

**The inclusion of Women in Nepalese Forestry Governance: Perspectives from Feminist
Institutionalism**

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Gender and Feminist Institutionalism-Nepalese Forestry Governance

Abstract

There is a large body of literature which acknowledges that women play vital roles in protecting and managing forest resources around the world (Agarwal, 2010b; Colfer, 2013; FAO, 2006, 2007; Mai, Mwangi, & Wan, 2011; Sewell Jr, 1992). Despite their contributions to forest management, women are still largely excluded from decision making roles in forestry organizations, especially in developing countries (FAO, 2007). As a result, most of the forestry related decisions are made by males, resulting in the marginalisation of women's interests in forest management and minimizing the potential contributions of women (ABS, 2013; Christie & Giri, 2011; Lidestav, 2010).

The history of forest management in Nepal typifies this gender bias in forestry governance (Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & Faculty, 2008). While men are actively involved in decision making processes within formal environmental organizations and institutions, women are more likely to be involved at informal and grass root levels, including as an unpaid labour force (Agarwal, 2010b). Before the introduction of community based forestry programs, the Nepalese Ministry of Forests and its subsidiaries (referred to here as the forest bureaucracy) was the major organization responsible for governing the forestry sector. After the introduction and advancement of community based forest management programs, and the entry of civil society, donor and other private sector organizations, the scope and nature of forestry governance has been extended in Nepal. Although, this shift in paradigm opened space for the entry of women into different forestry institutions, the under representation of women in forest bureaucracy (still a major part of forestry governance) still continues. Nepalese rural women have low literacy rates and little involvement in public spheres. As a result there is limited access, for women working at the grassroots level, to national level policy making, planning and implementation. It is usually assumed that professional women bring women's issues and interests into forestry policy and programmes on behalf of grassroots level women. This representation is not always effective (Giri and Faculty, 2008, Agarwal, 2010b). Government forestry institutions represent the country in participating in different national and international forestry agendas including climate change. If 'grassroots' women's agendas are excluded from decision making processes in regard to environment related agendas, the solutions proposed for environmental problems may be ineffective or only partially effective (WOCAN, 2012).

This paper examines the existing legislative measures and institutional practices that facilitate or constrain the role of women in Nepalese forestry institutions. This study also investigates how the gendered institutional norms and values associated with forest-governing institutions, such as forest bureaucracies, shape the nature and extent of women's involvement in decision making processes in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy.

We use Feminist Institutionalism (FI) to examine the effect of the gendered nature of forestry institutions, policies and practices that shape the role of women in forest bureaucracy. We extend New Institutionalism (NI) by incorporating feminist perspectives to forestry governance. In exploring why the gender mainstreaming of legislative measures and practices has not been wholly effective, it is important to examine the informal norms and values within an institution. These act to shape both the behaviour of the individual and political outcomes. Since forestry is highly gendered sector based on different social norms and values, NI is considered a good approach to study those institutions. New Institutionalism is a cutting theme which crosses various disciplines, and holds the interest of historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists and social theorists (Goodin, 1996). New Institutionalism was constructed as a progressive version of older, descriptive approaches to institutionalism in order to understand the role of formal and informal rules which affect the political behaviour of individuals (Gherardi, 1996).

This paper examines opportunities and challenges involved in: a) promoting women's participation in forest governance; and b) establishing an influential role for women in forestry governance. To date, researchers using the approach of institutionalism have not adequately considered the gender perspective, especially within the context of developing countries (Tripp, 2007). This study will therefore extend NI further through theoretical and practical insights, relating gendered issues to NI and particularly its sub-branch, FI.

