

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Challenges and experiences of women in the forestry sector in Nepal

Maria Elisa Christie<sup>1\*</sup> and Kalpana Giri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Office of International Research, Education and Development, Virginia Tech, 526 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24061 USA.

<sup>2</sup>Forest Action Nepal, Satdobato, Lalitpur, P. O. Box: 12207, Nepal.

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This article asks why there are relatively few women at the Institute of Forestry (IOF) and in the field of forestry in Nepal. It explores the obstacles to entering and succeeding in this male-dominated field from women's perspectives, and makes recommendations for increasing their participation. Based on "focus group discussions" and interviews with nearly 50 women, the authors considered issues of power and participation relevant to the gendered experience and profession of forestry in Nepal. Obstacles ranged from socio-cultural biases against women, to harassment during field trips, to being assigned purely administrative duties in the workplace. The article draws on theoretical approaches to gender in organizations, masculinities, and gendered knowledge. It calls for equitable, institutional transformation at the IOF that would in turn help graduates to better address social aspects of forestry.

**Key words:** Gender, masculinities, equity, women's narratives, forestry, inclusion, institute of forestry, Nepal.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite women's recognized role as key players in forestry, securing women's representation in forest organizations and input in decision-making in forestry remains a challenge. While empirical investigations about the systemic biases women face in forestry occupations in Europe and North America exist (Follo, 2002; Lidestav and Ekström, 2000; Reed, 2008; Teske and Beedle, 2001; Thomas and Mohai, 1995), little has been written about the Nepalese situation (Gurung, 2002). This research is the first to analyze the challenges of women's entry and inclusion in forestry education, and to a lesser

extent, in forestry work environments in Nepal.

Response to women entering male-dominated occupations such as forestry has often been negative. In Norway, where forestry has traditionally been one of the most masculine rural occupations, women have faced negative attitudes upon joining the profession (Brandth and Haugen, 1998; Brandth and Haugen, 2000). In 2007, the first women to graduate from the Central Forest Rangers College in Chandrapur, India were met with resistance from senior officials (Sainath, 2007). In Canada, women's employment in forestry faced resistance from both outside and within forest communities (Reed, 2008). A study undertaken with the Society of American Foresters (Kuhns et al., 2004) reported that 65% of the women felt that gender discrimination existed in their workplace; 71% of all surveyed thought women did not have the same opportunities as men in the profession.

This article is inspired by a visit to Nepal by Virginia Tech and Principia College representatives in November 2007 to meet with stakeholders of a planned Memorial Center of Excellence at the Institute of Forestry (IOF). The Center was established in 2008 as a living memorial

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [mechristie@vt.edu](mailto:mechristie@vt.edu). Tel: (540) 231-4297. Fax: (540) 231-3519.

**Abbreviations:** CF, Community forestry; CFUG, community forest user group; DFO, district forest officer; FGD, focus Group discussion; IOF, institute of forestry; I/NGO, International/Non-Governmental organization; NRM, natural resource management; NTFP, non-timber forest product; TCF, technical certificate in forestry; WOCAN, women organizing for change in agriculture and natural resource management.

commemorating the loss of 24 individuals including Nepal's leading conservationists and several foreign dignitaries who were killed in a helicopter crash in September 2006 on their way to hand over the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area to the local community. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development<sup>1</sup>, the Center aims to strengthen the capacity of the IOF to educate Nepal's future professionals in forestry and natural resource conservation; one of its goals is to increase the participation of women and other underrepresented groups.

In a meeting discussing the goals of the proposed Center at the Pokhara campus of the IOF, the all-male faculty insisted that women had "no problems" at the institution and pointed to their 10% quota for women students and scholarship support. In any case, "women do not work in forestry," one faculty member said. In fact, female IOF graduates work in forestry in areas including Community Forestry (CF), forest mapping, surveying, conflict resolution, wildlife management, and administration (Giri et al., 2008a). During that campus visit, both male and female students raised concerns about the cramped, run down, and clearly inadequate dorm facilities for women students. Besides this undeniable, infrastructural obstacle that literally limits space for women in the IOF, there was no recognition of attitudes or behaviors that present barriers to women.

