Facing the Institutional Challenge of HIFCOM-The HKH Forum for Forest Conservation & Management

Emergence of a Regional Mechanism to Promote Participatory Forest Management

One of the major objectives of the workshop was to "broadbase the concept of HIFCOM with all the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas" in addition to the founding member countries of Bhutan, India, and Nepal. To achieve this objective, a series of sessions were designed as part of the workshop. These sessions included plenary presentations on the background and objectives of HIFCOM, sharing the process of institutional development and the mission statement, seeking endorsement for the concept of HIFCOM, and identifying country specific issues and a regional plan of action for HIFCOM. This section provides a synthesis of these sessions.

E.1 Background to HIFCOM

The Hindu Kush-Himalayas are home to watershed systems and natural 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.

Government efforts alone are not sufficient, and solutions must be sought in the context of people's participation in forest management. Local communities have a symbiotic relationship with forests and should be partners in forest development efforts. For this reason, almost all of the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas have witnessed the emergence of participatory forest management (PFM) as a potential 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 paradigms of change. Sustainable PFM depends on the establishment of collaborative relationships between forest dependent communities and the forest departments involved in the protection and management of forests.

Forestry professionals have increasingly begun to recognise the role of communities and are willing to create a policy and an institutional environment 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 on and analysis of the status of participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas by ICIMOD in 1995 revealed both a diversity of approaches to community-

oriented forest management in the HKH region and a tremendous opportunity for learning and sharing between countries. Although some countries had national forums for developing the process of institutional change, there were no regional mechanisms that offered opportunities for inter-country learning. ICIMOD hosted a workshop in Chail, Himachal Pradesh, India, on the theme of 'Participatory Forest Management: Coping and Managing Change' in June 1995 to address this issue. This workshop was organized in collaboration with the Department of Forest, Farming and Conservation, Government of Himachal Pradesh, India, and brought together senior and middle-level forestry and related professionals from the three countries of Bhutan, India, and Nepal.

A diversity of institutions was represented at the workshop, including government departments, projects related to community forestry, and bilateral projects. Participants also came from international and government organizations and from forestry training institutions. The workshop focussed on the processes of change from conventional to participatory models of forest management and the kinds of institutions that are required to support this changing paradigm. The workshop participants concluded that the process needed to be analysed at personal, professional, and institutional levels in order to develop appropriate strategies that could nurture and encourage change.

One of the objectives of this workshop was to "explore the merit of establishing a regional forum, owned and driven by foresters, to promote and strengthen participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas." The concept of a regional mechanism was endorsed at this forum by all three countries and was named HIFCOM—the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management.

E.1.2 The Process of Building Ownership

The institutional process of HIFCOM started with the selection of a regional committee in June 1995 which was drawn from the found-ing member countries of Bhutan, India, and Nepal. Several national and regional consultations and workshops, and country specific and regional committee meetings have been held over the last few years. HIFCOM sub-country chapters have been created; and HIFCOM members have participated in the performance of sub-national and national studies on the status of participatory forest management.

In August 1995, a national planning meeting was held in Nepal in which professionals and policy-makers from Nepal were informed about the concept of HIFCOM. In September 1995, HIFCOM's First Regional Executive Committee meeting was held and the Mission Statement endorsed. It was also decided to draft a HIFCOM regional constitution. A sub-national workshop in Jammu and Kashmir was organized in February 1996. The Second HIFCOM Regional Executive Committee met in New Delhi in India in January 1997 to discuss and review the draft constitution. The workshop in China is part of the process of ensuring that forestry professionals take on the ownership and leadership for the institutional development of HIFCOM.

E.1.3 HIFCOM Mission Statement

The Mission Statement for HIFCOM was developed and adopted at the 'First HIFCOM Regional Executive Committee Meeting' which was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in September 1995: The statement is:

"HIFCOM is a regional institution committed to promoting and strengthening participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. HIFCOM is mandated to the holistic management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests, including wastelands. HIFCOM will aim to strengthen the capacity of local, national, and regional institutions in establishing participatory approaches in forest management".