Key words- Forestry governance, Institutionalism, New Institutionalism, Feminist Institutionalism

Introduction

There is a large body of literature which acknowledges that women play vital roles in protecting and managing forest resources around the world (Agarwal, 2010b; Colfer, 2013; FAO, 2006, 2007; Mai et al., 2011; Sewell Jr, 1992). Despite their contributions to forest management, women are still largely excluded from decision making roles in forestry organizations, especially in developing countries (FAO, 2007). Such organizations may

include local organizations, professional societies, and policy level institutions; and women may be excluded wherever governance, benefit sharing, policy making, capacity building, education and employment opportunities are taken into consideration (Colfer, 2013). Gender roles, knowledge and interests are often undermined or mostly overlooked in the forestry profession. As a result, most of the forestry related decisions are made by males, resulting in the marginalisation of women's interests in forest management and minimizing the potential contributions of women (ABS, 2013; Christie & Giri, 2011; Lidestav, 2010). In this paper we assume gender perspectives to examine forestry governance in Nepal. We attempt to examine the role of women in forestry governance through the lenses of Feminist Institutionalism.

Forest Management in Nepal

The history of forest management in Nepal typifies this gender bias in forestry governance (Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & Faculty, 2008; Gurung, 2002). While men are actively involved in decision making processes within formal environmental organizations and institutions, women are more likely to be involved at informal and grass root levels, including as an unpaid labour force (Agarwal, 2010b). Before the introduction of community based forestry programs, the Nepalese Ministry of Forests and its subsidiaries (referred to here as the forest bureaucracy) was the major organization responsible for governing the forestry sector. After the introduction and advancement of community based forest management programs, and the entry of civil society, donor and other private sector organizations, the scope and nature of forestry governance has been extended in Nepal. Although, this shift in paradigm opened space for the entry of women into different forestry institutions, the under representation of women in forest bureaucracy (still a major part of forestry governance) still continues.

The professional entry of women into the forestry sector only began in 1982 with the intake of women into academic forestry institutions. These women would later graduate and seek entry into forest bureaucracies (Christie & Giri, 2011). Now, after three decades of women's entry into forest bureaucracies, only three percent of people employed in these areas are female, and most of these women are working as lower level staff (GoN, 2012). Very few higher level positions are occupied by women at present. Only two out of seventy-five of the District Forest Offices are led by female District Forest Officers. The highest rank held by a woman to date is the position of under-secretary; and there are no women represented at the

joint-secretary and secretary levels(GoN, 2013b). As a result, women lack influence in policy process and design implementation frameworks, which further reinforce their exclusion.

This study examines how the gendered institutional norms and values associated with forest-governing institutions, such as forest bureaucracies, shape the nature and extent of women's involvement in decision making processes in the Nepalese forest bureaucracy along with provided policy frameworks. We apply Feminist Institutionalism (FI) as a framework to examine the effect of the gendered nature of forestry institutions, policies and practices that shape the role of women in forest bureaucracy. This framework will incorporate feminist perspective in New Institutionalism (NI) in order to strengthen FI in the study of the gendered nature of forestry institutions. This paper is based on a review of policies and documents along with some empirical evidence from interviews and focus group discussions.

Significance of understanding women in Forestry

In Nepal, women are the primary users of forests because they are responsible for collecting fuel wood, fodder, bedding materials, and other non-timber forest products from forests. This dependence on forest resources implies that women hold special knowledge related to forest resources management (Agarwal, 2010b). With the knowledge and skills generated from utilizing forest resources, they contribute to resource management. Including women in forestry related planning and a policy making process is, therefore, desirable for better forest governance. The inclusion is not only desirable in order to utilize and incorporate women's resource management knowledge and skills but also to address their own interests, needs and priorities (Christie & Giri, 2011).

Nepalese rural women have low literacy rates and little involvement in public spheres. As a result there is limited access, for women working at the grassroots level, to national level policy making, planning and implementation. It is usually assumed that professional women bring women's issues and interests into forestry policy and programmes on behalf of grassroots level women. This representation is not always effective (Giri and Faculty, 2008, Agarwal, 2010b). Government forestry institutions represent the country in participating in different national and international forestry agendas including climate change. If 'grassroots' women's agendas are excluded from decision making processes in regard to environment related agendas, the solutions proposed for environmental problems may be ineffective or only partially effective (WOCAN, 2012).

