Climate Change, LULUCF and Gender Dynamics

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Those who followed the climate change negotiations in The Hague in November 2000, know that LULUCF (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry) was one of the most contentious topics discussed, ultimately causing the suspension of the global climate talks.

LULUCF concerns the role of sinks (that is, forests and other biomass) in the carbon dioxide balance. Atmospheric carbon dioxide is naturally trapped in plant material and thus increasing the number of sinks offers a way of mitigating high atmospheric CO₂ levels. If, for example, forests are planted on areas which are unforested they would absorb carbon and thus counterbalance anthropogenic emissions.

Countries that have agreed to reduce their carbon emissions could thus offset part of their obligations by investing in such forestry. Reducing atmospheric carbon through the use of sinks is in many cases much cheaper than actually reducing emissions.

One question under discussion is whether developed countries should be allowed to establish carbon sink projects in developing countries under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). But how would LULUCF (sink) projects influence gender dynamics?

For Sub-Saharan Africa the statistics clearly show that women, far more than men, play a vital role in agricultural management. Any changes in this sector through large-scale LULUCF projects can thus be expected to affect gender dynamics. However, any proposals for LULUCF projects under CDM are likely to be restricted to forest projects, and not concern agriculture directly.

To be continued on p. 14