HIFCOM aims to provide a regional forum in which forestry and related professionals from the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Paki-

stan have the opportunity to share their experiences in coping with and managing change related to participatory forest management. HIFCOM is designed to offer a forum for discussion of strategies and lessons related to the change from conventional forest management systems to participatory forest management approaches.

E.1.4 HIFCOM's Institutional Structure

HIFCOM's Executive Committee meeting, held in Kathmandu in September 1995, proposed the institutional framework as given in Figure 1.

This framework envisages a HIFCOM regional executive committee drawn initially from the national level committees in Bhutan, India, and Nepal. The national committees are mandated to establish HIFCOM in their respective countries, while HIFCOM Regional will focus on cross-country needs and issues.

At the first meeting, Action Plans were drawn up for HIFCOM-Nepal and HIFCOM-India. These Action Plans involved organizing national meetings to disseminate information on the concept, objectives, and role of HIFCOM in these countries, seeking legal status, and beginning the process of institutionalisation.

The Director General, Department of Forests, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, and the Inspector General of Forests, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, formally agreed to become Patrons of HIFCOM.

E.1.5 HIFCOM's Theme of Institutional Change

During a Planning Meeting held under the aegis of ICIMOD in April 1995, a group of forest professionals met to discuss the impact of the institutional change implied in the shift from custodial forest management to participatory forest management. A diagram was evolved to portray the three levels of personal, individual, and institutional change (Figure 2).