It is necessary that women have an effective voice in different national and international policy forums. The influential presence of women delegates within government institutions can lead to better outcomes in climate and environment related decisions at national and international levels. However, there is still only a poor and relatively uninfluential representation of women at policy levels in forestry institutions such as in the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and its subsidiaries.

To date, researchers using the approach of institutionalism have not adequately considered the gender perspective, especially within the context of developing countries (Tripp, 2007). We attempt to extend NI further through theoretical and practical insights, relating gendered issues to NI and particularly its sub-branch, FI. With there being little research so far in the area of FI, as it relates to forestry governance in developing countries, this research will apply and extend FI to gain insights into the current and potential roles of women in Nepalese forestry bureaucracies.

Nepalese forestry context

The interdependence of forests and people in Nepal

The dependence of people on forests is intricate and has a long history in Nepal. Nepalese people mostly rely on state-owned forests for forest-based needs since private forests are not abundant enough to meet these needs. In fact, 80% of the Nepalese population have less than one hectare of land holding (MHP, 2011), which is mainly used for agricultural crop production and is insufficient for tree growing. People who possess more than one hectare of land generally use it for agroforestry purposes rather than as forest only. This cannot supply all the forest products they need.

There is a strong link between forests and farming practices in Nepal. Forests are important sources of fodder for animals and leaf litter for bedding material. Domestic livestock such as goats and cattle (e.g. cows, oxen, buffalo) are the main source of fertiliser (farmyard manure) and traction (e.g. ploughing) for farmers growing crops, while these animals are also an important source of protein and milk (Dhakal et. Al, 2005). The majority of the Nepalese population (77%) engage in agriculture, which contributes about 39 percent to country's GDP (Mundi, 2009).

Forest resources are also important sources of energy in Nepal. More than 80 percent of cooking and heating energy is derived from firewood, most of which is obtained from forests (CBS, 2012). A further 10 percent of energy is derived from the use of cattle dung as a cooking fuel

(CBS, 2012). In addition, forests also provide timber for dwellings and agricultural implements; grass for thatch; various herbs used for medicinal purposes; fibres for rope and cloth; and wild fruits, berries and tubers for food. All of these forest products are important resources for peoples' livelihoods. Moreover, forests are sources of a broad range of economic and ecological goods and services including water for irrigation and hydroelectricity, pollination, climate regulations, soil conservation and raw materials for industry (Hassan, Scholes, & Ash, 2005).

The dependency of Nepalese people on forest resources varies and is contingent upon economic conditions, ethnicity, gender and geography. Agarwal (2010a) identified poor families, indigenous people and women as having a greater and more frequent dependence on forest resources. To address this dependency different institutional arrangements have been made in forestry sector.

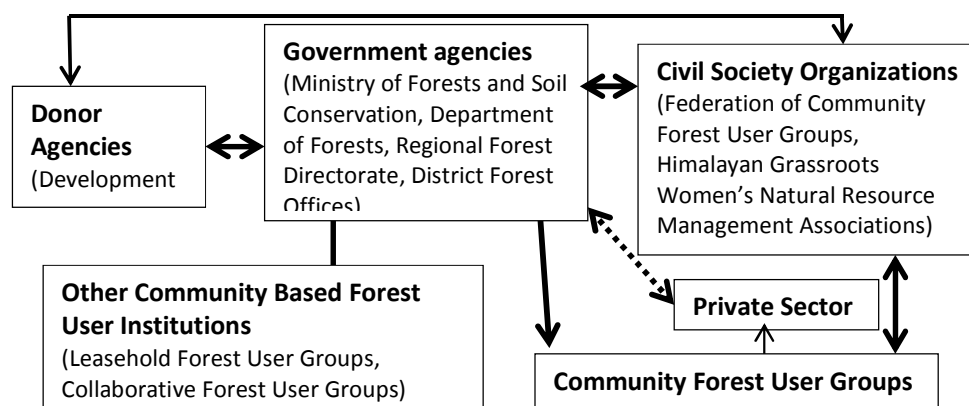
The interdependence of women and forests in Nepal

