

## 5. EXPERIENCE OF ICDPS

### 5.1 GENDER, WOMEN AND ICDPS - POLICY

The policies of individual conservation and development organisations involved in ICDPs are discussed in the summary document *‘Engendering’ Eden. Volume I*. Of the conservation organisations, only IUCN has developed a worthwhile gender policy and this influences the work of the regional offices to some degree. However, even here gender is not fully institutionalised and the enthusiasm and concerns of key individuals can be seen as the most important factor in taking gender forward to become an issue of concern at project level. ICDPs that are implemented by more development-oriented organisations such as CARE tend to have a greater emphasis on the inclusion of gender.

For organisations such as WWF, who have no organisation-wide gender policy, there is little pressure on projects to address gender issues, especially in the initial stages of planning and implementation. Generally, gender issues are addressed only when they arise, if at all. As a result, gender is rarely approached in a knowledgeable, strategic or organised manner, but relies more on haphazard ‘muddling through’ and the use of skills and resources available at the time.

In the few cases where gender is approached in a more strategic way, benefits have arisen. Even where gender strategies have failed to reach or be applied in the field, they have encouraged a greater emphasis on gender issues overall, and a focus on women.

### 5.2 RATIONALE

Projects in the past have tended to emphasise a ‘welfare approach’ focussing on women in their capacity as mothers and carers - seen as central to both social and economic development. It identifies women, as opposed to their lack of resources or access to them and decision-making processes, as being the problem. As a result projects have tended to target women's perceived practical needs as opposed to their strategic needs.

*“Efforts to empower women as a means to encourage their participation in programmes, whether through literacy, home improvement or income generation campaigns, whilst undeniably benefiting women, still operate within a welfare approach and therefore within a male dominated, patriarchal agenda...”* (Shields, 2001:155).

This has developed into the involvement of women being seen as a means of achieving an end: the success of ICDPs. For example, in 1990 WWF-US (Kanoute, 1990) suggested that increasing the participation of African women in conservation projects would:

- Save women time so that they could participate in sustainable income generating activities.
- Reduce or progressively eliminate the dependence of women on the wildlands for their needs.
- Improve women's income by enabling them to afford possible alternative sources of energy.
- Strengthen education programs in relation to the conservation concepts and actions.
- Allow the promotion of the production of natural resources as a business.

Such an approach has evolved into a greater emphasis being placed on women's empowerment believing that as their involvement in rural development processes progresses, their reliance on natural resources will decrease. As such women's empowerment is a growing objective of some

ICDPs (Mount Elgon Website, 2002; Flintan, 2002a). However, such empowerment is seen to be mainly a numbers game – the number of women on committees, the number attending schools and the number involved in project planning and design. Rarely are more qualitative goals aimed for, for example improved status, increased self-esteem and the quality of women’s participation. These may be more important achievements or needs for local women than those needs perceived by ‘outsiders’.

Some projects have taken a much stronger stance on the promotion of gender equity than others. For example, gender equity is a guiding principle within the strategies that define the Mt. Elgon ICDP in Uganda. The promotion of gender equity is seen to be one of the most important means open to the Project of introducing fundamental social changes that are necessary for sustainable development. It is suggested that current social traditions are not conducive to women realising their full economic and social potential. Therefore in a culturally sensitive manner, the Project seeks means of improving the social and economic empowerment of women. It is suggested that there are many ways to achieve this and even outside those activities designed explicitly to promote gender equity. For example, the Project can aim to ensure that women are equitably represented in all activities that are supported, and that these activities are designed to address the needs of women as well as men.

*“By adopting gender equity as a guiding principle for project strategy, it is intended that all opportunities arising during project implementation will be fully exploited for the promotion of gender equity”* (Mount Elgon Website, 2002).

More recently some organisations have focussed on a ‘rights-based’ approach to conservation and development with an emphasis on social justice. Indeed, together with the belief that ICDPs can alleviate poverty, this is now the central rationale upon which CARE’s involvement in ICDPs is justified (CARE, 2001) (discussed in more detail in the summary document – Flintan, 2003a).

### **5.3 PROJECT PLANNING**

Despite a growing emphasis on ‘participation’, ICDPs generally still fail to involve local communities within project planning and implementation. Where they are involved the inequitable social and power dynamics found in many rural areas compromise women’s contribution in favour of men’s.

Significant gaps in terms of addressing gender issues have been identified within ICDPs. As a result, gender specialists have been hired in a small number of projects, to train staff, incorporate a gender perspective into the ICDP and develop indicators and data collection methods for tracking project performance (Larson and Nzirambi, 1996; WWF-US, undated; Muderis Abdulahi, 2000; Tapia and Flintan, 2002). However there is little evidence that gender issues have been strategically incorporated into ICDPs from the planning to the implementation and through to the monitoring and evaluation stages.

A CARE-supported ICDP based in Awash NP in Ethiopia is one of the few projects identified that emphasised the inclusion of both women and men in the planning stages.

*“In both the planning and implementation phase of the project...gender issues and the role of women empowerment and participation has been taken into account at all steps of the project cycle...Both male and female groups were properly consulted and empowered in appraising and planning the project implementation phases”* (Muderis Abdulahi, 2000:4).

These included separate women's meetings, needs analyses, focus groups and individual interviews. Women were also encouraged to join the Community Development Committee and Water Users Committee etc. Muderis, the Project Officer continues:

*"at the beginning it [was] very challenging to overcome socio-cultural barriers to approach women and discuss development issues. It has been necessary to convince men (elders, religious leaders, husbands) and get permission to discuss with women. The project put more effort [into] this aspect and the problem was gradually resolved".*

#### **5.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

There is a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation within ICDPs, particularly during project implementation. In addition, the formal structure allows little room for flexibility and adaptation. Where evaluations do take place, time is rarely provided for good reflection and stakeholder input.

The collection of disaggregated data is now reasonably common when surveys are carried out within local communities. However not enough effort is made to provide more comfortable spaces for women to contribute such as in focus groups. Often information is collected in the presence of men so women may be wary of speaking out, and lack confidence to express their views. Although many ICDPs do carry out such surveys on project impacts, for example, the information is rarely analysed properly and used constructively.

Although some ICDPs state that they use participatory approaches for data collection, these usually extend little further than activities such as community mapping. A number of projects suggest that they use PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) when they clearly do not: though participatory research techniques may be used, the process does not support the true elements of PRA such as long-term empowerment, community control or 'ownership' and the initiation of a process of reflection and change. Where project analyses have been of a more participatory nature, they appear more successful in including, and taking account of, women's views, perspectives and knowledge (for example, see Abbott *et al.*, 1999; Tapia and Flintan, 2002).