



# Chapter 5 SDG 5: Gender Equality – A Precondition for Sustainable Forestry

Seema Arora-Jonsson\*, Shruti Agarwal, Carol J. Pierce Colfer, Stephanie Keene, Priya Kurian and Anne M. Larson

## Key Points

- Forestry cannot be thought of in isolation from its relations with other sectors and other parts of people's lives – for both the health of the forests and the well-being of forest peoples.
- Forest governance and everyday management are upheld by a superstructure of gendered forest relations – invisible to mainstream forestry – that often disadvantages women as a social group.
- Well-intentioned gender programmes can backfire, causing adverse effects on forests and forest peoples, if the efforts are not cognisant of context and power relations.
- Constant awareness of differences among various social groups – men, women, different classes, ethnicities – and how their interests intersect differently in various forest contexts is needed for everyone's energy, creativity and motivation to contribute to sustainable forest management.
- Research suggests that greater democratic governance of forests leads to better environmental outcomes.
- The gender-neutral framing of some SDG goals undermines efforts towards achieving the outcomes called for in SDG 5.

## 5.1 Introduction

SDG 5's ambition to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' is extremely important in forestry contexts. It brings attention to aspects that make forest livelihoods possible but often get subsumed in conventional forestry definitions, associating forests only with timber, woody biomass or biodiversity conservation. Taking SDG 5 seriously in relation to forests brings to the forefront what is usually taken for granted or backgrounded in forest

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\* Lead author.

debates: people, and their relationships to one another and to the forests, which determine forest outcomes.

We first analyse the context for SDG 5 in relation to forests; second, we consider how taking SDG 5 seriously might impact forests and people's livelihoods. So far, little progress has been made in implementing these targets within the forestry sector. Our analysis is built around SDG 5's nine targets (Table 5.1). Though defined separately in Goal 5, the issues the targets raise are inextricably linked to one another in the everyday lives of women and men. Bringing change to one would affect other aspects. We demonstrate the need to understand large systemic connections from a broad perspective. To do so, we turn to compelling feminist research on gender and forest livelihoods. We also go beyond forestry research to cutting-edge gender research on themes and targets where research in relation to forest contexts is scarce. We then theorise on insights from this research to what we know about forest contexts.

Taken together, the subsections titled 'Implications' in this chapter build a framework for analysis and raise serious questions in relation to interventions

**Table 5.1** SDG 5 targets

<b>5.1</b> End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
<b>5.2</b> Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres
<b>5.3</b> Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
<b>5.4</b> Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
<b>5.5</b> Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels in political, economic and public life
<b>5.6</b> Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
<b>5.A</b> Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, and access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
<b>5.B</b> Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
<b>5.C</b> Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls
Source: Adapted from <a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG5">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/SDG5</a>

in forestry if equality and sustainability are to guide forest action. The analysis, while focused on forest contexts, is also relevant for other sectors (e.g. agriculture), as is evident from the research we draw on and the ways these issues are intertwined in people's everyday lives.

Gender, as it is discussed here, is not synonymous with women – a common mainstream assumption. Rather, gender, as a category of analysis, studies relationships of power based on sex/sexuality and the ways in which relationships may be organised. We therefore analyse not only how this organisation in different contexts may discriminate against certain social groups based on their sex, but also how men's and women's positions in society are always cross-cut by intersecting dimensions of power such as class, caste, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup> Much of the research on forestry and gender comes from the Global South, but research on this topic is gaining ground in the Global North. There are differences in these contexts, but also striking parallels and connections, as we show in the following sections.

We begin with **Target 5.1**: the elimination of discrimination against women and girls. This section establishes the context of gender and forest relations and the potential for SDG 5 targets to be achieved in forest contexts. Extensive research on forestry shows that what is taken by mainstream forestry to be 'work' often ignores women's work in forests. We reflect on the implications of this research in relation to forestry and the anticipated impact that achieving the target might have for forests and forest livelihoods.

## 5.2 Elimination of Discrimination: What Does It Look Like in Forestry Today? – Target 5.1

Women are central to the work done in and around forests, yet forests have long been a male public domain. Most recently, FAO's *The State of the World's Forests* (2018) report, building on global data, states that women's forest-related work often surpasses that of men. Research from both the Global South and North shows how what has been considered work or valuable in forests has commonly involved activities associated with men: activities related to the commodification of forest products whose trade is often male-dominated. This is especially problematic as, in many places (if not most), men and women have different divisions of labour and differences in their ability to act and make decisions regarding forests and forest resources. Not actively addressing discrimination in this sector is not only

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<sup>1</sup> Most human rights law continues to deploy 'gender' as a synonym for 'women'. This failure to truly grapple with gendered systems of power means that these policy instruments are unable to effectively tackle gendered inequalities.

a setback for an equitable society, but also a huge obstacle for sustainable forest management.

Although research since the 1970s has highlighted gendered differences, gender-neutral approaches have coloured forestry policies and programmes, both in the Global North and South. The view of institutions as gender-neutral and meant for all is an important factor in discrimination against women. These institutions tend to take the interests of certain men (of a particular class, age, ethnicity and race or caste) as the norm – as is evident in past forestry programmes in the Global South, such as social forestry, joint forest management or community forestry in the 1970s–90s (Agarwal 2010). This is equally true of the Global North (Reed 2008) and in relation to women from Indigenous communities (Mills 2006). Current programmes such as REDD+ and large land-investment schemes seem only to be repeating past errors. A study of 23 early-stage REDD+ projects found that none listed women as a stakeholder group, although five initiatives listed fair benefits to women as an equity goal. A follow-up study three years later found that women's well-being in REDD+ sites had fared worse than the villages' as a whole, and that being in a REDD+ site was significantly associated with a drop in women's well-being when compared to a control group over the same period (Larson et al. 2018). Similarly, studies in Indonesia (Li 2015) bring to light negative economic consequences shouldered by women and their larger communities when forest-based roles are ignored during negotiation processes with investors proposing large-scale land acquisitions. Women in particular were absent from informational meetings and had little or no knowledge of what would happen to their lands.

The insecurity of women's forest rights under national law continues to be an obstacle. A recent global assessment of the legally recognised rights of Indigenous and rural women to community forests in 30 low- and middle-income countries (RRI 2017) concludes that none of the assessed countries adequately recognise women's rights. Rights to inheritance, community membership, community-level governance (voting and leadership) and community-level dispute resolution are wanting, despite constitutional commitments to protect women's rights.

