Gender and human diversity are critical dimensions of sustainable forest management (SFM) and human well-being (HWB). They are at the core of management decisions, tensions, and opportunities in tropical forestry. They also are complex and raise uncomfortable questions about the status quo and, as such, often appear to fit poorly with ambitious management or research agendas. For these reasons, despite their pivotal place in progress toward sustainable forestry, gender and diversity are often underplayed or even avoided in assessments of research and forest management.

In this chapter, I briefly explore the concept of gender and diversity analysis and its utility for assessing SFM and HWB (for management or research). My intent is to demystify the concepts through a theoretical discussion of gender and diversity analysis in HWB assessment that is supplemented by fieldwork examples. These examples are based primarily on my experiences with the HWB assessment and social criteria and indicators (C&I) methods test completed by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Long Loreh, Bulungan, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, with additional insights from the experiences of other CIFOR C&I methods researchers. The importance of recognizing the theoretical grounding of a research team vis-à-vis gender and diversity is highlighted.¹

Then, I briefly address some gender and diversity issues relating specifically to the C&I used in the East Kalimantan assessment. I explore some
obstacles to the participation of women and other marginalized or less dom-
inant groups of people in the assessment (or other research and forest man-
agement) processes and present some strategies for overcoming such barriers. 
I conclude with reflections on the HWB assessment process from a perspec-
tive of gender and human diversity analysis.

My overall goal is to contribute to the larger pool of wisdom on these 
issues so that more researchers, forest managers, and assessors can use gender 
and diversity approaches in their work and thereby effect the kind of long-
term changes needed to maintain the world’s peoples and its forests.

Concepts, Rationale, and Analysis

Gender and human diversity are overlapping concepts that constitute analytical 
approaches for understanding the world around us. These approaches are 
dynamic and relevant to HWB and SFM for both ethical and practical reasons.

What Are Gender and Human Diversity?
The term gender is probably one of the most used and least understood or 
agreed upon terms in the field of SFM. It is commonly built into donor 
requirements and strategic plans for SFM and other development research and 
practices, yet it frequently is assigned different literal as well as implied 
meanings.

The primary confusion relates to the difference between the meanings of 
sex and gender. Whereas sex refers to the biological differences between 
women and men, gender is a social distinction that is culture-specific and 
changes across time (ISNAR 1997). In other words, individuals are born 
male or female (a biological distinction) and, via gender (or engenderiza-
tion), become men and women (a social distinction) by acquiring the cultur-
ally defined attributes of masculinity and femininity. Individuals then take on 
the appropriate roles and responsibilities for these categories (Sarin 
1997). The second main area of confusion arises because, even within this 
framework, gender has been assigned different meanings by different users in 
various contexts. Hawkesworth (1997) identifies interpretations that range 
from “attributes of individuals” to “interpersonal relations” and from 
“modes of social organization” to “questions of difference and domination.”

The confusion created by such various meanings clearly runs some risk of 
diluting the concept’s utility. Fortunately, this confusion has been resolved 
somewhat by a highlighting of the common thread that ties issues of the 
“psyche to social organization, social roles to cultural symbols, normative 
beliefs to the experience of the body and sexuality” (Hawkesworth 1997).

This shared thread, relationships, can be understood as two interrelated 
aspects: gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on
perceived differences between the sexes,\textsuperscript{5} and gender as a primary way of signifying relationships of power\textsuperscript{6} (Scott 1986). In other words, gender is both a key force or process that shapes or “socially constructs” relationships between men and women and a conceptual (or analytical) “torch” that points to or illuminates the distribution of power in those relationships.

Human diversity, more neglected than gender in discussions about SFM and related research, is an equally important concept. By human diversity, we refer not only to different ethnic groups but also to all the other significant dimensions of social and biological difference that crosscut gender and ethnicity, such as wealth, age, status, class, and caste. As J. Scott (cited in Hawkesworth 1997) suggests for gender, human diversity is a force that influences (constructs) social relationships on the basis of perceived differences, as a way of defining and understanding power relationships.

**The Relationship between Gender and Diversity**

Over the past decade, gender has received some much needed and long overdue attention in forestry and research circles. This attention, however, has also generated concern that it may be “competing” with other elements of human diversity. A feminist critique has emerged that the “multiple jeopardy characteristics of many women’s lives” (for example, race, economic status, and sexual orientation) raise serious concerns about generalizing gender as the primary analytical concept. Hawkesworth (1997) points out that if gender in reality “is always mediated by other factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, then an analytical framework that isolates gender … is seriously flawed.” This kind of oversimplification would only mask the complex and overlapping identities (and, in fact, the challenges or oppression) of numerous women and men. No individual can belong solely to a single group or category\textsuperscript{8} of people—everyone belongs to many different groups, including those based on ethnicity, wealth, or status. Various dimensions of diversity (or identity) can reinforce positions of relative empowerment or disempowerment. In other words, gender combines with other forms of diversity to establish roles, relationships, and power structures.

This kind of critique is vital to the discussion on gender and diversity. It does not diminish the validity of gender as an analytical tool but offers a clear warning that gender analysis could become a victim of its own success. Considering gender in isolation—thereby drawing attention away from other dimensions of diversity—would run counter to the very foundations of gender analysis: the awareness of power relationships. Such an imbalance in a research or forestry initiative, for example, would risk reducing equity as well as effectiveness in outcomes, because it would fail to seek and take into account the other critical differences among stakeholders.

This potential pitfall may be minimized by considering a twofold role for gender analysis. At the macro (or generic) level, gender is a concept that
raises awareness of human differences and prevents assumptions of homogeneity. It serves this role well because it is universally present as a key dimension. As Sandra Harding (cited in Hawkesworth 1997) explains, “The fact that there are class, race, and cultural differences between women and men is not, as some have thought, a reason to find gender difference either theoretically unimportant or politically irrelevant. In virtually every culture, gender difference is a pivotal way in which humans identify themselves as persons, organize social relations, and symbolize meaningful natural and social events and processes.” Its very pervasiveness “opens the door to other social dimensions” (Schmink 1999). By sensitizing researchers and other actors in SFM, gender offers opportunities to introduce dimensions of diversity that may have otherwise been overlooked or ignored.

