

# Gender Perspectives in Forest Management

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## 1. Introduction

Much of humankind has either at least interacted with forests or benefited from forests for their lives and livelihoods. Approximately 1.6 billion rural people worldwide, mainly in tropical regions, depend upon forests in one form or the other. People rely on forests or forest services as sources of food, shelter, energy, building materials, fiber, fodder, income, medicine, and inspiration (Gabay and Rekola, 2019). The earlier efforts of international forest development practices were focused only on the production and industrial sector. Nonetheless, in the late 1970s and 1980s, this focus shifted to better understanding the links between people and forests. The same period has witnessed the birth of community-led (social/participatory) forest management in many countries. Women's role in the forestry sector has also started to receive more attention and understanding during this time (FAO, 1986; Ginsburg and Keene, 2020; Kristjanson, 2020). Thus, gender roles have remained an area of interest in forest management, especially in developing countries, and the perspectives have evolved over the years. The agenda 2030 of the sustainable development goals (SDG) encompasses strategies designed to tackle gender inequities and protecting ecosystems, including forests, biodiversity, and oceans (UN, 2015). In fact, the interlinked trajectories of women and the environment have led to the emergence of the theory of ecofeminism and women environment and development (WED) in the late 1970s (Tyagi and Das, 2017). It integrates the ethics of ecology with feminism to explore the intangible interconnections between environmental degradation and sexist oppression (Warren, 1993). Though feminist discussions are not new to the forestry sector, attempts to generate gender-disaggregated data exclusively on forestry management perspectives have been scarce.

Sunderland *et al.* (2014) reported that historically men and women had played distinctive roles in the forest sector. Men are mostly involved in hunting and

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