

4 Status of Participatory Forest Management in Himachal Pradesh

4.1 The Evolution of Community Forestry

Participatory Forest Management (or Joint Forest Management, JFM) as commonly understood, seeks to develop partnerships between local community institutions (CIs) and the State Forest Departments (FDs) for regeneration and sustainable management of degraded public forest lands on the basis of sharing forest management responsibilities and the benefits of forest produce. Since most forest land near villages has been degraded to scrub or even cleared, there are considerable opportunities for introducing a participatory forest management (PFM) process.

The concept of PFM is not new to Himachal Pradesh. PFM existed in the erstwhile princely states and was codified and sanctified under British rule. It effectively disappeared from the time of independence to the early 1970s, when the emphasis was on afforestation, consolidation of the Forest Department, and the establishment of forest-based industries. A report by the National Agriculture Commission in 1976 emphasised the need to orient forestry programmes to meet the daily needs of rural people for fuelwood, fodder, and timber, and, in the 1980s, many donor agencies supported the implementation of people-oriented forestry programmes through special forestry projects.

The official basis for Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in its modern form was prepared by the National Forest Policy of 1988. The policy recognised the fact that the economy

and livelihood of rural people was dependent on forests, and thus that people and communities must have the first charge on the use of forest resources. The policy emphasised environmental protection and conservation, and meeting the requirements of the rural and tribal populations for fuelwood, fodder, minor forest produce, and small timber. It intended to create a massive people's movement, with the involvement of women, to achieve its objectives (GOI 1988). The subsequent Government of India Memorandum of 1990 laid the official foundation for (re) introduction of participatory forest management in the states. To date, 15 States, including Himachal Pradesh, have issued government orders based on this memorandum. Himachal Pradesh issued its order on Participatory Forest Management in 1993. Since then, participatory forest management has been the main thrust of all forestry programmes in the State.

Seven stages or generations can be identified in the development of PFM in HP. These periods are summarised in Box 4.1 and described in more detail in the following sections. To facilitate understanding, the local people and communities living in and around the forest are described as "insiders", and all others as "outsiders."

4.1.1 First Generation PFM—Up To 1850

The concept of PFM existed in a rudimentary form in the era of the erstwhile princely States. The kings allowed limited rights to the general public in the use of forestry resources, and special

BOX 4.1

Generations of Participatory Forest Management in Himachal Pradesh

1st Generation: up to the 1850s

Period of usage and customary rights, the era of Princely States—The kings were the outsiders and decision-makers. Communities had no role, all rights enjoyed were at the pleasure of the king.

2nd Generation: 1850-1950

Period of codification of rights, the era of British Rule—The British replaced the kings as outsiders and decision-makers. Customary rights were recognised, given official sanctity, and codified in forest settlements. All decisions were still made by the outsiders—the British—but communities were consulted during the settlement of rights. The involvement of people was sought through the setting up of Forest Cooperative Societies in Kangra District from 1940 to 1954.

3rd Generation: 1950- 1975

Period of metamorphism, indiscriminate use of rights after independence—The local forest officers replaced the British as outsiders. This was a period of 'no decision'. The insiders continued to exercise their rights at increasing levels and forest resources started showing signs of depletion and degradation.

4th Generation: 1975-1980

Period of awakening, the beginning of social forestry—The outsiders, the Forest Departments, started preferring forestry schemes for insiders involving people and communities.

5th Generation: 1980-1990

Period of donor-driven social forestry, launching of donor-led social forestry projects—The outsiders, the Forest Departments, and donors, seek the involvement of insiders, much of the decision-making is transferred to donors, alienation of communities continues.

6th Generation: 1990-1993

Period of seeking community participation, National Forestry Policy 1988 and Memorandum of 1990 issued—Outsiders (Forest Departments) seek the participation of insiders in the formulation of forestry schemes. Insiders given limited decision-making powers within the existing classical framework of the Forestry Department.

7th Generation: 1993- onwards

Period of institutionalisation of PFM in the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department—Role reversal sought with outsiders (foresters) acting as catalysts and enablers, and insiders (communities) as decision-makers.

rights like hunting to the elite, the rich, and landlords who paid gifts (*nazarana*) to the kings. The kings made all the rules (as outsiders), granted *pattas* for land and grazing of cattle in pastures and forests, and decided the duties, obligations, and penalties of the communities (insiders). Non-compliance with the king's orders led to suspension of rights.

4.1.2 Second Generation PFM—1850-1950

After the arrival of the British in the 1850s, the kings leased out the forests for professional scientific management. Settlements of forest rights were started during the 1880s. These settlements codified the customary and traditional rights of the people to use forest resources. Rights were distinguished from concessions, but both

were very liberal. Working plans, although revenue oriented, laid down specific prescriptions for meeting the bonafide needs of the local people. For example, the right to grants of timber had precedence over commercial felling and were only subject to silvicultural availability. Similarly, the right to grazing in forests was unlimited, and forests could be closed only with the consent of the local people. The use of forests as a common property resource (CPR) by communities, however, was subject to their classification as Reserved, Demarcated Protected, or Undemarcated Protected Forest. The different types of forest were not equally available.

The village common lands were also CPRs but the ownership was vested with the village communities. Creation of Class III forest (Undemarcated Protected Forests) and

recognition of village common lands created a balance between the use of forestry resources for national and other needs and meeting the bonafide domestic requirements of the local population.

