

Emergence of HIFCOM

Session VI: Regional Foresters' Forum: Need for Institutional Mechanism

The last day of the workshop opened with two agenda items. The first was to spend sufficient time on the need for a sustainable institutional mechanism for forestry

professionals in the region, the second was to elicit feedback on the workshop from participants.

Reiterating the original objectives of the workshop, Mr. Gulati urged the participants to consider practical strategies which would strengthen PFM in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. The participants were divided into three groups and were requested to consider the following issues.

- ▶ Need for such a forum, an appropriate title and suggestions on the logo
- ▶ Forum's objectives
- ▶ Operational issues
- ▶ Membership guidelines
- ▶ Financial resources
- ▶ Likely constraints to the forum, considering expected interaction both within and outside the region
- ▶ Institutional issues
- ▶ Executive working groups for the forum
- ▶ Institutional arrangements for the forum to ensure that deliberations are disseminated widely, including frequency of meetings, rules, etc.
- ▶ Action plan for 1995-96.

The plenary reconvened at 11 a.m. with Mr. Mir Inayatullah as Chairperson.

Group One

Members: M.L. Shrestha, A.L. Karna, D.B. Dhital, Monica Manandhar, Nalini Subba, Gurmit Singh, M.J. Sharma, Mohan Gopinath

Name and Logo

**REGIONAL FORUM FOR
FOREST CONSERVATION
AND MANAGEMENT**



This group suggested the name Regional Forum for Forest Conservation and Management. The group recommended that the term 'foresters' should refer only to professional foresters and suggested that the forum should be more broadbased to include all persons who were involved in promoting participatory forest management. The group recognised the need to strengthen sustainable and integrated forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and, therefore, a forum was needed.

Objectives

The forum's objectives should be:

- ▶ sharing of knowledge and experiences,
- ▶ inter- and intra-country cooperation on common issues,
- ▶ exploring new opportunities,
- ▶ replication of success stories,
- ▶ transfer of technology,
- ▶ training and capacity building,
- ▶ facilitation of need-based, location-specific applied research,
- ▶ creation of a regional database,
- ▶ seminars, workshops, and meetings, and
- ▶ exchange visits.

Operational Issues

Such a forum should be headquartered in a regional institution such as ICIMOD, with a country focal office and country chapters in all the HKH countries. Consideration was given to making the forum an autonomous body under the aegis of ICIMOD. Two types of regular meeting should be held: an annual regional forum and country chapters as needed, two to four times a year.

Membership

Both institutional and individual membership should be offered with different categories such as life members and ordinary members. The fees should be comparable to those of other similar forums.

Financial Resources

Possible sources of funds are:

- ▶ seed money from ICIMOD,
- ▶ national/international donors, and
- ▶ membership fees

Institutional Constraints

A variety of potential constraints was identified. These included difficulty in endorsement of the concept by the different countries in the region, funding problems, and a complicated organisational structure, particularly regarding mobility and communication between members and countries.

Working Group Formation

A wide variety of working groups was identified which could be established.

- ▶ Agroforestry
- ▶ Forest protection

- ▶ Tree improvement
- ▶ Forest products
- ▶ Community forestry
- ▶ Pasture and grassland management
- ▶ Forest management
- ▶ Forest economics/marketing
- ▶ Non-timber forest products
- ▶ Gender

Action Plan for 1995-96

Certain crucial tasks needed to be carried out. These included mobilising seed money, tapping national and international funds, the establishment of a regional headquarters, country chapters, and membership campaigns. There should also be publicity through various media and follow-up by participants from the Chail Workshop.

Group Two

Members: David Black, K.B. Shrestha, Madhav Ghimire, G.K. Pradhan, D.P. Gupta, Savita Sharma, P. Patnaik, A.K. Tikku

Name and Logo

**HINDU KUSH-HIMALAYAS
FORESTERS' FORUM**



This group also corroborated the need for a common forum as there was commonality in problems.

Objectives

Important objectives identified included sharing of experiences to overcome feelings of isolation - working in collaboration and thereby bringing improvements. Transfer of technology was another appropriate goal.

