

# **D** Strategic Issues for PFM in the HKH

*Exploring the Advantages, Alternatives, Obstacles, and Policy  
Implication*

The country presentations provided an appropriate backdrop to initiating discussions on identifying strategic issues for participatory forest management (PFM) in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, particularly those that have implications for policies, programmes, and human resource development.

To facilitate discussion, five mixed-country groups were formed in which participants shared their experiences of PFM. Group discussions concentrated on certain key issues. Following a group discussion guideline, each group first examined what each member of the group considered PFM to signify. Next, the groups analysed the viability of PFM and examined alternatives. If they considered PFM to be a viable option, participants were asked to share their ideas about the advantages of PFM and how it could be made more effective, and to identify factors and causes that contribute to successful PFM, and factors and barriers that hinder it.

Each group presented the highlights of their discussion in a plenary session where they were discussed and collated. This section describes the major strategic issues identified for the development and promotion of PFM in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

## **D.1 Strong Endorsement of PFM as a Viable Option**

There was a consensus that PFM was a viable option for sustainable forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. The emergence of policies on PFM in the countries of the HKH was

an indication that this had been recognised. Other options to meet national and local needs were also pointed out, and it was stressed that there was a need to translate these policies into sustained implementation.

## **D.2 Lack of Alternative Options for Forest Management**

No concrete alternative approaches to PFM for sustainable forest management were identified. The past custodial approaches by government institutions had not been very successful in maintaining the extent and the quality of forest resources, in meeting the needs of local communities, or in meeting the needs of the country. This underlined the strong endorsement of PFM by the participants for resource conservation, sustainable management, and community development.

As a future strategy, it was recognised that the involvement of local communities was critical and that there were a number of forest management models incorporating varying degrees of community participation. The example of Nepal was cited as a country where there are legal provisions to manage forests as community forests, leasehold forests, religious forests, private forests, or national forests. The diversity of PFM approaches in the HKH was recognised, as were the opportunities for cross-country learning.

## **D.3 Forest Types and Areas Appropriate for PFM**

With the exception of Nepal, all the countries of the HKH only implemented PFM in degraded

forest areas. This was identified as a very important issue for the future of PFM. It was felt that if the governments persist in only implementing PFM on degraded lands, then local communities would have an incentive to degrade existing forests. It was argued that handing over of good quality forests to local communities was an appropriate preventative measure against further forest degradation. The current policy framework that excludes well-stocked forests from being brought under community management systems needs urgent review.

#### **D.4 Equity and Gender**

Equity in sharing benefits and real participation of women and disadvantaged groups were emphasised as important factors in the success of PFM. Lack of concern for equity would lead to conflicts and undermine any collaborative work, whether within a community, between communities, or between communities and forest departments.

Attention to gender issues was considered very important for development in all the countries of the HKH, including development of PFM. Development of innovative strategies in improving gender relations and in promoting the role of women in decision-making on issues related to the governance and management of forests will continue to be high on the PFM agenda in the region. It was clear from the discussions that the participants attached great importance to this issue. The major gap between policy and practice on equity and gender issues was highlighted.

#### **D.5 Benefit Sharing Arrangements**

There is a diversity of arrangements for sharing forest products and income from forests between the government and the local communities in the countries of the HKH. In Nepal, the forest user groups retain all products and income generated, whilst in most other countries there is a sharing of benefits. Where benefits are shared, there is often inadequate clarity about whether it is the gross or the net benefit that is to be shared. A need for clarity

was felt, and there was a debate on what constituted a fair sharing arrangement. This issue is of great importance, and it is unlikely that the same approach will be effective in all countries. Stakeholders, and especially the local communities, will need to be included in negotiations on fair sharing arrangements. This has to be done with a sense of urgency, as the absence of clear benefit sharing arrangements could undermine the trust of communities and have a negative effect on the promotion of PFM.

#### **D.6 Human Resource Development (HRD) Challenges**

Capacity building through effective training for different stakeholders was considered to be very important. Traditional forestry training does not include bottom-up planning and does not address the training of local communities or the incorporation of social aspects in forest management adequately. HRD encompasses not only formal training but also a range of other activities that provide learning opportunities. The issue of motivation and incentives was considered very important, as well as that of changing the organizational culture so that organizations can be responsive to changing HRD needs and recognise, facilitate, and promote innovations.

