In Dhikur Pokhari the traditional protection system broke down and abuse of the permit system led to uncontrolled use of the forest until local users reintroduced their own protection system. In Armala nationalization had little influence on the way people regarded the forest, and traditional protection systems continued. These areas are still regarded as private and management practices vary.

Ward 6 of Armala was the only panchayat to employ a watcher. His job was to enforce a rotational cutting system in the government forest and restrictions according to the owner's wishes in private forests. Technically, all the forest in Ward 6 is government forest, but it was given to the panchayat as PPF. Access is restricted to a single ward. At present most dry fuelwood is collected from a large area of government forest outside the ward, to which all wards of the panchayat and even people from outside the panchayat have access for one month of the year (outside users pay a tax). There has never been a watcher in this forest and it is now badly degraded. A watcher has, however, recently been installed in the PPF.

In Dhikur Pokhari protection measures were instigated over 30 years ago to save the extensive but degraded forest areas. The forest was divided between local groups and protected accordingly. Some forest was managed almost continuously since then under a system which allowed only the branches of deformed trees to be cut and limited fuelwood collection to one week of the year. Since it was given to the panchayat as PPF and a management plan devised, cutting has become more extensive. The local users have access to forest in another ward but as more FCs have been formed throughout the panchayat, access may be restricted in future.

In Huti, most remaining forest areas are strictly allocated among user groups. One large area serving five wards has been protected for 33 years. The restrictions which allow collection of dry fuel only and limited grass and leaf collection are maintained, although the forest became PPF in 1984. Employment of a local watcher answerable to the FC was discontinued at the suggestion of the District Forest Controller (DFC) in 1986. He was replaced by the Forest Department. The users also have access to extensive forest outside the panchayat. These areas supply most of their fuelwood and fodder needs.

Fifteen years ago dense forest still existed at the northern end of Bonch panchayat and was sufficient for local needs. When construction of a road began ten years ago demand for fuelwood grew. Easy access to the Kathmandu market became, and still is, the main cause of the destruction of the forest, often through illegal cutting. Although a permit system exists, the Forest Department is unable to enforce it. An attempt was made in 1981 to protect the area by setting a tariff for fuelwood but it failed because local leaders were unable to enforce it. Political pressure to keep the forest open did not help the situation.

In Hikila political influences have been responsible for lack of protection in the past. Twenty years ago, there was forest relatively close to the village but it was already in danger of depletion. Several attempts to close off the area failed because village leaders reopened them to gain election support. There is a large area which is now PPF and serves the whole panchayat. Beyond it, extensive areas of dense government forest are accessible after a four-hour walk.

FORMATION AND FUNCTIONS OF FOREST COMMITTEES

Need for and Formation of Committees

In every studied panchayat, it was the DFC or DFO staff who first saw a need for a Forest Committee (FC). In Huti, Hikila and Dhikur Pokhari it was specifically to enforce protection of the PPF or local forest. In Armala and Bonch the committee was set up to encourage community involvement in forest protection and management.

The local communities in each panchayat approved of the idea in general, but their perception of the need did not always coincide with the DFC's. In Huti and Armala, although the community agreed that women should be involved in protecting the forest, means of protection already existed so a committee purely for this purpose was not considered a priority. In Bonch the users also felt a forest committee would be generally beneficial but they did not perceive an urgent need for one.

In Dhikur Pokhari and Hikila all felt that there was an urgent need to protect forest resources from uncontrolled cutting and that a forest committee was necessary to enforce this.

In Huti and Hikila the formation process was similar. Both panchayats had participated in the Community Forestry Development Project (CFDP) for four or five years, and the people were therefore familiar with the idea of forest protection. In both, the DFC called a meeting specifically to discuss the formation of a committee, at which attendance was limited to a few individuals and local panchayat leaders. The DFC easily persuaded the men to accept the idea of a women's committee. Those present chose the women they thought would be appropriate for the task. In Hikila some political appointments were made. In neither case were the women consulted during any part of the process. There was also no discussion of the specific duties of the new FC. In Huti this meeting proved sufficient to establish the committee and despite lack of subsequent input by the DFO, the committee became operative. In Hikila, however, a second meeting was called at which some changes were made in membership, notably the chairman. This was prompted by a VSO although the actual choice was made by the women present. Neither committee was registered officially until 18 months later.

In Dhikur Pokhari an informal committee had existed for some time to implement a cutting agreement regarding the local forest, and everyone in the ward was familiar with this system of control. The idea of a formal committee (one officially recognized by the District Forest Office) was instigated by the DFC when the forest was handed over to the panchayat as PPF. Its object was to draw up a management plan to protect the forest. The ward leaders held a well-attended meeting to which only user groups were invited. The formation of an official committee was proposed and agreed upon and seven men were elected members. A year later a woman was added at the suggestion of the DFC and other members of the forest staff. The committee was active from the start without further input from the DFO, and the addition of a woman made no obvious difference to its effectiveness or activities. The committee was registered at the DFO immediately after its formation.

In Armala it was again the DFC who suggested that women should form the committee. It was formed after three well-attended meetings and much discussion about what the committee would do. The DFO was represented at the meetings at the request of the community. The Community Forestry Assistant (CFA) strongly influenced the membership to the extent of placing two local leaders on the committee and limiting the overall number of members. Women were included in the vote by general consent. They were elected on the basis of how active they were seen to be at public meetings and on their leadership qualities. Although the committee was not registered until five months later when the panchayat office also gave its approval, it became active immediately.