Research also shows that the personal, spiritual, emotional and non-economic aspects in women's and men's everyday lives cannot be separated from decision-making about forests. In both the Global North (Arora-Jonsson 2013) and South (Agarwal and Saxena 2018), women have often chosen to forego economic benefits in favour of other forest outcomes they see as benefiting their communities, families and themselves (see Box 5.1). These elements central to the lives of forest-dependent peoples are often disregarded in academic and political discourses that prioritise the economic value of forests.

### Box 5.1 Beyond Economic Benefits

India's Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 recognises the 'rights of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce' of forest-dwelling communities.<sup>2</sup> Tendu (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) leaves, an important minor forest product in Central India, are collected primarily by tribal women and constitute a crucial source of cash. As tendu is a nationalised minor forest product (MFP), the forest department had a monopoly on its trade. This changed with the enactment of the FRA, which empowers forest-dwelling communities to sell such MFPs to traders of their choice.

In 2017, when a private trader offered a better rate for tendu leaves than the forest department, tribal women from six Odisha villages contracted a deal with the trader. The forest department strongly opposed the deal and insisted that the leaves could only be sold to the department. Tendu leaves are a significant source of revenue for the state government (estimated at more than USD 70 million).

The choice available to these women was to sell the leaves to the forest department and earn whatever the department had to offer, or not to sell the leaves at all. Time was a crucial factor in the women's decision, as tendu leaf quality deteriorates quickly without proper storage, which was unavailable to the villages. The women agreed unanimously to trade on their own terms and forego the potential revenue from tendu if the forest department did not come around. The women wanted the department to respect their rights under the FRA. In a major victory for the women, the forest department acknowledged – albeit after six months of sustained protests – that communities have the right to engage in the private trade of nationalised MFPs.

Source: Agarwal and Saxena 2018.

Violence by men (and sometimes by female relatives), lack of access to birth control or decisions regarding childbearing, domestic work and lack of access to information or education prevent many women from participating, owning or managing forests and resources in and beyond the household (Colfer 2011). As a woman from a forest in Odisha remarked, 'What is the point of protecting the forests when we cannot protect ourselves?' (Arora-Jonsson 2013: 204). In forest livelihoods, as elsewhere, the feminist slogan remains clearly relevant: the personal is political. Matters around bodily integrity, domestic partnerships and household-level power dynamics are deeply intertwined with what takes place in the public sphere of management, conservation and business.

<sup>2</sup> <https://forestrights.nic.in/pdf/FRAAct.pdf>

Studies shows that women are consistently at a disadvantage in relation to institutional support in extension, information, technical support and other services (Lambrou and Nelson 2010). In Sweden, a governmental inquiry demonstrated that male-dominated forestry networks and greater links to economic resources for men than women have contributed to the slow progress of gender equality within the forestry sector (DS 2004: 39). A technical study of formalisation procedures on forest tenure across four countries – Indonesia, Uganda, Peru and Nepal – shows that most government officials managing these processes in each country were men. Only 18 per cent of the officials were women, and only 17 per cent of officials believed that strengthening the rights of special groups such as women and Indigenous peoples was a formalisation objective (Herawati et al. 2017).

The lack of female extension agents and officers is especially troubling in light of research showing that women often prefer female extension agents in order to discuss their interests regarding agriculture. A study in Tanzania shows that men too prefer female extension agents as they feel women are more inclined to listen to them than the male extension agents (Due et al. 1997). Another such example (from Arora-Jonsson 2013) is an assessment report of community forestry groups in Odisha by male authors with little direct contact with the village women that reported the women as being oppressed and lacking agency in forest contexts. In contrast, ethnographic research by a woman at the same time and in the same place presents a different picture, pointing to the many ways in which women's groups were taking action both for themselves and for the forests, showing ways in which they could be supported for forest health and themselves. Research in Senegal (Moore et al. 2001) shows that contact with women officers was a strong predictor of the level of women's knowledge about natural resource management (NRM) and adoption of management practices, also contributing to the level of men's knowledge. Mechanisms established specifically to have contact with women, such as employing women agents, are important for women.

These examples have implications for forestry since it is clear that the lack of networks, good extension and sensitivity to the experiences of different groups is likely to hamper forest production and health. They highlight the need for officers and researchers who might have better access to women. More importantly, research stresses that the main difference lies not in the sex of extension workers or forest officers, but in their ability and training to listen to the contextual needs of different groups and the importance of making an effort to reach out to them (Due et al. 1997, Jafrey and Sulaiman 2013, Quisumbing and Pandolfelli 2010).

### 5.2.1 Implications

This research shows overwhelmingly that forestry cannot be considered in isolation. As the previously given quote by the Odisha woman highlights, forestry cannot only be about trees but needs to link to other parts of people's lives. Questions of safety in the forests and the home, the spiritual and cultural significance that forests represent for many Indigenous and local communities worldwide, and the ability of women and other vulnerable groups to participate in forest-related decision-making are equally important for forestry agencies to consider.

Past lessons are being ignored. Discrimination against women often results from the institutional make-up of official bureaucracies and other outsiders and discriminatory legislation as much as it derives from customs within communities. The role of forestry officials on the ground, as well as other natural resource officials, is extremely important. The ratio of men to women working in forestry is significant: it is important that forest departments hire more women. Yet this is rarely the case. It is even more important that forest officers are trained to listen to concerns of different groups and to concerns that may differ from mainstream forestry as usually defined.

As the SDGs are implemented we need to confront the gendered nature of institutions, particularly in local areas, but also across the scale to the national and international levels responsible for the policymaking and projects that also shape conditions on the ground. Policymaking needs to be sensitive to these nuances when promulgating reforms intended to be gender-inclusive.

