

PARTICIPATORY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT- HOW GENDER MATTERS

KURIAN *PH.D.* Mathew

*Associate Expert- Institutions and Policy Studies. International Water Management Institute (CGIAR) 127, Sunil Mawatha, Pelawatta, Battaramula. via Colombo. Sri Lanka
Tel: 94-1-784080 Email: m.kurian@cgiar.org*

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years decentralized development approaches have gained wide acceptance in policy circles. In the water resources sector in particular, Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) and Joint Forest Management (JFM) policies have been promoted with support of multilateral development agencies like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB). IMT and JFM policies typically refer to devolving management of previously publicly controlled forests or irrigation systems to farmer's groups or other private-sector groups (International Water Management Institute (IWMI) 1995:4). Donor supported JFM and IMT projects in particular have emphasized the need for community participation to undertake tasks of catchment protection and water allocation, collection of Irrigation Service Fees (ISF's) and routine maintenance of irrigation infrastructure like water harvesting dams. (Kurian, 2001).

Gender is a recurring theme in discussions on participatory watershed management. There are essentially three arguments that have been put forward in support of according women a greater role in natural resources management. The first line of argument emphasizes the fact that poverty drives people to use environmental resources more intensively. As a consequence, land and water resources, especially those held in common, degrade thereby accentuating the environmental crisis. The growing environmental crisis further reduces the livelihood options of poor households and increases poverty. Increasing poverty, the argument goes, affects women and other marginalized groups like the landless more severely because of their lack of control over productive resources like arable land (Sudarshan 2001).¹

The second argument follows logically from the first. Since women are influenced by development interventions, they must be involved in the design of such interventions so as to optimise their effects on women's well-being. For instance, considering that community forest conservation projects may jeopardise poor women's livelihood options, how can alternative options be created through the innovative use of micro-credit or by guaranteeing access to markets for forest products (Ramdas 2001)? It has also been pointed out that women's well being may not be automatically guaranteed by improvements in forest productivity or agricultural incomes that arise from improved access to irrigation. This is because women's entitlements (like access to natural resources or income) within households are curtailed by superior bargaining power of male members of households (Balasubramanian et.al, 2002). Prior involvement of women in decision making would therefore clarify how such constraints may be overcome so as to address women's specific interests through an external intervention.

The third argument advocating an important role for women in natural resources management points out that project performance is closely tied to incentives for women to participate (Sarker and Das, 2002). Practitioners have argued that women's participation at meetings can improve

¹ Some studies have argued that natural resource degradation may result in reduced supply of subsistence products like fuelwood and fodder. As women are traditionally involved in gathering biomass fuels they would be adversely affected due to increased time and energy spent on gathering fuelwood and fodder at greater distances from their homes (see Agarwal 1986).

efficiency and accountability of procedures through their involvement in decision making (Sarin 1999). In the case of forestry, for example, women are often more knowledgeable than men about local tree or grass species and about their location and intensity of use (Agarwal 2000). This line of argumentation implicitly assumes that women enjoy an intrinsically special relationship with the environment. Their involvement in forest protection committees is therefore considered crucial to ensure the success of conservation ventures.

Institutional analysis of women's participation in watershed management has highlighted some of the above themes. Nevertheless three drawbacks of institutional analysis may be pointed out. First, most analysis of women's participation is undertaken in a project context, which makes it difficult to distinguish between collective action in 'decentralized settings' and mere participation in project activities (Baland and Platteau 1999). Second, institutional analysis has tended to overlook the consequences of participatory watershed management on status of women, differentiated as they are on the basis of age, caste or class (Sarin, 1999, Sarker and Das, 2002). Finally, most analysis of women's participation in watershed management has focussed on a single land use. Analysis of multiple land use interactions in a watershed context, especially in the transition from project to post-project phase is limited (Kurian 2003).

In this paper we chart attempts to involve women in different stages of a Joint Forest Management (JFM) project in Haryana. We focus on women's systematic exclusion from decision-making forums relating to management of earthen dams² that have State owned forests located in their catchment areas. We point out that women are nevertheless, influenced by watershed management interventions in Haryana. In this context we look at women's work with crops, livestock and their disproportionate access to tangible resources like arable land. We also examine differences in gender division of labour among different categories of households and discuss the potential that intra-household differences in access to resources and income can have on women's well-being. We argue that donor agencies, states and NGOs can foster pro-poor growth by targeting asymmetrical power relations that effectively exclude women from control over natural resources.