In Bonch some circumstances at the time of formation of the FC were similar to those in Huti and Hikila; it was formed after a single meeting in a panchayat that was familiar with the forestry activities of Integrated Hill Development Project (IHDP) but had not been directly involved. However, the meeting was not held specifically to form an FC. The idea arose spontaneously during the discussions. At the meeting the DFO was represented only by a ranger. A VSO and five women from the

Darchula FC gave the local women confidence. Neither the specific duties of the FC nor the appropriateness of a women's FC as opposed to a male or mixed committee were discussed. The pradhan pancha and ward leaders selected the chairwoman and secretary and other women then proposed themselves as members. The ranger set a limit on the number of members when it seemed that the committee would become unduly biased towards certain wards. The committee was inactive until the DFC sanctioned it.

In all panchayats the DFC was important in the formation process, either because he suggested the idea as in Huti, Hikila and Armala, or because he sanctioned it as in Dhikur Pokhari and Bonch. DFO staff were also influential where the involvement of women was concerned.

The amount of discussion prior to formation varied. In Huti, Hikila and Bonch, there was almost no discussion except at the meeting where the FC was formed and even then, in Huti and Hikila, the idea of a women's FC rather than a men's or mixed one was not debated. In Armala and Dhikur Pokhari, where an informal committee already existed with a history of forest management, considerable discussion took place.

Representation at the meetings varied. In Huti and Hikila the women were not consulted even when they were elected; they were volunteered into the committee. The men and local leaders made all the decisions.

In Bonch both men and women were consulted but they were not representative of the whole community. Armala and Dhikur Pokhari were fairly represented because only a single ward was represented and all interested parties were present at the meeting. In Armala, Dhikur Pokhari and Bonch members were democratically elected and both men and women influenced the decisions.

Follow-through by the DFC and the FC itself varied. In Armala and Dhikur Pokhari the FC and DFO continued the process. In Huti and Bonch there was no follow through from the DFO. In Hikila a VSO continued to help the committee.

Composition of the Committees

By Ward: Only the FC's in Hikila and Bonch officially represent the whole panchayat. The Huti FC represents five wards and the FCs of Armala and Dhikur Pokhari represent a single ward each.

Of the two panchayat-wide committees, only the Hikila FC represents all wards although membership is not equal; over 60 percent of members are from four wards and one ward has only a single representative. Four out of nine wards are not represented on the Bonch committee and 66 percent come from only two wards.

In Huti the committee is dominated by one out of five wards which claims 66 percent of the membership. The lack of representation by ward has been recognized by the Huti and Bonch committees as a problem but not by the Hikila FC.

By Number of Members: The Hikila FC has the largest membership (47) but only about 15 are fully involved in all meetings and decisions. Hikila is followed by Huti which has 20 members (seven active) and in

Bonch eight of 17 members are active. Armala has 11 members but three male members are only nominally included. The Dhikur Pokhari committee of eight is fully active.

At the time of formation even where there was no clear idea of what the FC was for, everyone expressed a wish to participate, which, if not controlled, gave rise to large memberships. In Huti the number was increased by the DFC to balance ward representation, and in Hikila it was the wish of the women that all women should have the right to participate and make decisions. In Huti and Hikila, once chosen, it was difficult to drop existing members without causing bad feelings.

In Hikila lack of full, active participation is a complaint though it is not considered important. In Huti the core members do not see it as a problem, but other community members do as it reduces the FC to an effective two ward committee.

By Sex: The members of Huti, Hikila and Bonch committees are all women and Armala is effectively all women since the men are purely nominal. Due to outside direction, Dhikur Pokhari is essentially a men's committee. It has only one woman member.

In Huti and Bonch the lack of male representation is seen as a problem by the committee members, because if a man goes to the forest, the women cannot admonish them. The core women members in Bonch also said that the committee could not work without the influence of the men or local leaders. In Armala and Hikila there is apparently no problem with the lack of male representation given the present scope of the FC.

By Caste: Exact proportional representation by caste is not generally considered of major importance although it was a consideration at the time of formation. Brahmins and Chhetris predominate but in four panchayats the lower castes are represented.

By Marital Status: Most committee members are married. Bonch is the exception with seven of the original 17 unmarried. It is generally felt by FC members that committee members should be married women because they are usually older, more mature and are a stable part of the community. In Bonch five members left the committee to marry. In Armala a girl who left was replaced by a married woman.

By Age Group: More than 80 percent of each committee (except Bonch) are over 31 years old. Those over 40 are more mature and self-confident and are more likely to contribute meaningfully to FC work. In Huti and Hikila most older women had been in women's organizations before.

By Education/Economic Status: The majority of FC members but particularly women are illiterate; only one woman on the Hikila committee and two in Armala were capable of writing minutes, but they did not have the necessary administrative skills or experience to do so. They required help from either the men or the DFO. In Dhikur Pokhari the secretary could write and thus was able to keep minutes. In Huti and Bonch this work was done by men and the DFO staff. Lack of education was seen as a problem by these committees and was given as a reason to include men, but though the other committees realized illiteracy was a drawback it did not hinder them because there was at least one literate member.