## 5.3 Women's Rights over Their Own Bodies – Targets 5.2, 5.3 and 5.6

Forests are particularly linked to violence or the equally debilitating fear of violence. In studies from the Global South, women speak of their fear of violence at the hands of contractors engaged in forest investments (Arora-Jonsson 2013), often associated with big multinational companies and other forest outsiders (Zamora and Monterroso 2017). Forests are seeing increased violence against environmental defenders in ongoing conflicts over territory and resources, and sometimes violence perpetrated by government authorities in their zeal for conservation (RRI 2018). In 2016, at least 200 forest defenders were murdered (almost 10 per cent more than in 2015) in different conflicts over land and resources; 40 per cent of the victims were Indigenous (Global Witness 2017). Female land and human rights defenders are murdered less often, but are more often subject to sexual violence and are less likely to be able to denounce these abuses. Nevertheless, there are emblematic cases such

as that of Bertha Caceres in Honduras, assassinated in 2016.<sup>3</sup> Caceres was an Indigenous Lenca woman and a Goldman Environmental Prize recipient in 2015,<sup>4</sup> and was killed for her opposition to a hydroelectric dam. Women and transgender forest defenders are especially vulnerable to sexual assault by fellow activists due to remoteness to the outside world (Mallory 2006).

Insidious everyday violence takes place within the walls of the home, including in forested areas. Studies show that poverty and alcohol abuse as well as climate-induced socio-economic changes in Kenya (Scheffran et al. 2014), or drought- and income-related stress in Australia (Whittenbury 2013) have led to an increase in violence against women. While these factors may provoke some men into violence against women in forested areas, incontrovertible evidence demonstrates that men's violence against women is widespread everywhere (for a review of 34 countries in North America and Europe, see Alhabib 2010). In India, lower-caste working women are subjected to routine violence and sexual abuse by the upper castes (Jayal 2003, Kumari 2017). In Sweden, considered to be one of the most progressive countries in terms of gender equality indices, Lundgren et al. (2001) found that nearly every second woman, at some point since her 15th birthday, has experienced violence at the hands of a man, regardless of ethnicity or social class. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, more than one-third of women (35.4 per cent) reported physical and/or intimate partner violence in her lifetime (Simon-Kumar et al. 2017). Research from South Africa shows the increasingly negative effects of violence on the mental health of victims (Lagdon et al. 2014). Data for 87 countries from 2005 to 2016 shows that 19 per cent of girls and women aged 15–49 experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in the previous year (HLPF 2017: 1).

Strategies to counter violence against women have had varying success. It is clear that male violence against women, and some men, is enabled by constructions of masculinity and the desire for control that go far beyond catalytic factors such as alcohol consumption. Scholars argue, however, that in some cases reducing alcohol consumption (Jewkes 2002) and access to arms – as, for example, in Sudan and Kenya (Budlender and Alma 2011, Scheffran et al. 2014) – can contribute to curtailing the frequency of violence. Education is important: women who are highly educated have an edge, although the relation between empowerment and the risk of violence is non-linear and education does not always mitigate the risk of violence (Jewkes 2002, Mabsout and van Staveren 2010).

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<sup>3</sup> [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/28/berta-caceres-honduras-military-intelligence-us-trained-special-forces](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/28/berta-caceres-honduras-military-intelligence-us-trained-special-forces) [www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/revealed-investigation-uncovers-the-plot-to-m/blog/60633/](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/revealed-investigation-uncovers-the-plot-to-m/blog/60633/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres](http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres)

Kusuma and Babu (2017) argue for the need to coordinate efforts among a range of relevant areas and groups: health, education, police, judiciary and community groups. This is especially relevant for forest contexts, which are often remote and far from such services. A review study of 142 documents on violence against women, mainly in high-income settings, indicates that education, youth projects and interventions in school-based dating violence can be successful in counteracting intimate partner and sexual violence among adolescents (Lundgren and Amin 2015). Research from Turkey shows that the involvement of medical professionals such as nurses and midwives has a key role in counselling women, including about the legal rights that protect them from the risk of violence (Özcan et al. 2016). Access to reproductive health services, including family planning, has helped reduce poverty, contributed to improved nutrition and educational outcomes, and saved mothers' lives, benefitting not only women but society more generally. Supporting girls' and women's education and the prevention of HIV infections by providing contraceptives has been shown to reduce the number of births, and that in turn mitigates deforestation effects as less land is taken over for agriculture (Starbird et al. 2016).

Context-based factors as well as resources and household assets can protect women from violence, as shown in 30 sub-Saharan African countries (Cools and Kotsadam 2017), in Nicaragua (Grabe 2010) and in different parts of India (Bhattacharya et al. 2011, Panda and Agarwal 2005). Ownership of resources also correlates with health. For example, propertied women in South Africa are better able to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS infections (Swaminathan et al. 2008). Income equality or men's economic subordination, not only in relation to women, is seen as a threat to a certain hegemonic masculinity. In such cases violence may be used to resolve a crisis of male identity (Jewkes 2002, Lwambo 2013). Behrman et al. (2014) in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and Mabsout and van Staveren (2010) in Ethiopia note a perception among some that increasing women's access to resources can increase violence against them. However, no linear relation between the two has been noted in practice.

Violence should be dealt with not only as a women's issue, but also as a gendered and systemic one. Researchers link increasing violence (warfare, domestic abuse) and criminality in sub-Saharan Africa with changing sex roles that no longer allow men to perform an idealised form of masculinity and act as breadwinners (Barker and Ricardo 2005, Lwambo 2013; also noted in Nicaragua, Evans et al. 2017). The Responsible Men's Club in Vietnam (Hoang et al. 2013) was one attempt to work with men that yielded important insights about men's relationships to their wives and also how these relationships were interconnected across scale, extending far beyond the household.

Many link violence to the weakness of the state (Dolan 2002, Schroeder 1999) and its inability to address caste and class violence, as in India (Jayal 2003, Kumari 2017). Violence against women must be tackled in a variety of ways and across various scales. Forest actors are vital to this in forest areas.

### 5.3.1 Implications

In contexts where forest issues are being debated, there is a need to work actively against gender-based violence and the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health. Legal rights are important, as is the work of state authorities, including forest authorities. At the same time, violence is not only an individual action but is tied to a larger question of gender and power, and contextual factors are extremely important.

A weak state can lead to greater gender-based violence. Efforts to counter violence have often resorted to the criminalisation of perpetrators, disregarding larger structural contexts and minimising success in reducing violence. The increasing focus on criminalisation that has emerged in both international law and the international-security domain risks obfuscating and downsizing the collective and public dimension of state responsibilities to reduce violence. Indeed, criminalisation strategies allow states to circumvent their duty to address the social, political and economic structural dimensions at the root of this severe form of violation of women's human rights (Pividori and Degani 2018).