The need to strengthen training institutions by upgrading their physical facilities and the need to improve the quality of trainers and material were also discussed. Shortage of trainers with adequate field experience was felt to be a great constraint to HRD, and the need to develop trainers from local communities was stressed. The need to improve formal forestry training at universities and other forestry schools was also highlighted. Most courses were felt to be too theoretical. It was noted, that in many cases, the curriculum had not been updated to reflect innovations in forest management.

#### **D.7 Attitude of Foresters**

The question of attitude was recognised to be closely linked with the training received and the institutional culture, including the history

of the forestry organizations. There is a need to change the traditional top-down attitude of foresters, which has been largely shaped by the custodial approach of forestry institutions, and to develop attitudes compatible with a more catalytic role that suits the concepts and approaches of PFM.

### **D.8 Sensitisation of Policy-Makers**

For policies to promote PFM to be appropriate, policy-makers must be aware of the current issues and concerns. Mechanisms to sensitise policy-makers needed to be developed. In many instances fear of failure causes people to underreport failure or only report successes, and this often results in a lack of true reflection on the appropriateness of policies.

### **D.9 Advantages of PFM**

The participants highlighted a number of issues pertaining to the improvement of the biophysical environment, better meeting of the needs of local communities, and effective resource generation and utilisation for community development.

#### ***D.9.1 Improved Forest Protection, Rehabilitation, and Management***

One of the major benefits highlighted was that PFM improves the protection and rehabilitation of degraded forests and helps to improve management of forest resources. PFM's role in enhancing a feeling of ownership and a sense of attachment to the resources amongst local communities was important for the sustainable management of forests.

#### ***D.9.2 Meets Subsistence Needs of the Communities***

Under PFM, communities themselves can set forest management priorities to produce those forest products that best meet their needs. Their subsistence needs can be met at a minimum cost and products can be obtained more easily. Increasing the quantity or range of forest products saves the time and labour of communities for obtaining these resources, and this

allows them to be involved in other productive activities.

#### ***D.9.3 Income Generation and Employment***

The role of PFM in increasing employment opportunities in plantation and other activities, such as forest product craft and trade, was considered to be a major advantage. Local communities can market surplus forest products and generate income which can be used for community development programmes. PFM also allows local community institutions to undertake other resource generation activities such as value addition and marketing, and they can mobilise other resources for community development.

#### ***D.9.4 Local Institutional Development***

One aspect of PFM is the evolution of community institutions to undertake PFM activities. Such local institutions are responsible for improving the participation of communities in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Furthermore, they develop policies on institutions and resource mobilisation and gender and equity issues at the local level. The evolution and development of these institutions is thought to exert an influence beyond community forest management. The institutions are thought to have an overall positive impact on civil society; communities learn to work in groups, to have their say, to resolve conflicts, to negotiate with 'outsiders', to run effective organizations, to plan effectively, and to implement those plans. These are all important facets of overall community development processes, and local institutional development in PFM is considered to enhance these community skills and actions.

#### ***D.9.5 Efficient Resource Utilisation***

PFM was thought to promote the optimal and efficient use of available resources. This was thought to result from the collaboration between the government, local communities, and other organizations. As more resources become available for rehabilitation, protection, and de-

velopment activities, there is also better scope for ensuring accountability on the part of all the stakeholders involved.

### ***D.9.6 Improved Relationship between the Government and Local Communities***

PFM contributes to building a relationship of trust and confidence between the people, the forests, and the foresters. It results in a synergy from the pooling of knowledge from all stakeholders and facilitates information sharing and improved management of resources.

## **D.10 Factors for Successful PFM**

The key factors identified for successful participatory forest management included appropriate policies, rules, and programmes; recognising local communities' capacities; adoption of a participatory approach; appropriate institutional arrangements; human resource development; commitment to learning and sharing; and appropriate donor support.

### ***D.10.1 Clear and Stable Policy Support***

Strong policy support and a stable policy were considered to be of paramount importance for successful PFM. Frequent changes in policy could have an adverse impact on the sustainability of PFM programmes. Clarity in both policy and the legal framework was very important.

### ***D.10.2 Presence of Appropriate and Timely Rules***

Policy is only a statement of intent. The presence of appropriate and timely rules is essential to ensure PFM policies are implemented as properly planned programmes. In many of the countries policies are present, but there are no rules and guidelines to support them. The participants considered this to be an important issue for the future of PFM.

Mechanisms to periodically review policies, rules, and programmes, to ensure the appro-

priateness and timeliness of government actions, were indispensable for successful PFM.