2 PARTICIPATORY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT IN THE SHIWALIK HILLS, HARYANA

The Sukhomajiri Watershed Model- Institutionalizing a Link between Forests and Agriculture

Panchkula district has the largest proportion of land under forests in Haryana. As a result the district has been a particularly important focus of participatory forestry projects. Since the early 1980s a spate of community forestry initiatives have been undertaken: social forestry, joint forest management and the Haryana community forestry project. The Haryana Joint Forest Management Project was responsible for developing an integrated model of watershed management based on experiments that were undertaken in the village of Sukhomajiri between 1975 and 1985. From the Haryana Forest Department's (HFD) point of view the Sukhomajiri watershed management intervention was crucial to reduce siltation of the Sukhna reservoir located further downstream in the State capital of Chandigarh. The Sukhomajiri model was premised on the idea that a linear relationship exists between the condition of forests located in

² Earthen dams are made of compacted soil from the Shiwalik foothills. Shiwalik hill forests serve as catchment of earthen dams. The catchment areas are usually bowl shaped; water from the hills collects in them during the monsoon period. Water collected during the monsoon period is used during the winter period for supplementary irrigation primarily for wheat cultivation. Institutional arrangements that regulate opening and closing the sluice valves are critical; if the sluice valve is left open beyond a certain point the dead storage of the dam silts up. Water is transported to agricultural fields on the basis of gravity flow. The dams are also fitted with spillways to ensure that excess water flows away without damaging the main body of the dam.

the Shiwalik hills and agricultural productivity in low lying plains. As a result fodder production on private fields was encouraged through provision of irrigation from earthen dams in the expectation that greater fodder and dung³ production from irrigated fields would obviate the need to use State owned forests for fodder and fuelwood extraction. Between 1985 and 1990 an attempt was made to scale up or replicate the Sukhomajiri watershed model to about 35 micro-watersheds located in Morni-Pinjore Forest Division⁴ of Panchkula District in Haryana. An important feature of the scaling up phase of the project was the creation of institutional mechanisms for sharing revenue from state forests with local communities. Five features of the institutional contract that characterized joint management of watershed resources are worth highlighting:

- Water user associations were constituted as Hill Resource Management Societies (HRMS) under the Registration of Societies Act, 1900.
- Membership issues were tackled, especially in cases where not all members in a village could benefit from water supply from dams. Further, where the HRMS comprised two or more villages, attention was paid to issues like how revenue raised from sale of water (and fibre and fodder grasses) could be spent.
- At least a third of positions in the managing committee of the HRMS are to be reserved for women. Every woman in a household was entitled to membership distinct from membership of the male head of household in the general body of HRMS.
- The Haryana Forest Department (HFD) facilitates participation of community groups in watershed management by organizing annual elections of Managing Committees of HRMS and monitoring annual auctions of fibre grass and water harvesting rights to forests under joint management.

2.1 Community Participation in Post-Project Phase

We noted earlier on that thirty five HRMS were established in Morni-Pinjore Forest Division of Panchkula District during the JFM project in Haryana. These thirty five HRMS were responsible for managing fifty four earthen dams. However, due to logistical constraints (roads being washed away in the monsoon rains) we could visit only 28 HRMS. This reduced our sample to 28 HRMS responsible for managing 45 earthen dams. Our survey of the 28 HRMS in the Morni-Pinjore Forest Division was undertaken over a period of six months in 2000 during which information was collected on variables like sources of fuel for domestic household purposes and participation in management of earthen dams.

2.2 Case Study Approach

Two of the 28 HRMS surveyed- Bharuali and Thadion were selected for a comparative case study⁵. The value of the comparative case study approach is that it highlights local-level institutional processes (Yin 1989). Two rounds of household surveys were undertaken to cover

³ Cattle dung is used extensively as a cooking fuel in the Shiwalik region. Increased production of cattle dung it was assumed would reduce pressure on State forests for supply of fuelwood for cooking purposes.

⁴ For administrative purposes Morni-Pinjore Forest Division is further sub-divided into three forest ranges- Pinjore, Panchkula and Raipur Rani.