Financial Resources

Funding sources should be membership fees, ICIMOD, and institutional aid agencies such as British Overseas' Development Assistance (ODA), Swedish International Development Assistance (SIDA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Constraints

Mobility of professionals, funding, and staffing were identified as the main constraints.

Membership

Each country should be a member. In addition, there should be membership for organisations and individuals. Membership application should be made through country coordinators. Membership fees were suggested as IRs 1,000 for life and IRs 100 per annum.

In India, the Inspector General of Forests should convene a meeting of all Principal Chief Conservators of Forests from all hill states to build consensus and to establish a national executive.

Operational Issues

The group suggested a national coordinator for India, located at Simla, and a rotating chairperson in the region.

Action Plan 1995-96

National-level meetings to be held by September 1995 and a regional executive committee to be constituted by December 1995. The next annual forum meeting should be held in April 1996, with a draft constitution to be discussed at that time. To meet these primary goals, there should be coordination within each country and state.

Group Three

Members: Toran B. Karki, N.K. Shrestha, Hom Mani Bhandari, Prayag Tamrakar, Ugyen Dorji, G.S. Mandal, Mir Inayatullah, K.D. Sharma

Name and Logo

REGIONAL FORUM IN THE
HINDU KUSH-HIMALAYAS



Need

The forum was needed as collective efforts were required to solve identical problems in a fragile ecosystem such as the mountains.

Objectives

Three important objectives should be:

- ▶ collection, storage, and updating information,
- ▶ encouraging people's participation in participatory forest management, and
- ▶ facilitating mutual technical support between member countries.

Goal

The ultimate goal was to promote a better quality of life for communities in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas by conserving the ecosystem with sustainable use to protect biodiversity and preserve the gene pool of endemic, endangered species.

Operational issues

A national committee should be established in each country, with an apex committee at the headquarters and ICIMOD acting as the Secretariat.

An existing institution should be identified for data collection, which could then undertake the following tasks:

- ▶ study of existing models,
- ▶ prepare a data bank - possibly linked with Internet,
- ▶ identify user institutions, and
- ▶ train staff to use database.

The data could be used to promote training and extension for PFM by facilitating resource personnel exchange among members. A detailed in-depth study of existing models could also be prepared.

Membership

The following countries were proposed as members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. Members from each country should include the head of the forest department and staff of research organisations and extension and training institutions.

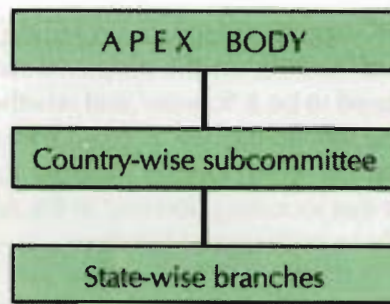
Financial Resources

Initial ICIMOD support, followed by other donor support and subscription by member countries and individual members.

Institutional Constraints

These related to infrastructure, human resources, and financial concerns.

Working Groups: The following structure was proposed by the working groups.



Meetings:

- ▶ Apex body — twice a year
- ▶ General house — once a year
- ▶ Sub-national meetings — decided by the national committees

Action Plan 1995-96

For the purpose of identification of critical areas, the following tasks should be carried out:

- ▶ inventory of existing database and literature,
- ▶ development of a data bank, and
- ▶ annual updating and retrieval.

There should also be an inventory and documentation of endangered species with local people's guidance. Microplan preparation should be carried out with people's participation.

For follow-up a time-table was proposed as follows:

- ▶ member countries/organisations to be informed about the apex and national forum within three months,
- ▶ proceedings of the forum to be prepared and distributed,
- ▶ next bi-annual meeting to be held at Jammu in November / December 1995, and
- ▶ follow-up meeting in April / May 1996 to be held in Bhutan.

Discussion

Following these three presentations, the floor was opened for discussion.

Choice of Logo

All proposed alternatives were put on the overhead screen. Discussion focussed on the different symbols as well as on the overall design. A modified version of Group Three's logo was unanimously adopted after much discussion.