At the micro (or site-specific) level, gender plays a practical role as one of many forms of diversity. Depending on the individual context, it may be more or less important than other dimensions of diversity. The relative importance (and indeed the relationship between the different forms of diversity) has to be assessed individually. This kind of evaluation requires willingness on the part of researchers, forest managers, and assessors to be flexible and to avoid preconceived notions about the key dimensions of human difference in particular contexts.

This critique of gender (or of gender analysis approaches in research or forestry) contributes a valid and useful concern. Taking the above twofold approach to the concept of gender enables researchers or forest managers to address the concern by viewing it within a broader context and thereby maintaining consistency with its roots in issues of equity and analysis for change.

What Is Gender and Diversity Analysis?

Gender and diversity analysis is more than analyzing data by gender or ethnic group; it is an approach or methodology in which “gender” and “diversity” become analytical variables throughout the research or program, from planning to implementation, analysis, and evaluation. Furthermore, it addresses both the structure (that is, the roles) and dynamics (that is, the relationships) of human systems. It involves an ongoing process of exploring a spectrum of interrelated questions from role-based to relationship-based. Questions include the following:

- What patterns of assigning meaning (beliefs) to events and things become evident between different groups? How do different groups value resources differently?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the different groups regarding forest management?
- Who controls access to resources? Who makes decisions about them?
• Who benefits from each activity or enterprise? Who bears any associated costs?
• What are the relationships among those roles? What are the power dynamics?
• How do relationships and roles influence the decisionmaking of the group regarding resources?

Many practitioners and theorists increasingly emphasize that the analysis should be focused on the relationships rather than the roles, except at a very descriptive level, because roles offer a “static” perspective on issues that are based on power relationships and thus are, by nature, dynamic (Young 1988).

This important insight is linked to the change over the last two decades in the development field from the women-in-development approach to the gender and diversity approach. This transition has improved understanding of the significant difference between changes in women’s condition versus changes in women’s position. Although women’s material situations may improve, their relative social positions (and thus, long-term well-being) do not necessarily improve. This explains why major gains in well-being cannot be brought about by working with only women or with any other individual group alone. Because well-being involves the social relationships between women and men, both women and men must be involved (Sarin 1997).

A related and particularly relevant issue is that equity or inequity in relationships between genders or groups of people is often deeply engrained in the institutions and sociocultural fabric of a society. Because inequities are legitimized in traditions, customary laws, and religious symbols, they may be powerfully rooted in the society as well as in the minds of the very people who are marginalized (personal communication with Barun Gurung, 1999). As Porro and Miyasaka Porro (1998) express, because we are all “born and raised in a gendered system of domination, both local men and women reproduce in their thoughts and practices the very system which imprisons them. Either resisting or being subordinated to it, women and men will in general express to the researcher the social experience they live.”

This phenomenon was often and diversely present in our Kalimantan experience. Some of the most poignant examples were expressed by women, concerning equity in decisionmaking. During an activity that reflected the distribution of rights of the different forest managers or stakeholders, the women were unanimous in their allocation of far greater “power” in decisions to the men, across all responsibilities. They also all expressed that this distribution of power was inequitable. Yet the women all agreed that, even though they did not like the current situation, it was impossible to imagine or describe a more equitable situation. Because they all were familiar with and accepted inequitable distribution in their community, they could not—at least initially—envision any other arrangement. Eventually, one woman offered an alternative vision that she saw as more equitable (her ideal situa-
tion), in which the women were far more involved in decisionmaking. Interestingly, however, even in the ideal, she allocated fewer rights to the women. She explained (and other women agreed) that women already have so many responsibilities—from tending rice fields and fruit gardens to household chores and childcare—and that increased decisionmaking power or rights would mean more tasks and responsibilities (such as attending meetings). Because she could not envision any of the traditional roles (and thus relationships) changing, any decisionmaking role would translate to additional burdens for women.

A final and important question is raised here about the nature of gender and diversity analysis. Because it is rooted in a movement for social transformation and is essentially political in nature, is gender and diversity analysis therefore also transformative about other relationships? Specifically, does it redefine concepts of subject–researcher relationships? Does it challenge traditional notions of objectivity? Certainly, gender and diversity analysis at least demands a certain degree of critical self-reflection by researchers in terms of their roles and relationships with the participants in (or subjects of) the research. This caveat—and the potential reflection on researchers’ own identities, influences, and biases—poses a challenge (welcome, or sometimes unwelcome) for research teams.

**SFM, Research, and HWB Assessments**

Natural resource use is based on decisions, actions, and behaviors rooted in overlapping social and natural systems (Schmink 1999). Within this framework, gender and diversity are relevant to SFM because stakeholders’ opportunities and constraints in decisionmaking (as well as resulting actions and behaviors) are determined by their different gender and diversity identities, which include their roles, knowledge, and responsibilities.

Because gender and diversity are critical in determining the choices that stakeholders make regarding forest management, understanding how these variables shape constraints, opportunities, interests, and needs can offer great insight for SFM research and management. In this way, gender and diversity analysis contributes to creating a more accurate and complete picture of a complex social landscape. Unless explicitly addressed, gender and diversity differences are often forgotten (for example, the historical tendency to base information and explanation on the views of dominant or most accessible groups, or assumptions of homogeneity regarding values, access, or benefits) (Edmunds 1998; Schmink 1999). In the CIFOR team’s HWB assessment experience in East Kalimantan, the most expedient assessment—one which drew on those individuals who were most accessible and willing to speak with us—would have indicated relative harmony and equity within the local community. The gender and diversity approach used in the stakeholder analysis revealed considerable perceptions of inequity in resources, benefits, and
access between the ethnic groups as well as some inequity between men and women—all of which have implications for forest management.