Parental support and peer networks (Chandra-Mouli et al. 2015, Faxon et al. 2015), along with safe spaces for women, are important in giving women agency and safety from violence (Eduards 2002). Again, forest authorities have an important role to play: for example, in providing training within forest departments, helping to provide safe spaces for women and spaces for their participation in decision-making on their own terms. The need for greater attention to these issues in the forest context is pressing since the official realm of forestry the world over is male-dominated. By not actively taking up questions that concern SDG 5 in other arenas because they appear unrelated to their forestry work, forest actors help to ensure that issues surrounding violence against women remain barriers to an equal, democratic and sustainable forestry.

## 5.4 Recognition of Unpaid Work through Social Policy and Public Provisions – Target 5.4

Women are often overburdened with care work in the home and perform much of the unpaid domestic labour everywhere. Research in Nicaragua shows that women identified their domestic work, and men's failure to share it, as a main reason why they did not participate in community decision-making

regarding forests (Mairena et al. 2012). Unpaid care work adversely affects both women and men, though it lowers women's income more (Qi and Dong 2016, on China). Even in a context of increasingly egalitarian policies such as in Canada, the gendered care gap is widening, with women taking on the bulk of this work (Proulx 2016). Time-use studies have led to a recognition of women's unpaid work in both the Global North and South. As research shows, however, recognition is insufficient. We need to rethink the androcentric socio-economic institutions and narratives that lead to such disparities. As a case from Malta indicates, pressure to conform to gender norms, combined with poor government policies (no paid parental leave, higher male salaries), coincides with an overall resistance among spouses to reallocate responsibilities (Camilleri-Cassar 2017).

This is particularly so in the forest sector. Most of women's forest-based labour is unpaid, and forest products that women are responsible for are often less economically valuable. Research in Scandinavia (Kaldal 2000) shows that women's forest work not associated with timber tends not to be regarded as work. Even where women do not do forest-based labour themselves, their tremendous care duties make forest-based labour possible for other family members. Especially in lower-income countries, a whole regime of unacknowledged care work upholds the forest sector. Exacerbating this hidden work is migration, especially in the Global South. Islam and Shamsuddoha (2017) show that in Bangladesh women left behind are burdened with additional work, including securing food for the family while the men are away. In cases where men migrate and are not able to or do not send money home, women must generate income to sustain their families. This is not always culturally acceptable, raising concerns for trafficking and exploitation. This is confounded by development-induced displacement and resettlement where women usually receive fewer benefits than men (Lin 2008). Michocha (2015) argues women act as shock absorbers when families are displaced, taking responsibility for sourcing food, cooking and child care.

In some countries, social provisions such as help with childcare or child allowances have been central to women entering the labour force and achieving economic independence. These provisions have counteracted women's weak social positions vis-à-vis public decision-making and enabled them to enter public arenas. Yet, the forestry sector remains an aberration. In Sweden some argue that the increasing number of women forest owners is likely to presage a change in forest management (Nordlund and Westin 2011). So far, practice has yet to bear this out. The forest sector continues to be dominated by a narrow group of actors – mostly men – despite increasing numbers of women forest owners (Holmgren and Arora-Jonsson 2015).

In cases where inequitable norms that privilege men remain intact, social provisions may be inadequate. Regardless of incentives, the participation of men in care work is lower than that of women in both the Global North and South. In Sweden, despite generous paternity benefits, fewer men than women take childcare leave (Duvander et al. 2010), due in part to higher wages for men. In Korea (Peng 2011) women are encouraged to enter the labour market, but their jobs are more often in non-regular and service sectors, impeding the attainment of gender equality. Yoon (2014) shows that in Korea the state tends to omit the role of family-provided care services, overestimating its own role and suggesting that much more in-depth understanding of the contributions to care, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed. Furthermore, policies that focus on flexible work hours – intended as an alternative to the male model of ‘working hours’ – disregard the gendered pay gap and social norms (Lewis and Plomien 2009) and can reproduce rather than reduce gender inequalities (Figart and Mutari 2000). Neither do they reduce the job deficit (Estévez-Abe and Hobson 2015). The increasing commodification of care work is gendered female worldwide, and tends to be low-paid.

Scholars argue that state provision of ‘merit goods’ – goods and services deemed valuable for every citizen, such as child allowance, unemployment insurance, schooling and healthcare – accompanied by targeted cash payments are much more likely to increase productivity and reduce inequalities (Bergmann 2004). They call for valuing care work on a par with other activities (Baker 2008). Research from Chile and Mexico shows that childcare services can enhance gender equality if the state commits to such goals, gives sufficient financial resources and develops effective regulations (Staab and Gerhard 2011). Moreover, findings from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Chile indicate that non-contributory pension funds can be a key measure to reduce gender gaps in benefits at old age (Arza 2017). Drawing on findings from a multi-country cash-transfer programme in sub-Saharan Africa, Asfaw (2016) concludes that promoting cash programmes can positively affect livelihoods as well as agricultural productivity, provided there is coordination with other sectoral development programmes and attention to local contexts.

### 5.4.1 Implications

The research cited herein is thus important to consider in the forestry context as much as in other walks of life. Meeting **Target 5.4** in the forestry world requires recognising that women’s care work, often invisible, underpins the recognised and overtly valued commercial work, widely considered as men’s work.

Informal employment characterises the lives of most working women, especially in the Global South: see Ghosh (2015) for India and Lopez-Ruiz et al. (2017) for Central America. Women's need to control their participation in local non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and other forest-related markets needs to be addressed (Section 5.6 discusses women's participation in markets). Merit goods such as those described here have been shown to be beneficial not only for men and women, but also for agricultural productivity (Asfaw 2016). Similar outcomes could be expected within forestry if merit goods provide resources and time for men and women.

The thrust of this research indicates the need for a systemic and contextual understanding, including addressing paid and unpaid forest-related labour in one frame. This entails acknowledging care work in the home and the subsistence work that men or women carry out in the forest. The need for interconnected policies and programmes is urgent (Peng 2011). As the examples demonstrate, the role of authorities and other official actors is vital in these efforts.

## 5.5 Women's Right to Decision-Making – Target 5.5

In contrast to the themes discussed earlier, there is considerable research on the participation of marginalised social groups, including women, in forest decision-making. Few women participate in forestry decision-making forums in the Global North and South (Agarwal 2010, Reed 2008). The RRI study (2017) across 30 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America found that women's right to participate in community-level forest governance processes was the most inadequately protected community-level right analysed in the study.

