Gender Dynamics of Mountain Natural Resource Management

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Mountain regions share topographical similarities and geographical commonalities' but are home to a diverse range of cultures, traditions and practices that determine their relationship with their natural environment and with each other at the human and institutional level. The mountain regions of Pakistan are part of the Himalayan Mountain Range and while the challenges faced by the mountain communities may be similar, the approaches to resolve the same differ based on factors that constitute social and economic forces that determine the role of gender in society. The rights of women when enshrined in the constitution give them hope and protection even when custom and tradition are used to undermine the same. Social empowerment therefore becomes the key to progress and development through which mountain women are able to realize their full potential and can strive to become a part of the decision making process that affects their lives rather than helpless recipients of laws and practices that place them at a disadvantage and give them a subservient role in society. Change and reform emanates from human agency and requires a critical mass to become the catalyst for change. It is very important to ensure the mountain women receive good education and health care services. A woman without education and good health will never rise beyond her traditional role and become an agent of change. An educated woman with knowledge about her health and reproductive system will be better equipped to work towards social, economic and environmental security of her immediate surroundings and will also become empowered to take action at the personal, societal and institutional level to preserve and protect resources that are the common and shared heritage of all on this planet. It is therefore, critical to incorporate education and health in the agenda for the improvement of mountain women in a changing world not only for the sustainable development of mountains but for the inclusion of women in the management of the natural resources from the primary to all the subsequent levels to bring structural reform in the way we think about mountain women and their future role in ensuring a sustainable environment in a changing world.