⁵ We used three criteria for selection of HRMS for a comparative case study. First, both HRMS must be functional, dams in both HRMS must be functional and finally HRMS must be situated next to each other to overcome major differences in contextual factors like soil or forest type, distance from markets and cropping patterns.

all households in the study sites of the Bharauli and Thadion HRMS⁶. The household surveys collected information on household demography, cropping patterns, asset ownership and participation in management of earthen dams. In addition to structured interviews, focused interviews and group discussions were undertaken. To substantiate findings of the case study we also reviewed findings of other studies that were undertaken in the Shiwalik region.

3 AGAINST ALL ODDS- MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN PARTICIPATORY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT IN HARYANA

Notwithstanding the attempt by policy makers to mainstream gender concerns in participatory watershed management context specific cultural and socio-economic factors pose a serious challenge to the project. In the context of Haryana two factors have a bearing on women's participation in natural resources management: the status of women and their relationship with forests in the Shiwalik hills. The socio-economic status of women in Haryana is poor in comparison with women with other parts of the country. We consider five factors in our analysis: sex ratios, rural female labour participation, rural female literacy, rural fertility and property rights.

Haryana has one of the lowest female-to-male sex ratios in India (*Table 2*). "Female-adverse sex ratios embody the effects on female survival of an anti-female bias in intra-household distribution of food and health care" (Agarwal 1997: 30). This anti-female bias in the distribution of basic necessities within the household is also reflected in gender differences in anthropometric measures such as morbidity and mortality rates and quality of medical treatment received during illness. Haryana's female literacy rate is only slightly higher than the national average. Further, the state's fertility rate is higher than the national average. Haryana also fares poorly in terms of female literacy and fertility when compared to states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Kerala in particular is known for its high levels of women's literacy and women's greater freedom in choices over child bearing. Further, in Haryana as in most parts of India with the exception of matrilineal communities in Kerala and the North-east, women enjoy no formal property rights to arable land. In addition to lower female literacy rates, Haryana has the second lowest female labour force participation rates in India, next only to the neighbouring state of Punjab. Yet it is ironical that Haryana and Punjab are the two most agriculturally prosperous states in India.

Mainstreaming gender concerns in watershed management in the Haryana Shiwaliks is challenging for another reason. "The traditional gender roles in the Shiwaliks do not conform to the stereotype of rural women being primarily responsible for collecting subsistence goods like fuelwood and fodder from forests" (Sarin 1996: 144). With the exception of two caste groups, the Banjaras and Bhanjda, rural women are not involved in gathering forest products nor do they derive an income from processing the same. In the case of the Banjara community, men harvest fibre grass from forest areas and women are involved in converting it to rope. Income

⁶ Bharauli HRMS is multi-caste group composed of two hamlets- Bharauli (downstream of the earthen dam) and Sher Gujran (located in the catchment of the dam). On the other hand Thadion HRMS is a single caste gujjar village composed of two hamlets- Thadion and Rethi. However, due to location of the earthen dam in Thadion and its command area only fields of Thadion residents receive irrigation from the dam. But residents of both Thadion and Rethi use catchment areas of the dam for fuelwood collection. Bharauli HRMS has 35 households that benefit from irrigation from the earthen dam there while only 15 households in Thadion village benefit from irrigation from the dam in Thadion HRMS. The main crop grown under dam-assisted irrigation is wheat during the rabi season. Private tubewells provide an alternative source of irrigation in Thadion HRMS. By contrast, there are no tubewells in Bharauli HRMS due to prohibitive drilling costs that are influenced by relatively greater depth at which groundwater is accessible there.

from sales of rope in local markets is, however, completely under the control of men (TERI, 1998). In the case of the Bhanjda community, men collect bamboo from forest areas and women make it into baskets for sale in local markets. However, Banjaras and Bhanjda communities are few and far between in the Morni-Pinjore Forest Division of Panchkula District. In fact there are only two HRMS in Morni-Pinjore Forest Division with populations of Banjaras and Bhanjdas. Shiwalik villages in Haryana are mostly made up of castes like the Gujjars, Tarkhans, Rajputs, Harijans and Lavanas. In these villages men are primarily responsible for collection of fuelwood, bamboo, fodder grass or fibre grass from forest areas.

