



Workshop Background

Evolution of the Process for the Forum

Forest resources play a vital role in integrated mountain development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. The last decade has witnessed dramatic changes in the approaches and strategies for sustaining forest resources in mountain areas. Participatory forest management has emerged as a successful approach in almost all the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. While the terms used may vary from community forestry in Nepal, to joint forest management in India, and social forestry in Bhutan, China, and Pakistan, the issues and challenges are similar.

Analysis and experience indicate that introducing participatory forest management has several institutional implications. Most national institutions responsible for forest management are facing new challenges emerging out of changes in policy and practice. The two areas most crucial for successful community-oriented forestry are policy and human resources' development. Despite considerable work in this area, there is still no organized and analytical body of knowledge and experience that can be shared as a basis for comparison among institutions in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

As part of its mandate to encourage regional exchange of successful approaches in forest management, ICIMOD has been involved over the past three years in establishing a regional forum of foresters in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. HIFCOM—the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management—was formed at a regional work-

shop organized by ICIMOD in June 1995 at Chail, Himachal Pradesh, India. The forum elected a regional committee from India, Nepal, and Bhutan, which included the Principal Chief Conservators of Forests from the hill states of India and the Director Generals from the Forest Departments of Nepal and Bhutan. The Inspector General of Forests, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, and the Director General of Forests, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, agreed to become patrons of HIFCOM. The regional committee has met twice since June 1995 and has developed a detailed plan of action to implement various recommendations.

The decision to organize a regional workshop with the title 'Participatory Forest Management: Implications for Policy and Human Resources' Development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas' was taken at a HIFCOM executive committee meeting held in New Delhi, India, in January 1997. The workshop was organized by the Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme of ICIMOD in collaboration with the South West Forestry College, Kunming, Yunnan, at the South Asia Scenery Garden, Kunming. Country studies on the theme of the workshop were commissioned as part of the pre-workshop process. These studies were carried out with the approval and under the guidance of forestry policy-makers in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan and were presented at the workshop.

A.1 ICIMOD's Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme

A mechanism to encourage regional learning and sharing

ICIMOD's Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme grew out of the realisation that one manifestation of increasing rural poverty in the mountain areas is the declining availability of biomass to meet people's basic needs for fuel, fodder, and even food. The reduction in the area and productivity of community resources, often called common property resources, and the ineffectiveness of state interventions to ensure protection, development, and the regulated use of such community resources—despite comprehensive legal, fiscal, and administrative frameworks—is leading to the further impoverishment of already disadvantaged people.

The failure of custodial state-adopted measures to protect and manage natural resources has lent urgency to the search for alternative development strategies and has led to the emergence of people-centred participatory management of natural resources. Such initiatives, involving participatory approaches to the development and harnessing of natural resources through community forestry programmes, farmer-managed irrigation systems, user group-managed pasture development, and joint management of forests, have been successful in Asia and other parts of the world. Most of these systems have integrated elements of formal approaches and of informal and traditional systems. ICIMOD has been closely associated with such efforts, particularly those relating to participatory forest management in the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region.

Participatory initiatives in resource management continue to be supported by different donors, NGOs, international agencies, and national governments (through bilateral arrangements). Many of the approaches and performances have been recorded by field studies, but many others have been poorly documented, especially those grassroots' initiatives producing innovative approaches used

to ensure both equity in obligations and rewards to the participants, and protection and upgrading of the resources. One of the key weaknesses in promoting understanding and learning from each other has been the lack of a mechanism to collect, synthesise, and exchange these varied experiences. Strongly action-oriented and often over-committed, the organizations involved rarely have the time, opportunity, or facilities for introspection, exchange, and thinking about the future. While donors encourage and support these new initiatives, they can rarely lead them. Most operate in a project mode and lack the perspective for a process that could systematically identify either the constraints or the technological and institutional means to address them.

ICIMOD's identification of this institutional gap in the region led to the development of the Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme in 1993. ICIMOD has a comparative advantage in carrying out activities related to participatory natural resource management, synthesising inter-country experiences to identify new directions and combine action research and field demonstration, and advocating and replicating policies and programmes. These result from ICIMOD's inter-country perspective and ability to study, observe, and work in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan countries; an operational flexibility and autonomy that allows for the testing of innovative, unconventional approaches; and a decentralized mode of operation. ICIMOD has, moreover, developed an understanding of issues and established contacts with the region's governments and national institutions.