The economic situation of the members makes no difference within the committees; everyone is considered equal.

Table 4. Committee Composition

Characteristics	Huti N=20*	Hikila N=47	Dhikur Pokhari N=8	Armala N=11	Bonch N=17
Sex					
Male	-	-	7	3	-
Female	20	47	1	8	17
Caste					
Brahmin	3	6	7	3	-
Chetri	13	32	1	2	4
Gurung	-	-	-	4	-
Tamang	-	-	-	-	8
Kami	4	9	-	2	5
Marital Status					
Married	18	44	8	7	7
Unmarried	2	-	-	3	7
Separated/Widow	-	3	-	1	3
Education					
Illiterate	17	45	6	5	16
Literate	3	2	2	6	1
Age Group (years)					
Below 20	2	-	-	-	4
21-30	1	7	-	2	6
31-40	6	16	3	6	4
41-50	8	19	5	3	3
Over 51	3	5	-	-	-
Economic Status**					
Low	20	46	2	1	5
Middle	-	1	6	10	12
High	-	-	-	-	-

* 'N' denotes the total number of members in the committee.

** Low = clothes/food considered insufficient for basic family needs.

Middle = clothes/food sufficient.

High = clothes/food in excess of basic family needs.

Source: Field Survey

Motivation of Committee Members

Four committees--Huti, Hikila, Bonch and Dhikur Pokhari--were strongly motivated. Motivation of women was achieved by first persuading the men that the responsibility for forest protection should lie with the women and then approaching the women both directly and indirectly using the pressure exerted by their menfolk. In Hikila this required

much time and effort by the VSO there. In Bonch a group of women from Darchula were very influential. In all cases active support by the local men and community leaders was a motivating force. Huti, Bonch and Dhikur Pokhari are similar in that the forest needed to be protected from outsiders. Many of the more interested members claimed to be motivated by a feeling of responsibility for the forest resources and a desire to protect and manage it for the collective good of the users. The women in particular seemed to be concerned for the forests and more prepared to translate this into action.

Some members had personal motives, including personal satisfaction from achievements and the belief that membership gave them personal status in the community. Dismissal from the committee is an insult.

Financial gain was often anticipated as were opportunities to go on study tours. In Bonch several members joined with these expectations and left when they were not realized. In Hikila study tours became an issue when the committee size was increased. There were also problems when the choice of participants for the study tours caused jealousy among members. Some felt that benefits should be forthcoming in view of the additional responsibility and work they were taking on. Study tours and seminars were seen by the more serious members as important for training; they thought that a prize should be offered to the most active FC.

Role of the Committees

In Huti, committee members saw the role of an FC as making arrangements for the collection of forest products, selling trees, informing people of decisions, patrolling the forest, supervision of the Ban Heralu (forest watcher), and taking action against culprits by informing them of the rules and fining them if necessary. They see themselves protecting the forests through authority rather than cooperation.

In Hikila their role is "to protect the forest, visit the nursery, do extension work and walk around the PPF." Protection was implemented first through a management agreement and later by controlling access to the forest. They elicit cooperation rather than enforcing decisions. The women are also involved in fund raising, improving village sanitation and general village development work.

The Bonch committee includes planting trees on barren areas among its roles. The core women see their role encompassing responsibility for most aspects of forestry in the panchayat as well as making and enforcing rules. The remaining eight women said that they did not know what their specific rights and duties were.

In Armala the FC's role is "to establish a plantation, do village development work and protect the existing forest". The women's committee felt they had only a limited role in forestry activities after planting. Forest protection was effectively carried out by Ban Heralus, and they had no ideas of what further forestry work to take on without direction from the DFO. Their main function was raising funds to improve school facilities and the drinking water supply.

In Dhikur Pokhari the role of the FC is "to protect the forest and supply fuelwood and other forest products to the people". This is done

through a management plan. The committee is viewed as a legislative body making rules to control forest use but employing a sub-committee to implement them and a Ban Heralu to enforce them.

Only Dhikur Pokhari and Armala FCs had a clear idea of their role from the start. Tasks were identified before the need for a FC was suggested. In Dhikur Pokhari the committee was formed to continue a job originally carried out by ward leaders. In Armala the women decided to become involved in planting and development activities as effective protection was already given by the Ban Heralu. The FC is not clear how it can be involved in protection and so has not adopted a role in this area.

When they were formed neither Huti nor Bouch FCs understood exactly what they were supposed to do but over time the women's role developed under a variety of influences. In Huti the DFC specifically mentioned to the local leaders a possible role. In Bouch visiting women from Darchula suggested that protection would be an appropriate role. In discussion with them, the idea developed. There was no input from the local community or the DFC himself.

Where the committee's role developed under the influences of elected members, general villagers, community leaders and the Forestry Department, there is sometimes confusion over definition of the committee's role. In Bouch the FC's role was developed in isolation from the community and the DFC which has led to most people remaining ignorant. Since they have not participated in discussions, they have no idea of what role the FC should adopt. In Huti the initial conflict was over how much responsibility the women should have, especially when their view of their role differed from that of local leaders. Later there was conflict over responsibility for appointment of the Ban Heralu (initially the right of the pradhan pancha). It was written in the first meeting's minutes that "the women should support a men's FC which would be primarily responsible for the forest". This attitude was also taken over the development of a demonstration plot and management plan. Sale and distribution of forest products is particularly seen as men's work.

