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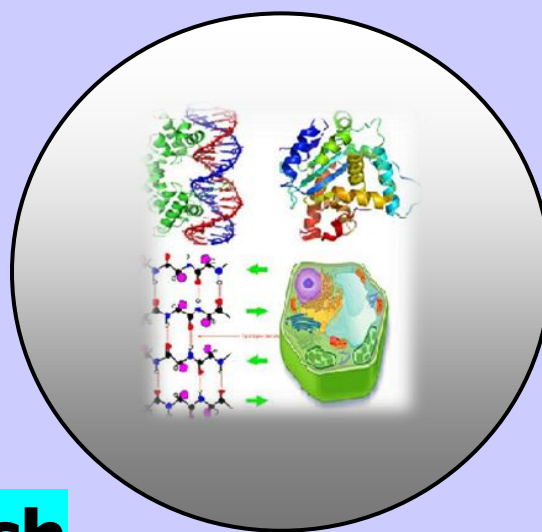
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Natural Resource Use Conflicts: Gender Opportunities and Constraints in Conflict Management: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Natural resources conflicts arise due to disagreements or inequitable access to, control and use of natural resources. Competition for natural resources and lack of formal rules and regulations to access natural resources can cause conflict. The causes of natural resources conflicts can be divided into different types; however this review identified four major causes; Rapid population growth, resource depletion, unequal resource access and political instability. Countries have high value resources like timber, diamonds, gold; other minerals and oil which are most susceptible for conflict. Since most of these resources are non-renewable and can be exhausted when not be managed in sustainably. Insuring of the involvement of gender in natural resource use conflict management can reduce resource depletion. However, the participation of women in natural resources conflict management issue might be limited by different factors such us gender inequality expressed in less exposure to new technology and low participation in natural resource related decision-making. Strong encouragement and skill enhancement can strengthen women participation in conflict resolution. Encouragement woman is crucial at all levels of society from grass root to national leadership. Full participation of women at all levels; particularly in decision-making related to natural resource issue is very important. Promoting gender equality in the policies to enhance natural resource management and resolve when conflicts arise and protect at early stages. Institutions need to ensure that women's and men's concerns and experiences are important to contribute in the reduction of natural resource use conflicts.

Key words: Conflict, Gender, Management and Natural Resources.

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in natural resources are caused by disagreements over access to, control and use of natural resources. People have different uses for resources such as forests, water, pastures and land for other uses, or want to manage them in different ways. Disagreements arise when these interests and needs are not equitable. There is competition over material goods, ecosystem services, economic benefits, property or power; people believe that their needs cannot be met; their values, needs or interests are under threat. Therefore such thoughts can also lead to conflict (FAO, 2000). The misuse of natural resources and related environmental tensions can become significant causes of conflict. Countries have high value natural resources like timber, diamonds, gold; several other minerals and oil which are most susceptible for conflict. Since most of these resources are non-renewable and can exhaust when they are not wisely used and managed in sustainable manner. The major driving forces for the depletion of these resources are population pressure and political instability. When the global population continues to increase, and the demand for resources continues to grow, there is significant potential for conflicts over natural resources. Demographic pressure and urbanization, other land use changes, inequitable access to and shortage of land, and resource depletion are widely predicted to worsen, with profound effects on the stability of both rural and urban settings (UNEP, 2006; UNIFTPA, 2012). The impacts of conflict are finally war and other violent. The impact has additional burden on women on top of their responsibility for children other home issues, the aged, the disabled and the sick, in especially different and deprived circumstances (Gachukia, 2009). Searching for food, water and energy sources (e.g. fuel), in such circumstances becomes risky; and endangered. These experiences and political vulnerability justify involvement of women's and equip them for their roles in conflict management. It contributes to the creation, management and sustenance of the culture of peace. Conflict management is embedded in a number of processes that help establish and maintain mutually agreeable principles and practices for managing natural resources. This writing was intended to create better understanding of causes of conflict in natural resources and enhance understanding the challenges and opportunities of women in conflict management.

Causes of Conflict in Natural Resources

Rapid population growth

In developing countries a large population growth is the main cause for conflict in natural resources thereby increasing environmental problems, pressure over resources and decreases availability of resources (SRO-EA, 2012). These situations have lead to resource scarcity and conflict between communities. As land, water and other natural resources become scarce, competition for these vital resources increases within societies. This became intense in developing countries which are mostly dependent on natural resources. The reduction of life-supporting resources per person that comes with population growth is threatening the living standards of millions of people below the survival level (EU-UN partnership, 2012). Access to land and shortage of water resource for irrigation, drinking and other uses are one of the key sources of social tension. According to Brown (2009) increasing world population reduced the arable land from 0.23 hectares in 1950 to 0.10 hectares in 2007. This ongoing shrinkage of cultivation land per person makes it difficult for the world's farmers to feed the 70 million people added to world population each year.