Nepalese women are traditionally responsible for domestic work such as cooking, cleaning and feeding and caring for domestic animals (Upadhyay, 2005). In order to fulfil these responsibilities they have to have access to a wide range of forest products. Women collect firewood, grass, bedding material, fodder, roots, tubers, fruits, herbs and many more forest products as daily activities. Women from economically poor families also gather forest products such as firewood, medicinal herbs and wild fruits for their income source by selling these products in the nearby markets (Agarwal, 2010a; Upadhyay, 2005). However, the representation of women in formal sector including forestry institutions is low (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Giri & Dranhof, 2010).

Major forestry institutions involved in forest governance in Nepal

Major forestry institutions working on forestry governance in Nepal can be classified into two major categories government and non-government institutions. Different government agencies such as the Ministry of Forests and Soil conservation and its subsidiary organizations fall under the designation of government institutions whereas non-government institutions are comprised of community-based organizations, civil society organizations, donor agencies/development partners, private sectors and so on. There are diverse interrelationships among these forestry actors which are explicitly illustrated through the figure (fig 1). Among these actors, are forestry related Government institutions which are the major hub of forestry governance. Women are important stakeholders in forestry governance, however, with the exception of some civil society organizations, women's representation, leadership and influential participation is lacking. Some studies have been carried out to explore participation of women in civil society organizations but

little previous work has been carried out on the role of women in government forestry institutions in developing countries such as Nepal.



Note: The bold two way arrows show strong two way relationships, the bold one way arrows show strong one way relationships, the two way broken arrow shows a two way shallow relationship, the thin one way arrow shows a one way relationships.

Fig 1 Relationships among various forestry institutions in Nepal

There is also scope to investigate whether legislative measures and institutional practices affect the capacities and performance of women to influence policies and decision-making processes in government forestry institutions. Together with feminist political science, the theory of Institutionalism is appropriated as a framework for this area of study, because it provides insight into formal policy, informal norms and institutional practices and facilitates the study of gender perspectives in institutions.

Institutionalism, New Institutionalism, towards Feminist Institutionalism

According to Peters (2005), Institutionalism is a political theory which examines how individuals and structures interact with each other and how an institution works in a given situation to serve the people. Institutionalism also recognizes the importance of formal and informal institutions in the policy process and their role in governance. Over time, different forms of institutionalisms have emerged as a result of the contributions made by various scholars to studies of institutions (Goodin, 1996; Peters, 2005; Weimar, 1995). Authors such as Hall and Taylor (1996), Mackay & Meier (2003), Immergut (1998) discuss three types of institutionalism – Historical Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Rational Choice Institutionalism – under the umbrella of New Institutionalism (NI). These varieties of NI offer avenues for incorporating a number of social and cultural issues such as values, attitudes, beliefs in order to approach discourse about institutions. In related areas some authors propose

the separate theory of ‘Feminist Institutionalism’ by incorporating gendered perspectives in NI (Kenny, 2007; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Mackay et. al, 2010; Mackay & Meier, 2003). In exploring why the gender mainstreaming of legislative measures and practices has not been wholly effective, it is important to examine the informal norms and values within an institution. These act to shape both the behaviour of the individual and political outcomes. Since forestry is a highly gendered sector based on different social norms and values, NI including gendered perspectives is considered a good approach to study those institutions.