The Institute of Forestry (IOF) is Nepal's main and, until recently, only degree-granting institution specializing in forestry. Until 1981, the Institute was open only to men. With the adoption of participatory forest policies in the 1980s, women's entry into the forestry sector was deemed necessary. Since then, international NGOs have been working to include gender in Nepal's forestry programs (Tinker, 1994) and to support female students in the IOF. Thus, strongly backed by international donors, the IOF began admitting women students in 1982. In the first year, seven women students were admitted: one in the Bachelor of Science and six in the Technical Certificate in Forestry (TCF) program. Nearly 25 years later, the IOF has prepared more than 300 women forestry professionals with a diverse range of expertise. Recently, it initiated master's and doctoral programs. In September 2009, one of nine PhD. students and 11 of 53 Master of Science students were women. Women represent approximately 22% of the undergraduate population. Two full-time, permanent faculty and one English instructor are women. There are no women, full-time forestry faculty.

As the primary gateway to the profession in Nepal, the IOF is positioned to help its students and faculty understand and address gender issues they are certain to encounter, with specific courses tailored to better preparing both men and women graduates to overcome them.

## Theoretical framework

Acker says that conceptualizing organizations as gender-neutral separates structures from the people in them (Acker, 1990). "To say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (146). She stresses the need to recognize the specificity of women's experience to avoid a disembodied, gender-neutral bureaucracy. This paper draws on the experience of female students currently at the IOF and graduates to explore its gendered structure and masculinist culture. It illustrates the "hegemonic masculinity" described by Connell as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005). While gender is the focus of this inquiry, the authors recognize that it intersects with other categories including caste, ethnicity, class, and remoteness to exacerbate discrimination.

Gendered knowledge reflects gender-based differences in women and men's relationship with natural resources. These result from their different access to and control of resources, the gendered division of labor, and other factors. Because much of women's work involves reproductive tasks including management of natural resources in the domestic sphere, they are also more vulnerable to environmental degradation, such as reduced water quality or deforestation. Rocheleau states that the "science of survival is largely in the hands of women." When women's work, such as gathering firewood or using non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for household goods or handicrafts, are not included in measures of economic activity, it is not apparent that limiting access to the forest or dwindling availability of forest products has drastic impacts on women's livelihoods. Privatization of forested lands or natural resource protection that excludes shareholders from sustainable resource use threatens women's role of completing the "daily management of the living landscape" (Rocheleau et al., 1996). Forestry therefore is not a gender-neutral field of study, but should explicitly consider women's interests and their roles in the household. Indeed, because women are the primary beneficiaries of the forests, and the ones most directly impacted by their loss, gender differences must be addressed and women's intricate relationship with forest resources recognized for forest programs to be effective (Fortmann and Rocheleau, 1985; Hoskins, 1980; Tinker, 1994). Because women's need of forest products and priorities for forest management can differ from those of men (Buchy and Subba, 2003; Paudel, 1999), institutions such as the IOF that train future generations of foresters are advised to incorporate gender into their curriculum,

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increase gender awareness at the institution, and create a friendlier climate for women students and faculty.

## Background

Nepal is a landlocked Himalayan country with 27 million people. It is comprised of 29% forest cover, 10.6% scrubland and degraded forest, 12% grassland, 21% farmland and 7% uncultivated land (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, 2009). The forest is key to rural livelihoods: 80% of Nepal's population depend on fuel wood for energy and many NTFPs for their subsistence needs (Koirala et al., 2008). It is a major source of energy, fodder, NTFPs, timber, and protection of watersheds for hydroelectric power generation, irrigation and domestic consumption.

Nepal has passed through several phases of forest management strategies as a result of both national and international pressures (Giri, 2005; Koirala et al., 2008; Shrestha and Britt, 1998). In the late 1970s, the concept of Community Forestry (CF) emerged, due to the failure of earlier approaches to address socio-economic development and to increasing deforestation and degradation (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

The National Forestry Plan of 1976 recognized people's participation as critical; this was reflected in 1978 forest policies that introduced a handover of the forest for its protection and management to local political administrative bodies (Fisher, 1999). An analysis of the progress and shortcomings in that process led Nepal to adopt a user group model of forest management. This required a reorientation of foresters from their previous role of policing the forest to one of encouraging participation of local communities in forest management. CF has been touted as a successful program that improves both the condition of the forest and people's livelihood (Agarwal and Gupta, 2005); however, studies show that benefits have not been equitably distributed (Agarwal and Gupta, 2005; Koirala et al., 2008; Lachapelle et al., 2004; Lama and Buchy, 2002). Elites dominate decision-making in the user groups, and the marginalization of women, the poor and scheduled castes is prevalent (Shrestha and Britt, 1998).