Name of Forum

The discussion next turned to the issue of a suitable name and acronym for the regional forum. In addition to the Regional Forum for Forest Conservation and Management

(REFCOM), an alternative was suggested: Himalayan Hindu Kush Foresters' Forum (HIFOR). Inclusion of the word 'forester' in the proposed name led to an extended discussion on who was considered to be a 'forester' and whether the forum itself could broaden an understanding of the term to include all those who work with foresters. The general understanding was that the word 'forester' referred to a professional forester. The majority of participants felt that including 'forester' in the name of the forum would appear to limit the forum solely to professional foresters.

Discussion on this issue continued with participants suggesting that the forum should try to break the closed tradition of foresters' associations by including everyone interested in the development of participatory forest management. It was also noted that many foresters' associations already existed and that this forum should therefore have a different title.

Two alternative names were put to the house for a vote: Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management (HIFCOM), or Hindu Kush-Himalayan Foresters' Forum for Conservation and Management. The first received a majority of votes and was accepted.

The logo and title agreed upon for the forum was as given below.

HIFCOM

**THE HINDU KUSH-HIMALAYAN
FORUM FOR FOREST
CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT**



The chairperson of the session, Mr. Mir Inayatullah, noted that, as all the three groups clearly agreed in principle on the need and objectives of the new forum, the plenary group needed to discuss institutional issues. It was decided that ICIMOD would be requested to provide post workshop support and that an interim regional committee be established to operationalise these recommendations.

Mr. Mir Inayatullah was proposed as Chairperson, Mr. G.K. Pradhan as national coordinator for Bhutan, Mr. K.B. Shrestha as national coordinator for Nepal, and Mr. A.K. Gulati as national coordinator for India. Monica Manandhar was also nominated as a member of the committee. Mr. Gulati reminded the group of the need to add some experts from Uttar Pradesh and the northeastern Indian states as they had been unable to attend the Chail Workshop.

Consolidated Recommendations of Working Groups

Need

- ▶ Fragile Himalayan ecosystem
- ▶ Integrated management of forests
- ▶ Common problems
- ▶ Collective efforts required

Objectives

- ▶ Sharing of knowledge and experiences through meetings and workshops, exchange visits, training, etc
- ▶ Inter-country cooperation on common issues
- ▶ Development of a regional database bank
- ▶ Transfer of technology

Modus Operandi

- ▶ Headquarters/regional office - ICIMOD?
- ▶ Country focal points
- ▶ Meetings.

Regional - annual

Country forums- as per requirement

Membership

- ▶ Individual
- ▶ Institutional

Life/ordinary

Fee to be determined on a par with other forums

Funding

- ▶ Initial ICIMOD support
- ▶ Membership fees
- ▶ National/international donors

Constraints

- ▶ Mobility
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Human resources

Action Plan 1995-96

- ▶ Mobilise seed money
- ▶ Tap national and international funds
- ▶ Establishment of regional headquarters
- ▶ Formation of country chapters and country offices
- ▶ Membership campaigns
- ▶ Publicity through various media
- ▶ Follow-up by participants of Chail workshop
- ▶ Inventory of existing databases

Mr. Inayatullah invited HIFCOM to hold its second meeting in Jammu in November 1995 when the state would be hosting a workshop on participatory forest management. It was agreed that the executive committee would consolidate the work of the workshop, synthesise recommendations, and draft an organisational structure for

HIFCOM. Mr. Gulati thanked everyone for their active participation and suggestions and said that the executive committee would do its best to fulfill the expectations of the general house. The group then adjourned to prepare for the concluding session. (The executive committee had a sitting in Kathmandu in September 1995. It was decided to hold HIFCOM-India, which was held in Jammu in the last week of February 1996, the next would be HIFCOM-Nepal, followed by HIFCOM-Bhutan).

Concluding Session

Mr. Gulati opened the concluding session by thanking all the participants for their confidence in the organising committee of the workshop and for their tremendous response over the past four days. The morning session was an exciting one, presenting the challenge of converting their ideas into reality. He noted that the opportunities for the forum were limitless and that the group was looking for a collective vision to consolidate efforts being carried out in various states and countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region to promote and strengthen community-based forest management.

He made some additional suggestions for consideration by the HIFCOM executive committee:

- ▶ a newsletter to keep members informed of the forum's activities and other relevant information pertaining to participatory forest management,
- ▶ national and regional awards for outstanding work in community forestry, and
- ▶ the establishment of country working groups.

