

Institutional and Support Services (Group B)



As the preceding discussion has already indicated, community forestry user groups do not, and can not, operate in a vacuum. As JFM implies, the Government in the form of the forest department is a necessary, if not too often, dominant player in community forestry. In turn, forest departments do not operate in a vacuum. Associated with the government are a number of other institutions concerned with research, government forester training, allied development line agencies, and international donors -- as well as the larger political and administrative context in which forest departments must operate. However, the line of connection between the Government and the forest community generally narrows down to the ranger and his forest guards. So far, **this ranger-community relationship is the most important focal point for community forest support.**

However, few programmes and rangers have been able to adequately provide the support services really needed by community forestry groups. This is one place that NGOs have

increasingly stepped in to provide the additional services communities need to start effectively managing their forest resources.

The participants in this panel identified the most important and effective services that rangers and NGOs provide as the following:

- immediate visible benefits,
- response to specific non-forestry needs,
- ideas and information,
- confidence and moral support,
- continued technical and managerial support,
 - awareness of forest management rights and responsibilities,
 - non-formal education as an entry point for forestry activities,
 - farmer-to-farmer extension,
 - preparation of forest operation plans,
 - linkages to the outside world,
 - advocacy to other line agencies and research centres,
 - financial support, and
 - material inputs (seedlings, fence

material, etc).

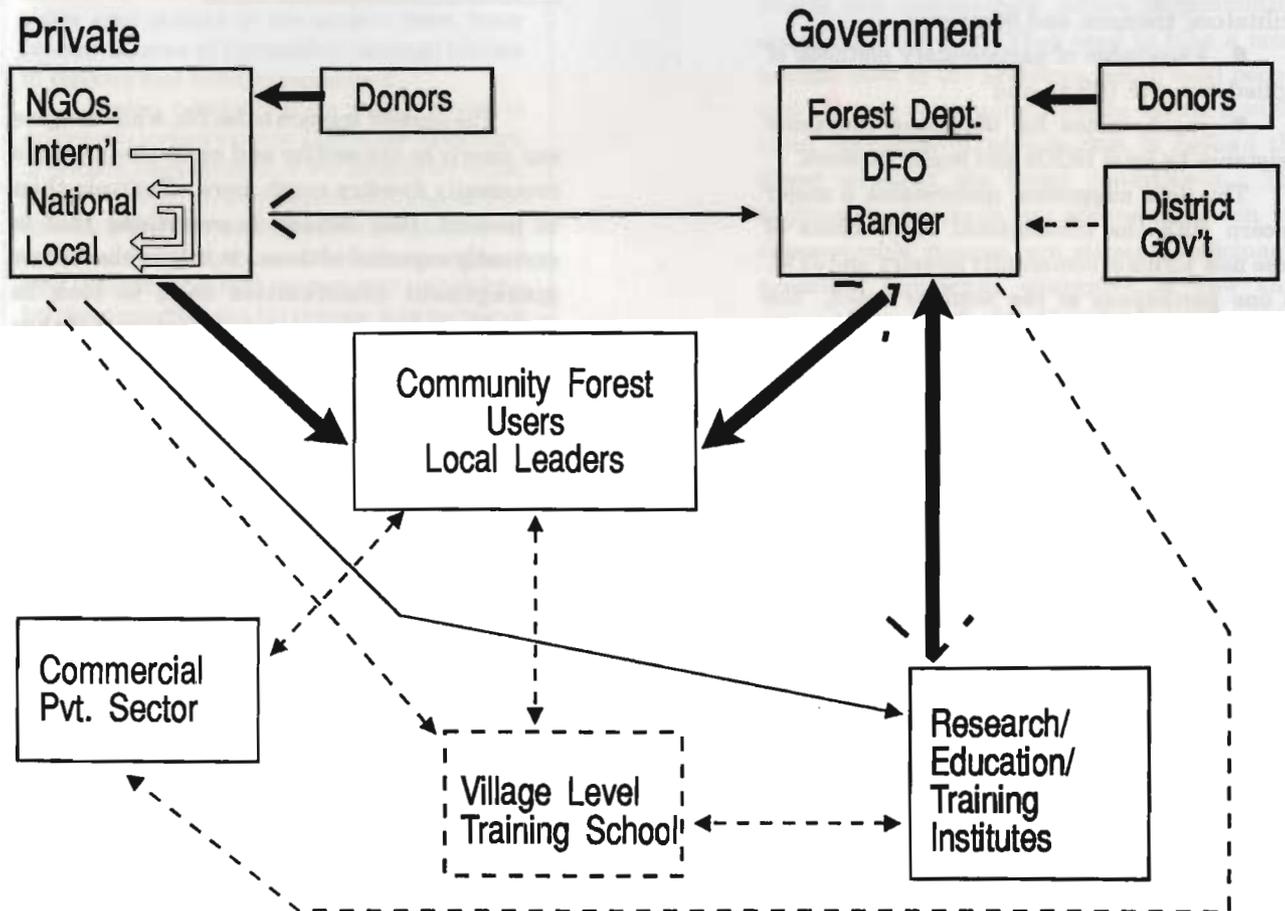
Many of these proven services are not currently available to communities. No programme includes all of them in the job descriptions of a ranger. Few programmes provide adequate training to rangers in carrying out these duties. NGOs have only begun to take on some of these roles in selected areas but, where they have, dramatic improvements can be found.