In Nepal, as in many parts of the developing world, women are the primary forest users because they are responsible for collecting most of the fuel wood, fodder, leaf compost and bedding; they also control grazing. Women have traditional knowledge about the management and utilization of forests (Agarwal, 2001) that plays an important role in the conservation of different species and varieties. It is imperative to include women in forest management decisions, encourage them to articulate their needs and priorities, and ensure that these are met. Given rural women's lower literacy levels and less exposure to the public sphere, however, they often require training and mentoring to effectively participate in forestry programs. Due to cultural norms

and constraints, women foresters are likely to be particularly effective in working with rural women and bringing their issues into forest development programs. Yet, despite women foresters working at different levels, only one district forest officer (DFO) operating in the country's 74 forest districts is a woman. The DFO is the highest forestry position in the government structure. By training women foresters and integrating gender into the curriculum, the IOF can address inequities at the professional and community level, and support sustainable livelihoods and forest management. Additionally, female foresters can counteract prevalent gender stereotypes in rural areas and provide a platform for change.

## METHODS

This qualitative study is the result of a partnership between Virginia Tech and Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN). It is meant to provide a glimpse into the challenges faced by women at the IOF over the years. A larger-scale survey including both men and women graduates and students is recommended to gain a more complete picture of the gender issues raised by this study. The research was carried out between November of 2007 and May of 2008 using focus group discussions (FGDs) and structured and unstructured interviews. A total of four FGDs were held to discuss and analyze the prospects and challenges of women foresters and other women professionals working in natural resource management (NRM) sectors (Giri et al., 2008b). They included a total of 49 female participants; of these, 48 had studied or were currently studying at the IOF. Participants were selected based on various criteria: year of graduation from IOF (from the first women graduates of 1987 to recent graduates of 2007, and current students at different levels); field of expertise (CF, wildlife, social mobilization etc.); ethnicity; career level (entry, mid, expert), and type of associated organization (academics, governmental organizations, NGOs and International NGOs). This heterogeneous mix of participants provided a good platform to discuss the experiences of women professionals spanning a period of 25 years. The persons facilitating the FGDs and conducting the interviews were native Nepali speakers who used both English and Nepali.

In each focus group, the discussion was conducted in three 1½ h sessions, recorded on tape, and transcribed. The first had 11 participants, the second had 18, while the third and fourth each had ten. Two were held in Pokhara and two in Kathmandu: these cities were selected so that women foresters working both in eastern and western parts of Nepal could join the FGDs. A facilitator moderated the sessions while an assistant took note of commonalities, if any, and of key words and expressions (Giri et al., 2008b). Content analysis (Berg, 2009) was used to make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified messages. The resulting patterns were discussed and confirmed with the FGD participants. Questions included:

1. What encouragement and/or obstacles did they face at the IOF?
2. Had they found the curriculum relevant and applicable in field settings?
3. Did the faculty and administration address women's education and problems?

Additionally, the students and professionals discussed their career aspirations prior to and after graduation, existing employment opportunities for women forestry graduates, and the recruitment

policies and management practices of different organizations. Based on the discussions, participants suggested various measures and services through which institutions such as the IOF can better address women's needs.

Following the FGDs, interviews were conducted with 20 of the participants. From these, two types of profiles were developed to document women's experiences. Eight long profiles presented in-depth information and knowledge on the barriers women foresters face in Nepal and on the impact of past efforts to integrate gender at the IOF. Twelve short-term profiles of a broader group of professionals in the NRM sectors were also developed (Giri and IOF Faculty, 2008). Respondents for the long profiles were selected on the basis of their demonstrated expertise in the field, and position in the field of NRM. Women for the short-term profiles passed through the IOF in different periods and were randomly selected from the 44 IOF graduates included in the recently updated Directory of Women Professionals in Forestry and Natural Resource Management (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001; Giri et al., 2008a). Interviewees were asked about the following:

Place of birth and motivation to study forestry; environment at the IOF and the organization where they were currently employed; supporting and constraining factors to women foresters; success and challenge stories, and at least two recommendations for improving problems women foresters face.

