



Discussion Paper
Series No. MNR 96/4

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS of Policy AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS of COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN INDIA AND NEPAL

S. Palit

Copyright © 1997

ISSN 1024 - 7556

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

All rights reserved

Reprinted in 1997

Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
G.P.O. Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal

Typesetting at ICIMOD Publications' Unit

The views and interpretations in this paper are those of the author(s). They are not attributable to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and do not imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN INDIA AND NEPAL

S. Palit

MNR Series No. 96/4

S. Palit, I.F.S., is the Chief Conservator of Forests,
Social Forestry, West Bengal

October 1996

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal

Community Forestry has been identified as the only viable forest management strategy in third world countries. Both Nepal and India are pioneers in this field, and development in this direction has been significant in recent years.

An analysis of the institutional aspects in Nepal shows that, both in policy as well as in legislation, complete support is necessary for community forestry. Another very bold step undertaken by HMG/N is that forests are being handed over completely to the communities.

These measures, though daringly progressive, are nevertheless premised on ground realities. The nationalisation of forests in Nepal proved to be a disastrous measure, mainly on account of the lack of resources and infrastructure. However, with the introduction of community forestry, these forests are now on the road to recovery, even though the required minimum infrastructural support is lacking. Other institutional aspects which need immediate attention are research and technology, introduction of scientific management, and promotion of support activities for the communities. Despite total commitment on the part of the government, the growth of community forestry has been sluggish. This is again due to the lack of resources and staff. Therefore, comprehensive planning and implementation are imperative.

In India, community forestry has been adopted in the form of joint forest management (JFM). However, JFM in India is also facing several limitations. While there is policy back-up, there is no legislative support. And although the issue of forestry falls into the concurrent list, i.e., it can be managed at the federal and state level independently, it is usually managed only by the states. There is, as such, no compulsion on the part of the states to adopt JFM immediately, although 15 states in India have already adopted JFM. The progress has been slow. Only about two per cent of the forest areas in India have so far been brought under JFM and, even where JFM has been implemented, the state still retains the major share of the revenue in most cases. India, however, has established institutional support in the field of forestry education, training, and research. It has a trained and committed bureaucracy. Despite state control on forests and the introduction of JFM, there has been no problem in the application of scientific methods to forest management. Forestry research in India is gaining momentum with the new security provided by the communities. Thus, through JFM, India can look forward to the restoration of degraded forests and improved productivity.

For a country of India's size, the installation of a sustainable forest management system throughout the country is a herculean task. Because of the liberal assistance of the donor agencies, resources may not be a constraint. Attitudinal changes amongst the implementors; acquisition of additional skills; purposeful collaboration with the NGOs; and, more importantly, a firm commitment on the part of the government and foresters will help ensure the establishment of JFM on a durable basis.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development for sponsoring this study through its Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme.

Nepal is considered to be a pioneer in Community Forestry and India too has seen the emergence of similar processes in recent years with the introduction of Joint Forest Management (JFM) in several states, beginning with West Bengal. An analysis is made in this paper of the policy and institutional dimensions of community forestry in both Nepal and India in order to identify the areas of weakness, steps required to rectify these, and opportunities for exchange and learning.

The author is grateful to Mr D.P. Parajuli, Director General, Department of Forests, Nepal, Mr A.L. Joshi, Director General, Department of Soil Conservation, Nepal, and Mr M.L. Shrestha of CFPD, Nepal, for providing valuable insights into the issues of implementation in community forestry in Nepal.

The author is particularly grateful to Mr Kiran Nath Shrestha, DFO, Tanahu; Mr Ambika Regmi, DFO, Kaski; and Mr Keshav Raj Shrestha, DFO, Nuwakot, for guiding the author in the field and arranging for interactions with Forest User Groups (FUGs).

Mr T.B. Karki, Dean, Institute of Forestry, Pokhara, along with the other faculty members, provided help and support in various aspects of forestry training in Nepal.

The author is also grateful to Mr. V.P. Singh, Conservator of Forests, Hill Circle, West Bengal; Mr. R. Sinha, Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle, West Bengal, DFO, Darjeeling Division; Mr. S. Dhandiyal, DFO, Kurseong Division; Mr. S. Patel, DFO, Baikunthapur Division; and Mr. R.R.P. Singh for their cooperation in conducting the study in northern Bengal.

The author is grateful to Mr Egbert Pelinck, Director General of ICIMOD, for his advice and keen interest in the study.

Finally, the author would like to record his deep appreciation of the invaluable help and support provided by Mr Anupam Bhatia, of ICIMOD, without which the author could not have successfully conducted this study in a brief span of four weeks.

Abbreviations

APROSC	Agricultural Projects' Services' Centre	1
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation	1
FUG	Forest User Group	2
FPC	Forest Protection Committee	3
HMG/N	His Majesty's Government of Nepal	4
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development	5
JFM	Joint Forest Management	5
NGO	Non-Government Organisation	7
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products	8
UMN	United Mission to Nepal	8
	Training	9
	Gender Issues	9
	Forestry Organisation	10
	The Government of India (GOI) Level	10
	Community Development	12
	Conflict Resolution	13
	Research	13
	Marketing and Processing	13
	Working Plan and Micro-Plan	14
	Non-Government Organisation	14
	Infrastructural Development	15
	Financial Support and Continuity	15
	Implementation Issues in JFM	16
	Selecting Areas for FPCs	16
	Composition of the FPCs	17

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
INDIA	3
Population, Forest Areas, and Distribution of Forests	3
History of Forest Management in India	4
<i>The Pre-colonial Period</i>	4
<i>The Colonial Period</i>	5
<i>The Post-Independence Phase</i>	5
Forest Management Objectives	7
Institutional Issues	8
Legal Issues	8
Training	9
Gender Issues	9
Forestry Organisation	10
The Government of India (GOI) Level	10
Community Development	12
Conflict Resolution	13
Research	13
Marketing and Processing	13
Working Plan and Micro-Plan	14
Non-Government Organisation	14
Infrastructural Development	15
Financial Support and Continuity	15
Implementation Issues in JFM	16
Selecting Areas for FPCs	16
Constitution of the FPCs	17
FPCs and the Panchayats	17
Registration of FPCs	17
Benefit Packages	17
Non-Timber Forest Products and Sustainability	18
NEPAL	20
Population, Forest Area, and Distribution of Forests	20
History of Forest Management in Nepal	20
Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS)	23
The Forest Act 1993	23
Institutional Issues	24
Training	24
Gender Issues	25
Forest Organisation	26
Non-Government Organisations	27
Community Development	27
Conflict Resolution	28
Research	29

Comparative Analysis of Policy and Institutional Dimensions	30
Forestry Organisation and Infrastructural Deficiency	31
Community Forestry – from Plantation to Natural Forests	32
Micro-Plans and Operational Plans	33
Planning Community Forestry	34
Forest Management and Research	35
Non-Timber Forest Products	36
Training, Gender Issues, and NGOs	36
The Inter-relationship between Forests, Agriculture, and	
Animal Husbandry	37
Policy and Legal Framework	37
A Comparative Study of the North Bengal Hills with Nepal	38
Some Critical Issues Related to Community Forestry in Nepal	
and North Bengal	39
Silviculture and Management of Forests	41
Conclusions	43
Programme Itinerary	45
References	47