Mr. Gulati said that the list of opportunities for HIFCOM was endless. He thanked the representatives from Jammu and Kashmir for offering to host the follow-up HIFCOM workshop in November 1995 (this was ultimately held in February 1996) as this would help the group to meet and consolidate its endeavours further. At this point, he felt it was important to recapitulate the original expectations with which the participants had come to the workshop and to determine how far these had been met. Each participant was then requested to give feedback about the organisation and design of this type of interactive workshop. These comments would be useful to help plan future workshops.

Feedback From Participants

Mr. K.D. Sharma, Himachal Pradesh: "We learned many things and shared many ideas, including how to move ahead into the future to achieve our goals. Today, we have made progress on certain issues, and this will make us stronger in the future."

Ms Savita Sharma, Himachal Pradesh: "There was enough time for sharing experiences and informal interaction, but the time for formal interaction was not sufficient. I wanted to discuss certain problems I am facing in the field. But there was no time for this. As far as the forum as a whole is concerned, it has been a grand success."

Mr. G.S. Mandal, West Bengal: "We had many expectations at the beginning. Some were met, some were not. The best that has been achieved is the sharing of experiences. We learned how others faced constraints and continued to move ahead, we were able to discuss each other's strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, a clear understanding of joint forest management has still not been reached. There are some rankling controversies, such as who is a forester? how much of forest management should remain with the forest department and how much with the people? Such important issues require further discussion and clarification. People have gained some idea about the need for the forum, but follow-up meetings on more defined issues are needed. Here, we took up a great many issues in a very short time."

Ugyen Dorji, Bhutan: "This has been an educational, useful, and interesting meeting to share information. Taking in more HKH countries in the future will be useful. HIFCOM is the beginning of something very inspiring. I am optimistic this endeavour will be sustainable in the future."

Monica Manandhar, Nepal: "There have been excellent exchanges among the participants, as well as the opportunity to reflect on what is going on in one's own programme. It was also very enriching having cultural activities integrated into the workshop."

Narayan Kazi Shrestha, Nepal: "It is true we have had a good sharing of experiences. Now we need to get down to action. Clearly, innovative thoughts and activities are going on and we can learn from each other. We are clear that the role of people's participation is very essential, as has been noted and recognised by all of us here. This realisation should not end with the workshop but must be taken back with us to the field. I also want to thank the organisers for the excellent logistics' arrangements in getting us all here from so many different places."

A.L. Karna, Nepal: "The workshop has been very nice, with good sharing about community forestry experiences in various countries. We have learned a lot. We didn't manage time properly, however. The country paper presentations were too long, so we were unable to discuss topics in detail."

Madhav Ghimire, Nepal: "The workshop on participatory forest management was successfully conducted and was fruitful. I am happy to note that we have a common goal in managing forests for the good of the people. My personal goal was to learn about joint forest management, because we have community forestry in Nepal, and it is always interesting to learn about new things. We foresters generally believe in visual learning, and that part was missing. I really wanted to see some forests managed by JFM. Perhaps we can do that next time."

Prayag Tamrakar, Nepal: "It was especially good for me and my organisation to learn about the situation in Bhutan, and I am happy about that. My expectations were largely met, but the applied aspect of indigenous forest management by communities was not mentioned. These practices have been going on for a long time and, if we build on them, we can move faster in meeting the goals of sustainable forestry. Therefore they must be more widely considered and discussed."

G.K. Pradhan, Bhutan: "I am impressed that our colleagues were interested in Bhutan, though joint forest management and community forestry are not yet fully implemented. We are happy to discuss our traditional systems. Bhutan is lucky because of our relatively small population. I had high expectations of learning about social forestry, especially participatory management systems. I was impressed by other people's work and experiences. I would have liked to learn from Uttar Pradesh and the northeastern Indian states, but I really have no complaint. I am looking forward to future interactions."

DP Dhital, Bhutan: "A workshop of this nature with mixed disciplines is useful for solving particular problems. Regionally, we have the same types of problems and our goals are similar. We can share our experiences, especially our successes, easily. I feel it would be good to share failures as well. Hopefully at our next forum we can deliberate further. I want to thank ICIMOD and the Himachal Pradesh government for organising this workshop."