The stories below were selected based on recurring themes in these interviews and in the FGDs. They also represent foresters who serve as role models that encourage other women to succeed in the field. For confidentiality, aliases are used even for women who gave permission for their life histories to be reproduced and whose career paths may mark their identity.

## TRAVELERS IN A MALE WORLD

Silvia Gherardi uses Judi Marshall's notion of "travelers in a male world" to explore the situation of women pioneers in male occupations (Gherardi, 1995; Marshall, 1984). Entering the IOF in 1983, Rekha was the first woman to complete a graduate degree. She promised herself she would become the first female DFO in Nepal, and she did, serving as the only woman DFO today. "We were the first few women to enter forestry education. All of society was watching us." She recalls teachers taking special care to encourage and promote women students "despite the stringent gender hierarchy prevalent during that time." She credits her success to her determination, the ongoing support of her husband and in-laws, and mentoring by faculty at the IOF. As a senior decision-maker today, she says she would:

*"Never, ever favor lazy, uncompetitive women just because they are women. But, [I] will fight to provide exceptional encouragement to committed women whose careers are suffering due to social and cultural expectations, such as duties in the home."*

When it comes to exams and evaluations, she says, the women's disproportionate burdens given existing gender roles, and the division of household responsibilities, are not taken into account. The difficulty in balancing work and home duties reduce women foresters' opportunities

for promotion. Rekha feels that a certain degree of positive discrimination is required to level the playing field.

Nepalese women foresters like Rekha reported similar challenges to those faced by American women foresters interviewed for the Forest History Society's Centennial Forester Collection. An interview with Wendy Milner Herrett, for instance (Reinier, 2001), mentions women's exclusion from men's informal networks, competing demands of family and career, and obstacles to working in the forest as opposed to administrative tasks. Similar issues were raised in the FGDs and interviews for this article.

Women in this study felt they had to work "twice or thrice" as hard as men to earn respect for their capabilities and accomplishments. The discrimination and isolation they face make it more difficult for them to succeed; one even described her experience at the IOF as "tortuous." Some IOF graduates regretted their decision to study forestry, including several who met with such discouraging behavior that they changed fields after graduation. Others persevered and are recognized for their outstanding achievements. Examples of such are the women cited subsequently:

'Sita' joined the Institute at Hetauda to pursue the Technical Certificate in Forestry (TCF) in 1983 and became Nepal's first forest ranger in 1986. She passed the test conducted by the Public Service Commission.

*"When I went to register as an employee [...]," she says, "the administrative staff refused to register me as a forest ranger saying, 'What? A forest ranger! I have never heard of women rangers!'"*

On the job, Sita found it difficult to negotiate the hierarchy to access necessary information and had to depend on male rangers. In the beginning, she was asked to carry out small administrative jobs, while the male rangers at her level were given responsibility for preparing operational plans and handing over the forests to Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). Most groups' steering committees were dominated by male members with nominal or no representation of women members. Sita mobilized women to form a user group with an all-women executive committee. With guidance, advice, and trust in Sita's capabilities, local women's confidence increased. They went beyond effectively protecting and managing their forests and started a revolving fund from the sale of forest products to address their livelihood needs. Eventually, this CFUG was awarded the Ganeshman Singh Forest Conservation Award for its outstanding and sustainable forest management.

'Tara' completed the TCF in 1986. Gender obstacles make it particularly tough for women to work in the field, she says:

*“The problem is that the society still perpetuates the idea of men as leaders and women as followers.”*

She reports that her gender was a plus when working with women in the forest:

*“Being a woman, it was easy for me to...talk to women from indigenous communities who will mostly shy away from the presence of male members. The advantage was that I could talk to both men and women, and understand their concerns in relation to conservation.”*

Tara was awarded the “Conservation Award 2002” by the Worldwide Fund for Nature for her achievements as Project Manager for the Terai Arc Landscapes program in Bardia district.

Like several other women in this study, ‘Janaki’ excels in conflict resolution. Before a CFUG can be granted legal approval and the forest formally handed over to communities, surrounding villages need to agree on forest boundaries. Janaki was responsible for forming user groups in four areas where villagers had major boundary disputes and earlier conflict resolution efforts had failed.