Forestry professionals operate at a three-core level. Personal and professional beliefs are the most immediate, and these have been depicted in the inner core. Foresters normally express their personal and professional concerns through the institutional environment within which they work, that is the forest department. And whatever their internal or personal beliefs, they are bound by a set of systems and rules. The internalisation process needs to start at the personal level and expand to the institutional level. The process of transformation has to be
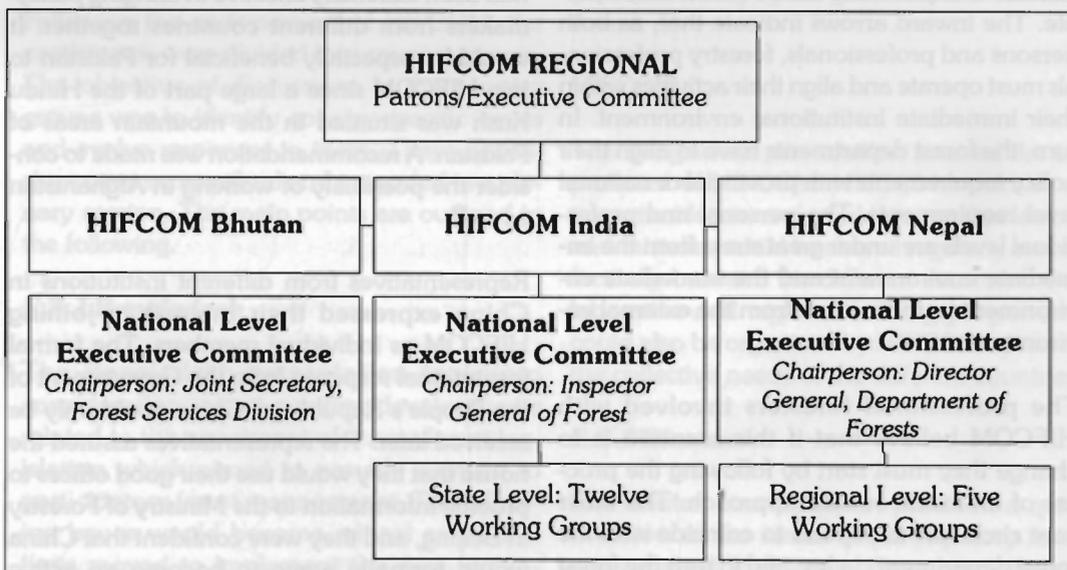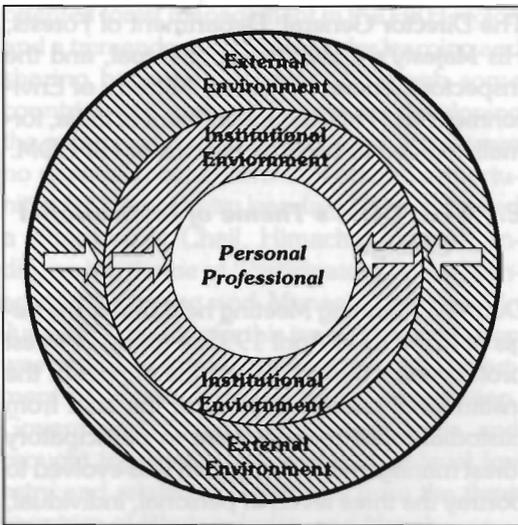
```
                ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                │      HIFCOM REGIONAL            │
                │   Patrons/Executive Committee   │
                └─────────────────────────────────┘
                               │
   ┌──────────────────┬────────┴─────────┬──────────────────┐
┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ HIFCOM Bhutan│  │ HIFCOM India │  │ HIFCOM Nepal │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```

HIFCOM Bhutan	HIFCOM India	HIFCOM Nepal
National Level Executive Committee *Chairperson: Joint Secretary, Forest Services Division*	**National Level Executive Committee** *Chairperson: Inspector General of Forest*	**National Level Executive Committee** *Chairperson: Director General, Department of Forests*
	State Level: Twelve Working Groups	Regional Level: Five Working Groups

Figure 1: Institutional Framework

Figure 2: Three Levels of Institutional Change

an inside-outside, rather than outside-inside, one. Ideally this process of change should be demand driven. At a wider level, Forest Departments do not operate in isolation. They operate and interact with all the other sectors of government and a diversity of institutions. The external environment within which the forest departments operate also influence the institutional environment.

If foresters are to follow an inside-outside approach, then they must look at the levels of stresses and pressures under which they operate. The inward arrows indicate that, as both persons and professionals, forestry professionals must operate and align their activities within their immediate institutional environment. In turn, the forest departments have to align their policy requirements with provincial or national level requirements. The personal and professional levels are under great stress from the immediate environment and the immediate environment is under stress from the external environment.

The professional foresters involved with HIFCOM believe that if this scenario is to change they must start by following the process of an inside-outside approach. The inner core circle has to expand to coincide with the forest department circles, and in turn the forest department circle must expand to coincide with

the external environment. In this way all three levels would operate in one big circle in which all four components are in harmony: personal, professional, forest department, and external environment.

HIFCOM aims to provide an opportunity for all the professionals committed to this concept of inside-outside principle centred leadership and change to achieve their aim

E.2 Strong Country Endorsements for the Concept of HIFCOM

The country representatives present at the workshop were unanimous in endorsing the concept of HIFCOM as an innovative and important institutional mechanism. They agreed that HIFCOM could not only assist in meeting the national objectives being pursued by different countries, but could also have a role in encouraging sharing and learning between the different countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

Bangladesh expressed a keen interest in becoming a partner of HIFCOM and participating in all future programme activities.

The representative from Pakistan said that HIFCOM, so far under the umbrella of ICIMOD, had been extremely effective in bringing policy-makers from different countries together. It would be especially beneficial for Pakistan to join HIFCOM since a large part of the Hindu Kush was situated in the mountain areas of Pakistan. A recommendation was made to consider the possibility of working in Afghanistan as well.

Representatives from different institutions in China expressed their interest in joining HIFCOM as individual members. The formal institutional response from the Government of the People's Republic of China could only be received later. The representatives assured the house that they would use their good offices to provide information to the Ministry of Forestry in Beijing, and they were confident that China would formally agree to become an active member of HIFCOM. The Chinese participants

stressed that their participation in the workshop had been extremely valuable, and they felt that HIFCOM could provide important learning opportunities that would contribute to improved forest management in the mountain areas of China.

Myanmar expressed an interest in becoming a member of HIFCOM and felt that since Myanmar was in the initial stages of implementing participatory forest management they could benefit greatly from HIFCOM. The formal assent for Myanmar would be sent later after due discussions with senior forestry professionals.