The reduction of cultivation land can affect the survival of human societies and it increases the tensions within societies. High level of tension for cropland among communities can lead to conflict (Brown, 2009).

Africa has fastest growing populations and is an area of spreading conflict. In Sudan, 2 million people have died and over 4 million have been displaced in the long-standing conflict of more than 20 years between the Muslim north and the Christian south (Brown, 2009). In Nigeria, due to high number of population the common resources were degraded and the land use type was converting grassland and cropland into desert. The competition for land, amplified by religious differences and combined with a large number of frustrated young men with guns, has created a volatile and violent situation where finally, in mid-2004, the government imposed emergency rule. According to Brown's (2009) finding in 1950, Rwanda's population was 2.4 however after 43 years, it had to 7.5 million. As a result of high population growth the demand for food, firewood and need of land resources became more than double. In 1991 the demand for forest resources had been double and this conditions lead to trees disappeared and enforced to use straw and crop residues for cooking. Eventually it reduces land fertility as a result of less organic matter accumulation. When the fertility of the land deteriorated, there was not enough food for the growing population and they would shift to new land for cropping (Brown, 2009).

Table 1. Civil wars and internal unrest fuelled by natural resources use.

Country	Resources
Afghanistan	Gems, timber, opium
Angola	Oil, diamonds
Burma	Timber, tin, gems, opium
Cambodia	Timber, gems
Colombia	Oil, gold, coca, timber, emeralds
Congo, Dem Rep	Copper, coltan, diamonds, gold, cobalt, timber, tin
Cote d'Ivoire	Diamonds, cocoa, cotton
Indonesia	Timber, natural gas, Copper, gold, timber
Liberia	Timber, diamonds, iron, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber, gold
Peru	Coca
Senegal	Timber, cashew nuts
Sierra Leon	Diamonds, cocoa, coffee
Somalia	Fish, charcoal
Sudan	Oil

Source: UNEP, 2009

This is the major limitation for sustainable natural resources management and increases environmental crises. Many other African countries, largely rural in nature, are on a demographic pressure. Tanzania's population of 40 million in 2007 is projected to increase to 85 million by 2050 (Brown, 2009). In similar projection the population of Democratic Republic of the Congo will triple from 63 million to 187 million by 2050. This implies high demographic pressure and subsequent potential for resource use conflict unless early controlled.

According to UNEP (2009) most frequent conflicts have been raised in Liberia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo by the exploitation of natural resources (Table 1).

Resource depletion as a cause for conflict

As population and economic growth increase demand increases for scarce resources and the potential for conflict increases. Resource depletion, environmental degradation and climate change pose fundamental threats to human security. Separately or in combination with other factors, they can destabilize livelihoods, negatively affecting ecosystems, and undermine peace and development (Warner, 2000 and World Bank, 2011). Where local and national institutions lack the capacity to resolve disputes may arise over the degradation or depletion of resources, violent conflict can emerge. Competition for scarce resources has always been a catalyst for conflict between different rural groups (UNEP, 2007; USIP 2007).

Due to excessive consumption of both renewable and non renewable resources (minerals of the soil by cropping or soil erosion or other natural events, loss fertility of soil land gradually deteriorates. It follows that quality and quantity of water resources for irrigation as well as for drinking and precious metals and minerals diminish (AMIS, 2006; UN DPA and UNEP, 2015). Subsequently it results in drought as land deteriorates resulting in many nutrients of the top soil destroyed and soil fertility is lost. As a result of uninterrupted cropping, the cycling of soil mineral nutrients is greatly reduced. In general, these anthropogenic activities have deteriorated agricultural land and ultimately cause the loss of national economy.

Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands can be also one areas of natural resources use conflict. There is a need to look into international waters balanced utilization on rational bases negotiating and in agreement between countries in which such resources are found. This may need bilateral and multilateral agreements between users of the resources. Some lakes are multinational nature expanding between different countries. Since the growth rate of population and available water resources are not balanced; as a result, there are disagreement over the allocation of water resources regarding International Rivers and other natural resources. Lack of bilateral and multilateral agreement may cause conflict because of water resource depletion (Brwon, 2009; Mwanika, 2010).