*“When I first approached the villagers for a meeting, some male villagers remarked, ‘even the DFO (a male) cannot solve the conflict in this area; now you! A woman ranger thinks she can resolve the conflict and form groups!’”*

Within 18 months, Janaki was able to hand the four forests over to the villagers; for this, she was given the “Best Ranger Award” at the regional level in 2003.

Many of the women surveyed in this research felt they were never considered “legitimate” foresters or received “respect” for what they accomplished. Despite changes over the last two decades, says Tara, “forestry was and is still a male dominated field and women are not taken seriously.” Neema describes her frustration:

*“My idea was that I would be included in the old boys club if I could get a degree from a reputable forestry institution. I thought that would automatically make me a card carrier. It took me two decades until it really sunk in. Did I ever become a card-carrying member, in fact? No, they never did let me in.”*

## **Masculinities**

Connell says masculinist hegemony is “likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideas and institutional power, collective if not individual” (Connell, 2005). Gender issues at the IOF are not unique to the institution and reflect the biases

in Nepalese society; discriminatory mechanisms are rooted in individual and collective behavior and attitudes.

Gender discrimination and cultural biases mean women are less likely than men to be in a position to enter the IOF in the first place. For women from remote areas, conservative attitudes about women’s right to education collude with the physical and economic challenges of actually getting to school. Samira, growing up in a remote village, walked three hours to school each day. Some teased her, saying she was walking in vain as there was “no use for girls to study anyway.” In addition to disparities in education, the idea that forestry is not an appropriate field for women, that it endangers their reputation, is a significant deterrent. Women may be barred or discouraged by their parents’ fear of sending them away from home to work in a field dominated by men and potentially requiring work in isolated regions. Also, families may not want to invest in a girl’s education when they expect that benefits will accrue to her husband’s family. Finally, women are burdened with family responsibilities, household chores, and other expectations rooted in traditional gender roles and customs which make it difficult for women to devote time to studying. This affects their chance of getting scores needed to enter the IOF, and to pass their classes and government employment entrance exams.

Participants in this study agreed on a persistent lack of gender awareness at the IOF. Faculty and administration do not seem to understand that the culturally-rooted, biased attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of male students and colleagues to which women are subjected can be problematic. Harassment at the hands of male students at the IOF ranged from insults and obscene cartoons to persistent, menacing phone calls. Speaking of her experience in 2008, one woman said:

*“Forestry boys think that they have the right to humiliate girls. If a girl wants to react, she is bound to face more trouble from boys.”*

When women complain, faculty and administration are often unresponsive. One woman called the police after receiving frequent harassing calls from a male student who was angry after she scored high on exams; the administration chastised her for going outside the institution with the complaint. A faculty expressed the opinion that men are envious of the opportunities women have with International/Non-Governmental Organizations (I/NGOs) working in forestry. This envy might explain why women who do better than men students in the IOF are subjected to increased harassment.

Exclusion from male social networks affected women’s performance in school, ability to find employment, and opportunities for advancement. This reflects both traditional Nepalese culture which segregates men’s and women’s spaces, and the hierarchical culture of the IOF. Women complained about the lack of communication that affected all students at the IOF, but women in particular.

They were forced to depend on male students for critical information including exam schedules. "Information about almost everything mostly follows this route: from faculty to boys' hostels to the girls' hostel". Women find themselves in a masculine system of top-down communication and male-only social environments involving alcohol that traditionally exclude women. Not surprisingly, one of WOCAN's recommendations is to build a formal network of IOF women students and graduates to share information and provide a collective space for women to be their own advocates and work for gender equity in forests and forest institutions (WOCAN, 2008).

Graduates described the off-campus practicum— which involved spending many days in the field living in a tent— as periods of severe harassment by male students, many of whom would get drunk and shout abusive comments. Again, the lack of management response was discouraging. Reporting could attract hostility from male colleagues and threaten women's safety. The lack of women faculty at the IOF exacerbates the feeling of isolation for female students. Several graduates said that it would be easier to express their problems to women faculty who could potentially mediate and communicate their concerns to the administration. The low numbers of women students and faculty support an unfriendly climate where gender issues go unaddressed.