Representatives from the countries of Bhutan, Nepal, and India, who had been involved in the founding of HIFCOM, reiterated their desire to continue their involvement and welcomed the endorsement of HIFCOM from the countries of Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, and Pakistan. These statements laid the foundation for broadening the basis of ownership and concept of HIFCOM so that it could emerge as a truly regional institutional mechanism to fulfil the goal of participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

E.3 Country Specific Issues and Responses

Following the endorsement of HIFCOM, the participants were divided into country groups. The objective of discussions in the country groups was to identify country-specific issues and evolve responses to them. These discussions were summarised and presented in a plenary session. The main points are outlined in the following.

E.3.1 Bangladesh

The Bangladesh presentation took into consideration recent positive developments related to the enactment of a new forest legislation which aimed to provide support to participatory forest management. The following issues would become critical as institutions moved to implement the new legislation.

The Attitude of Foresters

While some professional foresters supported the concept and practice of community-oriented forest management, there were others who needed to change their traditional perspectives and attitudes. An institutional reform process was in progress, and a social forestry wing would be established with professionals oriented to support participatory forest management.

Policy and Legislation

Substantial work had already been carried out in Bangladesh, including a review of existing policies and legislation. In order to ensure that implementation took place and that participatory forest management was a success, it was important to continue to sensitise policy-makers so that potential barriers could be removed.

Need for a Comprehensive Human Resources Development Plan

There was a need to develop a comprehensive human resource development plan and to provide priority to training and capacity building. The institutional mechanism for training had already been incorporated in the institutional reform process and was expected to be approved formally by the government in the near future.

HIFCOM

The Bangladesh presentation stressed the importance of HIFCOM. HIFCOM would be an important forum and would ensure that lessons and mistakes could be shared regularly and effectively between the different countries. Collaborative and regional training programmes could also be organized by HIFCOM based on the collective needs of the different countries.

E.3.2 Bhutan

The Bhutan country report provided a quick overview of the status of participatory forest management in Bhutan. Since participatory forest management was in the pilot stage in

Bhutan, it was stressed that there were many opportunities for learning from within the region which could benefit professional foresters from Bhutan. The following were identified as the key issues.

Need to Simplify Policy and Legislation

While policies and acts related to social forestry had recently been approved, there was still a need to simplify these instruments. These rules have already been drafted and will be approved in the near future.

Need to Change Attitudes

Change in attitude was an important factor, and it had to start at the individual level and then spread to the institution. Awareness and opportunities for interaction with similar institutions in the region would assist in changing attitudes and widening perspectives. There is a need to be proactive through workshops, seminars, and forums.

Human Resource Development

Capacity building and training has to be an ongoing process to ensure there are sufficient adequately trained people for successful implementation of participatory forest management.

HIFCOM

The role of HIFCOM could be to disseminate experience and information among member countries and assist in the organization of workshops, study tours, and training. HIFCOM may also consider offering scholarships to outstanding and deserving foresters in the region.

E.3.3 People's Republic of China

The group from China reflected on and reviewed the present situation in relation to community-oriented natural resource management in China. The existing policies, rules and regulations, current projects, and the institutions involved were discussed in detail. The following issues were identified.

Policy Environment

One of the key issues in China is the policy environment which includes the planning system of the department of forests and the management system of government. Substantial discussion and reflection were required to ensure the creation of an enabling policy environment for the success of participatory forest management.

Capacity Building and Training

There was an urgent need to initiate programmes that would enhance the capacity of community institutions, scientists, and managers in participatory forest management. Training on concepts and tools for participatory methods was essential. The focus of training must give priority to frontline staff.

