

Still a Man's World: Reflections of Women foresters in Nepal



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Presentation flow

- **Historical context of forestry and technical expertise for forestry in Nepal**
- **Changes in technical to socio-technical focus**
- **Women's entry to forestry**
- **Situation analysis over almost three decades since women's first involvement in forestry till now**
- **Part of WOCAN/IOF/VIRGINIA TECH project.**

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Historical context

Context of forestry and technical expertise for forestry in Nepal

- Women doers versus Men technicians
- “Forestry work” = Men working in “jungles”
- Men only -Academic institutes (IOF) and employing organizations



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Development remodelling in 1980s

- “Technical” forestry to “socio-technical forestry”
- Women were assumed to carry out extension
- Opening up of academic institution to women students
- First women intake at IOF
 - 1982

Till 2007, 300 women foresters

- Capacity and recognition
- Gender imbalanced scenario
- Decision-making levels

**Mere observations VS
Factual patterns?**



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Objectives

Situation analysis over almost three decades since the first intake

- Explore and analyze the perceptions/reflections of women foresters
- Focus on the prospects and challenges of women foresters in both academic institutions of forestry and in work places

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Methodology

Focus group discussions with 50 women foresters

Life histories of 10 women foresters; March- May, 2008

Participants selection: Snowballing with criteria of

- Year of graduation from IOF, field of expertise, ethnicity, career level, type of associated organization

Qualitative approach using narratives and life stories

Content Analysis through commonality and consistency

Limitations

- Academic environment of IOF only
- Due to resource and time constraints, women working in far-remote areas could not participate

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Environment at IOF

Increasing acknowledgement of women as foresters but daunting challenges in:

- Social perception towards forestry education for women
- Admission criteria and logistic support
- Lack of gender sensitivity
- Lack of pre-orientation and counselling
- Lack of information/communication
- Lack of courses on social and gender inclusion
- Issues of Excellence
- Periods of high harassment
- Covert Internalization
- Lack of a sizeable number of women faculty
- Political Environment of IOF

Structure
Process
Construction
Impact

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Employment prospects

The transition period of job hunting

- More lucrative jobs but shrinking job market and lack of access to networks
- Lack of counseling and courses to meet the job-demands
- Network for volunteering and internships during study period
- Exploring “unearthed” possibilities

Gender sensitivity in job sectors

- Recruitment policy and practice
- Interview phase
- Organizational environment
- Lack of an encouraging environment
- Lack of gender sensitivity
- Conflicting social norms and organizational culture
- Women at the outset of governance issues
- Acknowledging women’s competence/excellence

•Social perceptions
•Family support
•Individual strengthening

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Conclusion

- Gradual change in terms of Increasing recognition and acceptance of women as foresters
- Individual support from male colleagues limited
- Gender discrimination in both, academic and at work place
- Patterns of overt and covert discrimination evident
- Womanhood as a threat to having a successful career in forestry
- Lack of a gender-responsive environment in both academic and employing organizations
- Urgent need to institutionalize supportive behaviors -- norm rather than the exception

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Follow-up research: *Women in Woods in South Asia*

- Views of male foresters in Nepal about women foresters' opportunities and constraints.
- Wider applicability of such research in other professions (wildlife, vetenary science etc.)
- **Social construction/de-reconstruction of the field of forestry = male**

- Follow up research: **FGD in Dehradun**
- **E-mail survey? Interested?**

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Thank you!

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