Unequal resource access

Findings reported historical and present day conflicts are raised due to unequal resource distribution (USIP, 2007). This is more intense particularly in the countries which have weak governance occurs as a result of low levels of transparency, accountability, corruption and poor resource management. For example, the desire for diamond and oil resources has been the root of many armed conflicts in Africa. Reports produced by FAO (2007) and Transparency International (2011), investigated that in more than 61 countries weak governance has increased the likelihood of corruption in land occupancy and administration, intensifying the impact of pressures on land use, agriculture and food security worldwide.

Buckles (1999) reported that in many developing countries there are unequal resource distribution between farmers, investors, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) due to deficient land governance and a high influence of corruption.

Lack of accountability and transparency rises the risk of corruption and it can cause lose of cultural and economic benefits of their own land resources by communities (UN, 2011). In Colombia 52% of farm land is occupied by 1.15% of landowners (Budden and Gomez, 2014).

In the same country more than 4 million internationally displaced people who have lost access to about 7 million hectares were due to conflict fueled by corruption and deficient land governance (Budden and Gomez, 2014). In developing countries the access to natural resources largely depends on the power and landownership and in this way the rights of women to access the resource often discriminate. This unequal distribution of rights of ownership, access and use of natural resources is a potential source of conflict.

Table 2. Natural Resource Related Conflicts in Darfur (1930 to 2000).

No.	Tribal groups involved	Main cause of conflict
1	Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Medoub	Grazing and water rights
2	Kababish, Medoub and Zyadiya	Grazing and water rights
3	Rezeigat, Baggara and Dinka	Grazing and water rights
4	Beni Helba, Zyadiya and Mahriya	Grazing and water rights
5	Northern Rezeigat (Abbala) and Dago	Grazing and water rights
6	N Rezeigat (Abbala) and Bargo	Grazing and water rights
7	N Rezeigat and Gimir	Grazing and water rights
8	N Rezeigat and Fur	Grazing and water rights
9	N Rezeigat (Abbala) and Bargo	Grazing and water rights
10	Kababish, Berti and Ziyadiya	Grazing and water rights
11	Rezeigat, Baggara and Dinka	Grazing and water rights
12	N Rezeigat and Beni Helba	Grazing and water rights
13	Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Medoub	Grazing and water rights
14	Rezeigat and Mysseriya	Grazing and water rights
15	Kababish, Berti and Medoub	Grazing and water rights
16	Rezeigat and Mysseriya	Grazing and water rights
17	Taaisha and Gimir	Land
18	Bargo and Rezeigat	Grazing and water rights
19	Zaghawa and Maalia	Land
20	Zaghawa and Marareit	Grazing and water rights
21	Zaghawa and Beni Hussein	Grazing and water rights
22	Zaghawa, Mima and Birgid	Grazing and water rights
23	Zaghawa and Birgid	Grazing and water rights
24	Zaghawa and Birgid	Grazing and water rights
25	Fur and Turgum	Land
26	Zaghawa and Arab	Grazing and water rights
27	Masalit and Arab	Grazing and water rights
28	Zaghawa and Rezeigat	Power and politics
29	Kababish Arabs and Midoub	Grazing and water rights

Source: AMIS, 2006

Political instability

Political instability is one of the main causes of conflict in most developing countries; either the resources are scarce or abundant UNEP (2007). It can affect the governance structure, country economy such as the banking system, national oil-production facilities and infrastructures that depend on government control.

Population growth, environmental degradation and unequal resource distribution can combine to weaken an already unstable government's capacity to address the needs of the population and thus increases conflicts. Conflicts caused by political instability that turn into violent often result in destruction of the environment and infrastructure increasing the scarcity of resources, which in turn increases the potential for violent conflicts over the scarce resources. In Sudan for most of the past fifty years major conflict were caused by political instability (Table2). Resources captured by powerful groups' leads to an increase in the wealth gap between the selected and minor groups (USIP, 2007). This gap not only causes injustices among the local population but also increases the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged people and groups, children and women. Disagreement over control and distribution of natural resources, weak governance, and economic instability can increase violent. Even when natural resources are abundant, lack of transparency, corruption and generally political instability can threaten the fragile balance of peace (UNEP, 2009).