### ***D.10.3 Recognising People's Capabilities***

The emphasis on people and their capabilities was considered to be one of the most important aspects of successful PFM policy and programmes. The most important factors were people's involvement in the decision-making process from the planning stage to programme implementation and recognition and respect for traditional and indigenous knowledge. This recognition requires a change in the traditional attitudes of foresters who tend to value 'scientific' knowledge above 'traditional' and 'indigenous' knowledge and to consider local people to be a 'problem' rather than a part of the 'solution'.

### ***D.10.4 Stakeholder Participation and Community Involvement***

The thrust of PFM is on involving local communities and empowering them to enhance their decision-making role in local resource management. The need for their involvement in the very first stages of planning was emphasised. The PFM stakeholders do not just constitute local communities and the government, but also include others like non-government organizations and private businesses. These were identified as important allies in providing diverse services. Innovative strategies for fostering stakeholder participation were considered a major factor for the success of PFM.

### ***D.10.5 Appropriate Institutional Arrangements***

Without appropriate institutional arrangements, PFM could not be viable. Appropriate institutional arrangements include both government institutions and local-level community institutions. Government institutions needed to have structures in place that ensured that government staff could be in regular contact with local communities and be able to support their initiatives. This was singled out as a major determinant for the success of

PFM. Similarly, robust community organizations needed to be in place at the community level to develop and enforce community norms, help in conflict management, and lead participatory development planning and implementation. The role of the community institutions as representatives of the community able to work with the government and other institutions was also highlighted.

#### ***D.10.6 Human Resource Development***

Adequate numbers of government staff with appropriate attitudes and skills are indispensable for the successful implementation and promotion of PFM. Local communities may also need to be trained in new skills related to organizational management, mobilisation of people, and technical issues for resource management, all of which are needed for PFM. For these, training needs' assessment and training centres may be required. Regular updating of the skills of trainers and regular assessments of the usefulness of training are also very important.

#### ***D.10.7 Learning and Communication***

A spirit of learning by doing and of communication were also considered key factors for success. Although countries can learn from the experiences of other countries, 'learning-by-doing' is the best approach to ensure that policies and programmes are truly suited to the situation of the country. Communication needs to be improved, and feedback systems to policy-makers and communication between foresters and communities should be emphasised.

#### ***D.10.8 Appropriate Donor Support***

In many countries, donor support had been important in providing resources, facilitating HRD, refining policies, and implementing PFM programmes. Yet, donors needed to be sensitive to a government's overall policy, and their actions should be transparent and accountable. The participants felt that some donors attempted to put undue pressure on the government to implement standardised

activities in all places, ignoring mountain specificities and not considering the appropriate level of funding. Disregard of appropriate timing and the appropriate level of scaling-up of programmes often leads to failure.

#### **D.11 Barriers and Obstacles to PFM**

A number of barriers to effective PFM as identified.

##### ***D.11.1 Inappropriate Legislation***

Weak, complex, conflicting, and top-down legislation promotes confusion and leads to inappropriate PFM implementation. Lack of flexibility in rules to meet specific sociocultural conditions can also hinder PFM implementation. In many cases, other government acts and programmes need to be taken into consideration or even changed so that PFM policies and actions do not contravene these acts or programmes.

There should be appropriate policy guidelines and these should be backed by legislation. Legislation should be clear and simple. A stable forest policy, acts, and regulations are needed. Government legislation on PFM needs to be framed so that it complements other legislation.

##### ***D.11.2 Lack of Priority Given to PFM in National Programmes***

Inadequate priority given to PFM in national programmes leads to under funding, which results in inadequate human resource development and inadequate extension services. This remains a big obstacle for PFM in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

##### ***D.11.3 Inadequate Focus on Changing Attitudes and Behaviour***

Most country strategies for HRD do not explicitly include changing the attitude and behaviour of government staff as a priority. Attitudes and behaviour underpin many activities as well as the relationships between government staff and

local communities. The lack of focus on change has many negative impacts on PFM and community development as a whole. There will have to be a change in the approach of foresters and policy-makers from the top-down traditional style to a bottom-up participatory mode of working. All stakeholders should be committed; the will of the government, bureaucracy, and the people is absolutely imperative for the success of PFM. Mutual understanding and respect should be developed between all the stakeholders in PFM, and there should be coordination and cooperation, not only between communities and the forest department, but also between different government departments.

A comprehensive HRD programme should be developed for PFM. This is not just a matter of training staff or local people, it also involves offering appropriate incentives so that the training is effective.