Demonstration and Research

There was a felt need to enhance demonstration activities and to undertake research so that lessons and failures could be identified and disseminated widely. It was also important to ensure that information was delivered to those who really need it.

Information Exchange

This was identified as a major issue. The group felt that information exchange needs to be strengthened substantially between the mountain provinces of China as well as between the different countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

Attitudinal Change

This problem was reiterated, and the urgency and importance of changing attitudes stressed. A change in attitude and belief was essential to ensuring the success of participatory forest management programmes.

Process Documentation

Learning from experiment and experience would only be valuable it these processes were

documented. It was necessary to enhance process documentation and to build a new capacity for the process documentation of research, demonstration, and innovation.

HIFCOM

A specific role for HIFCOM would be not only to assist with inter-country sharing and learning, but also to assist in establishing an institutional mechanism for inter-institutional sharing in China. Several options were suggested, and these included the possibility of forming 'HIFCOM Yunnan'. Key participants from Yunnan expressed an interest in initiating this process after the workshop. The process would include seeking formal support from the Ministry of Forestry in Beijing.

E.3.4 India

The group from India identified issues at different levels which included the individual level, the institutional level, the state level, the national level, and the inter-country level.

The Attitude of Foresters

The consensus of the group was that the attitude of the forester is not at all fixed. On the contrary, it has changed with the situation. The attitude has generally been reactive, with foresters reacting to views and comments from outside the institution. More recently foresters have become proactive and responsive.

At the individual level, increased interaction, both horizontal and vertical, at all levels would assist in broadening and changing attitudes. The forest department will need to take a more active role in promoting participatory forest management.

Sensitisation of Policy-makers

The group felt that HIFCOM could play an important role in sensitising policy-makers towards the imperatives of participatory forest management. Policy-makers needed to be informed and educated about the advantages of introducing community-oriented natural resource management in mountain areas.

Policies and Legislation

Greater action needs to be taken at the national and state levels on the issue of policy and legislation. The policy needs to provide clear support for participatory forest management. It was important to ensure continuity in policies, as frequent changes would be detrimental.

Human Resource Development

Steps need to be taken at different levels on human resource development. At the individual and personal level, foresters need to improve their skills and knowledge about participatory forest management. Once they have acquired such knowledge and skills, it would be their responsibility to ensure that they share and communicate these with their colleagues. At the institutional level, it is important to ensure that human resource development is perceived as an important and core function rather than a peripheral activity. In this context training of trainers, training design, and management of training should receive a higher priority at both the state level and the national level. In addition, a database needs to be developed of individuals and institutions that can provide high quality training.

Positive Approach to Conflict Management

The preparedness of the department of forests to manage conflicts needs to be enhanced and developed. It is important to approach conflicts with a positive attitude at both the individual and the institutional level. An open-minded approach will be essential to ensure that conflicts are resolved as early as possible and at the level where they originate. The role of state and national-level institutions will be important when conflicts arise between different government departments. Key national and state level institutions need to be involved so that training on conflict management can be brought into the mainstream in ongoing programmes.

Stakeholder Participation

It is critical to take appropriate steps to ensure stakeholder participation in forest management. Although the communities dependent on forest resources are the primary stakeholders, the forest departments with a responsibility for forest management are also important stakeholders. The process of identification of stakeholders needs to be institutionalised so that future conflicts can be prevented. Consultations at the national and state level need to be organized around the issue of stakeholder participation.

Commitment for Equity and Gender Considerations