Research and forest management that better reflect the experiences of nondominant groups is more likely to lead to policies or programs that respect those different experiences and are targeted to more sustainable and equitable impacts. Accurate and complete assessments also lead to more effective and efficient outcomes of research, policy development, or forestry and development programs. Wilde and Vainio-Mattila (1995) illustrate this point with a negative example of a community forest project in which a group of local men was invited to a joint planning meeting with foresters. The men requested and received 3,000 hardwood seedlings to plant for future use in making furniture and in carving. The seedlings were planted, and all subsequently died. The reason for this lack of success was that, although the women were responsible for caring for seedlings, they had never been consulted or properly informed. At a subsequent meeting between the foresters and both men and women of the village, the women expressed their interest in fast-growing softwood species for fuel and fodder. When the foresters provided a mix of these and the hardwood species, the women successfully planted and tended the trees.

Sarin (1997) relates a parallel case in Gujarat, India, in which a group of local men formed a forest protection group that banned extractive uses. The group assumed that women could meet their responsibilities for providing family fuel and fodder from private lands. In reality, the rules forced local women to walk much farther than before and to steal firewood from other communities’ forests. This decision increased demands on labor and time, and as a result, many women were labeled as thieves. Only when the group’s strategies were renegotiated, taking into account the gender and diversity needs, did it begin to succeed. Unfortunately, such examples—where important differences are (at least initially) ignored and unsustainable outcomes emerge—abound in forestry. Especially given the increasingly scarce resources available for forestry research and management, the ability to increase effectiveness the first time around should be a powerful incentive to include this kind of analysis.

Within this discussion, a specific point must be made about the implications for equity, HWB, and SFM. HWB (a recognized pillar of SFM) is unevenly distributed across the globe. The current trend of the feminization of poverty offers a clear example. The majority of poor people in both the developed and the developing world are women, and poverty continues to grow faster among women (especially rural women) than among men (Ang-Lopez and others 1996). A gender and diversity approach tends to expose these “invisible” poor sectors of society and highlights the fact that well-being is not neutral or random. Recognition that well-being reflects patterns of gender and diversity creates better understanding and thus greater opportunity to address this inequity. Furthermore, it relates to the management
aspect of diversity, whereby gender and diversity affect use patterns and options; frequently, more disenfranchised groups are linked to the depletion of forest resources because of a cycle of poverty and degradation: “The lack of progress in the eradication of poverty and the increasing proportion of women among the poor is the single most important threat to the progress of development and sustainability” (Ang-Lopez and others 1996).

Finally, gender and diversity analysis in SFM research and HWB assessments is also relevant from an ethical and practical perspective because of the potential empowering effect of participation. Although it is not without its risks, the positive involvement of marginalized or nondominant stakeholders in research and assessment processes can have powerful effects of raising awareness of their own situations (“conscientization”), which is one of the cornerstones of empowerment.

HWB in SFM Assessments: Reflections on Methodologies, Issues, and Experiences

From the outset, researchers involved in CIFOR’s C&I methods tests and HWB assessments (at all sites) were requested to build gender and diversity analysis (or sensitivity) into their approaches, methods, and analyses. However, implementing this request in a responsive and adaptive way requires more than an add-on approach. “Building in” sensitivity to gender and diversity issues requires integration at the theoretical level, creating and trying methodologies that reflect those foundations, continually improving those methods in the field, and finally incorporating those methods into the analysis. In this section I explore these aspects, mainly based on my experiences in East Kalimantan,¹⁵ and highlight some key issues and approaches of broader relevance that emerge from that example.

Awareness and Approaches: Grounding Oneself

**Theoretical Frameworks.** The approach developed for methods tests, or assessments, depends on the theoretical grounding of the test team. (This term refers to the theoretical focus consciously adopted by the research team as well as team members’ unconscious assumptions or biases.) As already noted, gender and diversity analysis ranges across an entire spectrum. Whereas there are strong cases for the gender and diversity and power-based analyses, it also can be argued that other points on that spectrum can offer more or less appropriate approaches in different contexts or in different stages in the analysis. It may be useful for one research team to “choose to understand ‘gender awareness’ to mean simply making women more visible; others may focus on the differences between men and women’s roles, even considering power” (Porro and Miyasaka Porro 1998).

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A critical foundation of this process is that the team members develop initial and evolving clarity on where they see themselves in this spectrum, and why. Porro and Miyasaka Porro (1998), for example, established that for their assessment, it was more than simply necessary to understand the relations of power not only between loggers and peasants, but also between men and women, to address the inequalities involved in forest interventions … we realized that neither looking at women only or using gender just as one more variable was enough…. There was a need to understand how development and conservationist policies were influencing the relations of power between men and women, how such relations were affecting their roles in dealing with forests, within their communities, and with other forest actors.

In fact, the team set out in advance a series of criteria that the methods would have to meet to be considered gender-sensitive. This planning step undoubtedly contributed to the high quality of the assessment. The ambiguities that could have arisen from multiple or undefined theoretical bases were thus avoided. An ongoing critical exploration of this question by an assessment team during all phases of research not only improves the research outcome but also creates a continuous learning process for the researchers.

**Avoiding Pitfalls.** Two interrelated issues emerged as needing attention in the East Kalimantan assessment: (a) “embeddedness” and assumptions and (b) shortcuts and habits. As researchers, we carry with us perspectives and beliefs adopted during our own socialization process (which in most cases took place in predominantly male-dominated, hierarchical systems). Because we are “embedded” in our own context of socialization, we may make assumptions about assessment participants, stakeholders, or contexts that may ultimately limit our understanding. During stakeholder identification, for example, preconceived notions about women’s roles may prevent outside actors from perceiving the significance of women to certain aspects of forest management (for example, as bearers of significant knowledge about diverse species). As discussed earlier, some more marginalized stakeholders themselves may not easily realize their own role as important stakeholders in a forestry issue. Some women consider a role that sounds publicly important as beyond their understood domain—despite the fact that they may be the primary gatherers of fuelwood or important nontimber forest products, or keepers of other significant forest-related knowledge.