In Hikila, Armala, and Dhikur Pokhari there is general agreement that the role adopted by the committee is appropriate though in Armala this conflicted with men's traditional role in village development work. Once the women proved themselves, they were accepted.

The DFCs see a far wider scope for the women than their present role allows. In Darchula the DFC's idea is "protection of PPFs and PFs, preparation of a management plan, supervision of nurseries and Ban Heralus, involvement in identification of plantation and PPF sites, teaching other women, involvement in private planting and informing the DFO of decisions and proposals made by FCs"

Working Procedures of the Committees

Record Keeping: In Huti, Hikila and Armala minutes were either incomplete or not kept at all depending on whether any men with experience were present.

Meeting Frequency: Four committees (except Armala) call meetings once a month; all five call additional meetings as felt necessary. Records show that they were only attended regularly on a monthly basis in Dhikur Pokhari and Hikila. In Huti, Hikila and Bonch the frequency of meeting was suggested by either the DFC or the VSO.

Attendance: Only in Dhikur Pokhari and Armala are meetings fully attended. In Bonch the members who have not left the committee for various reasons all attend. A core of eight or nine members in Huti and 12 or 15 members in Hikila attend regularly. It is felt that the majority need only attend for major decisions although resentment was expressed by some members at this arrangement. Non-attendance therefore seems to be not through a lack of interest but because of a lack of opportunity since the chairwoman does not make an effort to invite all members to meetings.

Decision Making and Discussion: In the women's committees of Huti, Hikila and Bonch, discussion and decision-making skills are lacking. They often require help from local men, the DFO or the VSO. All committees except Bonch have a procedure for involving the community or local leaders in decisions over issues that they feel they lack the authority to deal with. In Armala and Dhikur Pokhari ward level meetings are held; Huti and Hikila committees usually invite local leaders to attend meetings or to sanction decisions made.

In most cases the committee and community felt the decision-making process was fair. Only in Huti were there complaints that the chairman did not fully consult all members over decisions taken outside meetings.

Implementation: In Armala, Dhikur Pokhari and Hikila the FCs rely on members to pass on news of decisions and suggestions. This is usually effective. In Bonch difficulties arose because the user group is large and the committee is small. Also, many members did not want the responsibility. In Huti, local leaders were useful in this regard.

Decision implementation was usually the responsibility of the whole user group, who were expected to observe any restrictions set by the FC. For specific overseeing and supervisory work, responsibility was delegated to individuals, such as a Ban Heralu, or, as in Dhikur Pokhari, to a temporary sub-committee. Again the Bonch committee lacked means of implementing decisions although committee members themselves were active and were sometimes successful at persuading others to participate.

Need, Acceptance and Support

In all five panchayats, local leaders and the community recognized the need for a protective organization to police the forests, enforce existing rules and close loopholes with new rules. In Hikila and Dhikur Pokhari, the committee controls access. The FC is seen as necessary for management as well as protection.

In Huti and Armala the need for women's participation was specifically mentioned. Women are the main users and are the strongest influence on other women. In Armala, women claimed that if they did not do village development work, it would not be done.

The committees need the support of local leaders, community, and the DFC, and the dedication of the chosen members to be a success. Acceptance can be passive; it does not need to be demonstrated. Support can be both moral and practical. As interpretations of the committees' roles varied among different groups, so acceptance and support was based on whether each group felt that the FC was doing what they perceived was its duty. In Hikila, Dhikur Pokhari and Armala, the villagers demonstrated their support by obeying the rules, except when the Hikila FC attempted to change grass cutting practices in the PF. The DFCs demonstrated their support by providing technical assistance where necessary.

In Huti and Bonch, support for the FCs was not obvious because their role was not clear. The various groups had differing opinions on why a committee was needed, if at all. They had reservations about the amount of responsibility given to the women. In Huti, local leaders initially gave their support by attending meetings, and being involved in decision-making, but after conflict arose between them, the committee and the DFC over the appointment of a Ban Heralu the community divided into two factions. The DFC's support was ambiguous and committee activities ceased soon after.

In Bonch because of lack of general understanding about the FC, its role and how it might be useful to the community, overt support and acceptance was weak. DFO support was shown only through the presence of a ranger at the meetings. Members were not happy with the FC's role as defined by the pradhan pancha and DFC and soon lost interest.

Committee Authority

No committee had formally declared its authority but all except Bonch felt that they had sufficient authority to carry out their decisions. In each case the FC recognized a limit to its authority and put difficult decisions to a community vote.

The authority of the FC in Dhikur Pokhari has not been questioned because they have the support of the community, and the committee itself recognizes its limits. When it feels unsure, a vote is taken at ward level. They realize that their authority comes through obtaining a consensus of opinion. They have a written management plan approved by the panchayat and the DFC in which their duties are made clear.

The Hikila committee also has a management plan but it is not accepted. The DFO has not made his support visible, the role of women is unclear and the FC prefers to use coercion to implement its decisions. The FC managed to change the pattern of fuelwood collection in the forest but was less successful in altering traditional grazing and grass cutting habits. The difference was that Ban Heralus, backed by the Forest Department, enforced the former, but those picked by the committee to oversee grazing could not enforce the rules.