During job interviews, IOF graduates were often shocked by inappropriate questions that had nothing to do with their technical expertise. They were asked regarding their commitment to family, whether or not they planned to marry, or their looks and physique. One woman was told:

*"You look tender and beautiful and so you are more suited to administration, banking or medical work, but not forestry."*

Others were asked what their husbands would say about their working. Employers exhibit inflexibility with regards to rigid cultural expectations: several women reported being threatened that they would be fired if family obligations should ever interfere with their work. More than one recalled leaving sick children to go into the field for days at a time so as not to risk their job.

On the job, women were often barred from opportunities for advancement: they were kept out of the forests and relegated to administrative tasks in the office. One woman reported that solutions she proposed were ignored, only to be praised when a male colleague repeated them (Giri et al., 2008b). Just as at the IOF the percentage of women students decreases as you move from TCF to PhD, in the workplace the number of women in top positions is negligible. The most dramatic example, mentioned earlier, is that only one out of 74 DFOs is a woman. Significantly, at work as at school, women said they faced more discrimination if they were in higher

ranking positions or otherwise showed themselves to be competitive with the men.

Women also face obstacles working with forest communities, where the same patriarchal structures that discriminate against women at the IOF and the workplace exist and are reinforced by male foresters and community leaders. Men and women alike often assume women foresters were wives, lovers, or subordinates, even if they are in charge of a crew. Sometimes, the male community representatives initially refuse to speak with women foresters. Despite initial resistance, women foresters in this study were able to carry out their jobs and also open the door for village women to speak. They felt they were better able to work with the community as a whole than were men, and that they helped to break down stereotypes and open some doors for women to improve their position.

Our findings reflect prevailing stereotypes in forestry, not only in Nepal, but also as reported in previous studies. This suggests that issues of gender invisibility in forestry are not new or limited to a particular region, but are rather a global issue that merits immediate attention.

## Conclusion

At the first stakeholder meeting to discuss plans for the Center of Excellence in November 2006, participants said that IOF graduates have a hard time finding jobs because they do not understand social issues. Graduates need to be "relevant," one insisted, if they are to maintain the legacy of the conservation heroes whom the Center aims to commemorate. This, they said, requires the IOF to move beyond its traditional approach to forestry as a technical field and to integrating social aspects including gender.

Asked why fewer qualified women students are accepted into the IOF than men, one faculty said it was "maybe for biological reasons." Another recalled three decades ago when the IOF was run like a military operation, students had to salute faculty, and a woman was turned down by the Dean for a position on the basis of her gender. Several participants in this study referred to illegal poaching in the forest and the resulting militarized environment as one reason why men do not want women foresters. "But things have changed, women have become empowered," the faculty assured. IOF faculty, students and graduates may agree that things have improved for women in forestry, yet masculinist attitudes prevalent at the IOF and in the forestry profession belie the hurdles that remain. Deep-seated biases will not change automatically by increasing the number of women students or faculty, or by "empowering" them.

Rural women have valuable knowledge about forest resources and can play a key role in improving forest management. Ensuring that Nepal has qualified women

forestry professionals to mainstream and engage uneducated, rural women increases the chances of bringing the latter into forestry and community development activities. As reflected in the narratives above, women foresters can also help to counteract prevalent gender stereotypes in rural areas and provide a platform for change.

The subordination of women and other less privileged groups at the IOF and in the community must be challenged by addressing issues of equity and power. The success of leaders such as those presented above underscores the importance of facilitating the entry of qualified women into the forestry profession in Nepal. Yet while some of the women students and professionals interviewed appreciated the valuable support of individual men, the lack of a gender-awareness at the IOF was a constant barrier. Given its position as the primary forestry education institution in Nepal, the IOF can have widespread and positive impact by recognizing and rectifying the systematic gender biases therein. It has an opportunity to address these by raising gender awareness; counseling students, faculty and staff; halting discrimination against women, and integrating gender into the curriculum. By doing so, the Institute could better prepare both women and men to contribute to forest management and the related, gendered, social issues at an educational, workplace, and community level. The Memorial Center of Excellence at the IOF has already taken steps in this direction by bringing recognized experts to speak on gender and diversity at both IOF campuses; it has also undertaken a study on inclusion at the IOF. The more difficult but instrumental next step is equitable, institutional transformation.

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