A.2 Workshop Objectives

Sharing, reflecting and learning together

The workshop had the following objectives.

- To provide a forum to bring together senior policy-makers from forest departments of the mountain areas of ICIMOD countries to share strategies and approaches to participatory forest management

- To promote understanding of policies, rules, and regulations related to participatory forest management
- To gain insights into strategies in the HKH region for institutional development and for strengthening the capacity of forest departments to implement sustainable forest management
- To generate improved understanding of the implications of institutional change and transformation
- To share the concept of HIFCOM, to expand membership, and to evolve strategies for its institutionalisation

A.3 Participants

Policy-makers as the major stakeholders

The workshop participants were drawn from among senior forestry sector policy-makers in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The key participants were the forest policy-makers, including those involved in the preparation of the policy studies and those already involved in HIFCOM. Participants were also invited from various bilateral, multilateral, and non-government institutions involved in participatory forest management in the region. A total of 80 participants attended the workshop. The List of Participants is given in Annex 1.

A.4 Workshop Methodology and Design

Embracing diversity and providing an enabling environment

One of the major challenges identified during the design of this workshop was based on the analysis of the participants and the languages they would bring to the workshop. It became clear that there would be two broad groups of participants: about half of the participants would come from China, while the other half would represent six other countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. While many participants from China are familiar with English, there was some concern that a number would not be very conversant with the language. Thus, it was decided that two languages would be used at the workshop—English and Mandarin Chinese. The use

of two languages had implications for the management of the workshop, and the workshop plan was designed to take this and other important considerations into account. Arrangements were made for several professional interpreters to be available throughout the workshop. The full workshop programme is shown in Annex 2.

A core committee was created to manage the workshop, the members drawn from among professional foresters in Nepal, India, and China. The workshop opened with an informal welcoming session designed to offer an opportunity for participants to meet and interact with each other. The following morning was devoted to the formal inauguration.

The core intellectual component of the workshop was designed around eleven national and sub-national studies from the seven participating countries. Most of these studies had been prepared using a common conceptual framework (see Annex 3). These studies were presented in plenary sessions in both workshop languages (using simultaneous translation). Small groups were formed for discussions following the plenary presentations. Each group was provided with an interpreter. The major contents of these discussions were clarified and summarised in the evening and presented in a plenary session at the next full workshop day to provide an opportunity for further discussion and sharing. Linkages were created from the syntheses of the group discussions and fed as guidelines into subsequent workshop sessions.

The last day and a half of the workshop was devoted to discussing the concept of HIFCOM, seeking comments and inputs on and endorsing its mission and objectives (Annex 4), electing new national and regional HIFCOM committees, and holding a meeting of the newly constituted regional committee.

As a build up to the workshop, and to ensure that the Chinese participants were brought up to date on the status of participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and the institutional process of HIFCOM, several key

documents were translated from English to Mandarin Chinese. These included the workshop background and objectives, the constitution and the mission statement of HIFCOM, and the texts of several key speeches. In addition, an ICIMOD workshop report on community forestry and an accompanying film were translated into Chinese and formally released at the workshop.

These steps were designed to ensure that the workshop provided a high level of communication and sharing between all the participants

and that language was not a handicap during workshop deliberations. In order to maximise opportunities for interaction, the workshop was held at a venue just outside the city of Kunming, in a residential environment.

A.5 The Workshop Programme

A brief overview

Table 1 shows an overview of the workshop programme. The detailed workshop programme is given in Annex 2.

Table 1: Workshop Programme, 7-12 MAY 1998

Date	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
7 May 1998 Thursday		Arrival and registration Welcome Session	Dinner at the South Asia Scenery Garden
8 May 1998 Friday	Formal Inauguration	Country presentations	Visit to national minorities village
9 May 1998 Saturday	Country presentations	Group discussions	
10 May 1998 Sunday	Field visit	Visit to South West Forestry College	Cultural programme and dinner at South West Forestry College
11 May 1998 Monday	Plenary Session Introduction to HIFCOM HIFCOM Country Groups	Presentations from Country Groups Closing Ceremony	Farewell Dinner
12 May 1998 Tuesday	HIFCOM Executive Committee Meeting	Departure of Participants	