In Huti and Bonch the FCs have been able to implement very few decisions (planting and fencing) and in Huti the women mainly continue to enforce decisions that were made before they existed as a committee. The support of some other group is needed to enforce their decisions. The authority of the Huti committee extends to grass cutting restrictions (traditionally women's work) but not to the sale of products.

The Bonch committee has no authority except when supported either by the panchayat or the Forest Department since there is no popular consensus on its role or even the reason for its existence.

Because they realize their authority is limited, the FCs of Bonch, Hikila, and Huti have all at some time expressed the need for formal written support from the DFC. The DFO is a recognized authority with considerable power and the FCs would like some of that authority officially delegated to them. The DFO sees their authority being obtained through a general consensus for the FCs activities, expressed in a written management plan.

FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVENESS

Six factors influence the effectiveness of a committee:

- organizers' knowledge of past forest use systems;
- discussion on role, rights and authority prior to FC formation;
- selection and motivation of committee members;
- working procedures of the committee; and
- participation of the DFC, DFO staff, and others.

In Huti the committee did the work it felt responsible for, but not without problems caused by lack of authority. It never functioned as an independent body and required constant support and input by local leaders; a need that eventually caused it to become inactive.

In Hikila the committee carried out all its main objectives. It was recognized by the community as having the authority to do the work and was therefore able to function independently.

In both Dhikur Pokhari and Armala, FC objectives were achieved due to unquestioned authority. They were highly effective. However, in Armala the FC did mainly village development work and not much forestry.

The Bonch committee achieved very few of its objectives and was not supported. It was largely ineffective.

Knowledge of Past Forest Use Systems

Lack of knowledge is the main reason for the ineffectiveness of the Huti and Bonch committees. In Huti the organizer was the DFC. Although familiar with certain aspects of the traditional protection system, he was not informed of the previous existence and activities of the mer's committee. Formation of a FC interfered with the traditional system. It was also not clear to the DFC who constituted the user group of the PPF. The villagers began to rely too heavily on a watcher to protect the forest; the main users were women and to prevent overcutting, forest protection should have been made their responsibility.

Because knowledge of the situation was incomplete, the role and membership of the resulting committee were unsuitable. The committee

duplicated the efforts of the existing committee which cast doubt on the authority of the new committee.

In Bonch none of the organizers lived in the area, and they had no background information. Assumptions were based on experiences elsewhere and on visible evidence, but no details were requested or dialogue initiated. The organizers thought it would be beneficial to have a committee responsible for the forest and since women were the main users, they should take an active part regardless of local customs.

In Hikila the DFC was again the organizer, but he was well informed of the situation, and his views coincided with those of the users. However, if the DFC had not initiated formation of a women's committee, it probably would not have been formed since there was no precedent.

In Armala and Dhikur Pokhari the main organizers were the local people. Familiarity with the old system by the organizers allowed them to integrate the FC into the existing system rather than setting it up to run concurrently as in the case of Huti.

Summary: The organizers' perception of the needs of the community depended on their knowledge of local customs and forest protection systems. If this was incomplete, their views did not necessarily coincide with those of the user group; they were biased or narrow which sometimes led to incorrect identification of an appropriate role and membership for the new FC. Detailed knowledge of existing management systems is beneficial because it is easier to build on a traditional system of rights and authority rather than try to replace it with a new one. Outside organizers have the advantage that their perspective may be wider, allowing them to introduce new ideas or identify potentials that locals had not considered, but they must be informed.

Discussion Prior to Formation

Where discussion was extensive the result was shared perception of the role, rights and authority of the committee. This was the case in Dhikur Pokhari, Armala and Hikila. In Dhikur Pokhari and Hikila preparation of management plans encouraged discussion and clarification. Where a traditional system existed the role of the committee was more readily understood, and the traditional system was hardly altered when the FC and management plan were formed. Both members and users recognized the limits to the committee's authority and the users' full support gave it automatic right to make and implement decisions within these limits.

Where issues were not discussed and the committee's role developed piecemeal, views conflicted. The FC developed either in isolation (Bonch) or without sufficient discussion and feedback (Huti) and it became impossible to discuss problems arising from differences in interpretation and come to a compromise. Even where a traditional system existed, unless new roles and rights were clearly defined, confusion resulted. In Huti there was insufficient discussion and understanding of how the newly imposed system should function.

In Bonch, the organizers recognized the problem as one of differences in interpretation, but they never discussed it so the committee remained ineffective. Support from the DFC was essential but was not

forthcoming because the ranger who represented him was not qualified to lead discussions. Questions on authority can only be answered by the DFC unless there is a set policy that rangers can refer to. A written description of rights does not exist.

There must also be a clear understanding between the FC and the DFC. The DFC's view is often broader than that of the community. The FC is sometimes asked to perform a role for which it will not take responsibility. In Huti and Hikila, the DFCs' idea of the FC's work extended to plantation and nursery supervision. This was considered the work of the watcher and Naikes (nursery foremen), who are responsible to the rangers or CFA's. While the FC is able to check attendance of local staff, it does not have the technical knowledge nor the financial control to supervise the nursery foreman. The FC cannot effectively fill this role under these circumstances.

Summary: For a committee to be effective its role, rights and authority must be understood by all and this is only possible through discussion with the user community. Often discussion fails to take place because the need is not recognized or the organizers do not devote sufficient time and resources. Management plans are useful because they enable such discussion to take place. Where traditional systems exist, rights and authority are often widely recognized, but changes must be clearly specified to avoid confusion.

