



Caribbean
Women in
Forestry

CAWFOR

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Forestry and Gender

FACT SHEET 1

Women and forestry

Women have significantly contributed to the management of the world's forests either through traditional forest management or scientific forestry; however when it comes to the field of formal forestry, the focus has been on timber production, which is traditionally viewed as men's work. The characterization of forestry as a male profession may shut out women from jobs in the field of forestry that they may have been willing to undertake but because of cultural views they are not afforded the opportunity. Not surprising there are limited opportunities in forestry for women's voices to be heard although there are some hints that gender marginalization may be beginning to change.

Shift in Management

There is currently a shift towards a more multidisciplinary approach to management of the world's forests. This shift coincided with a change from timber extraction to forests being managed for its environmental services. As a result more and more attention is placed on the value of the forest ecosystems as a unit inclusive of ecosystem biodiversity (different types of animals and plants in one location) and the link to current social and economic issues such as livelihoods, poverty alleviation and human health. Interestingly if some of forestry's features, such as poverty alleviation was more commonly talked about *more women might surface as supporters and/or career professionals in the field. We have not fully experienced this shift in Caribbean Forestry!!*

Towards Developing a Feminist Perspective

By all accounts forestry is one that is dominated by men and one that privileges men over women. The implications of this situation within the social and working institutions of forestry have led to the hiding of femininity, women acting more masculine and the development of unhealthy coping mechanisms. CAWFOR aims to advocate against this apparent gender discrimination against women in forestry and notes that the underlining drivers of the discrimination women face in forestry and their responses to this discrimination has its grounding in feminist concepts theories, such as '**doing gender**' and '**power/knowledge nexus**'. CAWFOR hopes to bridge the gap between forestry and feminist perspectives.

What is gender? Gender can be defined as the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (Lorber, 1991).

What is forestry? Forestry is defined as managing and using trees, forests and their associated resources for human benefit (FAO, 2007).

What is doing gender? Doing of gender occurs when gender can be viewed as an accomplishment of situated conduct (West and Zimmerman 1987) or the sense of accomplishment that women get from doing the masculine gender.

What is power/knowledge nexus? Refers to who produces power, who spreads this power and the satisfaction derived by meeting the standard set of power that is spread through knowledge (Foucault 1978).

For further information please contact CAWFOR at cawfor@gmail.com.