

IUFRO Spotlight is an initiative of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. Its aim is to introduce, in a timely fashion, significant findings in forest research from IUFRO officeholders and member organizations to a worldwide network of decision makers, policy makers and researchers. IUFRO will encapsulate, and distribute in plain language, brief, topical and policy-relevant highlights of those findings, along with information on where/how to access the full documents.

Occasionally, *IUFRO Spotlight* also presents special activities such as sessions at major IUFRO congresses or the work of the IUFRO Task Forces. These focus on emerging key issues that contribute to international processes and activities and are of great interest to policy makers and to groups inside and outside the forest sector. With those criteria in mind, **the Spotlights for the next several months will highlight the undertakings and goals of the IUFRO Task Forces.** The *IUFRO Spotlights* will be distributed in a periodic series of emails as well as blog postings.

IUFRO Spotlight #79 / June 2020

A Focus on Gender Equality in Forestry

When one thinks of forests, forestry and forest research, gender equality is probably not the first thing that springs to mind.

But it actually makes a lot of sense, explains Dr. Gun Lidestav, of the Department of Forest Resource Management at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. Dr. Lidestav is also Coordinator of the IUFRO Gender Equality in Forestry Task Force (TF).

“Forestry has always been about people as much as it is about trees and the biophysical conditions of this particular land use. However, forest research worldwide leans heavily toward the latter aspects,” she said.

“But now, forestry-related processes will be guided by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Agenda 2030 adopted by the United Nations.

“The 5th SDG deals with gender equality, and that has become, for forestry, a cross-cutting issue related to governance, policies and strategies at different societal and organizational levels,” she said.

There are different cultures and different forest issues in different parts of the world, so addressing the gender equality issue does not lend itself to a one-size-fits-all solution.

“We understand gender as a social and cultural construct. Gender and gendering processes play out differently in different contexts,” Dr. Lidestav said. “As researchers, and research organizations, we must be able to understand the interaction/relation between gender and context, e.g. how gender impacts forest(ry) and how forest(ry) impacts gender.



Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

Therefore, for this TF, it has been crucial to have broad geographic and topic representation.” She notes that one of the strengths of her TF is that “within the team we have a broad range of different competencies in science, in research and in practitioners.

“We understand that policies, conventions and directives are tasks to be developed, agreed on and implemented by policy makers. But it is the duty of the scientific community to provide data, theories and methods to help policy makers understand the specific ways that gender shapes everyday lives, employment opportunities, knowledge production, and forest use,” Dr. Lidestav said.

“Therefore, integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue in the implementation of the IUFRO Strategy as well as strengthening the participation of scientists on equal terms, are the main objectives of the TF. This work will then provide a basis for gender mainstreaming processes within the IUFRO network, and hopefully beyond – i.e. advancing gender equality in forestry worldwide,” she said.

It won’t happen overnight. “Not everyone – and that can be true at all organizational or societal levels – thinks it is an important and relevant issue in which to become involved,” added Dr. Lidestav.

“An organization may have an overall strategy that supports gender equality. But, in those areas where men are dominant – forestry or research, as examples – men are the norm. And the understanding of gender and gender equality can then become a ‘women’s issue’ rather than an organizational one that involves both men and women. That is one of the major obstacles we have to overcome.”

The approach that her TF will take is to explain and promote gender equality as it relates to the scientific and research practices of IUFRO. And, by examining selected gender equality initiatives in different parts of the world, it will provide examples of research and policy interaction.

Dr. Lidestav’s goal for the Gender Equality TF is to have “an action plan proposal to be presented, discussed and agreed upon at the IUFRO 2024 World Congress in Stockholm, Sweden.

“The proposal will emerge from a solid evidence base, foster an inclusive mindset, and communicate and recognize progress. In this particular context, we will collect and analyze data to explain and advance gender equity and diversity in the forest research and policy practice interface.



Scientists at XXV IUFRO World Congress poster session in Curitiba, Brazil. Photo COC

“To anchor the proposal, inputs will be sought for a diverse set of groups within the IUFRO network through various consultations and strategic dialogues organized during major IUFRO events,” she said.

Find out more about the IUFRO Task Force on Gender Equality in Forestry:

<https://www.iufro.org/science/task-forces/gender-equality-in-forestry/>

In May 2020 Dr. Lidestav would have been the keynote speaker of an international networking conference entitled “Forests in Women’s Hands”, which had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event shall now take place on April 12th - 14th, 2021, at WALDCAMPUS Austria, Traunkirchen, Austria:

<https://forstfrauen.at/en/konferenz-2021>

The IUFRO TFs are established on a temporary basis during each 5-year IUFRO Board term and focus on emerging key forest-related issues. The nine current TFs will run till 2024 at which time their relevance will be assessed in relation to the forest issues of the day.

The findings reported in IUFRO Spotlight are submitted by IUFRO officeholders and member organizations. IUFRO is pleased to highlight and circulate these findings to a broad audience but, in doing so, acts only as a conduit. The quality and accuracy of the reports are the responsibility of the member organization and the authors.

*Suggestions for reports and findings that could be promoted through IUFRO Spotlight are encouraged. To be considered, reports should be fresh, have policy implications and be applicable to more than one country. If you would like to have a publication highlighted by Spotlight, contact:
Gerda Wolfrum, IUFRO Communications Coordinator, wolfrum(at)iufro.org*

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>

IUFRO Spotlight #79, published in June 2020, by IUFRO Headquarters, Vienna, Austria. Available for download at:

<http://www.iufro.org/media/iufro-spotlights/>

If you wish to unsubscribe from IUFRO Spotlight, please email us at: [office\(at\)iufro.org](mailto:office(at)iufro.org)

Imprint: <http://www.iufro.org/legal/#c18944>