Member Selection and Motivation

Process of Selection: Selection of members in Dhikur Pokhari and Armala was by general consensus of the community. This ensured that the final committees were truly representative of the community and had their full support.

In Huti and Hikila local leaders selected the first women members. In Hikila the procedure was dominated by one individual whose choice was politically motivated. In both, the choice of chairman was not fully supported by the other members or the users but the problem was never sufficiently addressed. In Huti poor leadership has contributed to the committee's problems and Hikila an early change of leadership caused conflict and broke continuity. Huti ended with a committee that was unrepresentative of the user group, and both Huti and Hikila are now experiencing problems arising from the appointment of unsuitable people. (In Huti a move to change some members of the committee and to increase its effectiveness was unsuccessful because it would have been difficult without publicly humiliating those members and everyone was anxious to avoid this.)

At the selection meeting in Bonch only a small fraction of the user community was represented and members were chosen only from those at the meeting. As the majority of users were not involved, they had no reason to accept the committee or support its attempts to protect the forest.

However, selection of members in their absence and without their consent does not necessarily mean that they will be ineffective. Activity of members is also related to attitudes and personality.

Representativeness: Dhikur Pokhari, Armala and Hikila committees are fully representative of the user community. Acceptance by the users gives them authority to do their work.

Both Huti and Bonch committees realized later that women's representation only was insufficient, and both then elected men onto the committee. This was necessary to give the committee authority over the male sector of the community and to increase its credibility. In Bonch the committee realized that its ineffectiveness stemmed from lack of authority and so the men they chose were the two most powerful panchayat leaders, the pradhan panch and the upa-pradhan panch.

Leadership: Poor leadership of the Huti committee reduced the committee's effectiveness. Although strong and decisive, the chairwoman failed to ensure that all members attended meetings and made decisions without consulting the majority of the committee. This sparked resentment among the latter especially when the chairwoman, on behalf of the FC, supported a candidate for the position of watcher which other members did not agree with. Factions developed and for several months the FC was rendered completely ineffective.

In Dhikur Pokhari and Bonch both leaders had past experience in such positions and were known to be capable leaders. In Dhikur Pokhari an ex-pradhan pancha who had been responsible for forest protection was chosen, and in Bonch the president of the women's organization was chosen. In Hikila and Armala the leaders were chosen by the women on the basis of their motivation and commitment to the work.

Marital Status and Age: Married women and those between 20 and 50 years of age were the most effective committee members. Married women are a stable part of the community, generally older, more experienced and self-confident. Women with families to care for are more willing to accept responsibility to protect the forest for the future. However, although unmarried girls are seen as a liability it is recognized that they are now the most literate segment of the female community.

On all four women's committees, the women involved are more independent than most Nepali women. In Huti and Hikila Chhetri wool spinners are considered stronger and more independent because their men often leave the village for months at a time. The women make frequent visits to the market to buy and sell basic foodstuffs and wool. In Armala, the Gurung women are traditionally independent, allowed free movement, and run tea-shops. Women with husbands in the army are used to taking complete responsibility for the family. In Bonch, Tamang and Chhetri women dominate the committees. Tamang women there are bold and independent.

Summary: If most of the user group is involved in the selection process, the resulting committee is more likely to be representative and therefore to receive the support it needs to exercise its authority. Selection by an unrepresentative group, particularly if political or personal interests are involved, is likely to result in a biased committee that does not command support, and may consist of people who are inappropriate for the work involved.

Once members have been chosen it is difficult to change them without causing resentment, so it is important to choose good people the

first time. Selection of members in their absence does not mean they will be ineffective members as long as they are interested.

Whether men or women or both should be involved depends on how the committee's role has been defined. However, a broadly representative committee involving both sexes is more likely to have the support of users and thus the authority to implement its decisions.

A capable, accepted leader is important for the credibility of the committee. Leadership qualities include the ability to inspire others, initiate and direct discussion, be outspoken without being dominant and to have a democratic viewpoint.

Both old and young have skills to offer but ideally members, particularly women, should be married and middle-aged.

Motivation: Personal satisfaction was particularly important in Armala and Hikila. The opportunity to gain respect from others by being an FC member increased women's self-confidence. Conversely, in Bonch where the FC is not recognized or able to function effectively, membership results in discouragement through frustration and feelings of impotence. Expectations of personal gain through financial remuneration or study tours led to problems on where the situation was not made clear at the outset and then expectations were not realized. Incentives can also cause jealousy if they are not administered with sufficient sensitivity.

Whether committee members are motivated has a direct influence on their effectiveness. They may be motivated by personal satisfaction, financial gain or because they feel they are doing a worthwhile duty. The desire to care for local forest resources was common among FC members which justifies a community approach to forest management.

Summary: Ideally motivation should be through expectations of collective benefits, but personal satisfaction is also a strong and potentially positive force when not linked to expectations of tangible benefits such as money. Women may be more easily motivated in this way than men. Women can be equally discouraged when personal satisfaction is not forthcoming. Incentives are a powerful source of motivation, but they have to be administered carefully to avoid disappointment and jealousy.