The related issue refers in part to the tendency to take shortcuts in problem-solving or make judgements by drawing on past experience or knowledge (heuristics). This tendency is not only natural but even can be expedient; yet at the same time (especially in combination with the other factors), it can lead to a lack of accuracy and dangerous generalizations (Bazerman 1998). It also refers
to the natural move toward “easier” or more ingrained methods, habits, or skills, even when they may not be in line with assessment or research goals or may not be consciously selected approaches. Porro and Miyasaka Porro (1998) expressed the view that, even though they established the strategy of using stakeholder separation at the level of focus groups and then conceptual stakeholder integration at the level of analysis, “there was a tendency to isolate women’s and men’s roles, expectations, and practices and only look for similarities and differences between their relations with the forest, without making the connection between them…. We needed to constantly remind ourselves that building gender sensitivity in a project aiming toward SFM demanded more than data about a sum of individuals disaggregated by sex.” They faced the common challenge that field realities (such as time constraints, complexity, and other pressures) are inclined to push gender and diversity analysis back to its more rudimentary forms in the absence of a conscious effort to maintain its integrity.

In East Kalimantan, even though our team had the specific goal of learning from participants, we became increasingly aware of our own embeddedness and assumptions as well as opportunities to fall back on shortcuts and habits. Great care was needed to avoid hearing most clearly only what we already anticipated to be true (or worse—even subtly conveying to local participants the notion of a “right” answer in the discussion). Within the team, a mixture of backgrounds (experience, ethnicity, and education) and the openness for some critical analysis and self-reflection offered opportunities to counter these tendencies. Having a researcher with training and experience in facilitation was useful in keeping the focus group discussions and other activities “directed” but not “led.” During stakeholder identification and other activities, triangulating responses with different groups of stakeholders was important in circumventing assumptions, as was discussing specifics and examples with community members (to the greatest degree comfort would allow). It also was very useful to use the facilitation technique of “feeding back” statements and responses as clarifying questions during the course of discussions or activities to allow participants to correct the researcher’s interpretations.

**Seeking Diversity.** The ongoing process of stakeholder identification and understanding the complexities of stakeholder diversity emerged as an important issue in East Kalimantan. Tempting as it was (for reasons of time and simplicity) to compartmentalize stakeholders early on (that is, categorizing them as representing or belonging to a certain category), seeking to continually understand the complexities of stakeholders’ diversity was crucial. Each stakeholder belongs to multiple groups or categories simultaneously and over time. These groups and categories can either compete with or reinforce each other (in terms of power relationships). Stakeholders’ identities, in other words, can be understood to exist as overlapping circles of identity. This perspective was important in East Kalimantan to the extent that it forced us to
confront the illusion of uniformity in our “homogeneous” groups. The “homogeneous” women’s group (all female, Christian, subsistence swidden agriculturists) was in fact far more complex than initially thought because of other factors, such as ethnicity and social status. These other identities were so divisive that they created considerable barriers to the participation of the Punan (the ethnic group of lower status) women. In an all-male series of gatherings, members of an ethnically mixed group appeared to be far less inhibited in their ability to exchange ideas; these men were accustomed to meetings because of their political or other leadership roles as village heads. Thus, among women, ethnically based status differences competed with the binding force of their common identity as agriculturists. However, among men, the identities of political figures reinforced the homogeneity of the group\textsuperscript{18} (even though even more distinct differences existed among the men in terms of occupation).

Recognizing that stakeholders’ power exists in relationship to each other and is historically based was critical for our analysis. The distribution of power between and within stakeholder groups referred to many things, from information flow to decisionmaking ability to the distribution of benefits. Tiani and others (1997) emphasize this point from their C&I methods testing experience in Cameroon. Anne Marie Tiani (personal communication, 1998) also says,

\begin{quote}
the analysis should not stop at the level of interactions among different stakeholders concerned by the management of the forest…. Rather it should penetrate into the internal structure of the group so as to determine the practices that could determine sustainability for management. For example, it should question, do people have an equitable distribution of the resources put at their disposal? Are some social groups marginalized regarding the resources? What is the reaction of these groups regarding the resources? Looking at this level of interaction … understanding power relations … can help clarify actions and behaviors.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Impacts and Social Change.} Gender and diversity analysis plays a critical role in shedding light on complex situations and highlighting issues or dynamics that may need resolution. It is also, at its core, oriented toward social change. (This concept is linked to the earlier discussion of benefits of a gendered approach—specifically, the empowerment aspect.) Rigorous gender and diversity analysis based on participation almost inevitably brings about some increased level of conscientization (which is a crucial element of change) for both local participants and researchers. This result may give pause to research teams who do not see themselves as active catalysts in the movement for social change.

Regardless of goals and comfort levels about catalyzing social change, once again, one priority is at least awareness of the implications of gender
and diversity analysis—that is, understanding that the assessment process will very likely have some impact regardless of intentions. People are affected by even apparently small actions or decisions by the research team; intentional or not, activities may reinforce or undermine the status quo. For example, the decision (conscious or by oversight) to not invite a marginalized group of stakeholders to a meeting reinforces the public belief that they are less important. Asking men to invite women to sessions, or inviting groups to settings where they realistically cannot participate (either physically or socially) produces the same result. In East Kalimantan, some local men were very surprised that we sought groups of women (as well as groups of men) to undertake the activity and even more surprised that women had anything to contribute to mapmaking.

