Promoting women’s voices in the management of natural resources

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Research Problem

Women are heavily engaged in managing natural resources in developing countries and are particularly susceptible to negative impacts for example deforestation, resettlement, flooding, water shortages. Yet women are not often represented in natural resource decision making processes and bodies.

Research Question

What are the institutional challenges and constraints to women’s participation? What makes effective women’s participation happen?
How I explored the research question...

1. Review of the literature about women’s role in the management of natural resources.

2. Interviews and focus groups with women in South West Madagascar.

3. Observations at dialogue meetings in South West Madagascar.
What I found…

Examples from the literature
• ‘One Million Cisterns’ (Brazil)
• Sisters Watershed project (Canada and Brazil)
• Climate Change Adaptation Project (Kenya)

Findings from Women in South West Madagascar

*Women are like a thread passed through the eye of a needle*- Malagasy proverb

“We are always ready to attend workshops but sometime the men won’t let us, it’s not us that don’t want to speak but if we say something we are always wrong that’s why we don’t talk”.
For any global change initiative, effective participation by women is vital.

Natural resource management initiatives tend to perpetuate male decision making structures (Agarwal, 2009).

• women are invited but not comfortable speaking up in front of men (Razafindratsima & Dunham, 2015)
• dual workload makes it very difficult to attend (Westerman & Benbow, 2014).
• gender neutral policy approaches can actually worsen development outcomes and widen the gender gap in natural resource management (in Eftimie et al., 2012).

Participatory planning processes need to be gender-transformative (Kabeer, 2005), responding to women’s needs according to their realities, but without limiting women to the care role, and without reproducing gender stereotypes; transformative in the sense of promoting women’s ability to challenge these roles and stereotypes.

(Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015, p. 1364)
References