Working Procedures

Venue of Meeting: This was only an issue where the venue was not acceptable to all members, as in Huti. The meeting place was convenient for members of the two wards that dominated the committee. Members from other wards resented the additional time burden placed on them and the fact that they were not informed of meetings in time to attend. This decreased effectiveness by increasing imbalance in representation and reducing support for the FC.

Attendance: Meetings of small committees, Armala and Dhikur Pokhari, were generally fully attended. With fewer members it is more essential for the credibility of the committee that everyone attends.

With large committees this is not necessarily so. In Huti and Bonch partial attendance reduced effectiveness in that it further reduced the

representativeness of wards which were already underrepresented, but in Hikila the fact that only 12-15 members attend regularly has had no effect. The core members are regarded as the committee proper with the right to make decisions.

Decision-Making: Where limits to authority are recognized, major decisions may be referred to a higher level such as local leaders, the panchayat committee or the general community, and the committee is more likely to be effective. In this situation no decisions are taken that lack general support and therefore there is no major resistance to their implementation. Huti and Hikila occasionally made use of local leaders, and Hikila called a general meeting on one occasion. Bonch developed no such system, which contributed to the FC's ineffectiveness.

In some cases there was a lack of consistency in recognizing the limits of the FC's authority. The Huti and Hikila FCs sought the approval of local leaders over some decisions but then exceeded their authority over others. Huti did this in an attempt to appoint a Ban Heralu of their choice and Hikila when it tried to change traditional communal grass cutting arrangements.

Implementation Procedure: Committees that had a well developed procedure for informing the community of their decisions were more effective in implementing them. Ward-based committees did this through public meetings and committee members informing the people. In Hikila the responsibility fell entirely on FC members and often entailed house-to-house and village-to-village visits. In Huti responsibility was of both the FC members and local leaders, the latter being needed to reach villages in other wards. Bonch had no such procedure.

The means of implementing decisions varied. In Hikila eliciting the cooperation of the users was seen as the way to effectively implement committee decisions. In Bonch and Huti people were informed, but fear of the committee and its right to punish offenders was seen as critical for effective enforcement of decisions. In Bonch the FC was unable to delegate responsibility for implementation to any group since again they lacked support and communications were poor.

Record Keeping: Adequate record keeping is not essential for a committee to be able to work effectively. It is, however, desirable that accounts are kept for the Forest Department.

Summary: The venue and timing of meetings is only of consequence if it prevents full attendance at meetings. This is critical where the committee is so small that nonattendance introduces an imbalance in representation or where those not attending represent a single group whose interests would not otherwise be taken into account. Where the FC is large, a core group may emerge naturally and provided its authority is accepted, attendance of the other committee members is not crucial.

Committees with an effective decision-making procedure were those where the limits to their authority were clearly understood and where major decisions were referred to higher levels.

Effective implementation of decisions initially depends on keeping users informed. Responsibility for implementation must be clearly as-

signed and, where communal responsibility is necessary, there should be general support for the FC or it must have authority to punish offenders.

Participation of DFO Staff/Volunteer/Other Outsiders

In Motivation: In Huti and Dhikur Pokhari the people were already strongly motivated to protect their forest, so the influence of the CFA, ranger and DFC was not essential. In Hikila the DFC was active in changing men's attitudes to protection, while in Bonch those who attended the first meeting were motivated by the VSO and ranger. In Armala forestry officials made no attempt to motivate the people and therefore the committee was never made aware that a wider role could exist for them in forest protection.

To Help Identify the Need for a Committees: The DFCs helped identify the need for committees, but in Huti and Hikila this was less effective than it might have been because the issue was not widely discussed. In Bonch and Armala the need for the committee was not discussed with the user community at all resulting in doubt about whether the committee had a role in protection; many users had little understanding of what the committee had been formed to do.

To Introduce New Ideas: DFCs can play an important role in the adoption of new ideas because of their status. They are able to suggest ideas that might not occur to the local community because they lack an overall perspective of the situation or the relevant skills. In Dhikur Pokhari, the DFC introduced the management plan and greater scope in cutting which the local users had probably not considered. However, there can be drawbacks when the community is afraid to criticize or discuss the ideas of the DFC or Forestry Office staff. In Huti and Hikila, the DFC introduced the idea of a women's committee but only in the latter case was it really appropriate and further discussion on the subject might have made this clear.

Motivating Women: If the DFC gives his moral support, the women gain both confidence and status. In Huti and Hikila, women were motivated to work on the committee, not directly by the DFC himself but by village men, who had heard the DFC specifically state that he thought protection was women's work. In Armala also, the women formed a committee with the direct support and approval of the DFC.

VSOs, particularly women, can be influential if they are accepted members of the community. A volunteer is employed specifically to do extension work and has time to build a relationship with the women. Also, interest is often generated by having a foreigner in the village.

Rangers and CFAs have time to work with the women as in Bonch and Armala, but in Huti and Hikila he had very little to do with the committee; some women felt they should only deal with the DFO through the VSO.

Introducing the women of one panchayat to others doing the same work was very effective. In Bonch discussion with the Darchula women about what they were doing and why stimulated the women's interest and motivated them to do the same. The contact with the Darchula FC members also increased their confidence in their ability to do the work. Seminars, training courses and study tours can also be useful.

Follow-Up: It is not enough to form a committee and then leave it to function by itself. If the committee has a clear idea of its responsibilities, it will be able to carry them out as in Armala and Dhikur Pokhari, but some are formed with only a vague definition of their work so its important that the DFO helps to clarify their role and solve their problems.