The personal level is the most important level for ensuring that disadvantaged and marginalised groups are not excluded from the gains of forest management . A forester will need to have a high level of commitment and appreciation to ensure equity and gender considerations are not compromised. This individual level of conviction will form the foundation for leverage of institutional commitment.

HIFCOM

The group from India also felt that HIFCOM could play a pivotal role in the mountain states at both the state and national level. They noted that a large number of states that are not located in mountain areas have done interesting work on participatory forest management. This rich pool of experience should be accessed so that the mountain areas could benefit from their approaches and strategies.

E.3.5 Myanmar

The broad goal of the action plan for development of participatory forest management in Myanmar is to enhance the role of participatory forest management in promoting sustainable forest management and the socioeconomic well-being of rural communities while maintaining the environmental value of forest resources.

To meet this goal three key objectives have been outlined:

- to initiate human resource development within the forest department and the local communities;
- to enhance the status of livelihood of the local communities ensuring them benefits from participatory forestry programmes; and
- to enhance the capacity of rural communities, especially women, to diversify and augment their incomes.

Recognising that Myanmar has a long tradition of community participation in forestry development, a new forest law approved in 1992 allows individuals or communities to establish, maintain, and harvest forest resources. A new forest policy adopted in 1995 highlights people's participation and public awareness. Community forestry instructions were also issued in 1995. Plans are currently underway to implement community forestry oriented projects, and it will be essential to develop a new orientation and approach to forest management. It is of paramount importance to strengthen the role of participatory forest management in sustaining forest resources in Myanmar. To achieve this a comprehensive action plan is urgently needed for the development of participatory forest management, covering the emergence of enabling conditions, institutional strengthening and capacity building, the promotion of socioeconomic well-being, the provision of economic information and market intelligence, and the development of a rural-based forest industry.

Myanmar plans to develop action plans to promote participatory forest management incorporating the following.

Raising Awareness, Motivation, and Training Activities

Raising awareness on environmental issues will be targetted at primary school children and teachers. Training and strengthening of professionals in participatory forest management will be done at the local level.

Strengthening of Forestry Resource Management Activities

A participatory planning approach will be promoted to strengthen forestry resource management activities, especially in the formation of Village Resources' Management Committees (VRMCs). PFM plans will be developed, and transfer of land or issuance of User Rights' Certificates to local communities will be undertaken.

Income Generation Activities and Rural Credit Schemes

Recognising the need for rural poverty alleviation, credit committees will be organized for a rural credit scheme and income-generating activities will be identified.

Promoting a Participatory Approach to Development

Endorsing the importance of a participatory approach to development, programmes and projects will be developed on the principles of participation and equity and focussing on income, employment, and meeting basic needs. Mechanisms will be developed to promote joint management of natural forests.

Institutional Development

The Forest Department's institutional capacity will be enhanced to undertake reforms so that foresters develop a favourable attitude towards, and can work with, farmers and vice versa. Institutional development of local organizations and user groups will be a key area of work at the local level. Consolidation of forest resource management will be promoted through these groups.

Research and Extension Support to Participatory Forestry

Adequate research will be undertaken to support the biological and socioeconomic aspects of participatory forest management, and extension services will be strengthened to ensure close linkage between research, extension, and feedback.

Promotion of Woman's Participation

Women's participation in all forestry activities will be improved. Women will be provided with employment opportunities. Training and workshops on gender issues will be organized.

Legal Framework for Ensuring Rights and Securing Land Tenure

Work will be undertaken to abolish rules and regulations that discourage tree plantations on individual or communal lands and to promote security of tenure over land and resources.

Establishment of Demonstration and Experimental Plots

Demonstration and experimental plots will be established under various community plantation programmes. These sites will serve as learning centres for upgrading the capability of communities in tree planting and implementing agroforestry practices.

Establishment of Mechanisms for the Promotion of Joint Management