Constraints on women's in conflict management

Challenges arising from gender inequality

Women are affected differently from men during natural resource use conflict. Women are exposed easily to violence which seriously demoralizes their human rights and affects their opportunities to participate in conflict resolution (Agbajobi, 2010). Gender based inequalities often result in women's limited access to assets, which generates implications for natural resources conservation. Gender differences exist in rights and access to natural resources, including land, trees, water and animals. When compared men with women; women have less land –use rights than men (Rocheleau and Edmunds 1997). The way of using land-resources indicates gender differences. For example, women may collect non-woody parts of the tree, however men may have rights and power to cut and harvest trees. Sometimes women may lose their right of land ownership during divorce (Buckles 1999; World Bank 2010). Women face a variety of gender based constraints as farmers and managers of natural resources. In many societies discrimination and some social practices restrict women's rights to land. Women generally receive the most marginal lands. Insecure land tenure reduces rural women's incentives to improve natural resources management practices and conservation (Kikhi and Kikhi, 2011). Poor rural women lacking secure land tenure often depend on common property resources for fuel wood, fodder, and food. The depletion of common property resources initiates a severe threat to the livelihoods and food security of poor rural women and men. Women household heads remain at a particular disadvantage in terms of access to natural resources (Kikhi and Kikhi, 2011). That means, gendered relations and responsibilities in terms of natural resources are dynamic and subject to change.

Less exposure to new technology

Women have less access to new technology, information, and training related to natural resource management.

Exposure to new technology remains highly gendered, with most of the related initiatives targeted to men. Bina (2003), Elaine and Meyreles (2004) and Carolyn (2007) reported extension personnel in agriculture and natural resources frequently speak only to men, often wrongly expecting that the men will convey information to their wives.

Gender mainstreaming can increase women's potential to access useful information and to adapt new technologies. To mainstream women in conservation and natural resources conflict resolution it is still a challenging and needs more attention.

Low participation in natural resource related decision-making

Women are still absent from the climate change and natural resource related decision making processes at many levels. Bina (2003) and Stalker (2004) reported equal participation of gender in community based decision making is difficult, since the community considered women as inefficient. Even when women attend meetings or events, they may not feel free to voice their opinions, or their opinions and needs may not be taken seriously. In most countries gender is rarely a central issue in policy initiatives. Men tend to dominate in the newly emerging decision-making and policy arenas of natural resources. Low participation of women in decision making processes at international and local levels restricts their capacity to engage in political decisions that can impact their specific needs and vulnerabilities (Rachel, 2002).

Opportunities for women in conflict management

Engaging women in natural resource management and conflict resolutions

In most developing countries women are not well represented in the governance of natural resources at local to global scales. Women are often not included in decision-making because of gender inequality and cultural norms Belsky (2003). However, Agarwal (2009) reported that in India and Nepal community forest initiatives resulted improvements in forest condition because of inclusion of women in decision-making committees. Women engagement in natural resource conflict resolution is an outcome of the inputs, efforts and support of many people and national and international institutions and government policies. Understanding the role of gender in relation with natural resources conflict management and insuring the involvement of gender issues in conflict resolution are crucial to sustainable management of the environment.

Women constitute the majority population in most countries

Uniquely vulnerable stakeholders

Certain stakeholders are not traditionally included in decision making, or can represent relevant interests in the talks that would otherwise be marginalized (Jensen and Halle, 2014). Such experiences have shown that certain categories of stakeholders warrant special attention in mediating resource conflicts because they face specific vulnerabilities linked to natural resource exploitation. For example, stakeholder characteristics such as gender, ethnic affiliation, and socio-economic status may influence resource ownership or access as well as opportunities to meaningfully participate in decision making processes. In some parts of the world, indigenous people as well as migratory pastoral communities are disproportionately affected by resource disputes given their historical and cultural connection to the land and its resources, and the associated customary rights they often claim or defend.

Specific reference to these vulnerable groups will appear in different sections of this guide (Jensen and Halle, 2014). Women are important to the peace building process, since they constitute half of every community and they are also the central caretakers of families.

When they are excluded from peace building; it can affect everyone. In the Horn of Africa such as in Sudan and Burundi, women have contributed prominent roles in peace building processes (Agbalajobi, 2010).

The Unique Nature of Women

Naturally women are different as we experience and observe in day to date life (Agbalajobi, 2014). Especially in conflict resolution activities they have different views and peaceful attributes; their abilities as caretakers and peacemakers. Women and men also differed in the ways that they talked about their conflicts. Women explain in detail about the context of the disagreement, particularly focusing on their involvement in the relationship with the other party. However, men used more rational, linear and legalistic language to speak about their opinion (Birkhoff, 2014).