Summary: Successful motivation depends on existing attitudes. Even where the community is already motivated incentives must be offered to maintain enthusiasm. Motivation of women requires more effort but often they are the most effective in motivating other women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy for Improving Effectiveness

Discussion Prior to Formation: Forest users and FDO staff or organizers should each be aware of the other's perception of the resource situation. Views and ideas can be best exchanged at informal discussion meetings, prior to FC formation.

The needs of the community with regards to their forest resources should be assessed. Organizers can help by introducing ideas or information where they are lacking. The reason why an FC is needed should be clearly identified and its role defined in terms of specific action and who is responsible for it. A management plan performs such a function.

Users should be encouraged to consider the question of authority including the decision-making process and what support is needed.

DFO staff should participate in these discussions, not as directors but as facilitators. They should clarify what moral and practical support they will give. They must then follow through when requested.

One meeting is not enough to reach the majority of the user group unless considerable extension work has already been done. The organizers should visit the community frequently and start discussions either individually or in small groups to identify interested people. Large meetings should be held only when users are familiar with the issues.

Motivation: The organizers should clarify what benefits there are for committee members to avoid false expectations. Incentives should be linked to training and achievements only. The primary motivation should be the general good of the community. Villagers of other panchayats should be brought in as a motivating influence.

The DFC has a special role in motivating potential committee members particularly where panchayat leaders are involved. Rangers and CFAs, who may not be motivated or have adequate skills to do the work themselves, must also learn to identify with the people.

Seminars, study tours, and training courses help to motivate potential forest managers by transferring technical skills and introducing new ideas and technology.

Selecting Committee Members: Selection should be at the discretion of the user majority. Not everyone needs to attend the selection meeting provided all interest groups are equally represented.

If proper discussion takes place representativeness should not be a problem. If all interest groups feel they are sufficiently represented, the committee membership is right. Priority should be given to active and enthusiastic members.

The optimum number of members will vary from case to case. If the formation and selection processes are well organized and there is full understanding of the work of the committee, it is likely that the committee size will be limited by the users themselves since organizationally the fewer members the better. An upper limit must depend on the structure of the user community and role of the committee. Overly large committees should be avoided.

Married or mature members are likely to be more effective because of their experience and confidence. This is more critical for women than for men.

Ensuring Good Working Procedures: The FC needs to recognize that much of its authority depends upon the support of the users. Meetings should be open and interested parties encouraged to attend. A procedure should exist for referring decisions to either the panchayat office or to a general vote if the committee does not feel qualified to make them.

Committee activities should be decisive; responsibility for informing the whole community and implementing decisions should be delegated.

The need to keep records increases with the complexity of the work. When committees operate at a simple level, records are not essential.

DFO Support: Continued support for the FC is essential. The less clear the position of the committee at the time of formation, the more the need for support afterwards. It should start immediately, before the interest of members and users wanes. Support can be in the form of technical advice, practical help or moral support when needed, for example when the committee's authority is in questioned.

Strategy for Encouraging Women's Involvement

Improving Attitudes: The biggest constraint to women's involvement in formal forest management is that often neither the DFO nor the local community (including the women themselves) believe that women are capable of the work or that there is any need for women to be involved in it. To change these attitudes a different viewpoint must be presented by someone who is highly respected. This person or people must first convince the men before any attempt is made to reach the women.

In some places women's involvement will be accepted more readily because women have traditionally been more independent. Therefore, when assessing the background situation, the place of women within the community should be examined. Traditional roles, previous involvement with committees, degree of independence, and strength of character should all be considered.

Motivating Women: Women tend to be motivated by other women. They are often shy or lack confidence and may not respond to organizers whom they do not trust. They are unlikely to respond to unfamiliar ideas from organizers outside the community, particularly if not sanctioned by men. The first step is to convince community leaders and men that women's participation is desirable and then put pressure on the women.

Often within a community there are a few women who are more outspoken or of stronger character. The community needs to identify these women and seek them out at the start.

Women tend to feel more confident in groups. Individuals may be shy and less willing to focus their attention on forestry. The best approach is discussion within small groups.

Women are rarely outspoken in the company of men. Mixed meetings should be avoided initially.

Women often seem to have a more responsible attitude towards the forest than men because it is more important in their daily lives. They can be motivated by the thought of the additional hardship they and their children would face as a result of depleted forest reserves.

Defining the Role of Women: Familiarity with forest products suggests that women could easily learn silvicultural techniques and could play as full a role in silvicultural management as men. However, sales and distribution of products ordinarily lie outside the accepted scope of women's work. They could undertake such work only if given sufficient support by the community.

Selecting Appropriate Women Members: Women should not be elected to the FC just because they are women. It does little for self confidence and may be counterproductive. Although women may be an asset to a committee, their participation should not be compulsory as they can only participate effectively if their presence is accepted by the community and they themselves want to be involved.

Age and marital status is a more important consideration for women members than men. The majority of women members should be between 20 and 50 years of age and married or divorced. Young girls are only an asset if literate or particularly interested and self-confident. Older women can contribute through their experience and because they command the respect of the community.

The low level of literacy among women does not affect their ability to work on committees and to make decisions, but it is essential for administrative work. Women may require additional support to help them cope with such unfamiliar tasks.

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