Nalini Subba, Nepal: "Congratulations and thank you to the organisers of the excellent workshop. This forum is an important initiative for the future. The results can only be judged when the action plans are actually implemented. The sharing of experiences at the workshop was good, but I think more could have been achieved by working in the direction of solving common problems. I greatly appreciate the openness of our colleagues from all countries, this will be important for sharing information in the future. I hope for wider participation and more output from our future interactions."

K.B. Shrestha, Nepal: "I came here without much information about joint forest management or participatory forest management in Bhutan. My interest was to learn more and that has been fulfilled. The initiative and establishment of HIFCOM was beyond my expectations, and that is a real plus point. The workshop has forged a common bond among participants to have something concrete on the ground."

M.L. Shrestha, Nepal: "I am thankful that the workshop gave me an opportunity to come together with the other participants. We have seen that our countries are at different stages of implementing participatory forest management strategies. We need to ask ourselves, to whom and for whom is forestry being practised? Seventeen years ago, Nepal was also very conservative, but there is now much more openness. People are seen as the real managers of the forests. I have learned a lot about joint forest management. You have covered more area in India than we have with community forestry in Nepal, but perhaps you need more openness. The workshop theme was not so clear, but it was a good introduction. I suggest the next time we have a concrete theme so that we can look back at our achievements."

A.K. Tikku, Jammu and Kashmir: "Thankyou to the organisers and especially to K.D. Sharma for his personal interest. All our countries face the same problems and our cultural values and heritage are also similar. One shortcoming was the lack of field officers from Himachal Pradesh, as the workshop was held in Himachal Pradesh."

M.J. Sharma, Jammu and Kashmir: "This was a good opportunity to meet and interact with colleagues from other countries. We are learning about joint forest management

and ways to shift more towards participation. I myself had a chance to rethink how to move towards participatory approaches during this transitional period of change. I am happy about the development of HIFCOM and wish it well. We expected more people from Himachal Pradesh. We also missed a field visit. I want to congratulate Mr. Gulati for keeping us busy throughout the day and for providing excellent entertainment in the evening."

P. Patnaik, Jammu and Kashmir: "I am grateful to ICIMOD for this opportunity to meet all the participants here and to share ideas on participatory forest management, community forest management, and joint forest management. Many of the concepts have become clearer after attending this meeting. We are sorry to have missed Anupam Bhatia's participation due to his indisposition. One major achievement of this meeting is the unanimity that HIFCOM should be established as a permanent forum. We look forward to more activities of the Forum and we welcome everyone to the November 1995 seminar in Jammu. We shall be happy to show you how we practise JFM in the field."

Discussion

Mr. Gulati thanked the participants for their free and frank comments. He said that the main objective of the workshop was to start a dialogue and initiate a sharing process, and that had clearly been achieved. The goal was also to bring everyone involved in participatory forest management together. The sessions were designed basically for ice-breaking; informality was the key to interactions rather than dependence on formal interaction alone. Despite the busy schedule, it was expected that there would be some time for interacting with local people, but most field sites in Himachal Pradesh were located far from Chail. Under the circumstances, it was thought to be a good idea to get together, share knowledge and experiences, and become acquainted in order to decide on a future course of action. The workshop had been successful in meeting this objective and had paved the way for future interactions.

Mr. Gulati then opened the plenary for discussions and comments. Representatives from different countries gave their impressions on how HIFCOM would be able to help them.

BHUTAN: Mr. G.K. Pradhan said that this forum would be our ultimate contact point for future sharing. In Bhutan, they were in a transitional situation. Bhutan had had traditional management until 1969 and now was initiating community participation. HIFCOM would be very helpful in this process. The forum would provide opportunities for learning and exchanging information in the future. He wished HIFCOM success, sustainability and action in the future. Mr. Pradhan especially wanted to thank and congratulate Mr. A.K. Gulati for his excellent organisation. On behalf of the participants, Mr. Pradhan presented Mr. Gulati with a book signed by all participants as a token of their appreciation.