Feminist perspectives within New Institutionalism

The features of New Institutionalism (NI) show that NI provides a framework for both mainstream and feminist political science. Both are well studied fields and they parallel each other. In recent years some scholars have tried to find the intersection between institutionally oriented feminist political science and New Institutionalism (Acker, 1992; Driscoll & Krook, 2009; Kenny, 2007; Krook & Mackay, 2010; Lowndes & Roberts, 2013; Mackay & Meier, 2003; Martin, 2004; Waller & Jennings, 1991; Waylen, 2009; Zein-Elabdin, 1996). These authors maintain that there are many similarities between feminist theories and New Institutionalism. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) states that feminist perspectives are inherent in institutionalism. However, she does not agree that all institutionalism is necessarily feminist, but agrees there are some similarities between Feminist Institutionalism and feminist theory. She argues that these similarities are based on ‘continuity of culture, the problems and hierarchies created by dualistic structures (men vs women, mind vs body, rational vs emotional, private vs public), and the importance of historical accounts’. Both theories pay attention to the role of formal and informal rules and norms in shaping institutional processes and practices (Kenny, 2007). These theories also concern the origin of institutions, continuity, resistance and change (Kenny, 2007, Mackay et. al, 2010). Moreover, both theories emphasize the importance of power dynamics and power relations in political and economic outcomes (Immergut, 1998; Kenny, 2007).

The inclusion of women in Nepalese forestry institutions

In general, women’s roles are undermined in Nepalese society though they are involved in various household related and economic tasks (Bista, 1991). Women are seen as having a subordinate position to men, and it is generally expected that women should obey their male counterpart in the family (Buchy, 2012). Women have poor access to education and economic opportunities due to several restrictions imposed on their mobility. They are not able to travel

because of their family responsibilities, but women in Nepalese society are also very much restricted by social customs which limit their movements (Nightingale, 2003). Reflecting the views of society, women are portrayed in the community, civil society, and in government and non-government forestry institutions as being lowly and without influence (Buchy & Rai, 2008). Against this backdrop, government has been trying to include women in different institutions including forestry by developing some women friendly policies, however, success has yet to be achieved. The under representation of women from grass root level forestry institutions in policy level organizations still continues.

The inclusion of women in various aspects of community forestry institutions is a highly studied area of research in the Nepalese context. Many researchers (e.g. Agarwal, 2010a; Buchy & Rai, 2008; Christie & Giri, 2011; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Khadka, 2009; Lama & Buchy, 2002) have identified a range of factors responsible for the exclusion and marginalisation of women in Community Forest processes. These factors may prevent involvement in decision making or in participation. The consequences of exclusion are deprivation of the material, monetary and social benefits of community forestry programmes (Buchy & Rai, 2008; Buchy & Subba, 2003; Lama & Buchy, 2002). Some policy and institutional measures have been applied to increase the level of participation however the intended outcome has yet been achieved.

There is much less involvement and influence of women in policy level institutions such as forest bureaucracy; and research into women's involvement in government forestry institutions is very limited. Forest bureaucracy is very heavily male dominated: only 3% of forestry officials working in Nepal's government forestry institutions are women (GoN, 2012). Of 74 District Forest Officers, only two are women (GoN, 2013b). In comparison to the proportion of overall female civil servants (about 13%) the representation of female staff in the forestry sector civil servant is lower than three percent (GoN, 2013a).

Policy changes to include women in government forestry organizations

The importance of including women in grass roots level forestry institutions has been reflected in policies and practices since the early 1990s. However, it has more than two decades for these policy changes to begin to be reflected in the recruitment of women in government forestry bureaucratic institutions. According to the thrust of the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, a subsequent amendment to the Civil Service Act 1991 guaranteed a 45% reservation in government organizations

for women, the dalit (formerly described as the ‘untouchable’ caste), indigenous minorities and those from other disadvantaged communities.

Civil Service Act and Regulation

Recruitment, appointment, transfer and promotion are guided by the Civil Service Act of 1993 and the Civil Service Regulations of 1993. Although there are different requirements of various streams of the civil service, there is a blanket act and regulation which guides the overall country’s bureaucracy, including the forestry service. Some inclusive measures are covered by the current Civil Service Act 1993 (Appendix 2). However, these make little impact against the socio-cultural barriers that women need to cross to enter and work in forestry organizations in Nepal.

