

MAJOR GROUP: WOMEN

Proposal for the NLBI from Major Group WOMEN

In response to the Non Legally Binding Instrument agreed to by member nations, and in support of the Four Global Objectives on Forests, the Major Group WOMEN would like to reiterate that these goals and objectives cannot be met without women's active engagement and leadership. As a group, women are an integral part of implementation and their participation in the process is required to ensure ownership of the outcomes and effective action; women leaders have an important role to play in creating focused priorities for future action.

To date, the Major Group WOMEN has been successful at ensuring that the experiences and concerns of women have been voiced and tabled in the UNFF formal sessions and expert meetings to raise awareness on the barriers faced by women foresters, forestry students and community members, and to describe successful initiatives that have achieved SFM and women's empowerment. These have all pointed to the need for structural changes within forestry organizations to address gender equality. But within the UNFF process, we have yet to see more than a very few explicit statements of support for and commitment to women and gender equality in relation to Sustainable Forest Management and the International Arrangement on Forests. Despite the efforts of the Major Group WOMEN over the past few years to draw attention to these concerns within the UNFF sessions and inter-sessional meetings, and the commonly heard references to poverty and the MDGs, women have not been recognized as an integral part of the deliberations.

This next phase, of the NLBI, now requires that more significant attention and resources be devoted to gender issues and women's needs and contributions related to SFM, poverty alleviation and related topics such as those of health so that such changes can be implemented. Towards this goal, Major Group WOMEN offers cooperation, skills, knowledge and networks of women throughout the world to forge new paths by engaging women as equal partners in sustainable forest management.

In order to promote the adoption of action oriented policy decisions for the NLBI through 2015, the Major Group WOMEN hereby proposes events and activities as priority areas for action.

1. Research for change:

A recent meeting of women forestry professionals in Sweden, sponsored by the IUFRO Working Group on Gender and Forestry Research, endorsed a plan to assist FAO to extend the research already completed by FAO on gender and forestry in Europe and North America¹ to other regions, including Anglophone and Francophone Africa and Asia. This group has proposed a project that aims to analyze current knowledge and

¹ *Time for Action: Changing the Gender Situation in Forestry*, FAO

information gaps regarding gender roles, responsibilities, access and control over resources, challenges and opportunities among selected communities and professional organizations in Asian and African tropical forests; propose actions that promote gender sensitive development among selected communities; and document “best practices” or successful cases of promoting gender sensitive programs in forestry. In relation to the forestry profession, the study will also document the current knowledge and information gaps of gender representation in forestry institutions in selected Asian and African countries; analyse key challenges to the present status; recommend actions for improving gender balance; and disseminate information.

The Major Group WOMEN will collaborate with these organizations and individuals to engage its network of women forestry professionals, and bring research results to the attention of UNFF member states at a formal session or informal side event sometime in 2007.

2. Enhancing collaboration and partnership between government and civil society to mainstream gender in forestry, Nepal

Nepal has achieved certain exemplary performances in project implementation through the effective collaboration between NGOs and government agencies to achieve maximum participation of women and other deprived groups of forest users in national forestry development programs. The Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC) collaborated with a national NGO specializing on gender and forestry development, to bridge the gender gap by training and mentoring rural and professional women as group promoters and gender focal persons from livestock and forestry departments. This has led to a policy shift whereas MFSC developed a national strategy for gender mainstreaming action plans until 2015.

As an activity of the Major Group WOMEN, WOCAN proposes to build on this unique effort and to strengthen linkages with the MFSC of Nepal by establishing a formal relationship for at least the next 3 years, to assess the effectiveness of NGO/ government partnership strategy; identify gaps in MFSC's efforts in gender mainstreaming in programs and organizational aspects; and make recommendations.

The outcome of this partnership will be a multimedia presentation that highlights the added value of gender mainstreaming to the SFM work of government forestry and related sector agencies. This will be presented at a UNFF session, and distributed to UNFF member states in the form of a CD Rom.

Similar partnerships between Major Group WOMEN and the governments of South Africa and the Philippines are under discussion.

3. Regional Meetings of the UNFF

Major Group WOMEN will coordinate various side events and meetings in conjunction with the regional meetings of the UNFF, in collaboration with regional organizations

working on gender and forestry issues, such as CIFOR, IUFRO, WOCAN partners and others.

4. World Forestry Congress

The Major Group WOMEN and the IUFRO Working Group on Gender and Forestry Research have proposed to the FAO organizers the themes of “Gender and Forests” or “Women, Men and Forest Livelihoods” for the XIII World Forestry Congress to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2009. Major Group WOMEN will assure the maximum participation of women at this event.

5. Women in SFM at CSD Women in SFM at CSD 2012/2013

The Commission on Sustainable Development reviews forest management and biodiversity in 2012 and 2013, including aspects of poverty eradication and gender equality. Major Group WOMEN will initiate planning for this significant global event in 2010 to assure maximum participation and impact by women.

Issues for WOMEN in SFM:

- capacity building for women’s leadership is required at all levels at the community and professional levels.
- multi-sectoral approaches are necessary to meet women’s needs
- gender mainstreaming skills and expertise are lacking within all forest related institutions, including universities, international organizations, national forest departments and ministries.
- pilot projects and case studies are still needed to document the positive impacts of engaging women in poverty-addressing SFM initiatives.
- resources are needed to strengthen women’s capacity-building initiatives. These programs are currently handicapped by grossly inadequate resources.
- a Gender Advisory Committee composed of women leaders who meet to discuss key issues and propose concrete ways to plan and implement actions at the national and regional levels through collaboration with each other, members of other Major Groups, government representatives and inter-governmental organizations should be formed. With expertise in forestry and gender and development, this group should provide tools, guidelines, technical assistance and training to develop the policies, skills and knowledge for gender mainstreaming within forest related agencies.
- to assure that policy directives are implemented, the Secretariat’s budget should have allocations specifically dealing with gender equality and women’s participation.
- partnerships between governments and civil society, and with regional and global organizations specialized in gender mainstreaming need to be developed so as to assure the implementation of gender sensitive SFM initiatives.