

SOCIAL AND GENDER ANALYSIS  
IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

*Learning Studies and Lessons from Asia*

EDITED BY RONNIE VERNOOY



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**RONNIE VERNOOY**



China Agriculture Press



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# Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	7
<i>List of Figures</i>	9
<i>List of Boxes</i>	10
<i>Preface by Ronnie Vernooy</i>	11
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	13
1. Integrating social and gender analysis into natural resource management research <i>Ronnie Vernooy and Liz Fajber</i>	17
2. The social and gendered nature of ginger production and commercialization: A case study of the Rai, Lepcha and Brahmin-Chhetri in Sikkim and Kalimpong, West Bengal, India <i>Chanda Gurung and Nawraj Gurung</i>	37
3. Strengthening market linkages for women vegetable vendors: Experiences from Kohima, Nagaland, India <i>Vengota Nakro and Chozhule Kikhi</i>	65
4. Enhancing farmers' marketing capacity and strengthening the local seed system: Action research for the conservation and use of agrobiodiversity in Bara District, Nepal <i>Deepa Singh, Anil Subedi and Pitamber Shrestha</i>	99
5. Empowering women farmers and strengthening the local seed system: Action research in Guangxi, China <i>Yiching Song and Linxiu Zhang with Ronnie Vernooy</i>	129

## 6 Social and Gender Analysis in Natural Resource Management

6. Creating opportunities for change: Strengthening the social capital of women and the poor in upland communities in Hue, Viet Nam 155  
*Hoang Thi Sen and Le Van An*
7. Herder women speak out: Towards more equitable co-management of grasslands and other natural resources in Mongolia 181  
*H. Ykhanbai, Ts. Odgerel, E. Bulgan and B. Naranchimeg*
8. Similarities and differences: From improved understanding to social transformations 207  
*Ronnie Vernoooy and Linxiu Zhang*
9. Social and gender analysis is essential, not optional: Enhanced capacities and remaining challenges 225  
*Ronnie Vernoooy and Linxiu Zhang*
- About the Editor and Contributors* 237
- Index* 243

# List of Tables

1.1	Key features of women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) approaches to research	29
1.2	Key features of the six studies	31
1.3	Methods, tools and skills used in the six case studies	32
2.1	Demographics of the two study regions compared with national data, 2001	41
2.2	Size and ethnic composition of households in the selected villages	48
3.1	An overview of vegetable vending enterprises in Kohima	75
3.2	Designated market niches for vegetables vendors provided by the Kohima Town Committee	78
3.3	Number of vegetable species sold each month by women vendors from Pholami	80
3.4	Costs and benefits of a trip to the Kohima market for vendor 1 (INR)	85
3.5	Costs and benefits of a trip to the Kohima market for vendor 2 (INR)	86
3.6	Comparison of retail and wholesale prices per unit of vegetables and fruits obtained by a vendor from Pholami village (INR)	86
3.7	Options for increasing and improving production of marketable vegetables and fruits in Merema and Tsiese Basa	93
4.1	Sources of seeds across wealth categories	116
4.2	Involvement of men and women in seed production across wealth categories	120



## 8 Social and Gender Analysis in Natural Resource Management

5.1	Changes in out-migration in Anhui, Qinghai and Guangxi, 1997–2003	132
5.2	Basic information about the five research sites	138
5.3	Key characteristics of maize production at the research sites	139
5.4	Men and women's perceptions of who manages household resources and activities	140
5.5	Men and women's perceptions of who makes decisions about the management of resources and activities	141
5.6	Comparison of variety selection criteria between women and men farmers in Guangxi villages	143
6.1	Land use in Hong Ha and Huong Nguyen communes	162
6.2	Population of Hong Ha and Huong Nguyen communes	162
6.3	Wealth ranking of commune households	163
6.4	Access to training by wealth category in the two communes	166
6.5	Number of women and poor households involved in interest groups	174
7.1	Participation of men and women in the protection and restoration of natural resources according to community members	194
7.2	Pasture rotation plan designed by the Arjargalant community women's group	196
7.3	Changes in income structure of herder households, 2001–03 ( $n = 36$ )	198

# List of Figures

1.1	Theory of action	28
2.1	Location of the study sites in the Sikkim region	40
3.1	The Nagaland region showing the location of the research sites	68
4.1	Map of Nepal showing the research site	102
4.2	Reasons for growing modern varieties of rice	114
4.3	Reasons for growing landraces of rice	114
4.4	Period of seed replacement for three socioeconomic categories of farmers	115
4.5	Existing seed marketing channels for Kachorwa farmers	117
4.6	Rates for seed exchange across socioeconomic categories	118
4.7	Seed selection methods according to wealth category	119
4.8	Labour used at various stages of seed production by socioeconomic category	121
4.9	Participation by men and women in decision making and selling (rich farmers only)	122
4.10	New seed marketing channels	124
5.1	Trends in out-migration in Anhui, Qinghai and Guanxi by sex	133
5.2	Location of the research sites in southern China	137
6.1	The Viet Nam research site	161
6.2	Access of men and women to training courses	166
6.3	Source of decisions about training topics	168
7.1	Location of the study sites	186
7.2	The participation of men and women in farming and household work ( $n = 84$ )	193

