



Women, Energy and Water in the Himalayas

Integration of Women in Planning and Management
Policy Guidelines



Bikash Sharma
Kamal Banskota
Samira Luitel

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**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
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Rosemary A. Thapa (Consultant Editor)

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United Nations Environment Programme
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: 254 20 1234
Fax: 254 20 623927
Email: cpinfo@unep.org
Web: <http://www.unep.org>

International Centre for
Integrated Mountain Development
P.O. Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: + 977 1 5525313
Fax: + 977 1 5524509 / 5536747
Email: distri@icimod.org
Web: <http://www.icimod.org>

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Foreword

Increasing numbers of gender awareness and development interventions are helping to increase opportunities and improve the lives and well-being of women and rural communities across the Himalayan region. Nevertheless, in many areas women continue to bear a disproportionate burden in meeting their household water and energy needs. Increasing chemical pollution and ecosystem degradation often exacerbates their daily plight.

Fortunately, there are an increasing number of technical solutions available. A number of good practices in energy and water management are able to reduce the need for fuel, provide alternative energy sources, and increase water availability close to the home. However, such technologies and approaches are only accepted and used in practice if women are directly involved, and their special concerns taken into account in the decision-making and implementation processes. Unfortunately, the failure to recognise this has meant that many water and energy initiatives have been much less effective in the long-term than originally hoped.

ICIMOD, with its long experience in diverse mountain communities, recognises that any new interventions for improving the well-being of mountain women need to focus on ways to free women from the long hours and drudgery of work to enable them to engage in income-generating and other activities. This is accomplished by bringing them into the technology choice and decision-making process from the outset. This approach has the added benefit of contributing to women's overall empowerment and status.

In 2002, UNEP and ICIMOD initiated a project on 'Incorporating the Needs and Roles of Women in Water and Energy Management in Rural Areas in South Asia – Capacity Building of Women in Rural Areas of the Himalaya' with financial support from the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA). The project focused on enabling women to participate fully and effectively in the planning and implementation of household water and energy initiatives by building their capability to organise themselves and to identify and prioritise their own needs. The project was carried out in partnership with the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) in Bhutan, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in India, and the Centre for Rural Technology (CRT/N) in Nepal.

In less than two years, the project made a marked difference in the lives of the women, their families, and their communities. Women developed their own solutions to their water and energy needs, and many were able to use the time saved to generate income. Women have operated a technology demonstration centre from the technologies they adopted for the benefit of other women. Some have emerged as energy entrepreneurs, for example, as liquid petroleum gas depot managers, and producers and sellers of solar dryers and improved cook stoves. The impact was further broadened by coordinating with different development partners to provide

additional inputs and training to the women, providing the basis for mainstreaming good practices at district and national levels.

The project has demonstrated that the issue is not merely which technologies best serve the needs of women, but also how to enable them to choose the options that meet their needs and improve their livelihoods. The major challenge now is to translate such experiences into gender sensitive policies that can extend the impact across the Himalayan region.

The experiences and lessons learned from the project have been encapsulated in three publications and a film, one of which is this Policy Guidelines publication. A Project Final Report and a Training Manual complete the series. The Policy Guidelines book highlights the importance of bringing the gender perspective to water and energy policy analysis and design. It identifies approaches and actions to 'mainstream' gender concerns in policies and programmes and to implement them in water and energy activities. Policy makers and rural development practitioners can pick from these experiences those that are useful or suitable to their particular needs for replication and upscaling.

I hope that the Guidelines will be of use to policy makers, planners, and development specialists in national institutions, NGOs, and donor agencies engaged in engendering development and empowering women, especially in mountain areas. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to UNEP-Nairobi and SIDA for the financial support, without which this important work would not have been possible.

Dr. J. Gabriel Campbell
Director General
ICIMOD

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
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| AEPC | Alternative Energy Promotion Centre |
| CBO | community-based organisation |
| CEDAW | The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CRT/N | Center for Rural Technology, Nepal |
| CSD | Commission for Sustainable Development |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| DDC | district development committee |
| DEEP | Society for Development and Environmental Protection |
| DEPI | Division of Environmental Policy Implementation |
| EIA | environmental impact assessment |
| GAD | gender and development |
| HKH | Hindu Kush-Himalayas |
| HOPE | Himalaya Organisation for Protecting Environment |
| ICIMOD | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development |
| ICS | improved cooking stove |
| ICWE | International Conference on Water and the Environment |
| IGAs | income generating activities |
| INGO | international non-government organisation |
| IWEP | Integrated Water and Energy Programme |
| IWM | integrated water management |
| LPG | liquefied petroleum gas |

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