Despite this already heavy agenda of

services, participants identified the following additional services that are now needed:

- access to research groups/communities,
- marketing help in supply inputs to private industry,
- training school for village organisations established by NGOs, involving rangers as facilitators, and
- widespread awareness of technical services and forest rights.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES



Key

- = Main flow at present: what has worked
- = Minor (pilot) flow: what has worked
- - -** = What should be tried

Services currently provided by NGOs and educational institutions to rangers and DFOs, that have proved effective in practice, include the following:

- training in interactive development of operational plans with local communities;
- training in communication, agriculture, and livestock;
- facilitating extension, local awareness, and the development of operational plans;
- study tours for rangers; and
- in-service technical training.

While there is ample room for strengthening and widening the scope of these services, participants also felt that a ranger's role could be strengthened further by trying the following:

- more effective re-orientation and motivational (moral) training for new roles as facilitators, trainers, and managers;
- knowledge of participatory methods of applied research (PRA); and
- mechanisms for obtaining extension assistance by local NGOs and leader farmers.

This last suggestion understates a major concern with the institutional implications of these new forms of community forestry and JFM. As one participant at the seminar noted, "the Rangers are being asked to perform the impossible".

The Foresters' Syndrome

Katz Watanabe (a forester with a donor-assisted project) described the 'Forester's Syndrome' — a common malady of foresters which results in them valuing trees over people and believing that the best trees are the tallest. Bureaucrats are the biggest enemy, creating divisions amongst sectors, donors, and other actors. Too many donors and too much coordination from the centre has led to inadequate levels of field support.

-- Katsura Watanabe, Hattiban

The herculean task being asked of rangers and the practical and cultural obstacles to effective re-orientation training of the magnitude suggested pose important questions to advocates of increased JFM and community forestry co-management. Can rangers handle this amount of work? Can rangers function in the multi-

faceted roles that have been identified? Can the Government afford to hire enough rangers to cover the hundreds of thousands of communities such an approach implies?

Forestry Staff Tenure

It has been recognised that the whole programme work functions when NGOs, forest department officials, and the village community work in close cooperation. There is, therefore, a need to ensure tenure stability for staff because forestry officials are prone to frequent transfers, thereby disrupting the progress.

-- S.K. Dhar, Hattiban

The answer appears to be: No, while rangers can clearly be trained for and motivated towards community forestry much more effectively than at present, they cannot do everything that is currently expected of them. It is here that forest management communities need to look to themselves and other sources of support if they are to succeed on a wider scale than pilot projects.

Institutional Empowerment: Seva Mandir

In the Seva Mandir project area in Rajasthan, it was discovered that mainstream development processes are draining the rural area of its resources. What is needed is a matrix of institutions to serve as countervailing sources of empowerment, able to match the mainstream forces in strength. Seva Mandir began with literacy, but residents wanted development. Soon thereafter, villagers were co-opted and could not create people-based alternatives. In order to develop community-based groups with strength, an NGO needs accountability, a transfer of knowledge, a culture of internal consultation, and autonomy from donors. Seva's work in forestry has progressed from private tree growing to group farm forestry, to community forestry, and finally to joint forest management.

-- Ajay Mehta, Hattiban

Integrated Linkages: CARE/Nepal

CARE's approach is based on **food security**; trees are of interest to project staff only through their role in the agricultural system, and are brought into CARE's activities in an integrated manner with agriculture and soil conservation measures. In Nalini's experience with HMG/CARE Begnas Tal/Rupa Tal Integrated Watershed Management Project, she observed that extension **must be targeted at small subgroups of women, students, and occupational castes** and should be carried out through informal methods to make it effective. The **introduction of cash crops, such as cardamon and coffee, into the forests** has encouraged more farmers to participate. Project staff interact with villagers on a daily basis and have resisted pressures to prepare forest operational plans due to a certain wariness of the possible negative effects. Training and excursions of staff and farmers, to both failed and successful projects inside and outside of the project area, have created a sense of competition amongst farmers to improve their forest management.

Factors constraining the project's work in community forestry include: 1) a target orientation, 2) unclear interpretation of the policies by DFOs, and 3) too much money. Nalini recommends that forestry initiatives be linked to other project activities, that indigenous systems be recognised and assisted, and that rangers and technicians be given priority status to upgrade their technical knowledge and boost their confidence. Farmer-to-farmer extension systems can be used to supplement the inadequate number of extension workers engaged in forestry and agriculture.