Acknowledgement from outsiders, proof of knowledge or ability, and consciousness and confidence-raising within a group can initiate or add momentum to a process of social change. Groups of women discussing power relationships or common concerns across ethnic boundaries (a relatively new phenomenon in our East Kalimantan site) increases awareness and alliance-building. A discussion about local rights may, in the long run, fuel local confidence to act. The potential downside of a gender and diversity approach is that, whereas it may offer long-term change and benefit, it also can create difficulties and/or conflict within a community because of its disruption of the status quo. Although this disruption may ultimately be a necessary part of making long-term changes regarding equity and other issues, it may trigger backlash against those involved and accidentally reinforce marginalization.

**Assessment Tools: CIFOR’s Generic C&I Template**

Tools used in assessments, as with any intervention, are never entirely neutral. They may unintentionally favor some users over others or lead discussions and ideas in a particular direction. As such, it is always valuable to give the tools the same kind of careful consideration that the team undertakes regarding its theory and approach. Our field experience focused on methods that rely on or feed into CIFOR’s Generic C&I Template for SFM (1999). CIFOR scientists and partners tried to build gender and diversity sensitivity into the template by using gender-balanced interdisciplinary teams in its development and by expressly encouraging the teams to consider these issues. However, because gender and diversity are context dependent and because the C&I set is intended to be adapted to each site, the template cannot refer to specifics of gender and diversity. Thus, the template encourages and enables rather than “demands” the application of a gender and diversity approach.

As such, it is up to those who use the C&I template (and thus adapt it to local conditions) to recognize the openings and invitations set to incorporate
gender and diversity sensitivity. Where the template reads “local communities,” it is the responsibility of the assessor to consider the local stakeholder categories and groups as dynamic and complex institutions and to consider the issues of equity and power within and between the groups. In East Kalimantan, we tried to take the terms local people, community, and so forth, as symbols to represent the many groups and categories and the relationships between them as well as a cue for us to consider which of the many overlapping groups and categories were relevant to each case. For Indicator 3.2.1, “Mechanisms for sharing benefits are seen as fair by local communities,” we had to understand local communities as a generic term that needed substitutions by the multiple stakeholder groups and categories that we had assessed—Punan women; Punan men; Bugis traders; Kenyah Lepo’ Ke women; Kenyah Lepo’ Ke men; and within each of these categories, the subcategories of more and less politically connected, informed, and powerful.

Examining the C&I from this perspective, we were exposed to the dynamic between not only the timber company and the village at large but also between the subvillages, ethnic groups, religions, and genders. In fact, these dynamics turned out to be very relevant; access to benefits and communication with the company varied considerably between these overlapping groups. They appeared ultimately to be dominated not only by one ethnicity but also by a subvillage, one of the religious groups within it, and particularly by the men in that group. As a result, one specific subgroup had different opportunities and constraints in its decisionmaking framework regarding resources because it had far more access to information and assistance from the local timber company in the form of seeds and other agricultural inputs. This finding reinforces the crucial need for a stakeholder identification process that is thorough and inclusive and that acknowledges the tensions and complexities of forest situations.

One potential challenge to this kind of process is that most “assessors” (that is, researchers or formal forest managers), like most people, have been socialized to live in a male-centered, hierarchical world; they are embedded in it. Combined with the other barriers to participation in C&I adaptation and assessment by less visible groups, this socialization often leads to assessors’ focusing on the more dominant (often male) groups. Either homogeneity is assumed, or the dominant groups’ features are projected onto the less dominant groups. To avoid or minimize this situation, the assessors can undertake awareness-raising activities for themselves as a part of designing their activities, such as reading background materials, participating in team discussions (for example, based on a few questions about their own professional and personal experiences with gender and diversity, their own potential preconceptions, and how the team will recognize and address biases), and involving a gender and diversity resource person early on. A good C&I adaptation and assessment process offers opportunities for consciousness-raising among all participants.
Assessment Approaches: Challenges and Strategies for Accessing Local People’s Participation

The assessment process, which strives for accuracy and completeness, relies on gender and diversity analysis to guide it in its early stages of stakeholder identification as well as in its actual assessment phases. One major challenge in East Kalimantan was that the very people it was most important to access or communicate with during these phases were often the most difficult to reach. By recognizing such challenges in advance, they can be better anticipated and addressed.

Challenges. Many factors can limit the effective participation of less dominant subsections of a community in research or assessment activities. They include many of the basic research biases (see Sutherland 1994), such as

- a _likeness bias_, whereby researchers focus on those groups that most resemble themselves (for example, in gender, culture, or level of education);
- an _off-the-beaten-track bias_, whereby researchers are reluctant to go far afield to meet with people; and
- a _language bias_, whereby researchers fail to communicate in the native language of the group.

Social or cultural norms of certain groups may also limit their speaking out in the presence of certain other groups, the most common example of which is women in the presence of men. In Long Loreh, East Kalimantan, only men would speak in a mixed-gender discussion group (whether ethnically homogeneous or heterogeneous). In an all-woman group, the women of the dominant ethnic groups spoke, and the Punan women spoke extremely rarely. In a group of all Punan women, however, women who did not speak in a mixed women’s group spoke so energetically that the researchers barely had a chance to ask questions. In circumstances such as these, mixed-gender or mixed-ethnicity discussions, stakeholders may feel that they do not have the knowledge, ability, or right to contribute. Their participation may be actively or subtly discouraged or undervalued by others; they may risk violating social or cultural principles and expose themselves to risk of retribution by the community through participation.

