

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

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Case Study Name:	Gender and Forest Conservation: The Impact of Women's Participation in Community Forest Governance		
Authors:	Agarwal, B.		
Document Type:	Paper in a scientific journal		
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Region:	South Asia		
Country:	India and Nepal		
Ecosystem Type:	Semi-evergreen, seasonal tropical forest, mountain ecosystems		
Social Characteristics:	Community inside protected area, indigenous community		
Scale of Study:	Community, regional, women		
Resource Type:	forestry, protected areas, species conservation		
Type of Initiative:	Research driven-project		
Community- Based Work:	Resource management		
Keywords:	Forest governance, India and Nepal, institutional functioning, decision-making		

Summary:

Would enhancing women's presence in community institutions of forest governance improve resource conservation and regeneration? This paper focuses on this little addressed question. Based on the author's primary data on communities managing their local forests in parts of India and Nepal, it statistically assesses whether the gender composition of a local forest management group affects forest conservation outcomes, after controlling for other characteristics of the management group, aspects of institutional functioning, forest and population characteristics, and related factors. It is found that groups with a high proportion of women in their executive committee (EC)—the principal decision-making body—show significantly greater improvements in forest condition in both regions. Moreover, groups with all-women ECs in the Nepal sample have better forest regeneration and canopy growth than other groups, despite receiving much smaller and more degraded forests. Older EC members, especially older women, also make a particular difference, as does employing a guard. The beneficial impact of women's presence on conservation outcomes is attributable especially to women's contributions to improved forest protection and rule compliance. More opportunity for women to use their knowledge of plant species and methods of product extraction, as well as greater cooperation among women, are also likely contributory factors.