The devolution of forest decision-making has been an important global trend in recent decades. In settings related to rural development and forestry in both the Global North and South, decision-making power is often captured by male elites. Studies from South Asia report intense conflict in local groups managing high-value forests. Older and elite men become more active in forest-user groups managing high-value forests, making women's effective participation harder to achieve (Adhikari and Di Falco 2008, Lama et al. 2017). Similarly, studies in Nicaragua (Evans et al. 2017) and Colombia (Sandoval-Ferro 2013) show that women in some Indigenous communities, with equal rights on paper to manage the forest, forego their own interests. They are pressured to accept decisions guided by male interests and men's groups, defined as having more benefit to the wider community.

A similar pattern of elite capture can be seen in Europe in a forest management context (Arora-Jonsson 2013), as well as in EU programmes that stipulate the participation of local groups in development. In a process of

devolution of local governance activities in the UK, for example, Tickell and Peck (1996) observed that male power was naturalised as the legitimate conduit for effective local governance. The political process in unelected bodies privileged pre-existing male networks, while their *modus operandi* marginalised and excluded women and their interests.

In such cases, quotas for women have been useful, though sometimes quotas have also resulted in token rather than substantive and comprehensive participation among women (RRI 2017). According to studies in rural Andhra Pradesh, India (Afridi et al. 2017), women village council heads in reserved seats were initially seen to be less effective at administration and tackling corruption, though in several districts they caught up after one year. The findings suggest that learning speeds among female Executive Committee members may depend on their starting point (e.g. level of education, intra-group dynamics and reciprocal support among the women members) as well as the complexity of their administrative tasks and responsibilities. Programmes to make women's representation more effective from the start require a better and more detailed understanding of hurdles to this effectiveness and its variation with individual, resource and community characteristics (Afridi et al. 2017). Importantly, this entails working actively to reduce disparities with men in access to technology and information (Mwangi et al. 2011).

Research across South Asia indicates that women's groups tend to be more rigorous in forest conservation (Agarwal 2010). It remains unclear whether this leads to better conditions for them.

Gender balance in forest-user groups in East Africa and Latin America was shown to be associated with more participation and enhanced forest sustainability (Mwangi et al. 2011). From her research in Northern India, Minocha (2015) concludes that a perception among women interviewed was that more active participation by women in council meetings and similar decision-making bodies would result in more resistance to big infrastructure projects that adversely affect livelihoods or cause displacement.

Adding a few women to committees will not ensure that all women's interests are addressed or that governance necessarily becomes more effective. Real positive change requires a willingness to accommodate the interests and issues taken up by marginalised groups and openness to changing decision-making forums and structures (Arora-Jonsson 2013). In forestry forums, women often raise issues not considered central to forests or forestry, such as violence, lack of decision-making power and inattention to other community issues they consider related to forests. Such issues that touch upon spaces other than forests, such as the home or village, while not directly related to timber and forest products, impinge on people's relations to the forests and to each other. They play an important part in what actually happens in forests. This is the

‘space-off’<sup>5</sup> of forestry, i.e. the invisible relations and spaces often disregarded in decision-making on forests (frequently focused on certain economic interests) that are nonetheless vital in supporting forestry and the well-being of forest peoples (Arora-Jonsson 2013).

Separate spaces or networks supported from outside mainstream decision-making forums have been important for women to press their demands in forest contexts, suggesting a need for new thinking about forest governance. These demands have been expressed when women have organised across loyalties such as ethnicity, indigeneity, class or caste (Arora-Jonsson 2013). In such cases, support (not necessarily monetary) from the outside (NGOs, government agencies) has been important for women’s groups to make claims and be heard (Arora-Jonsson 2013, Schroeder 1999, Sundar 1998). Similarly, support for collectives may also need to be combined with individualised support, as shown by microfinance interventions such as an HIV-prevention measure for transgender and cisgender<sup>6</sup> women using drugs (Lall et al. 2017). It is clear that no one solution fits all contexts. Women’s groups are not the solution in all contexts. Even in the same place, different strategies might be needed at different times, including both individual and collective approaches.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.5.1 Implications

Better, more equitable management is required. The empirical research makes clear that decision-making would represent a wider diversity of interests related to forests if marginalised people were included. Research also suggests that greater democratic management leads to better environmental outcomes.

To achieve equitable management, individualised support is important, but so is a wider systemic approach. Hurdles to women’s actual participation exist even when there are quotas or legally recognised governance rights. Contextual factors need to be addressed in each case to ensure the realisation

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<sup>5</sup> Arora-Jonsson borrows the term from de Lauretis, who explains ‘space-off’ as the ‘spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus. It is there that the terms of a different construction of gender can be posed ... in the micropolitical practices of daily life and daily resistances that afford both agency and sources of power’ (1989: 25).

<sup>6</sup> Cis women identify with the gender they are assigned at birth, unlike transgender women, who do not.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in Odisha, some women’s microcredit groups were groups in name only. Others carried out microcredit activities, but were controlled by a few men from village committees. Still others were able to use the space provided to make demands and bring about change (Arora-Jonsson, 2013).

of women's governance rights. A willingness to address systemic obstacles and undertake structural change is required, rather than merely adding women and other marginalised groups to existing structures. Practically, this would entail recognising the 'space off' of forestry in mainstream discussions and a disposition to consider dynamic and flexible organisational forms. If we are serious about involving women as a group in decision-making on forests, we need to allow possibilities for women to take part in decision-making in various ways – in concert with each other, from within their own spaces and also as individuals from within formal institutions (Arora-Jonsson 2013).

## 5.6 Rights to Economic Resources and Control over Land and Resources – Target 5.A

This section discusses women's rights to resources including: (1) rights, access and control over land, and (2) policies and projects on income generation designed to give women increased economic resources.

### 5.6.1 Tenure Rights

Strong legislation and accessible mechanisms to implement women's forest rights are essential, but the enabling conditions needed for such achievements must be understood within local contexts. Depending on context, law can work as perceived authority preventing violence and enabling women's rights in ways that village leadership may be unable to do. Rao (2007) advocates hybridity in the pursuit of gender equality, wherein socially validated rights are addressed alongside formal instances of law. Rankin (2003) calls for recognition of the limits to undertaking change within the boundaries of households or villages, cautioning against strengthening place-based institutions such as the local civil society built on hierarchical premises. Specific components of secure tenure<sup>8</sup> must be considered carefully before and during actions designed to secure women's tenure rights and legal entitlements.