Cultural or social factors, in the form of responsibilities and workload, also can limit women’s and other groups’ abilities to participate. In Long Loreh, the Punan worked in upland rice fields (_ladang_) that were farther from the village than those of other ethnic groups, and they worked them later in the season; both of these factors limited their accessibility for any village-based research. Commonly, local women have more responsibilities and less free time than men and thus have less time to be involved in research. Even when they are involved, they may still be at least partly involved with their children, either caregiving or having children drop in and hang on them (lit-
erally), so they are required to divide their attention in a way that is not necessary for male participants.\(^\text{25}\)

The experience in Long Loreh also highlighted the extent to which some groups of people simultaneously have multiple characteristics (or sometimes identities) that overlap in a manner that reinforces distance from the research process.\(^\text{26}\) The elderly, for example, often spoke only local languages, and little or no Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language); many had no formal education, and thus were illiterate; they tended to be shyer with outsiders; and were generally less mobile than the other individuals. Whereas a single identity or characteristic that distances a stakeholder from the research process may be addressed fairly readily, multiple “reinforcing identities” make it much more difficult. In fact, the elderly attended far fewer discussions than others and participated far less when they did. Our research team tried to include as many elderly people as possible by, for example, ensuring that elderly participants were always accompanied by a trusted relative or friend for support and translation, focusing on verbal or drawing methods and activities, and trying to keep activities informal and relaxed. Time and resources permitting, we could have visited elderly people in their homes and used more verbal activities, such as storytelling. As our experience revealed, unless such challenges are noted and efforts are made to proactively address those challenges early in the study, the risk that a group of people—in this case, a generation—with unique knowledge and experience will be overlooked is significant.

Researchers carrying out the methods tests in other sites encountered several challenges to accessing certain groups of people. For example, Anne Marie Tiani notes that in the Cameroonian C&I tests, stakeholders outside the local village were reticent to participate because much of the wood they used was cut illegally (personal communication, 1998). She also observed a more “structural” problem there in terms of accessing diversity. Although the researchers attempted to group equal numbers of women and men within the different stakeholder groups (as was recommended by the methods), those stakeholder groups were (sensibly) often organized by occupation, and the occupations tended to be heavily weighted by gender. The *ouvriers de scieries* (sawmill workers) group consisted of 24 men and only 4 women; the carpenters group was made up of 30 men, and no women; the sellers group numbered 30 women, with no men. Thus, some stakeholder groups, almost by definition, preclude representativeness of gender within the groups; in such cases, representativeness has to be sought across groups.

**Strategies.** In terms of accessing and “hearing” women, men, and people of diverse identities, one important approach is to seek equality of outcome (that is, the outcome of participation), not identical opportunity to participate.\(^\text{27}\) In other words, it is the ultimate quality of the participation that should be equitable; the opportunity to participate (that is, the form and forum for participation) need not be identical or shared among all stakeholders simulta-
neously. In Long Loreh, for example, because of certain existing differences or barriers among the local peoples, it would not have been effective or wise to always invite men and women or people of different ethnic groups in equal numbers to the same meetings. Instead, we attempted to design and conduct the research and meetings in such a way that all stakeholders could participate as much as they wanted and in a safe environment, allowing them not only to contribute to the research but also, ideally, to gain something from the process. In many cases, we held discussions in single-gender groups or within (as opposed to across) ethnic groups.

Depending on the context and goals of the research or assessment, in some cases, it would be very appropriate to start with such a “homogeneous groups” approach and then move toward or iterate more processes with multiple stakeholders. Such would be the case, for example, in action research or management processes in which one or more groups lack the confidence or capacity to express themselves to other groups. The homogeneous group phase can be used to build capacity and confidence within those groups (and to build openness to listening in the others) before the different groups come together. Even in less action-oriented assessments or research, such a process of allowing the smaller homogeneous groups to gain confidence or clarity on the issues internally can be useful in laying the foundation for a meaningful, shared discussion or critique when a synthesis of the assessment or research is “returned” to the community.

Several well-documented strategies are used to increase the ability of less dominant groups to participate effectively in research such as HWB assessments. In terms of characteristics for success, it seems important that research teams should

- be gender balanced, have local language skills, and know local protocol and
- include a skilled facilitator to conduct the participatory sessions28 (and have someone else take notes or listen).

In terms of approaches and actions, the assessors should

- invite women and other marginalized groups directly, not by proxy;
- go to the participant (not vice versa);
- avoid rushing through explanations of why the research may be relevant to different groups;
- understand that all groups will not act or interact in a similar way or at a similar pace;
- recognize that accessing the input of some groups may require more time than others, and plan for longer travel times, more cancellations, and slower meetings;
- be flexible and responsive with time, place, and pace of the meetings as well as with distractions, such as the presence of children or the participant’s need to simultaneously carry out other tasks;
be aware of group dynamics, and adjust processes as needed;
understand the risks of breaching the status quo to the participants, and respect their right to be silent;
use pictures, drawings, or other creative means as often as possible when literacy may be an issue for any of the participants;29 and
acknowledge the value of people’s contributions both before and after discussions.

In our experience (and, it seems, in that of most other assessors), an underlying principle emerged that links all of the above strategies: flexibility and creativity in everything. In Long Loreh, when the Punan and Merap villagers (understandably) had no desire to return to their fields on the weekend, we tried to rework the transect walk method so it could be carried out indoors from memory. Even though an ideal participatory mapping scenario involves participants doing all their own drawing, when the women lacked the confidence to draw, I agreed to do a good part of the drawing while they directed me. (The men, who were more confident, did it themselves.) An earlier Indonesian C&I methods test team noted the same approach in their trials: “We realized that there was no standard strategy or approach even for the implementation of the same method” (Sardjono and others 1997; personal communication from Mustofa Agung Sardjono, 1998). They describe slightly different situations that required researchers to switch from house meetings to going with villagers to the forest or rice field. For example, when the team realized that it was going to be very difficult to get women to attend a group meeting because meetings and decisionmaking were considered the responsibility of the men, the team approached meetings another way. They instead invited the local women’s church organization to prepare food and drinks for a men’s meeting. This gathering gave the female researcher an opportunity to join the women, interact about the research, and initiate research topic discussions. This experience raised the women’s comfort levels and confidence in the research process, and they became more willing to participate in meetings.