The review of the legal documents, focus group discussions and key informant interviews revealed that the recruitment, appointment, transfer and promotion system is not gender sensitive. Although there is availability of a certain quota for female staff, these provisions are not sufficient to result in equality between the genders in terms of appointment of personnel in the bureaucracy. For example, although the Civil Service Act 1993 guaranteed a 45 percent reservation for marginalized sections of the society, including women, the actual number of positions held by women is minimal. This is because only 10 percent of all positions are covered by the quota, and the remaining 90 percent are filled from internal promotions. Out of the 10 percent of positions covered by the quota, 45 percent are reserved for the marginalized sections of the community. Only 33 percent of positions covered by the quota are specifically reserved for women. . In other words, less than three per cent of appointments are reserved for women.. At the higher level of the bureaucratic pyramid, such as under-secretary and joint-secretary, very few positions become vacant every year. In this situation, it takes years of recruiting women from the tiny fraction of their allocated quota, before they can take their place in positions of responsibility.

Other policies contradict the limited support available for women. A recently adopted curriculum guiding the recruitment of forest guards has made it difficult for female forest guards to fulfil the criteria. The curriculum mandates that all candidates who wish to take part in the tests can swim. However, it is difficult for Nepalese women to gain such skills. There is a cultural resistance working against girls learning to swim, lack of access to swimming pools, and difficulty in learning swimming skills in open rivers or ponds. The government has a policy that women be recruited to such positions, but the women are unable to fulfil the requirements of the positions. As a result, many otherwise capable women from rural areas are excluded from participating in the tests to recruit forest guards.

The transfer system guided by the civil service act and regulations has also proved to be a barrier for women who wish to enter and remain in government institutions. For example, there is a provision that

employees are appointed in the same region where she/he attended the examination, and she/he needs to serve for at least seven years in the same region. Usually, there are more vacancies in remote areas due to senior staff transferring to the more accessible areas. Many female foresters are reluctant to apply for remote positions because of poor infrastructure and facilities, remoteness and lack of family support. Some evidences revealed that this provision has negative implications on many of the female rangers and forest guards' family lives, career goals and working performances. There are also problems in the promotion process, even though the relevant policy seems to discriminate positively in favour of women.

Gender and Social inclusion strategy for forestry sector

The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation issued the Gender and Social Inclusion Strategy in the Forestry Sector in 2008. This strategy aims at enhancing the meaningful inclusion of women and other marginalized sections of the society such as indigenous people, and was in line with the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007. A monitoring mechanism to ensure that the strategy has been properly implemented is lacking. Moreover, many of the forest officials who are required to implement it are not aware of the strategy, its content, or the intention behind it. A committee under the chairpersonship of the Joint-secretary of the Planning and Human Resources Division, and including five officer members at under-secretary rank has been formed to address gender and social inclusion issues, as well as to formulate and implement inclusive programs in and under the Ministry. However, the committee is not yet functional.

Organizational culture

During interviews of staff in Nepalese forestry institutions, most of the female interviewees described their experiences of a work place culture which is negatively biased against women. . One senior (female) officer working at the Department of Forests felt there was serious bias against her when she was not offered oversight over an independent administrative section where she could perform her responsibilities with the authority to make decisions. She was kept in a pool position, which did not have any specific responsibilities or accountabilities. She stated that she felt insecure, underprivileged and unmotivated in the job. Such practices undermined her capacity to develop and excel in her career. Another senior (female) staff member from the Department of Forests, who also worked in the non-government forestry sector, found that junior male staff were reluctant to work under a female manager, or to follow her instructions. She found that while male dominated culture is common in the INGOs and NGOs associated with the forestry sector, such a culture is much more severe within government institutions.

A (female) ranger from a donor-funded project, who was working with the District Forest Office (DFO), experienced bias by male staff members against female staff. Project-paid female motivators were even asked to carry the field bags of the forest officers, a task which was not in their Terms of Reference. When they refused to carry the bags, they were threatened with dismissal. The same ranger experienced different responses from the district forest staff before and after marriage.