The question of collective as opposed to individual rights is extremely pertinent in the forest context since a substantial percentage of forest-dependent communities, especially in the Global South, rely on community-based tenure systems (formal and/or informal) in order to control and access land. Under many such collective tenure systems, the community rather than any individual community member is understood as 'owning' land. This can make the situation for women more complex to understand and to guarantee

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<sup>8</sup> Tenure refers to the bundle of legal entitlements that comprise a landholder's ability to control, use, access and benefit from land and natural resources.

rights due to various layers of governance, especially in customary systems. In several instances in South Asia, women's customary rights of access were undermined by the creation of forest management committees that created new rules of access disregarding women's previous customary access (Agarwal 1995). Interestingly, a recent study across the 80 community-based legal frameworks analysed within 30 low- and middle-income countries found that the frameworks that provided the strongest legal protection for communities as a whole also provided the most robust protection for women community members (RRI 2017).

Projects with little understanding of the context often create new inequalities. For instance, Chung (2017) examined a large-scale land deal for industrial sugar-cane production in the coastal region of Tanzania. The forms for land valuation and compensation claims distributed by the government only included the names of male household heads (unless the households were headed by females) 'It was assumed that husbands and fathers were the de facto owners of the land and that they were the ones that would collect compensation payments on behalf of their families' (Chung 2017: 115). Even though wives of landowners saw this as common practice, nearly all women interviewed speculated that their husbands would use the money and/or run away with it to pay bride-wealth for younger women, leaving them and their children destitute. Women of the Barabaig tribe (among whom polygyny is actively encouraged) noted that some men took on more wives or mistresses, using the prospect of cash compensation as credit.

### 5.6.2 *Income Generation*

The ubiquitous adoption of income-generation programmes and policies advocating the opening of markets for women (connections with SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) are also relevant for women's rights to resources. In forestry contexts, these have included the establishment of markets for NTFPs, making handicrafts, being involved in forest work, etc. These initiatives are meant as a key to empowerment, improved family income and nutrition, and children's education.

Access to markets is important for women, but the benefits depend on the kind of control they have over their own involvement and its implications for forest sustainability. For example, in Burkina Faso's plans for REDD+ programmes, engaging the women-dominated shea trade is an important strategy. Related decisions were made, however, without consulting the women or women's groups involved (Westholm and Arora-Jonsson 2015). An example from Odisha, India, shows how women may work to circumvent such disempowerment: women from the lower castes in some areas opted not to sell

their bamboo goods in the new local markets especially for NTFPs because men made all the decisions on pricing and location. Instead, they chose to sell in kind only to other women in order to have control over their trade (Arora-Jonsson 2013). This was an attempt to address their own needs and to avoid situations where dependency on markets led to further poverty for their communities. In Burkina Faso, the linking up to international markets has led to increased pressure to provide shea nuts and consequent environmental degradation (Elias and Arora-Jonsson 2017). These instances provide important insights to consider when addressing SDG 5 and SDG 1 (No Poverty). They also challenge targets proposed by SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

Many income-generation programmes meant ostensibly to empower women have in fact become projects where women are expected to raise incomes for domestic use and take part in projects that serve other development and market agendas (Chant 2016). Indigenous women's income-generating activities with respect to large-scale oil palm projects in Indonesia provided women with sorely needed income. In some communities this income was accompanied by a more equal distribution of household work among partners. In others, women's workload simply increased in ways that were fundamentally unsustainable since domestic tasks did not decrease. Furthermore, working conditions for women were part-time, insecure and lower paid (Li 2015).

Indeed, a significant body of research suggests that women's agency and well-being cannot be secured through an increase in income alone. A study of intra-household decision-making in 3000+ households in Ethiopia (Mabsout and van Staveren 2010) found that increases in women's incomes do not necessarily result in increased decision-making power within households. Instead, many women compensated for having taken on some of men's ideal responsibilities by more assiduously performing women's traditional roles, including submission. The research on microcredit enterprises, extremely popular in the last two decades, reports similar findings. There are no automatic benefits since the programmes insufficiently explore the dynamics of women's social networks (Maclean 2010) and ignore the role of men and of gender power dynamics (Chant 2014).

### 5.6.3 Implications

**Tenure rights:** Given the cross-cutting nature of women's tenure rights, legal reforms that strengthen these rights must extend beyond the realm of forestry as traditionally conceived. They must address women's underlying needs with respect to family law, access to justice and a broad array of obstacles

to women's economic agency (i.e. their capacity for choice and action) that render them vulnerable to both economic and physical forms of violence. Women and men need support to be able to negotiate changing norms within the community.

Work is needed to devise constructive approaches to bolstering women's forest rights and titling, which can have negative effects without sufficient attention to particular contexts. This is especially so for women's livelihoods in cases where women are dependent on commonly held and managed resources. Strong norms that 'good women do not inherit land' (Rao 2008) put pressure on women not to claim a share in their inheritance even if there are no brothers. Mainstream neoliberal policies that advocate individual ownership can backfire for women, who may be exploited and divested of their titles (Ramdas 2009, Ahlers and Zwarteven 2009).

How government agencies act in such contexts is of vital importance. Institutions directly involved in the formalisation processes granting forest and land rights often prioritise men. More creativity is needed to develop titling processes that positively affect women's lives in different social and cultural contexts.

**Income generation:** Income generation and involvement in projects can be counterproductive and can become a 'feminisation of responsibility' (Chant 2016). But they can also have surprising outcomes, not necessarily related to the income they generate but to the space they provide for women to take up their particular concerns (Arora-Jonsson 2013). In such cases, outside support for women is important. For example, in a Dominican Republic project, support from NGOs enabling women to control their money gave them an edge in negotiating HIV protective behaviour vis-à-vis their partners (Ashburn et al. 2008) – linked also to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Likewise, in Bangladesh participation in microcredit-based productive activity (SDG 1 – No Poverty) protected women from poor communities against marital violence (Hadi 2005), and in South Africa women participating in women's HIV support groups received both practical and emotional support (Dageid and Duckert 2008). In such cases, the role of outsider help, such as from NGOs or officials, is vital.