Conclusions

From a personal perspective, the most challenging and valuable part of the methods testing experience was facilitating the participatory research sessions. Taking on the role of facilitator means putting the theory of gender and diversity analysis into action. Discussion groups, focus groups, and mapping groups are microcosms that reflect all the tensions and complexities of gender and diversity in forest management writ large. In a group discussion with local peoples, especially when subject to outside pressure, it
An Excerpt from the Long Loreh Field Report

In retrospect, having taken the approach outlined in this chapter, the team felt generally satisfied with gender and diversity in terms of accessing participants—that is, people being present at sessions—and the balance of representation of different groups. The main weakness was the relatively low participation of members of the Punan communities, because we were never able to entirely overcome some of the overlapping barriers to participation. Some of these barriers may never be satisfactorily overcome without a much longer-term relationship and time to build trust. An additional note is that over the course of the human well-being assessment, we saw many of the same people participating again and again. This fact was positive in the sense that those people were interested in the issues and the process, but less than ideal in the sense that a small percentage of the total local population participated.

In terms of accessing input—that is, the degree to which all those involved in the research actually engaged themselves in discussions and were heard—the ideal would have been to have much more balanced participation and more people engaged from the less dominant groups, such as the elderly. Although the group-based methods both raised consciousness and allowed us to interact with many people in a short time, they also had some significant limitations. In the context of East Kalimantan culture, for example, it seemed especially difficult to create the kind of “space” needed in group discussions to allow some people to speak. Ideally, more one-on-one follow-up with people would be necessary to balance that limitation.

In summary, any success we experienced was most likely based on several linked elements. The effort to be very aware of the theoretical grounding was important, as was a continuous check regarding assumptions, biases, and shortcuts. Considering stakeholder identification to be an ongoing process allowed an acceptable level of complexity and accuracy in our understanding of local relations and dynamics. Trying to be flexible, creative, perceptive, and willing to abandon set plans enabled us to respond to situations and ultimately involve far more people than otherwise would have been the case. These strategies, as basic as they are, consistently seemed to be relevant in the field and, in retrospect, appear to have been appropriate for resolving the challenges we faced. The major limitation was the lack of time. A tight time schedule restricted our ability to pursue strategies more thoroughly, and to continue to learn and adapt. Most important, it also limited our ability to build trust in the research process and to offer local peoples the opportunity to take more legitimate ownership of the process.
would be relatively easy for a facilitator to “hear” only what he or she wants to hear about values or practices. It would be easy in difficult moments of a session to overlook people or to brush aside their opinions when they “make the process difficult” (for the facilitator, researcher, or assessor), for example, by voicing dissenting views or by having different needs for ensuring their participation. It would be easy to neglect the impact of a research process on local peoples, because it would make for simpler planning and implementation.

Extending this notion from research to the level of forest management, it would be easy (at least in the short term) to exclude local peoples from formal forest management planning in those many cases where they might have conflicting interests with other stakeholders. In fact, it would be easy to ignore gender and diversity issues in SFM, because to include them means challenging firmly held perspectives and perceptions and opening up planning processes.

Yet despite the perception of “ease” associated (at least temporarily) with ignoring gender and diversity at any level, such an approach also fundamentally minimizes learning, understanding, and potentially equity and positive change—especially for marginalized stakeholders. Researchers, facilitators, and formal forest managers are part of the matrix of gender and human diversity; choosing to ignore rather than acknowledge and address our places (as well as those of other stakeholders) in that matrix heavily influences the outcomes of our research, assessment, and actions.

Opening research and forest assessment and management to incorporate gender and diversity approaches is not easy, but it is possible, and it is desirable. The benefits and opportunities that emerge from taking on this challenge are necessary for maintaining multiple and diverse peoples and forests over the long term. If we acknowledge and address power issues through gender and diversity approaches, we may face multiple hurdles—but we also enable rigorous and insightful analysis of complex situations, as well as challenges to and opportunities for SFM. And in doing so, we may create the beginnings of processes that can positively shift an inequitable and unsustainable status quo.

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Endnotes


2. In some instances, individuals are in fact born into a third biological category that combines both male and female characteristics: hermaphrodites. Although awareness is increasing about this group of individuals—which is quite diverse in terms of ultimate social identities and offers many important insights into this issue area—for the sake of simplicity, we focus on only male and female categories.

3. Harding offers a useful perspective that “feminists must theorise gender, conceiving of it as: an analytic category with which humans think about and organise their social activity rather than as a natural consequence of sex difference, or even merely as a social variable assigned to individual people in different ways from culture to culture” (cited in Hawkesworth 1997). The stress on the need to theorize is key, as is the emphatically made point that gender should not be conceived of as a causal force.

4. By constitutive, Scott means that gender “operates in multiple fields including institutions and organizations, as well as culturally available symbols and subjective identity” (cited in Hawkesworth 1997).

5. The question of the differences between the sexes is clearly a highly debated topic. In this chapter, I reject the notion of “biological determinism,” or “essentialism.” In other words, I do “not espouse [the idea] that all women share characteristics of nurturance, or lack of aggression; nor assume homogeneity in aims, etc., as a matter of essence…. It starts from the premise that very slight biological differences have been reinforced socially to create the appearance of considerable (almost unbridgeable) differences between men and women” (Young 1988).

6. Kanchan Mathur (cited in Sarin 1997) makes the poignant remark that “now, with the extensive use of amniocentesis to abort female foetuses, these socially constructed differences have started affecting females even before birth.”

7. As one form of difference, gender can be understood to be subsumed within human diversity, as outlined in the following section. However, its ubiquity as a key (sometimes the key) form of difference in relations and roles among people creates significant value in also addressing it independently.

8. I refer to both groups of people (which can denote either a sense of membership to the group by its members or some political potential) and broader categories (which denote some shared, but not necessarily internally recognized, characteristic or position). Although the distinction can be important, because both concepts were equally valid within the context of the assessment, I refer to them alternately, without differentiation.