Mechanisms will be developed for sharing of benefits in Community Forestry programmes through preparation of statutory agreements and other legislative support.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Reliable monitoring and evaluation is particularly important for realistic assessment of the technical and institutional innovations associated with PFM. Effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems will be developed to obtain timely, relevant, well analysed, and clearly presented information for the planning and management of participatory forestry programmes and to support institutional development.

E.3.6 Nepal

The group from Nepal emphasised the need to focus on both the individual and the institutional levels. Appropriate activities could only be established if the institutional aspects were strengthened.

At the individual level, commitments made ranged from improving and sharing information, active involvement, ensuring reduced political interference, pursuing effective implementation of participatory forest management, and continuing to struggle against those forces trying to undermine participatory principles. It was necessary to involve all stakeholders and to contribute to a dialogue for continued review of policy legislation.

The group from Nepal also agreed to reform the HIFCOM committee and to finalise the constitution so that HIFCOM could be formally registered in Nepal. HIFCOM Nepal will seek the advice and approval of the government on the registration process so that HIFCOM can emerge as a formal institution and begin to play a proactive role in promoting and strengthening participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

The following issues were identified for future attention at the institutional and national levels.

Advocacy Role at the Policy Level

There is a need to play a professional advocacy role in the review of legislation, policy, and operational guidelines and to engage in a process that can propose constructive amendments.

Attitudinal Change and Reorientation

Encourage and support training and programmes that will lead to attitudinal change and reorientation, especially amongst professionals in the forestry and related sectors.

Human Resource Development

Support and improve existing human resource development programmes and focus on all aspects of the training cycle.

Equity for Disadvantaged Groups

Support should be provided for the involvement of disadvantaged groups at all levels with a focus on ensuring equitable rights. A forum needs to be developed that can raise awareness about equity considerations in community forestry.

Conflict Management

Support should be provided to individuals and institutions involved in conflict management. Conflict management needs to be introduced into the mainstream in policy, practice, and human resource development.

Involvement of Women

Women's involvement in participatory forest management needs to be promoted, and women representatives should be encouraged to join the executive committee of HIFCOM.

E.3.7 Pakistan

The Pakistan presentation took note of the positive changes in the realm of participatory forest management and identified the following issues.

Need for Compatible Attitudes

The existing bureaucratic attitudes are not compatible with the needs of participatory approaches, and both short and long-term measures are necessary to change this. In the short term, extensive training programmes will be needed for the staff of the forest department to sensitise them to modern and new concepts. In the longer term, there is a need to address fundamental issues of forestry education to ensure that a new type of social forester can be produced.

Need to Sensitise Policy-makers

There is a great need to sensitise all segments of society, but particularly politicians and policy-makers, in order to create a facilitative and supportive policy environment that is people-cen-

tred. Recently, organizations and pressure groups have been created that are able to discuss with politicians and policy-makers and assist in the formulation of suitable policies. There is a need for extensive sharing of information to encourage environmental journalism. Appropriate amendments and changes are required in the existing legislation. In the long-term, there is a strong need for comprehensive legislative reform.

Human Resource Development

Although extensive work is currently being undertaken on participatory approaches to forest management in various countries, exchange of such information and experiences is inadequate. There is a need for a facilitative organizational mechanism, and HIFCOM seems to be an appropriate vehicle. Focal points need to be established in various countries and regions to facilitate the flow of literature and information. High quality trainers need to be identified and a core group established. These trainers need not come from the forestry sector; they could be from different disciplines and organizations.