INDIA : Mr. Mir Inayatullah noted that they had reached Chail after a long 26-hour trip from Srinagar to meet people from neighbouring countries. He said that the opportunity to represent India on the interim executive committee was a proud privilege for him. He felt that there was a lot of commonality, similar concerns, and problems. For the first time foresters were thinking about the common person. In his 38 years of service, he had seen many methods, but JFM and community participation had given new life to what the saints and sufis had always said, that survival of the plant and animal kingdom also depended on the recognition of the importance of human beings in the ecosystem. It would be pointless for foresters to confine themselves within the borders of demarcated forests only. They must come out of their self-spun cocoon and seek involvement of the people for whom they held the forests in trust.

Mr. Inayatullah thanked everyone for their openness during the workshop. He said that the group must meet others to see what they wanted from the forum. The next workshop could be made more field oriented. With cooperation and deliberations he saw a good future for the Himalayan Hindu Kush Regional Forum.

NEPAL: Mr. K.B. Shrestha stated that they could not question the functioning of HIFCOM. It had a great future, and, with the participation of other countries, it would be a wonderful forum for interaction for foresters and non-foresters alike. He fully committed Nepal to its future activities. It was heartening to see the commitment from high-level Indian foresters, the Inspector General of Forests, and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

The workshop had been successful in cementing a common bond among all of them. He congratulated and thanked all who had made the workshop possible, including ICIMOD and the DFFC staff. Mr. Shrestha presented a gift book signed by all the participants to K.D. Sharma, DFO, Chail.

Mohan Gopinath: Mr. Gopinath said he was pleased to have been able to come and share views with them all but especially happy to have been present at the birth of HIFCOM. Management of change was one of the most difficult things in the world, especially in larger organisations. He foresaw that HIFCOM would be able to guide the process of change in the right direction.

Dr. L.R. Verma, Vice Chancellor of the Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Forestry and Horticulture: Dr. Verma apologised for not being able to devote enough time to the workshop. Nonetheless, he found his participation rewarding. He stated that his current task would be to increase interactions among foresters, users, and others concerned with community forestry issues. He had been discussing this since his arrival the previous evening and had many new ideas. He also reiterated to colleagues from Nepal and Bhutan that his university was most eager to provide any assistance.

He was happy to have been able to participate in the session which led to the formation of HIFCOM. The forum should be not only a common platform for solving problems but also a very broadbased platform for many types of professionals to cooperate on developing strategies for protecting the fragile ecosystem of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

He mentioned that during his six months at the university, nine delegations had visited from Nepal, and that there were now requests from Bhutan and China. As an alumnus of ICIMOD, he found this increasing interest from other countries especially gratifying.

Mr. V.P. Mohan, PCCF, DFFC, Himachal Pradesh: Mr. Mohan mentioned that it was in March 1995 when the organisers first began thinking about this workshop and about how three organisations could cooperate in a participatory manner: the DFFC, ICIMOD, and DYSPUFH.

On the issue of time management during the workshop, Mr. Mohan thought that the time was more than adequate for the discussion of various issues. The residential facility was designed to provide opportunities for a great deal of formal and informal interaction. Four days were considered sufficient for this type of workshop.

He mentioned that field visits had been planned, but the more important theme of the workshop was to come to an awareness and appreciation that foresters were not so comfortable with extension, and that they were considered to be rather authoritarian. The main issue was a forum for self reflection on the need to be open and to be able to provide extension services. He felt convinced that foresters could bring about the desired attitudinal change. Once it was achieved, participatory forest management would be possible. What was essential was developing the momentum. They needed to move forward as a team, to try and see that these ideas were taken forward on the ground.

Finally, he thanked ICIMOD for giving an opportunity to the DFFC to hold this participatory workshop by inviting other foresters from Nepal and Bhutan. He noted with satisfaction that an institutional arrangement in the form of HIFCOM had been agreed to which would enable the ideas to be carried out even after the workshop. For all participants, the process was basically one of managing change. He encouraged the senior officers to take the lead and to carry this change down the line.

He noted that the cost-benefit ratio of the workshop had been very high. It was always an elaborate process to organise such a workshop. On the first day, the Forest Minister, Pandit Sant Ram, had asked him, "What will come out of this?" He had replied that the workshop would result in an action plan, and he was happy that this had happened. He congratulated Mr. Gulati for facilitating the workshop.

The workshop concluded with the participants giving three cheers for the future success of HIFCOM - The Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management.