

Chapter 1

Background, Methodology and Summary Findings

Mountains are the world's most vulnerable, fragile and poverty-stricken areas. In order to reduce global poverty, these areas need to be given priority in terms of development policy and programme interventions. Livestock, as an integral component of mountain farming systems, have a critical role to play in poverty reduction.

Four years of collaborative work by three international organisations – FAO, ILRI and ICIMOD – in poor and vulnerable areas of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region of South Asia have generated useful knowledge on smallholder livestock farming in high-pressure mountain regions. There is now substantive information that can contribute to the Global Livestock Information Network being initiated by the FAO in Rome.

The review and field studies show that empowering local communities can make a difference to planning processes and policy reforms of mountain countries. Mainstream institutional and economic policies cannot effectively address livestock resource management issues in poor and vulnerable areas with fragile and resource-scarce environments. Although some attempts have been made to seek community participation in planning processes, up to now communities have not been empowered to make decisions regarding planning and programming of local livestock resources.

Furthermore, there is no systematic participatory policy framework for community empowerment. Therefore, development of a framework for community participation and empowerment for livestock resource planning and management, in the context of natural resource management, is critical in order to enhance the contribution of livestock to poverty reduction in mountain regions.

The main objectives of this paper are as follows.

- To develop an institutional and policy framework to empower local communities in integrated livestock resource planning and management
- To ensure maximum participation of women farmers in all stages of planning and implementation
- To emphasise an integrated approach to livestock resource development as part of natural resource management

Livestock, as an integral component of mountain farming systems, have a critical role to play in poverty reduction

- To improve income and livelihoods by promoting value addition, product diversification, and marketing development
- To operationalise the framework by testing and validation in local communities for wider application and replication

Methodology for developing the framework

The methodology for developing the framework comprised the following five phases of FAO-ICIMOD collaborative work over the past four years (1997-2001).

Phase 1 Reviews, case studies and development of a livestock resource database

Reviews and case studies identified a number of inappropriate policies and programmes being implemented in the field. However, successful livestock improvement programmes, where communities had taken the initiative, were also found. Knowledge development involved systematic collection, organisation, and computerisation of secondary data/information. This was achieved through two projects: the FAO-ICIMOD state-of-the-art review study entitled 'Livestock in Mixed Crop-Livestock Farming Systems of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas', and the parallel and complementary 'Livestock Database Inventory Project' with ILRI.

Phase 2 International Symposium on Contribution of Livestock to Mountain Livelihoods

As a follow up to the first phase and to address livestock issues of mountain regions at a global scale, an international symposium entitled 'Contribution of Livestock to Mountain Livelihoods – Research and Development Issues' was organised jointly by FAO, ICIMOD, ILRI, and CIP from 7 to 11 December 1999. This symposium provided a platform for sharing of existing knowledge, and airing of global and regional livestock issues that focused on the most vulnerable, fragile, and poverty-stricken areas of the world.

Phase 3 Case studies for identifying the key indicators

During 2000, FAO and ICIMOD jointly carried out further field studies as the basis for a stakeholders' workshop to develop a framework for community participation and empowerment in local-level livestock resource planning and decision-making. Household studies were carried out at two sites in Nepal, and at two sites in Himachal Pradesh in the western part of the Indian Himalayas. The purpose of these studies was to identify key parameters related to household-level decisions on livestock resource planning. The results were intended to provide a basis for assessing the harmony between farmers' priorities and current public-sector policies that support rural livestock development. The Livestock GIS Database, available at ICIMOD, was used to identify field sites in high-pressure mountain regions of Nepal and Himachal Pradesh. Participatory rural appraisal

techniques using structured household survey questionnaires were used to collect information on ecoregion-specific livestock resource management systems. One site in each country was selected to represent a market-accessible animal production area and the other to represent a market non-accessible area.

Phase 4 Country papers on public planning processes

Resource persons from various Hindu Kush-Himalayan government institutions were invited to prepare workshop papers on current public-sector planning processes for livestock resource development. In addition, several NGOs were also invited to prepare papers describing their methodologies and work experience in planning and implementing livestock development projects in Hindu Kush-Himalayan countries.

Phase 5 Regional workshop

A regional stakeholders workshop was held from 11–13 October 2001. This workshop facilitated sharing of the planning experience and compared it to ground-level priorities that emerged from the household surveys. The process helped participants to identify weaknesses and gaps in present planning processes. Workshop participants were divided into three groups; each group brainstormed a single agenda adopted in an initial plenary session. A concluding plenary debate developed and adopted the new planning framework for testing and validation in the field.

Summary of findings of joint FAO–ICIMOD collaborative studies

The major findings from collaborative work on mountain livestock development between FAO and ICIMOD can be summarised as follows.

- Improved breeds fail to survive with poor feed resources and insufficient animal health services.
- State-owned dairy-processing plants and distribution infrastructure are widely established (subsidised by government/donor funds).
- Dairy co-operatives, operated and managed by the state, are widely established.
- State-fixed prices favour the urban consumer over the livestock keeper.
- Private initiatives and investment are discouraged.
- Conflicts in the use of common property resources have resulted in declines in populations of sheep and cattle.

The International Livestock Symposium identified common problems faced by livestock-dependent farmers in marginal and vulnerable areas of the world.

Improved breeds fail to survive with poor feed resources and insufficient animal health services

State-fixed prices favour the urban consumer over the livestock keeper

Communities are not empowered in the planning and decision-making process

- Shortage of feed resources
- Poor animal health infrastructure
- Poor market development and product diversification
- Inappropriate policy and institutional programmes

Based on these problems/constraints, the symposium accepted that the agenda for livestock planning, programming, and policy formulation in the twenty-first century should pay greater attention to the contribution that livestock makes to poverty reduction. This agenda should emphasise the following activities.

- Generation of socially equitable and environmentally sustainable technologies and strategies
- Diversification of processing and products (technology and economics)
- Market development and market-oriented livestock production
- Credit and investment, and trade and regional integration
- Institutional strengthening and human capacity-building

Local farmers do not participate in needs assessment

The primary findings of the review of livestock planning processes can be summarised as follows.

- Decision-making is top-down and mostly centralised.
- Participation of the community is sometimes sought. However, communities are not empowered in the planning and decision-making process.
- The approach is oriented to service/output; demand is neglected.
- More time and resources are spent at the central level than at community and farmer levels.
- Local farmers do not participate in needs assessment.
- No account is taken of the location-specific resource base, and its comparative advantages and market opportunities.
- Poor communities in vulnerable areas lack a systematic planning framework.

No account is taken of the location-specific resource base

Field studies identified some successful small-scale livestock enterprises. In most cases, women were active players. Some examples are as follows.

- Smallholder dairy-farming organised and managed by women's dairy co-operatives
- Micro-livestock enterprises involving goats and poultry initiated by women's savings and credit groups
- Household biogas plants operated and managed by women (This has led to a reduction in women's workloads as well as a reduction in methane gas released into the atmosphere.)
- Informal marketing of lactating buffaloes from lowlands to mountain areas, and the return of non-lactating cows to the lowlands for insemination