**Strategic and practical interests:** These debates touch on the question of women's strategic and practical interests in relation to forests and how those are intertwined. Feminists have long been critical of development interventions such as income-generation programmes that might fulfil individual women's practical interests but fail to deliver on larger structural changes and their strategic interests. It is believed that strategic interests are those derived from an analysis of women's subordination and the formulation of strategic objectives to overcome it. Practical gender interests, on the other hand, arise

from the concrete conditions of women's lives and are usually a response to an immediate perceived need. They do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality (Molyneux 1985).

Arora-Jonsson (2013) draws on her studies of women's grassroots activism in forest contexts to argue that though useful to understand some aspects of discrimination, this division of women's lives into practical and strategic interests can be counterproductive. The articulation of practical needs and claim-making in relation to forestry have in themselves challenged structural disadvantage. On the other hand, strategic considerations such as tenure or a conscious involvement of women in organisations for forest governance could well become a tool to rubber stamp existing inequalities.

These studies suggest that there is no clear division between the two. Depending on the process and the context, income-generation activities or short-term practical help for individual women in forestry contexts *can* lead to larger changes, as can structural change initiatives. What is clear is the need for supporting structures in the home and in public that enable women and other marginalised or vulnerable groups to participate in maintaining forests sustainably and to voice their particular interests.

## 5.7 Enhance the Use of Enabling Technology for Women's Empowerment – Target 5.B

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are enabling the participation of women in social, political and economic processes at greater rates than in the past (Alves and Steiner 2017). However, structural and socio-cultural factors, including poverty, illiteracy and gender norms and practices, may limit women's access to ICTs and other technologies, with resulting impacts on women's empowerment and agricultural productivity (Mogues et al. 2009, O'Brien et al. 2016). Agricultural extension work and access to technology packages focus more on men, tending to view women as less important to development initiatives (Mogues et al. 2009). O'Brien et al. (2016) show that involving men and women as couples in technology-related training events can improve women's access to new and emerging agricultural information.

Gender biases in technology access and dissemination and disparities in information access have consequences even when women are part of the decision-making process (Mwangi et al. 2011). A study on female ICT intermediaries in rural China and India found that although access to ICTs could improve women's status in the short term, such gains were reversed in the absence of broader changes in society. The choices they made while using ICTs always took place in the context of 'societal expectations (and their

own) [which] continued to be structured by patriarchal values' (Oreglia and Srinivasan 2016: 506).

Socio-cultural values and gender norms are, however, not static or unchallenged. Masika and Bailur (2015) argue that ICTs should be understood not as automatic sources of women's empowerment, but as a site of contestation where women carefully calibrate gender relations in complex ways. Clearly, more attention should be paid to women's socio-cultural contexts and the bargains they make. In comparison to men, they are less likely to have wide informal networks they can tap into to fulfil their needs.

### 5.7.1 Implications

The research on ICTs and gender draws attention to the significance of power structures and societal norms in shaping women's access to technologies and their impacts on gender relations. This has implications for facilitating women's agency and empowerment. Given this, addressing structural factors that shape forestry management is more critical than focusing exclusively on individual constraints.

Additionally, technologies should be targeted in ways that facilitate women's technology adoption. This could be accomplished, for example, by ensuring that extension visits to user groups be undertaken by both men and women, or by raising awareness and providing requisite skills among male agents of the sustainability benefits of proactively engaging women resource users (Mwangi et al. 2011). Authors suggest that (1) technologies should be designed to take into account women's time constraints, and (2) extension should be accompanied by training in the skills necessary for ensuring and sustaining technology adoption (Mwangi et al. 2011). More structured and formal access for women and other marginalised groups is also necessary. ICT can play an important role in that process.

## 5.8 Policies and Legislation for Gender Equality and Empowerment – Target 5.C

Not all gender-sensitive policies are necessarily implemented. Indeed, practice often strays far from the progressive language of policymaking. Passing gender-sensitive laws and policies is nevertheless a key component of gender equality. The manner in which gender-sensitive laws are crafted, implemented and legislated have significant consequences on their enforceability.

Emphasis on women or gender in policies often implies an increase in responsibility. Ecofeminist arguments about women's closeness to nature

were mobilised by bureaucrats to enrol women in conservation and soil improvement programmes, primarily increasing women's workload without much desirable change in their everyday lives (Leach 2007). In other cases, assumptions about women's vulnerability to climate change have led to policymaking that has increased their responsibilities rather than addressing their disadvantages (Arora-Jonsson 2011). Holmes and Jones (2013) observe that policies often reproduce unequal gender norms. Social policy has made positive inroads, but it needs to move beyond reproducing harmful stereotypes that define women only as mothers and men as oppressors.

Critics have argued that gender mainstreaming policies have served merely to bureaucratise gender and that adding women to existing programmes merely underwrites their previous invisibility by reducing them to a check mark on required forms. This has absolved agencies from doing anything substantive about gender discrimination. Some have in fact argued for doing away with the idea of gender mainstreaming altogether (see Arora-Jonsson, 2014, for an overview of this debate).

### 5.8.1 Implications

An individual-based approach can disregard systemic gender-based discrimination. For example, Sweden's forest-sector policy on gender equality encourages women to take an active part in the forest sector and focuses on their role as economic agents benefitting the sector. While these overtures to individual women are important, the approach ignores the systemic reasons for women's absence from the sector (Holmgren and Arora-Jonsson 2015).

On the other hand, a gender-neutral approach or the absence of policies on gender can make it difficult for officials and others wanting to create space for change. For example, while Swedish environmental policy has promoted gender equality as an important cornerstone of its work in development aid, there has been little attention to gender in domestic environmental policies. This lack of policy support within the country has made it more difficult for forestry and environmental officials to challenge discrimination related to gender and power relations. On the other hand, its policies on gender in development aid have forced NGOs and others to pay attention to gender-based discrimination, which has sometimes helped women to organise themselves (see Case Study 16.4 in Chapter 16).

The discourse on gender has made space for intersectional approaches within international organisations in a way that was previously much more difficult (Arora-Jonsson and Sijapati 2018). This indicates that there is a need for policies on gender, but they must allow for hybridity (Rao 2007) and flexibility (Arora-Jonsson 2013) and enable a careful analysis of gender and power

relations in each context. Blanket statements about the poverty or vulnerability of all women or women's closeness to the environment often become counterproductive to the interests of women.