-- Nalini Subba, Hattiban

Annapurna Conservation Area Project

Chandra Gurung's experience in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in Nepal, run by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, has shown that there is no single prescription, and that an integrated approach is necessary. ACAP has supported the development of Forest Management Committees to promote community forestry and agroforestry. These efforts are supplemented by the work of mothers' groups, teachers, and tourist education campaigns. Alternative technologies to reduce fuelwood consumption, such as backburner water heaters, solar water heaters, and small micro-hydro plants, have formed a focus of ACAP's programme.

-- Chandra Gurung, Hattiban

NGOs are increasingly identified as one of the major sources of such additional support to forest management communities. A number of NGOs are increasingly active in promoting community forestry. They tend to take a more holistic view of the problems facing local people and promote community forestry within a wider rural development agenda that is beyond the direct scope of the forest department. The arguments for such an approach, given its demonstrable success, are strong. Participants provided numerous examples of how this approach has worked in Nepal and India, albeit on relatively small scales.

Direct partnership of larger international, national, and State level NGOs with the government, in supporting community forestry, has also been pioneered in places such as West Bengal and Gujarat. Apart from direct project activities, these NGOs have demonstrated important abilities to work as intermediary organisations to build up local NGOs. Given the uneven distribution and skills of local NGOs, this sector will require concerted long-term training and financial inputs from national and international NGOs as well as the government if they are to provide competent coverage anywhere near the level needed.

NGO support appears to have the greatest potential for widespread impact when it is targetted to provide technical and financial training and research support. Experiences with the use of untrained local NGOs as a substitute for the forest department, in developing plantations and forest management schemes, have generally met with much less success. Based on experiences to date, the following specific roles

Literacy & Forestry: Action Aid Nepal

Action Aid Nepal (AAN), an international NGO implementing an integrated project in Sindhupalchok district, Nepal, works through Community Development Committees to establish user groups for community forestry development. Motivated through AAN-sponsored literacy classes, the six to seven forest user groups already organised have equal representation of males and females. Ten private nurseries have been established since 1988 to provide seedlings to these groups; all other inputs, including forest watchers, are provided by the users. AAN has forged strong links with the DFO, NACFP, and other NGOs and projects to assist them in meeting the training and technical needs of the user groups.

-- Babu Ram Pathak, Hattiban

for NGOs show the greatest promise.

- Training forest department staff and community forest leaders.

- Conducting community-level publicity and extension services.

- Developing operational/microplanning tools and serving as facilitator between the community and forest department.

- Assisting communities in developing participatory monitoring methodologies.

- Selected multi-disciplinary studies, particularly in social science areas neglected by forest departments.

- Establishing marketing information networks.

- Forming women's groups and farm forestry associations.

- Providing technical support for small-scale, non-timber forest product processing and energy alternatives.

- Providing training to NGOs in accounting, forestry, and management.

Expanding the role of private industries will also be critical in relieving the burden on rangers and developing a self-

The NGO Culture

The organisational culture of the NGO must be enhanced/maintained to ensure that NGO staff are given optimum professional incentives. Staff naturally have their own self-interest and financial matters at stake. These interests can be addressed by creating a working environment that is stable, fosters self-esteem, encourages consultation, and maintains a pluralistic membership to avoid any "consensus of self-interest". These conditions should help encourage commitment and minimise corruption.

-- Linl Wollenberg, Hattiban

sustaining community forestry programme. This requires equipping both private industries and local communities with better access to technical and market information, relaxing constraining rules and regulations, strengthening the bargaining power of communities, and promoting fair competition. As pioneered by the Western India Match Company (WIMCO), through their contractual arrangements with farmers willing to grow poplar seedlings for match production, a large variety of arrangements between wood

product industries and local communities is possible. These arrangements ensure markets for producers, increase product quality and productivity, and ensure supplies to industries. If the model of WIMCO and the private agro-industries proves more widely applicable, the private sector will follow up its purchasing arrangements with extension services.

Private Forestry

Ravi Pradhan (a private forest industrialist) posed a basic question: **is community forestry a good thing?** Or, is what is needed a more basic **systems'** change to encourage **private forestry and private enterprise?** How can agroforestry be promoted, on small plots of small farmers? Agroforestry can be more profitable than farming, yet there are no credit schemes to promote this. **Law-makers should maintain an openness in drafting rules related to the harvesting and use of privately-owned trees.**

-- Ravi Pradhan, Hattiban

Coordination between the government, donors, and NGOs also needs strengthening at the headquarters and district levels. Participants suggested establishing working groups at each of these levels to coordinate planning and implementation and to avoid some of the duplication and misunderstandings which currently arise.

During discussion, seminar participants noted that, perhaps, the most important task facing the institutional support agencies was to turn one-way arrows into two-way ones. "Community users give us perspective", noted N.S. Jodha. "We can learn as much as we can teach", commented Ajay Mehta. Until the teachers realise they must simultaneously be students learning from each other, inappropriate technologies, management, and supporting arrangements will continue. Listening may be the most important skill taught to both government foresters and NGO workers whose job it is to support community forestry management.

Hypothesis No. 6

The greater the external support the greater the dependency on that source and the less sufficient a community becomes.

Messerschmidt et al.
Forest User Groups in Nepal:
Perspectives on What Works and Why. 1992