When I was single, I had more freedom to work in the field as well as at late hours in the office. At that time, the DFO staff were happy with me and they hardly complained about me. In most cases they co-operated with me very well. When I got married and had children, it was not possible for me to work like before, but I tried hard to work and in many cases I took my child with me and tried to accomplish my duty. However, DFO staff blamed me as if I were doing nothing and even complained about me in my office. My project employer inquired to the DFO about my work but I was fortunate the DFO replied in my favour and I was not fired from the job – a *female interviewee*

The nature of the work undertaken in the forestry sector makes sexual harassment of female workers more likely. Female foresters have faced various forms of sexual harassment in the work place. Many of them reported that verbal sexual harassment has been common. Some of them also experienced unnecessary touching and inappropriate proposals from their male colleagues and senior staff. The study also found that women did not report harassment but tried to resolve it by themselves, since they did not find appropriate laws addressing such issues. Sometimes, they did not disclose the incidents due to the fear of social stigma, rumor and even threats from the abusers. After being sexually harassed, one female ranger felt her only option was to seek a transfer.

The working culture of forestry institutions such as the Ministry of Forests, Department of Forests and District Forest Offices are not female-friendly. The working environment is affected by either unavailable or poorly maintained infrastructures such as staff residences, toilets and other sanitation facilities. A culture which favours alcohol consumption, after-hours and informal meetings and intimacy with executives all favor male staff, while women staff are reluctant to be engaged in such informal situations; and are often slandered if they do engage. Many decisions are made during informal after-hours gatherings between staff and executives and later authenticated during office hours. This culture deprives female staff of the opportunity to be involved in major decision making processes appropriate to their offices.

Lack of unity among female staff is prevalent, which is why a strong voice against gender bias has not been raised. Female foresters do not have a professional network, nor do they have influential roles and positions in various formal and informal unions. Professional networks such as the Nepal Foresters' Association, Nepal Rangers' Association and Junior Foresters' Association lack female leadership. As

a result, women are not capable of raising their issues in policy forums, since gender issues are rarely raised on meeting agendas.

Some women have demonstrated better performances despite several barriers in the profession. Their presence in the service has encouraged rural women to participate in community forestry, while the rural women also encouraged the female staff to grow their professional career. This has created an environment for mutual empowerment of women working in forestry bureaucracy and in community forestry in Nepal.

Power relations

The prevailing power structure in Nepalese families and in society is also reflected in the Ministry and its subsidiary institutions. Women are undermined by senior level staff as well as juniors. One female officer in the Ministry experienced a lower level of respect from the outsiders and staff members than her male counterparts. She was treated as a helper while she was working in the Ministry.

People often ask me to photocopy papers for them. They think I am an office assistant in the Ministry, not an officer. While I never see them asking other male officers to do the same job. I feel insulted and disempowered while people treat me in such a way- *a female interviewee from the Ministry* The existing performance evaluation system in the Ministry is biased against women forestry staff. The immediate supervisor and the head of division are responsible for evaluating the performance of their staff members. The evaluation process is not transparent, and the staff member is unaware of the score she/he receives until after a promotional opportunity has passed. Some female officers in the Department of Forests reported that they were not able to be promoted to a higher level since they did not get sufficient marks in their performance evaluation. Other male staff members, who were junior to them, were promoted simply because they had higher scores in their performance evaluation. The female participants argued that they were given a lower score than their male colleagues without any reason.

Feminist institutionalism in connection with women inclusive forest bureaucracy

Nepalese forest bureaucracy was found to be largely based on patriarchal power structures that have prevented women from participating in decision making and policy processes. Why women have been excluded from participating in forestry decisions, why their roles have been minimized and how they can be included needs to be understood within broader social contexts. The space for feminist activism within government forestry organizations seems currently limited. However, there is hope for a radical shift towards a women-inclusive forest bureaucracy through the intersection of government, non-government and grass-root institutions. It is through feminist institutionalism, which focuses exclusively on women within an institution, through the lens of formal and informal institutions, power

relations, structure and agencies and organizational culture, that the avenues for meaningful inclusion of women in forest bureaucracy can be realized.

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