There is also a need to provide short courses, including workshops and study tours, at the regional, national, and local levels. The existing education and training institutions should review and develop curricula. A reform in the forestry education environment is equally important. Demonstration is an important component of human resource development. Training and concepts that have been tested elsewhere in the region should be established at selected demonstration sites. Based on the principle of "seeing is believing," these sites will assist in the transformation process of forestry professionals.

Conflict Management with Stakeholders

Multi-institutional collaboration and the concept of building triangular relationships between the forest department, local community institutions, and non-government organizations are an effective strategy for preventing and resolving conflicts. To involve stakeholders in partici-

patory forest management, it is important to identify the stakeholders first through proper stakeholder analysis. Another approach, which has been used in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan, is that of 'forestry round tables'. This approach will be replicated in other parts of the country to provide an opportunity for open discussion.

Involvement of Women

Policy support is critical for ensuring the involvement of women. Appropriate support is already provided in the new forest policies. The present rules of the department of forests do not discriminate on the basis of gender, but cultural barriers still need to be overcome. Efforts are also being made to ensure a gender balance through a process of institutional reform.

HIFCOM

The group felt that HIFCOM could play a very important and constructive role in many of the issues identified. Documentation and sharing of existing experiences and approaches would also remain an important role for the organization. HIFCOM could facilitate exchange visits between professionals in the region. It could play a strong role both through organizing workshops and training programmes, and more particularly by initiating a newsletter on participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

E.4 HIFCOM Executive Committee Meeting

After the critical issues had been identified in country groups and country representatives selected, the first meeting of the newly elected members was held.

The following executive committee members were present.

Mr S M Jalil, Bangladesh
Mr B B Chhetri, Bhutan
Ms Z. Hengfang, China (Observer)
Mr Z. Baohua, China (Observer)
Mr L. Quingkui, China (Observer)

Mr A K Gulati, India
Mr M. Sein, Myanmar (Observer)
Mr K B Shrestha, Nepal
Mr R Ahmad, Pakistan
Mr M Iqbal, Pakistan.

Mr I S Karki from Nepal sent his regrets.

The representatives from China and Myanmar were invited to the executive committee meeting as observers, rather than members, as they still needed to obtain formal clearance from their respective government institutions on the formal participation of their countries in HIFCOM.

The following decisions were taken by the executive committee.

Mr I S Karki, Director General, Department of Forests, Nepal, and Patron of HIFCOM, was selected unanimously as the new Chairperson of the HIFCOM REGIONAL executive committee.

Mr K B Shrestha, Deputy Director General, Department of Forests, Nepal, and National Coordinator, HIFCOM Nepal, was selected unanimously as the Coordinator of HIFCOM REGIONAL.

The executive committee endorsed the HIFCOM Mission Statement. It was agreed that changes to the mission statement would be tabled after the formal registration of HIFCOM REGIONAL

The HIFCOM REGIONAL Constitution draft would be circulated to all national coordinators and observers to facilitate the process of registration of different national and sub-national HIFCOM chapters.

HIFCOM national committees would draft their own constitutions and initiate the formal registration process.

All correspondence to HIFCOM national committees would be sent to the national chairpersons/patrons with a copy to the national coordinators.

All correspondence to HIFCOM REGIONAL would be sent to ICIMOD, Kathmandu, Nepal, till further arrangements were made.

The criteria for membership of HIFCOM national chapters should be compatible with the criteria evolved in the HIFCOM REGIONAL constitution. Any changes made to meet national and sub-national requirements should be discussed with HIFCOM REGIONAL prior to registration.

The Regional Coordinator was authorised to take whatever steps were necessary to initiate the process of accessing funds for the operation of HIFCOM.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the outgoing executive committee chairperson, Mr. Mir Inayatullah, and the other members for their valuable contribution to HIFCOM.

E.5   Closing Ceremony

Professor Yang Fucheng, President of the South West Forestry College, chaired the closing session. Professor Fucheng expressed his appreciation to all the individuals and institutions who had contributed to the success of the workshop. He also thanked the participants for their contribution and most of all for providing a strong commitment to HIFCOM. He said that this would go a long way towards helping HIFCOM emerge as a durable and effective mechanism to strengthen our common objective of meeting the needs of mountain communities and improving their quality of life.

Each participant was then presented with a lapel pin with the HIFCOM logo as a memento and reminder of the commitments made at the workshop.