




*Forests and Gender Equality*

# Participatory forestry

A stylized illustration in shades of green, brown, and white. In the foreground, a large white hand is shown planting a small green sapling into the ground. In the background, a person wearing a white hat and a yellow bag is working in a field. The background consists of stylized, rounded hills in various shades of green and brown, suggesting a forest landscape.

**T**he aim of participatory forestry is to ensure that all stakeholders are included in all relevant aspects of forest management, decision-making and policy formulation. Using participatory forestry approaches, FAO Forestry promotes consensual negotiation among government agencies, civil society, forest users and the private sector – stakeholders who often have divergent interests in, and views on, forest management. Encouraging broad debate on forest issues and enabling stakeholders to resolve issues in a participatory way is an effective way of managing existing conflict, minimizing the risk of future conflict, and strengthening the impact of national forest programmes.

Gender has a strong influence on the implementation of forest management planning and implementation at the country level. Field programmes supported by FAO Forestry purposefully try to include representatives of those groups most affected by forest activities, such as small informal forest enterprises and women. Greater awareness of gender, along with greater participation of both men and women, can empower and strengthen whole communities and improve forest management. The entire community thrives when men and women work together to determine how best to manage the forest and when both genders are involved equally in planning and implementation.



## Case study

### Initiating participatory forestry in Afghanistan for sustainable livelihoods (GCP/AFG/052/GER)

#### The challenge

The project area is frequently affected by drought and armed conflict, and most people live below the poverty line without access to formal education. Given prevailing attitudes towards, and perceptions of, gender roles, women are strongly marginalized and their responsibilities and rights are subjugated in a male-dominated society.

#### FAO's response

The project aims to improve the lives of people in rural communities through the conservation and sustainable management of forests and other natural resources. It creates livelihood opportunities, including for women, by supporting them in planting forest trees and building capacity for natural resource management. Activities focus on: capacity building; the production of forest plants in home-based nurseries; agroforestry; the establishment of forest plantations; natural forest management; soil conservation; and the formation of terraces and pits.

The gender component comprises the following interventions:

- mobilizing women in pilot sites to support the formation of female forest management committees (FFMCs);

- capacity-building among women in raising forest nurseries;
- providing guidance to female nursery growers in raising home-based nurseries;
- ensuring the participation of women in field-level workshops.

#### The impact

In the project area, women have restricted mobility in their villages, and do not lead family businesses or work in the private sector. However, gender mainstreaming has been achieved in the project through a culturally sensitized social mobilization strategy that reached women by gaining the permission of men. When implementing the strategy, male forest management committee members were consulted before women were approached to form equivalent FFMCs.

From the perspective of women's empowerment, the success of the project is not limited to the establishment of home-based nurseries and the generation of income for women; it includes the realization of women's coordinating forums – the FFMCs – with multifunctional roles in women's development. The FFMCs provide the starting point of a process that will lead to a change in the attitude of women and men in the communities.