Three issues may be emphasized in light of the above discussion. First, women are not directly disadvantaged by forest degradation in the Haryana Shiwaliks, as they are neither subsistence product gatherers nor do they benefit directly from value addition. Second, women in the Shiwalik hills do not possess specialized knowledge of forest products, their location or their use value. In fact, discussions in the study area revealed that it was men (like forest guards, contractors, and travelling saints) who had knowledge of the medicinal value of herbs, location of fibre grass and access trails within forest areas. Third, regardless of the absence of a special relationship between women and forests in the Shiwalik hills, women's presence in civic forums can still be desirable. This is especially because their knowledge of watershed management regulations through attendance of HRMS meetings can increase the general level of awareness of rules in the community. Awareness creation may be viewed as an important first step towards increasing accountability and transparency in managing public resources through participation in decision making.

The joint forest management project in Haryana attempted to increase transparency and accountability in public forums by insisting on women's presence at the HRMS meetings. Joint forest management rules stipulate that at least two women must be members of the HRMS managing committee. Women were also required to be present at water and fibre grass auctions and to vote at annual HRMS elections. With a view to institutionalising women's participation in HRMS meetings, farmer training camps were organized. At the peak of the scaling-up period of the joint forest management project (1993–96), for instance, four farmer camps were organized in the Morni-Pinjore Forest Division. At total of 306 women attended these camps. Further, one women's training camp was organized in 1996 at which 31 women were present. A report submitted by TERI to the Ford Foundation noted that "most HRMS in Morni- Pinjore Forest Division now have a greater representation of women in the Managing Committee membership as well as in the general membership" (TERI 1997: 7–8). However, notwithstanding the efforts of the HFD and TERI to convey the need for women's participation during the joint forest management project two challenges remain. First, women remained uninformed about HRMS meetings. Second, women were unaware of whether they were members of the HRMS (see TERI 1997: 29). The male head of household was usually assumed to be the member of the HRMS.

4 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POST-PROJECT PHASE: UNCOVERING A HOLLOW SPACE

The previous section highlighted how women's participation was emphasized by external agents like NGOs and the HFD. But project evaluation reports indicated very limited success in bringing about "genuine" participation by women in HRMS affairs. To examine the extent to which women were involved in participatory watershed management in the post-project phase we examined data from the eight HRMS with functioning dams in the Morni-Pinjore Forest Division.

Our survey indicates that women are poorly represented in the general body of the HRMS. Six of the HRMS had representation of less than half of women in HRMS households in the organization. Further, in none of the HRMS did women attend annual meetings of the

organization: water and fibre grass auctions and annual elections. Almost all the HRMS met the norm of having at least two women represented on the managing committee of organization. However, the women did not attend any of the HRMS meetings. The minutes of the meetings are simply sent to the homes of the women members for their signature. The complete exclusion of women from HRMS affairs is reflected in expenditure patterns of HRMS, which is biased towards male preferences (Table 3). With the exception of Thadion HRMS all HRMS expenditure between 1995 and 2000 was directed towards repairs of earthen dams. In Thadion HRMS a *dharmshala* was also constructed, which is primarily used for meetings of the village elders and the *panchayat* from which women are excluded. In the case of Kiratpur HRMS no records were available, reflecting a lack of transparency in the functioning of the community

Table 2: Indicators of Women's Socio-economic Status: A Statewise Comparison

State	Sex Ratio (F/M) 1991	Rural Female Labour Force Participation Rates, 1981	Rural Female Literacy Rates, 1991	Rural Fertility Rates, 1988
India (national average)	929	24.4	25.37	4.3
<i>North-west</i>				
Haryana	874	7.6	27.09	4.5
Himachal Pradesh	996	29.2	41.94	3.7
Jammu and Kashmir	923	9.2	NA	4.9
Punjab	888	2.6	36.8	3.5
Rajasthan	913	16.1	9.24	4.8
Uttar Pradesh	881	9.4	16	5.6
<i>West and Central India</i>				
Gujjarat	936	20.2	32.7	3.6
Madhya Pradesh	932	39.7	15.6	5.1
Maharashtra	935	47.3	33.8	3.9
<i>Eastern India</i>				
Bihar	912	15.3	14.6	5.5
Orissa	972	16.7	25.7	3.9
West Bengal	917	10	31.3	4
<i>South India</i>				
Andhra Pradesh	973	46.6	20.7	3.4
Karnataka	961	33.4	29.05	3.7
Kerala	1040	20.2	74.1	2
Tamil Nadu	972	39.8	36.75	2.7
<i>North-east India</i>				
Arunachal Pradesh	861	67.1	19.6	N/A
Assam	925	55.4	31.88	3.9
Manipur	961	61.2	35.39	N/A
Meghalaya	947	60.8	30.1	N/A
Mizoram	924	60.6	54.01	N/A
Nagaland	890	72.6	41.8	N/A
Tripura	946	14.3	36.18	N/A