Comparing women with men; women have less destruction potential of natural resource. Women manage natural resources daily in their roles as farmers and household providers. They have unique knowledge of local crop species and usually they are responsible for growing home garden crops (FAO, 2013). Despite their reliance on natural resources, women have less access to and control over them than men. It is becoming increasingly obvious that women have unique opportunities for conflict resolution and peace building due to the unique role they play in society. Women, particularly rural women, also have a distinct set of knowledge and skills that can be utilized in the policy making process (UN Women et al., 2013). Some unique characteristics of women related to conflict resolution are: neutrality in peace broking; you cannot be trusted unless you are neutral, Influence at family and community level for the development of positive attitudes; it is a long-term process and women are crucial teachers, women's emphasis on non-violent conflict resolution, ability to work across the political divide once they identify an issue of common concern Agbalajobi, 2014.

Gender is an important part of understanding these dynamics in managing natural resource use conflict, as men and women tend to use and enjoy the benefits of natural resources according to the roles and responsibilities determined by their gender, as well as economic and social status. Violent conflict often causes gender roles and responsibilities to shift. For instance, where families have been displaced by conflict, women may become primary earners for their households when they are able to continue or even expand economic activities traditionally associated with their gender roles, such as petty trade and selling in local markets (Jensen and Halle, 2013). Women's may be forced to break certain accepted "feminine" behaviors by adopting riskier coping strategies dictated by market demand and/or other tactics to maintain or gain access to livelihood assets necessary for their survival, including valuable natural resources. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, women have relied on marriage outside of their ethnic groups to secure access to cash crops, in spite of the fact that such marriages are outside of cultural norms. Although these tactics allow them to cope with the changes twisted by conflict and to provide for their households.

They can also result in altered perceptions within their community in the form of hatred from men who feel that their role as primary economic providers has been usurped, or stigmas that lead to social marginalization (Jensen and Halle, 2013).

It is important to note that in conflict situations, women may be both victims and perpetrators of violence, choosing or being forced to participate in violent conflict for a variety of reasons and motivations (Jensen and Halle, 2013). In Sierra Leone, for example, it is estimated that some 10 to 50 per cent of armed forces were comprised of women and girls (Jensen and Halle, 2013). Perpetuating a simplistic view of women in conflict settings as more “nurturing” and “peaceful” can not only strip women of their agency and reinforce patriarchal values, but also result in roll-backs and marginalization for women in the peace building phase. In many wars of independence, such as those that occurred in Mozambique and Angola, women took on traditionally “masculine” roles (Jensen and Halle, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the review it is clear that, natural resources such as land, water, timber, minerals, metals and oil are essential sources for livelihoods and income generating for societies. This influences countries and communities around the world. When natural resources are poorly managed or inequitably shared, when business activities are implemented without sufficient consideration for realities and in context and needs of communities, they can contribute to tensions that can escalate into violent conflict, or feed into and exacerbate pre-existing conflict dynamics. Population growth and environmental degradation are intensifying competition over already scarce resources, such as land and water, and climate change threatens to increase such competition. This review has also revealed that, strong encouragement and skill enhancement can strengthen women participation in conflict resolution. Encouragement is crucial at all levels of society from grass root to national leadership. Full participation of women at all levels; particularly in decision-making related to natural resource issue is very important. Promote gender equality in the policies and operations of all natural resource management institutions, and ensure that women’s and men’s concerns and experiences are integrated. Women can see and feel early warning signals of conflict, by their approach in their communities. They can therefore alert institutions and individuals for early intervention. To protect natural resources conflict, rural women and men must be empowered to participate in decisions that affect their needs and vulnerabilities. Addressing the gender dimensions of natural resources management will help policy makers formulate more effective interventions for their conservation and sustainable use. Having women participants and ensuring the representation of women in important decision-making institutions and enhance their contribution. In order to improve natural resource management and decrease rural poverty, women must be engaged in the planning, implementation and monitoring of conservation activities. Furthermore, they need be benefited from the results. It is therefore, key that development practitioners understand how to prevent conflicts over natural resources by involving all stakeholders at all stages. Based on the review the following future lines of work are forwarded:

- Promote women’s participation in formal and informal decision-making structures and governance processes related to natural resource management.
- Promote female participation in negotiation processes related to natural resource management.
- It necessary to adopt proactive measures to protect women from resource related physical violence and other security risks early in the peace building period.
- Remove barriers and create enabling conditions to build women’s capacity for productive and sustainable use of natural resources.

- At local level, natural resource projects and interventions need to emphasize community-level participation.
- In order to improve sustainable natural resource management and decrease violence, women must be systematically engaged in the planning, implementation and monitoring of conflict management, resolution.

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