## List of Boxes

3.1	The NEPED project	71
3.2	<i>Gajo-jotho</i> : A promising wild vegetable for domestication	81
3.3	Fencing: A leap towards sedentary agriculture	82
3.4	Insect infestation: A selling point!	83
3.5	Substituting vegetables for rice in TRCs	89
3.6	Creating an overnight storeroom in Kohima	90
3.7	Situation for an average part-time vendor in Tsiese Basa	91
3.8	An alternative marketing chain: The vendors of Pfutsero	97
5.1	The seed fair in Guozhai	149
6.1	People's voices	176

## Preface

This is a book about encounters—literally and figuratively speaking. In one way or another, the nine chapters are about encounters among the authors and collaborators and their meetings with rural women and men, and with women and men working for local and national governments and for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in a number of South Asian and South-East Asian countries. Some of the authors and collaborators are themselves government or NGO employees. The three synthesis chapters and six case studies are also about attempts to create interfaces between the natural sciences and the social sciences, between more descriptive social science research and more transformative participatory research, and between locally situated research ‘projects’ and wider socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures and processes.

What all contributors have in common is an interest in a better understanding of the societies in which we work and live. In particular, we are concerned about the everyday social differences and inequalities that exist, and how they are changed over time (the process of social differentiation). To varying degrees and in different ways, we also share a desire to look for and explore opportunities for social transformation. Based on our very diverse everyday practices and experiences—encompassing more than the joint research project that this book is about—we have come to understand that this is easier said than done. Becoming involved in social transformation means engaging with politics and power or knowledge struggles; almost by definition, it implies dealing with setbacks and challenges.

The six case studies forming the ‘Learning Studies’ project describe and reflect on a diversity of efforts to integrate social and gender analysis into natural resource management research. They point to the importance of ‘local’ history and context, and to the increasingly interlocking ‘local’ and ‘supra-local’ forces. In addition, the six cases allow a comparative analysis and the discovery of a number of commonalities.

The cases recognize the steps that researchers are already taking in implementing social and gender analysis research, including questions of class, caste and ethnicity in natural resource management. They all represent 'learning stories'—attempts to deepen our understanding and strengthen our practice.

Through cross-regional exchanges, the six research teams and collaborators supported and encouraged each other to learn along the way, trying to be both reflexive about practice and critical about theories and concepts. The selected cases illustrate 'on-the-ground' examples of challenges and opportunities, successes and disappointments in integrating social and gender analysis. They also highlight a number of methods used and adapted in the very diverse contexts of the Asian region.

The studies make a start at reflecting on what has been done and is being done in organizations in terms of capacity development for the integration of social and gender analysis. They also look at *how* this has been done and is being done, and the enabling and constraining factors that are affecting the process. In addition, they ask how best to support these capacity development efforts in the future.

The authors and contributors share the assessment that the series of encounters enabled by this initiative over a period of more than three years has made a difference. As the chapters will tell, they have indeed deepened our sociological knowledge and strengthened our (action) research skills. They also allowed the building of friendships.

**Ronnie Verwooy**

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The research documented in this book and the book itself came to fruition thanks to the support of many people. Women and men farmers and herders shared their ideas, points of view, dreams, concerns and worries with the research teams while teaching us about their way of life in India, Nepal, China, Viet Nam and Mongolia. Extension agents, other researchers and government officials collaborated with the teams, joining the learning caravan on the road to better understanding and action. We acknowledge their contributions to the research, their patience, hospitality and good company.

Special thanks go to John Graham, former IDRC programme officer, now happily enjoying a quieter life. John provided spirited input and critical feedback from start to finish—in the field, during workshops and through long-distance correspondence. He patiently proofread all chapters, highlighting gaps, questionable observations and shaky use of the English language. We have done our best to take his suggestions into account, and he is not to blame for any remaining errors.

Support and encouragement were provided by many other IDRC colleagues from the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and the Community-based Natural Resource Management teams, the Gender Unit, the communications group, and staff in the Singapore, New Delhi and Ottawa offices. Thank you!

We say *xie xie* to the staff of the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy (CCAP) in Beijing for their support and good humour, and for demonstrating their singing talents to us fearlessly and skilfully. We acknowledge the perceptive comments of Peng Guangqian when we first dared to venture into a comparative analysis of the six case studies.

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at IDRC. We also acknowledge the support of Omita Goyal, consultant commissioning editor.

The Sikkim/West Bengal team notes that their region has been long overlooked by most international development organizations. IDRC has been one of the few that has taken an interest in this region and its people, thereby, bringing it into focus on the international development scene. They thank IDRC for this. The process of conducting this study required numerous visits to the villages and long hours interviewing and questioning the farmers. The team would like to express their gratitude to the farmers, who throughout all of this showed immense patience and enthusiasm—and showered the team with hospitality. They are also grateful to the six field assistants for their contribution and invaluable help. Liz Fajber (IDRC) for her guidance and advice, deserves special mention. Nawraj would also like to acknowledge the Indo-Swiss Project, Sikkim, for allowing him to participate in this study.

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The Mongolian team notes that their collaborative research is a pioneering effort in which voices and aspirations of women herders have been included in the study and in the co-management arrangements for better pasture use. They thank, *bayarlalaa*, Ronnie Vernooy, Liz Fajber, John Graham and Hein Mallee from IDRC for their valuable comments and timely contribution and support for the organization of the Second Social and Gender Analysis International Learning Stories Meeting in Ulaanbaatar in 2003. They also thank all the local women's groups and representatives of the local governments in Lun, Khotont and Deluin *sums* for their cooperation during the study.