Source: Agarwal 1997

organization.⁷ Notwithstanding women's exclusion from decision making in the HRMS, we found they are still influenced by watershed management. For instance, we find that with the construction of the earthen dam in Bharauli, women's work in fields had increased⁸. Our findings in Bharauli are substantiated by findings of another study of the Bunga watershed project in the Haryana shivaliks. Increases in work load of women are explained in part by crop diversification strategies pursued by peasants. For instance, studies in Andhra Pradesh indicate that with the arrival of irrigation in a semi-arid region farmers began cultivating water-intensive crops like paddy and raising milch cattle to maximize income from expanding markets for milk (see Ramdas 2001).

We note also that in the case of on-farm jobs especially for harvesting paddy wage rates for women were lower when compared to that of men. Interestingly, we also find that wages for women who came from the neighbouring State of Bihar were lower than that of women recruited locally (*Table 4*). Further, considering women's varied involvement in irrigated agriculture one is justified in asking if they have a say in choices regarding cropping patterns or how income from such ventures is spent? Or are women reduced to mere providers of labour in the production process. Studies in India indicate that very often women do not have an important role to play in decisions about how household income is to be spent. Cash income is usually spent on the purchase of bicycles, mopeds or alcohol by men. Few purchases are made of utilities that would improve women's well-being, such as LPG cook stoves, hand pumps or medical care (Sarin, 1999).

Our Bharauli case study reveals that before the watershed project was introduced there was shortage of fodder grass in the village so men migrated with livestock for up to six months. Women were responsible for tending the livestock that remained in the village. However, after the watershed project the time spent fetching water and collecting fodder grass was reduced. These findings are substantiated by a review of the Bunga watershed project (*Table 5*). But women's workload in activities like cutting chaff from fodder grass, cleaning cattle sheds and feeding livestock increased.

⁷ A study of HRMS investment patterns listed the following main items of expenditure- forest plantation, forest watch and ward, repair of earthen dams, repair/construction of village school, village road, temples, purchase of utensils for use by village, provision of drinking water taps. The study founded a major share of HRMS funds was invested in construction/repair of village hall, followed by construction/repair of temples and earthen dams. On the other hand investments that women would have preferred such as repair/construction of village school and roads and provision of drinking water received less than half the amount that was invested on more male dominated preferences (See Datta and Varalakshmi 1999:117).

⁸ Access to irrigation from earthen dams has improved fodder grass production on agricultural fields. However, focused discussions indicate that increased fodder grass production has meant more work for women. For instance, women make more trips transporting fodder grass from fields to their homes. Second, when decisions are made to increase cattle herd sizes to maximize returns from sale of milk, women end up spending more time feeding and bathing cattle. Third, unlike grass from forest areas, fodder grass from agricultural fields has to be threshed in a machine before it is fed to livestock. Women's involvement has increased in this task and will rise with an increase in fodder grass production from agricultural fields.

Table 3: Women's Participation in Joint Forest Management in Morni-Pinjore Forest Division, Haryana

HRMS	Women Represented in Managing Committee	Women Attending Managing Committee Meetings	Women Represented in General Body	Women Attending General Body Meetings	Main HRMS Expenditure (1995–2000)
Sukhomajir	3	Nil	50%	Nil	Repair of earthen dam
Dhamala	3	–	22%	–	Purchase of diesel engine to pump water from dam pondage area
Lohgarh	3	–	18%	–	Repair of earthen dam
Thadion	2	–	50%	–	Construction of <i>dharamshala</i> (men's meeting place)
Bharauli	2	–	40%	–	Repair of earthen dam
Nada	2	–	1%	–	Repair of earthen dam
Kiratpur	3	–	67%	–	No records available

Table 4: Wages for Agricultural Labourers by Location of Recruitment and Gender

Farm Practice	Local Labourer		Labourer from Outside	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sowing	60	50	50	35
Weeding	60	50	50	35
Harvesting	60	50	50	35

Interestingly, the Bunga watershed project study highlights the fact that the effects of watershed management may be received differently by men and women. The report notes that with introduction of the watershed project multiple cropping was adopted due to availability of supplemental irrigation. This increased the involvement of women in agricultural activities. Interestingly, though, the workload of women increased more than that of men. Likewise, with the availability of irrigation, per acre labour utilization of both men and women doubled for all crops. However, among the women the increase in the ratio of labour utilization in the post-project phase compared to the pre-project phase was greater than that for men. In the case of animal husbandry activities too there were differences between men and women. Our case study reveals a clear link between class and gender inherent in forest use practices in Bharauli. In the case of fuelwood collection there are differences in who is primarily engaged in the task.

