Daily Bulletin: Day 4, 18 October 2012

The Way Forward – Gender and Mountain Agenda Setting

Many ideas, images and words were shared with a vision for the future— which will all be taken into consideration by ICIMOD for Bhutan +20. The participants took stock and then envisioned an agenda over the next ten years in terms of policy, action research, women’s capacity building, and networks.

“Conversations here will resonate into the next decade.”

“I liked the focus on leadership of mountain women.”

“During the last ten years, we have moved from exclusion of women to enhanced inclusion. While the pace is slow, it is happening.”

“This conference has a huge harvest of knowledge. How do we cash in on this knowledge and commitment when there are so many other forces in the world?”

Taking Stock

What has worked

- There is a shift in formal policies towards affirmative action, such as quotas, representation opportunities
- Recognition of women’s issues at the global level, and women often at the highest level of management at the national level;
- Increased awareness of gender concerns and the role of ethnic minorities by donors, forums, and conventions
- Institutions are into taking gender into account – though more out of obligation than out of belief
- Greater access to education for girls; access to platforms to share their voice and concerns; increased opportunities to show leadership
- Increased economic empowerment of women through income generation activities
- Organization of women into groups and networks has increased
- Gender sensitivity is being developed

Challenges

- Women’s empowerment often restricted to tokenism and not reflected well at the level of decision making, planning, and policies
- Documentation and upscaling of best practices lacking
- Inadequate research on gender-sensitive technologies
- Difficulty of changing mindsets about gender; patriarchal norms and values and men’s resistance to gender equity
- Cultural and religious resistance continuing to restrict the space for women’s growth and voice
- Lack of affirmative action targeted to different groups (e.g., at grassroots, in academia)
- Continuing institutional gender blindness
- Inadequacy of resources and gender budgeting; Lack of implementation of gender initiatives
- Awareness of policies and rights not reaching all audiences
Visioning the Future: What would you like to see us celebrating at Bhutan+20?

- Trained, confident women making their way with strength and ability
- Collective action of both men and women towards balanced and happier society
- Equal access to all kinds of facilities: health, education, financial mechanisms, economic opportunities, decision making, resource use, and global networking
- Influence outside individual niches
- Equality and progress – from households to the house of governance
- Gender equity in land tenure
- More women entrepreneurs
- Gender sensitivity and equity in government institutions
- Gender balance at the household level, with children attending gender sensitive schools, gender equality on the farm, more food and water and less luxury
- Radiating happiness through ‘rainbows’ that reach out to women of all sects, classes, and creeds
- Improved communications and universal sharing about gender issues and innovations
- Active and functional networks like leaves in a tree that photosynthesize (i.e., convert one form of energy into another), converting challenges into opportunities and bringing balance
- An active platform of women leaders supporting each other
- More women leaders trained in the mountain communities
- More women leaders from all groups of society

Field trips

Women’s Vegetable Producer Group, Paro

Since June 2012, this women’s group in Namkar village at Paro has been farming vegetables (organic tomatoes, cabbage, and chilies) collectively in 352 m² of greenhouse handed over to them by the government. The group is already making a profit of USD 300 per month.

This is also the first women’s group in Bhutan who started dart throwing, traditionally done only by men. Their husbands helped train them; indeed the traditional gender roles are changing. For example, the women’s husbands now help them in household activities when the women are busy with the vegetable business. Inspired by this group, three more women’s groups around Paro have begun throwing darts.

Visit to community forest of Kabisa village

Approximately 30 participants were welcomed by the women and men of a community forestry group 8 km outside of Thimphu; the members accompanied the participants on a walk through the forest and informed them about the group’s forestry practices and governance structure.

Visit to National Commission on Women and Children, Thimphu

Visit to Tarayana Foundation and Folk Heritage Museum, Kawajangsa

The participants visited the Tarayana Foundation, a non-profit organization working to uplift and enhance the lives of vulnerable communities in rural Bhutan. The participants were greeted by Secretary-General Chime P. Wangdi and were shown a short video called ‘Grassroots First’.

Next, a guided tour of the Folk Heritage Museum – a restored three-storey, rammed-earth and timber building houses – provided a glimpse into traditional Bhutanese life.

Visit to National Commission on Women and Children, Thimphu

Approximately 30 participants were welcomed by the women and men of a community forestry group 8 km outside of Thimphu; the members accompanied the participants on a walk through the forest and informed them about the group’s forestry practices and governance structure.