#### ***D.11.4 Failure to Address Complex Social Factors***

Many forestry policies and programmes only take into account the technical and bio-physical aspects of forestry. However, for PFM, social, institutional, and political realities also need to be considered. At the community level, social customs, such as gender issues, the caste system, and economic disparity within the community, often lead to inequitable benefit sharing and conflicts.

There is a complex range of stakeholders in participatory forestry and a need to involve the different groups of stakeholders in decision-making. NGO involvement in facilitating communication and supporting extension services has been very important in some HKH, countries. NGO involvement in communicating policy and implementing programmes at the grass roots' level, an area in which many governments have limitations, has been particularly important for the promotion of PFM.

#### ***D.11.5 Lack of Transparency***

A true spirit of trust and collaboration can only take root if transparency is maintained in deci-

sion-making by the government and local community-level institutions. When policies, rules, and legislation are made without wider consultation, important issues are often ignored and this leads to conflict.

Many communities do not follow the rules, guidelines, and management plans, and there is a lack of transparency in their activities. These can lead to a disappointment with PFM and undermine its promotion. Lack of information and awareness at various levels exacerbates such situations.

#### ***D.11.6 Lack of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms***

If there are no appropriate conflict management mechanisms to deal with any conflicts that arise, this will seriously undermine programmes. Conflict resolution mechanisms need to be easily accessible, cost effective, timely, and consultative. As yet, none of the countries has any specific rules or programmes to address this issue.

#### ***D.11.7 Lack of Site Specific Planning***

Inflexibility in the rules, regulations, and programmes can mean that a programme unsuitable to a place is forcibly implemented. This insensitivity to site specificity will cause the programme to fail. This is particularly true in a widely diverse mountain region like the HKH.

#### ***D.11.8 Lack of Recognition of Usufructory Rights***

Lack of recognition of local usufructory rights leads to conflict between local communities and the government. This undermines a good working relationship between the stakeholders and PFM cannot flourish under such circumstances.

#### ***D.11.9 Lack of Security of Tenure***

Lack of clearly articulated security of tenure over land and products being managed by local communities under PFM can be a

disincentive for local communities to participate fully in PFM activities. This remains a major issue in the countries of the HKH region.

#### **D.11.10 Poor Involvement of Women**

Whilst the important role of women in natural resource management in the HKH region is well understood, practical policies and programmes to enhance their role, particularly in decision-making, remain elusive. This is an issue being faced by all the countries in the region and, without adequate emphasis on this, PFM is unlikely to be truly successful. PFM should make participation more effective by undertaking programmes for the empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups.

#### **D.11.11 Inequitable Benefits for the Poor and the Disadvantaged**

The success of PFM should not be measured simply in terms of the protection and regeneration of forest resources, but also in terms of whether or not it meets the needs of local people. In many cases, studies have shown that the poor and the disadvantaged do not necessarily benefit from overtly protection-oriented PFM. It is important to recognise this, and PFM programmes need to be sensitive to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

Alternative income generation is very important, especially for the poor and the disadvantaged, since the gestation period from planting to harvesting is long. Alternative income generating activities need to be implemented as part of the PFM programme in such areas.

### **E.1 Background to HIFCOM**

The Hindu Kush-Himalayas are home to well-known systems and other resources that provide life support not only to mountain communities but also to those in the plains. Currently, unrelenting pressure on the forest resources in the region is leading to declining biodiversity and threatening the whole ecosystem.

Upland forests play an important role in meeting communities' subsistence needs and contribute to mountain agriculture. In addition, they protect soils and river systems that ensure the productivity of agriculture in the plains. Continuing resource degradation in the mountains has led to growing concern and a sense of urgency to search for strategies that can ensure sustainable management of mountain resources.

have witnessed the emergence of participatory forest management (PFM) as a prominent approach. While the terminology differs from country to country, the issues and challenges for institutions are similar, and most national institutions charged with the responsibility for forest management are facing new measures of change. Sustainable PFM programmes have been found to be more successful when the forest-dependent people in the protection and management process are actively involved. Primary producers have increasingly begun to manage their own resources and are willing to create a policy and an institutional arrangement that gives local communities more control over their own resources. There is a prominent need for forest professionals who play a major role in promoting and protecting forests, to provide the impetus for future change in forest management in their respective countries.

#### **E.1.1 The Emergence of HIFCOM**

Consultations, an end analysis of the status of participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas by ICMOD in 1995 involved both a diversity of approaches to community