Table 5: Time Spent by Women on Various Activities in Peasant Households

Activities	Time (hours per annum per household)		Percentage Increase/Decrease (in hours per annum per household)
	Pre-project	Post-project	
Farm work	434	1,078	(+) 148
Transporting fodder grass	218	495	(+) 127
Grazing animals	512	220	(-) 132
Animal husbandry (excluding grazing and collecting fodder grass)	191	562	(+) 194
Collecting fuelwood and fetching water	661	285	(-) 132
Household chores	1,360	1,441	(+) 6
Child and personal care	547	442	(-) 24
Miscellaneous (social and leisure activities like knitting, carpet-making, cot-making)	657	498	(-) 32
Total	4,580	5,021	(+) 10

Source: Arya and Samra 1995.

For instance, in the high and medium endowment⁹ category of households fuelwood collection is primarily undertaken by male members of the household. However, low and landless category households rely on women and young girls to a greater extent to undertake fuelwood collection (see Table 6).

These patterns of fuelwood extraction are explained to a large extent by the nature of non-farm jobs engaged in by male members of such households. It is important to remember that upto 80 percent of non-farm jobs¹⁰ in Bharauli were captured by households in the low endowment category. Further, male members of landless households were drawn away to work as daily wage labourers in nearby towns. As a result women in these households were called upon to shoulder domestic tasks like fuelwood collection. The low paying nature of such jobs also prevented such households from adopting LPG technology and transiting to use of non-biomass fuels for domestic purposes. By comparison we find that primarily due to higher incomes the dispersion of LPG to be greater among high endowment category households.

Our discussion so far indicates that women and men are affected differently by watershed management projects. Moreover, different categories of women benefit differently from such interventions depending on their class and demographic status.

⁹ We stratified households on the basis of ownership of endowments like arable and rainfed land and livestock in proportion to household size. For a description of how household endowment scores were constructed see *appendix 2*.

¹⁰ Non-farm jobs include employment as daily wage labourers in stone quarrying, truck driving and petty government jobs

Table 6: Gender, Class and Forest Use Practices

Endowment Cluster	Percentage of Households where women are Responsible for Fuelwood Collection from Catchment areas of Earthen Dams
High	-
Medium	-
Low	25%
Landless	44%

These assertions are substantiated by the Bunga watershed study. For instance, the report notes that decrease in extraction of fodder grass after the introduction of the watershed project differed according to the ages of women. For instance, the greatest decrease in fodder grass extraction rates (72%) was for women in the age group 25–50 and the lowest (29.8%) for women aged 10–14 (Arya and Samra 1995: 88). Nevertheless, it is clear from our review of participatory watershed management in the Haryana Shiwaliks that women regardless of their class or demographic status are effectively excluded from decisions relating to management of natural resources such as water and forests.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we examined the discourse surrounding the role of women in natural resources management. We outlined the three main arguments purporting an important role for women in managing watershed resources like forests and water. We highlighted the equity, poverty-environment nexus and the project performance arguments that posit an important role for women's participation in watershed management. Next we turned to the empirical context presented by the Shiwalik hills: high levels of women's exclusion from public life and a peculiar relationship between women and forests. These two factors, we argued, do not make women in the Shiwalik context particularly disadvantaged as a consequence of environmental deterioration. We thus unpacked some of the stereotypical arguments that have been put forward in support of women's participation in natural resources management.

We examined trends in women's participation in joint forest management in Haryana in the post-project phase. We observed that women continue to be uninformed about HRMS meetings and they remain unclear about their membership status. We argue that because women are influenced by watershed interventions it is imperative that they be involved in decision making on use of natural resources. Women's workload in animal husbandry and on-farm work has actually increased in the wake of a watershed project. Women also tended to bear the greater portion of the increase in workload compared to men. Further, women, far from being a homogeneous group, are differentiated on the basis of class, caste and age. Acknowledging such differences we argued was critical to designing pro-poor interventions.