9. This analysis should be undertaken at many levels. As Mathur points out, gender roles “are embedded in four major social institutions: the household, the community, the market, and the state.” These institutions define who gets “included or excluded, who has access to decision-making and resources, what gets done or is not done and who sets the rules … as institutions are the sites for the production, distribution, and exchange of resources, it is important to know how they structure women’s subordination and resourcelessness” (cited in Sarin 1997).

10. This transition also can be understood to be continuing in the current human diversity or stakeholder differentiation approaches, as espoused in this chapter.
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11. One such example is an area in the eastern Himalayas where the women, despite having extensive knowledge of economically valuable crop genetic resources, have very little influence in decisionmaking about crop production (personal communication from Barun Gurung, 1999). Customary laws—such as those that deny property rights to women—reinforce those inequities as part of the cultural routine, not only for those men who benefit but also for the women who are marginalized by them.

12. Incidentally, the men also allocated greater power to the men than to the women, but they perceived the gap to be far less than that expressed by the women.

13. Schmink (1999) rightly highlights a point that social research must constantly address: that gender and diversity analysis can offer opportunities for innovative alliance-building for resource management. She relates that “often women’s responsibility for family subsistence and health means they focus more on livelihood systems and on the environment as opposed to the market-oriented perspective of men.” From a conservation perspective, local women may be seen as key allies in conservation.

14. Sarin (1997) describes gender and diversity issues being ignored at the expense of sustainability at the household level in development: “Experience has disproved the projections of development pundits who believed in the ‘trickle-down theory.’ The assumption that targeting development interventions at male heads of households would equally benefit other household members, particularly women, has not been validated in practice.”

15. See Chapter 4 for additional contextual information on a similar system in East Kalimantan and Chapters 5, 8, 12, and 16 for analyses from West Kalimantan.

16. For example, the researcher can follow up discussion points with a question such as, “Just so I am sure I understand what you are saying, I think I heard you say [feedback summary of statement/ideas]; what parts of that did I get right? What parts can you correct me on?” or “Am I right in understanding you to be saying [feedback summary of statement/ideas]?” (Note that the latter example, because it is a yes-or-no question, may be less effective because it invites more instant agreement and less thought than the former).

17. To meet this challenge, I tried always to be aware of the many concurrent identities of the people I was working with and talking to, as well as my own. When talking to a key informant, for example, if I approach her because she is a swidden agriculturist, I also seek as much information as possible about her other identities so that I can better understand who else she might “represent.” Is she old or young? Rich or poor? Politically connected or politically marginalized? Is she typical of the group to which I have tentatively assigned her or is she, for example, a “poor” agriculturist who has far greater access to resources because of links with outside actors who donate seeds and tools?

18. This case highlights that identity is also intertwined with skills and opportunities to reinforce or develop those skills, not only because the men have the identities of similar roles (“political” figures) but because they had had the opportunity to develop similar skills and confidence in discussing their opinions in meetings through their political roles and tasks.

19. As described in the Introduction, the assessment was intended to generate insights into well-being and to assess the tools and methods themselves.

20. The Generic C&I Template (CIFOR 1999) from the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) is designed as a monitoring tool to assist in assessing sustainability—including human well-being—at the (commercial) forest management
unit level (for more information, see Annex 1 in the Introduction and relevant discussion in the Introduction). CIFOR has also undertaken work on criteria and indicators for sustainable community-managed forest landscapes (see also Burford de Oliveira 1999; Burford de Oliveira and others 2000; Ritchie and others 2000).

21. References to “local people” and “communities” throughout the C&I set are contextualized by text on the significance of stakeholder diversity and analysis (Colfer and others 1999c).

22. In my opinion, using local peoples (plural) rather than local people would be more encouraging to assessors to consider the human diversity present in each site.

23. In this case we refer to assessors because, in accordance with CIFOR’s Generic C&I Template, we are considering “outside” (non-community-based) parties undertaking (participatory) human well-being assessment for a Forest Management Unit. In co-management (or community management) assessment, community members would themselves take on the role of (self-) assessors by using criteria and indicators adapted to their context.

24. This case has a Catch-22, however. Where awareness of gender and diversity sensitivity is low—and thus where the potential consciousness-raising aspects of the C&I adaptation process would be most needed—the fundamental gender and diversity sensitivity processes that would allow for such insights are unlikely to be recognized or in place.

25. At least two of the CIFOR test teams (Porro and Miyasaka Porro, McDougall) specifically reported on this phenomenon as a factor in their CIFOR social C&I methods assessments.

26. Other methods testers in East Kalimantan (Sardjono and others 1997) divided stakeholders by age but apparently drew the line between youth and adult and did not specify the elderly (thereby creating an opportunity for this group to be overlooked in the process).

27. Although this approach may sound counterintuitive—especially in the current climate of appreciation for equal opportunity in other arenas (such as gender and organizational development)—it is an important perspective. Equal opportunity is most often interpreted to mean “the same opportunity,” that is, in which identical opportunities are given to all players. This interpretation assumes that all players face the same constraints to acting on that opportunity. Kanchan Mathur (cited in Sarin 1997) alludes to the weakness of this assumption with an analogy of a fox and a crane to which food is offered on the same plate. The different access of the two creatures, despite apparently equal opportunity, is obvious. An approach of equality of outcome tries to overcome access differences by emphasizing the ultimate quality of the participation based on its outcome. In the analogy, the fox and the crane may be offered different foods on separate and different plates, thus addressing their individual needs and constraints.

28. This strategy, as well as sensitivity to the context and goals, is critical because of its major role in influencing the empowering and disempowering effects of discussions on local peoples.

29. For example, to improve the ownership of the discussion in a focus group with low literacy, our discussion notes ended up being a shared wall full of stick figures.