Implementing a process to include women

The type of project

Generally, projects work best when they include women as an integral part of their family or community group, while remaining sensitive to women's special needs and resources. However, occasionally "women-only" activities are needed. Ruth Dixon has developed a list to help designers evaluate when a "women-only" project may be required: 32

- where there are strong taboos against untamed males and females working together;
- where the effects of past discrimination need to be overcome;
- where many or most households are headed by women;
- where women specialize in tasks that could be made more productive with outside help;
- where men control resources (such as land) and women have no access to them; and
- where women's financial realities. For example, seed may be more cost effective than seedlings.

Women in Lesotho planting out saplings in a reforestation programme

HOW CAN BENEFITS FOR WOMEN BE ENCOURAGED?

Consult with women

Sorting seedlings in Thailand

Collaborate to make credit and income available

Promote the role that women do and can play

Support women's groups

Exchange information

Evaluate when a "women-only" project may be required:

- where women request a measure of self-reliance to avoid conflict or competition with men;
- where many or most households are headed by women;
- where the effects of past discrimination need to be overcome;
- when there are strong taboos against unrelated males and females working together;
- where women control resources that men control. "Women-only" activities and projects can also be poorly funded and out of the mainstream of development activities. Some forestry projects that have a great impact on the productive resource base upon which women depend, deal only with men.

In some cases a component such as improved fuelwood stoves is added for the sake of "including women". Care should always be taken to ensure that additional activities that are seen as being of interest to women do enter their priority areas of concern and do not exclude them from being considered in the project's main activities.

Project benefits

The main goal of including women in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is to assure that they have access to benefits that they value and that they are able to manage the resource base in a sustainable manner. It is of central importance that any project ensures that those involved will, in fact, benefit.

Project planners and local women must communicate in a two-way process before the implementation of the project. Women will have important insights as to how the technology may affect them. Women's financial realities. For example, seed may be more cost effective than seedlings.

Women's groups.

Women without legal rights to land have no collateral to offer to obtain loans for equipment and other inputs. Women to provide access to land and trees recognizing customary and traditional tenure systems if possible.

In some households, women control their own money; in others, men control household funds. When the latter is the case, women may want to pool funds or set up cooperatives in order to retain control of income from their activities. Women without legal rights to land have no collateral to offer to obtain loans for equipment, seed, or fertilizer. When loans are necessary and women have no collateral, other means for women to obtain credit must be found.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON WOMEN?

Plan to target those women who will benefit from project activities. Women are short on time, land, and money. Women who control their own money will benefit more from the project. Women in the poorest segment of the village or community group, while remaining sensitive to women's special needs and resources, may be more amenable to such activities. Women who control resources (such as land) and women have no access to them.

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The more clearly women's circumstances are understood and reflected in the project's design, the more likely the project will be successful.

Women of the project are seen as being of interest to women

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The eight steps

In summary, implementing a process to include women in project design includes the following eight steps:

1. Explore gender issues through two-way communication with rural women, recognizing that the needs of women and men may not be the same and that the impact of projects on them may therefore be different.
2. Investigate customs, taboos and time constraints that women face: knowledge and common sense can go a long way to overcoming these constraints.
3. Promote the role that women do and can play in forestry activities at each level, and analyze the ways in which projects either include or exclude them.
4. Exchange information with individuals at every level, with local women on forestry activities, with practitioners on involving women in forestry, with policy makers on women's roles in forestry.
5. Support women's groups and encourage the formation of new ones that help women gain access to decision making and the political process, and strengthen women's support for one another.
6. Work together to provide access to land and trees recognizing customary and traditional women's holdings, ensuring women are included when land is privatized, and seeking creative solutions for landless women.
7. Consult with women before introducing new technologies or species ensuring that women's needs have been considered, and the impact of new techniques or trees on women's lives have been evaluated.
8. Collaborate to make credit and income available to women either individually, or through women's groups.