## 5.9 Conclusions

One of the major conclusions from the literature overview is the importance of understanding the contextual and systemic nature of inequalities if we want to act for greater justice and sustainable forestry. There are no automatic gains in gender equality from greater development, expansion of markets for women, inclusion in forestry forums or poverty alleviation programmes. They might bring economic benefits to some, but for others they can exacerbate adverse conditions. As is clear from the instances cited in the chapter, concern for the dignity and welfare of forest-based peoples requires contextual responses that go beyond these measures. They need institutional support and structural change from 'business as usual'. As is clear from the research discussed here, forest governance and everyday management are upheld by a superstructure of gendered forest relations (invisible to mainstream forestry) that often disadvantages women as a social group. Paying close attention to this 'space-off' of forestry is vital if we are to reach towards sustainable and equitable forest relations promoted by the SDGs.

Forests are a key site where the goal of sustainable development and its linkages with gender equality play out. Yet, there are significant challenges and barriers to the implementation of SDG 5 across the North and South. While the contexts in these places differ greatly, similar features recur in forestry contexts across the world.

Decision-making on forests at all levels is dominated by groups of men from certain castes, class or age groups. Women often have less access to the information needed for decision-making. Men are also overwhelmingly the targets for forestry interventions – reflective of current tenure systems wherein more men than women own forest land. However, beyond ownership, perception biases as well as gender norms and values tend to position forestry as a male domain. Poverty and the lack of supportive infrastructure in countries in the Global South do correlate with discrimination, but it is also clear that welfare and development do not automatically lead to greater gender equality, and inequitable relations of power in forestry stretch across the Global North and South (Arora-Jonsson 2013). This is true in universities and international organisations where the legacy of purely technical approaches to forestry education is still entrenched. Thinking through how SDG 5 targets may be applied in various forestry contexts provides a space for

new ideas to emerge and to challenge convention at a time when new directions are sorely needed.

Taking SDG 5 seriously implies a fundamental change in approaches to forests and the environment – one that incorporates systemic and contextual factors as well as people's relations outside of forestry. This change entails learning from the past. New forest-related initiatives have yet to take up these gender lessons (e.g. REDD+).

Progress will entail taking into account connections between the Global North and South. Forestry as a profession and field of work has interconnected features in its organisation and the ideologies that drive it. The responses to challenges within it must also recognise these interconnections. For example, violence in the forests in the Global South often results from struggles with multinational companies based in the Global North, which derive their influence from their work and trade there. Concepts that travel between the North and South have different implications in different places. For instance, women in (Indigenous) communities in some areas of the Global South risk backlash when using the term 'gender'. It has been associated with taking power away from men and with Northern or external ideologies that threaten custom (Geetha 2002). In other cases women have taken up the English term 'women's rights' (even if they do not speak English) to forward their claims as a group. The likelihood of success with this strategy has been enhanced with support from NGOs and others that have also engaged men's help. In contrast, questions of gender in forest contexts in the Global North have been ignored by practitioners, with the argument that gender equality has already been reached (Arora-Jonsson 2013). Taking account of SDG 5 in different contexts requires different strategies, as well as paying attention to the various connections between contexts and scales.

Closer attention to SDG 5 highlights the invisible labour and relations so crucial to good forest management, and helps to develop democratic and sustainable strategies so key to forest relations and of benefit to forest people (with close connections to most other SDGs – especially SDGs 1–4, 6, 7, 10, 13–16). Such attention could promote voice and a focus on dignity and rights. It could demand compliance on the part of institutions that perpetrate injustice, sometimes unconsciously, by carrying on with business as usual (in relation to SDGs 8, 9, 17) – such as the current focus on business within forestry and agriculture and the assumption of gender neutrality, as in the Indonesian palm oil case (Section 5.6), in the ways education is gendered in content and the student body, the provision of information and so on.

Forest management can improve with the involvement of heterogeneous groups, and especially women (Agarwal 2010, Mwangi et al. 2011). Increasing women's access to funds and social provisions such as childcare allowances

benefits their families and larger communities (e.g. Bergmann 2008, Butler et al. 2012). It provides some recompense for their 'invisible work' in forests that remains otherwise unacknowledged. Valuing such care work as well as women's work in the forests on a par with other conventional forest activities is likely to increase productivity and reduce inequalities (Baker 2008). As women's household-level bargaining power increases, rates of HIV and undernutrition and violence decrease (Ashburn et al. 2008, Mabsout and van Staveren 2010), and additional energy, creativity and motivation to sustain forests could be brought to bear.<sup>9</sup> These aspects are enhanced by more secure forest rights (RRI 2017).

The gender-neutral framing of the other SDG goals could undermine efforts towards rights called for in SDG 5. This requires serious attention to the norms that form the basis of many of the other SDGs. For example, SDG 8's focus on economic growth could lead to serious disadvantages for marginalised groups. The call for decent work for women, without acknowledging the underlying discrimination within the current system, could merely exacerbate gender inequalities. The focus on trade and women's involvement in markets called for in SDGs 8 and 9 can undermine both the environment (Elias and Arora-Jonsson 2017) and gender equality (Li 2015).

From the point of view of SDG 5, political will is needed to transform unequal relationships, challenge privilege based on sex, class, ethnicity or caste, and destabilise inequitable micro- and macroeconomic structures (based on notions of private property, commodification etc.). Forest agencies and other actors need to interact seriously with other governmental agencies, NGOs and others that provide services and pay attention to community concerns beyond the forests. Greater democratic governance of forests leads to better forest management, but the institutional forms need to be flexible and responsive to the context. Companies need to be more accountable, and forest-sector education needs to expand to include the social and the cultural. The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) has an important role to play in this context – in questioning business as usual in what IUFRO does, and also in undertaking gender research and analysis of forestry policies and programmes to better understand gender dynamics in forestry. The welfare and dignity that achieving SDG 5 would bring to forest peoples and livelihoods is essential to ensuring better managed and sustainable forests.

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<sup>9</sup> The Center for International Forestry Research's Adaptive Collaborative Management programme, which worked closely with rural forest women in 11 countries in the early 2000s, saw these benefits accrue (see [www.cifor.org/acm/](http://www.cifor.org/acm/) and Colfer 2005).

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