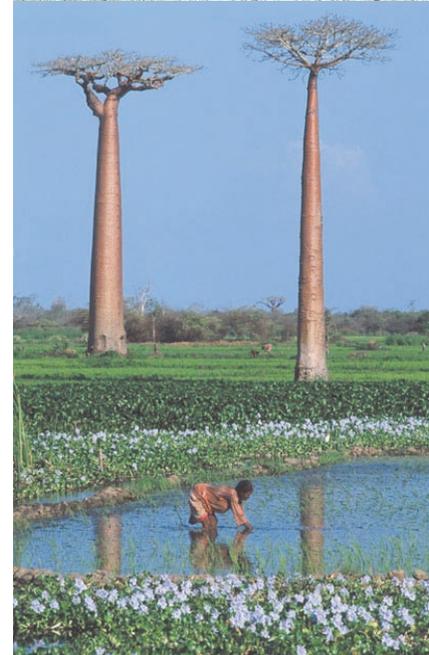
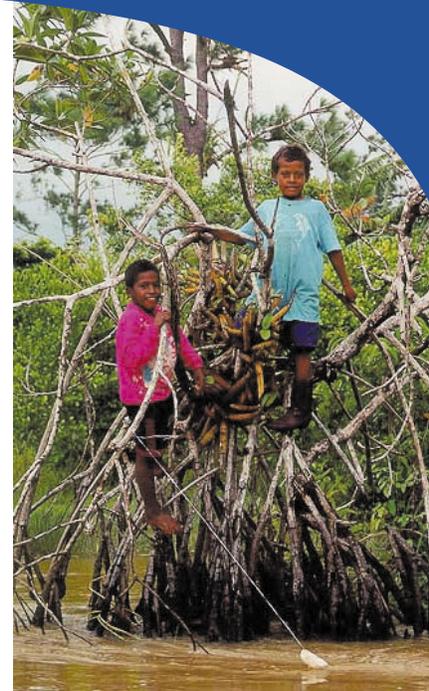


# PROTECTED AREAS

Lorena Aguilar, Montserrat Blanco and Paula Zúñiga

## Gender Makes the Difference

- Protected areas represent 11.5% of the total surface of the planet. Millions of women and men continue to live within these protected areas because they depend upon the natural resources for survival. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, community harvesting of giant snails in the buffer zone around Tai National Park provides a source of food and income: each snail provides between 100 to 300 grams of meat and the shells provide calcium for animal feed or crop fertilizer.
- Forests contribute to the livelihoods of many of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty by nourishing the natural systems that support agriculture and indigenous food supplies, such as fruit, nuts, and roots.
- Protected areas have, at times, been a source of conflict between conservationists and local peoples. For example, a re-settlement program in the Acre state of Brazil was implemented without taking into account the particular needs of women. The program placed the communities in areas that were not accessible to sources of water and firewood, causing significant hardship for women and their families.
- In protected areas, women undertake such activities as gathering wildlife products for food and fodder, maintaining home gardens, fishing in estuaries and walking long distances to collect water and firewood. Men's activities more often include tasks such as hunting and fishing off shore.
- Recent studies conducted in Africa, Asia and Latin America have shown that while most production systems tend to promote single-crop farming and use of a single type of seed, women have continued to utilize a wide variety of seeds, to produce diverse crops that have become important reserves of plant genetic material. In doing so, women have become important guardians of biodiversity. Research on 60 family farms in Thailand, revealed 230 different species of crops, many of which had been rescued by women from neighboring forests, before they were cleared.
- Stakeholder analysis must include both women and men. In Zimbabwe, a project meant to improve the management of communal properties demonstrated that when farming income is received solely by the "head of family" (most often a male member of the household), the income does not necessarily improve the quality of life of all members of the family.
- Factors contributing to the low participation of women in the management of environmental programs in protected areas are: lack of support from the community, low self-confidence, and illiteracy. In the Biological Reserve of Vizcaino (Baja California, México), training of women as look-outs for incoming whales, has allowed them to develop skills in the marine field and to obtain a new source of income. At the same time, women have become models for younger generations of women and men.
- When women's knowledge about natural resources is not considered, much valuable information is lost. Only after consulting with women, was a technical team at Jaú National Park, in Brazil, able to determine which species and quantities of animals were being hunted by men in the region. The women, who were in charge of the preparation and distribution of food, possessed valuable information regarding: consumption patterns, varieties of meat, and the frequency and seasonality of hunting activities. Management of protected areas will only be effective if local women and men are involved with them. Gender equity should be viewed as a cornerstone to achieving conservation and sustainable development.
- On the other hand, conservation initiatives in protected areas may constitute a unique opportunity to promote gender equity, as long as they propose alternative actions that will allow a more just access to the benefits arising from proper management of natural resources. All interested persons must be made visible and must be consulted and involved in the process to manage and conserve resources.



## FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC CAN BE FOUND AT:

IUCN-Gender and Environment  
[www.genderandenvironment.org](http://www.genderandenvironment.org)

Women in Fisheries Bulletin  
[www.spc.org.nc/coastfish/news/wif/wif.htm](http://www.spc.org.nc/coastfish/news/wif/wif.htm)

International Collective Support of Fisherworkers (ICSF)  
[www.icsf.net/](http://www.icsf.net/)

MERGE  
[www.latam.ufl.edu/publications/spanish.html](http://www.latam.ufl.edu/publications/spanish.html)

Comisión Mundial de Áreas Protegidas (CMAP).  
[www.iucn.org/wcpa/](http://www.iucn.org/wcpa/)

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)  
[www.idrc.ca/minga/](http://www.idrc.ca/minga/)

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Based on this principle of equity, the World Congress on Protected Areas, held in Durban, 2003, recommended that international conventions, governments, PA agencies, donor agencies, conservation NGOs, communities and the private sector, strive to:

- Ensure that further work towards building systems in comprehensive protected areas takes into full account the rights, interests and aspirations of both women and men.
- Adopt and promote policies and incentives to encourage effective involvement of women in decision-making and management of existing protected areas, via a range of mechanisms including sharing of complete information; participatory exercises from a gender perspective and sharing of benefits and support to stakeholders (both men and women) in organizing themselves and increasing their capabilities.
- Promote roles in women that avoid patterns of subordination, exclusion and discrimination, thereby influencing change and understanding toward younger generations.
- Undertake programs to develop and strengthen institutional and human capacities for mainstreaming a gender equity perspective in the management and conservation of protected areas, including the offering of basic training and refresher courses for managers of natural resources and national and international visitors, and the promotion of joint learning initiatives among institutions and sites using a gender-equity approach.

## WHY GENDER EQUITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT

- It favors the success of strategies designed to reduce poverty, when implemented in the context of sustainable use by women, of resources in protected areas. Evidence suggests that women spend money differently than men do: a study in Cote d'Ivoire reported that raising women's share of household income reduced household expenditures on alcohol and cigarettes, but increased spending on food.
- It contributes to improved nutrition, greater employment opportunities, and improved family well-being, by recognizing the fundamental role that natural resources in protected areas play in household survival strategies of rural communities. In Rwanda, holding income constant, members of female-headed households consumed 377 more calories day, per adult equivalent, than in male-headed households. This difference was even greater among lower income households.
- It contributes to resolve conflicts of interest in the definition and management of protected areas. By recognizing the different interests and priorities of men and women, protected areas management approaches can be developed that eliminate conflicts and support both conservation and sustainable livelihoods.
- It facilitates utilization of non-traditional activities that may contribute to reduce gender inequalities. In Brazil, the women's association of Bahía de Sol, has received training on the membership requirements established by IBAMA, an environmental agency. Through this knowledge, women are able to help fishermen obtain the necessary fishing permits, which are mandatory for rural populations involved in fishing activities.
- It allows the establishment of appropriate criteria for zoning of protected areas, as related to the needs and interests of women. As a result of the forest protection resolution adopted by 15 states in India under the program for Joint Forest Management, women had to walk an average of 10 kilometers to gather firewood in non-restricted areas. The resolution established severe penalties (public flagellation) for wood collectors in the PA. The result was that women accounted for 90% of the people punished.
- Gender equity indicators can help to measure the effectiveness of protected areas management efforts. IUCN, through its publication, "In Search of the Lost Gender: Equity in Protected Areas," proposes a methodology and practical examples for the creation of gender indicators to be used in management of protected areas.
- Protected areas programs that integrate gender equity into the management cycle attract financing from international aid agencies that are interested in promoting gender equity initiatives. Certain projects related to management of protected areas in Latin America, have been able to obtain financing after incorporating the gender focus into their objectives and considering this as an integral part of the problem.
- It promotes the design and implementation of innovative research methodologies which include non-traditional sources of information, such as cooking recipes used by generations of women in Yucatán, México. These recipes represent a valuable data bank on types and quantities of species used in communal diets over many generations.