People's participation in the management of local forest resources was sought directly in Kangra through the setting up of the Kangra Forest Cooperative Societies during the 1940s.

The Kangra Forest Cooperative Societies

At the Forest Officers conference of 1935 in Madras, the Chief Conservator Mr. H.N. Glover advocated formulation of a policy to develop village foresters. In 1937 the Punjab Government appointed a commission for Kangra district (under Sir Colin Gorbett) to study the difficulties experienced by people living in and around forests and suggest how these people could be integrated in the conservation of forests and how they could be encouraged to cooperate with the Forest Department. The commission recommended that the villagers should manage the forests in accordance with simple working plans, the government should ask for representatives of the people to participate in forest management, and villagers should share the benefit of profits accruing from the management of *shamlat* lands and reserves. *Panchayats* should be formed in the villages to explain this concept to the people and working schemes prepared for each village covering any *shamlat* lands and protected and demarcated forests in which the village had rights. If possible, the costs of management should be met from the proceeds of sales. Staff costs would be borne in part or whole by the Government.

The Punjab Government issued a notification in 1938 accepting these recommendations, and asked the Forest Department to implement it. The Forest Department suggested that the new village-level institutions to manage forests be called cooperative societies, since *panchayats* already existed in Kangra district. The Cooperative Department became interested, and the village-level Forest Cooperative Societies were born.

The conditions for membership, constitution of a general and a management body, nature of working plans, and management of cooperative funds were detailed in the Kangra Forest Cooperative Scheme of 1938. In 1939, the Kangra Village Forest Division was created to implement the scheme. The scheme was sanctioned in 1940 by the Punjab Government for 5 years with an annual grant-in-aid of Rs. 50,000. Between 1941 and 1945, 40 Forest Cooperatives were set up. The scheme was reviewed and extended for a further 5 years, with 21 more cooperatives established, and then for a further 3 years, with 8 more cooperatives set up. The scheme was then extended yearly up to 1956 with an increased grant-in-aid of Rs. 90,000 to introduce Forest Cooperative Societies in Hamirpur and Nurpur *tehsils*, and thereafter extended every year up to 1961. In 1961 it was extended for 10 years, but the grant-in-aid was limited to Rs. 50,000 and no new Forest Cooperative Societies were allowed to be formed. One more Forest Cooperative was set up in October 1954 taking the total number of cooperatives set up to 70 (Palampur division 15, Dharmashala 19, Dehra Division 10, Nurpur Division 26), with a total area covered of 23,562 ha. The types and amount of forest of land managed by the societies is shown in Table 4.1. A composite working plan for management of the cooperative forests was prepared by Rd. Rawal in 1968-69 for the 15 years up to 1982-83.

These areas were merged into Himachal Pradesh when it was created in 1971. The new Himachal Government extended the scheme up to 1978, but did not release any grant-in-aid after 1971. The activities of the Forest Cooperative Societies came to a halt in 1973. A Forest Utilisation Committee set up in 1974 to examine the scheme was abolished in 1977. In the absence of any orders, the Forest Department stepped in and took over the management of the forest cooperative societies' forests. The forest cooperatives still exist as they have been neither de-registered nor legislated under the Cooperative Societies Act but most are defunct as they have no control over the management of the forests. Since the ownership of forest lands by these committees was not recorded in the revenue

records, the unclassed forests, *ban muafi*, and *shamlat* were taken over by the government under the Himachal Pradesh Village Common land (Vesting and Utilisation) Act, 1974 and ownership shown as the Himachal Pradesh Government or Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. In this way, the initiative to involve communities in forest management begun in 1940 ended in 1971 with the formation of Himachal Pradesh.

Rajiv Ahal of the Working Group on Natural Resources in Himachal Pradesh has drawn a parallel between the objectives and activities of the forest cooperative societies and those of the village forest development committees (VFDCs) proposed under joint forest planning and management (JFPM). His report concludes that the village forest cooperative societies were a great success as a social movement, despite shortcomings. Instead of being strengthened, however, these institutions were made defunct, and now the same approach has been reinvented in the shape of JFPM.

4.1.3 Third Generation PFM—1950-1975

The delicate balance between the exercise of rights and concessions and duties and obligations continued smoothly until the 1950s. With the increase in population of both humans and livestock, the demand on forestry resources increased. Notifications issued by the GoHP in 1896, 1897, 1919, and 1952 empowered the government to bring all Class I, II, and III forests under the provisions of Chapter IV of the Indian Forests Act 1927; declared non reserved lands as Protected Forests, and restricted the exercise

of rights and use of forests as an unrestricted CPR. People had already started facing hardships (quantitative and qualitative) in meeting their genuine requirements. Then the Forest Departments responded to depleting resources by restricting the free access that communities had become used to and enacting more laws and rules. As a result people stopped fulfilling their duties and obligations. As more top-down target-driven forestry programmes were launched, people became alienated from the activities of the Forest Department, once their greatest benefactor. Non-judicious and unsustainable use of forest resources led to degradation and deterioration of forest land. The presence of Forest Department officials was perceived as a threat to the exercise of rights and concessions. The Forest Guard found himself in a helpless situation. His job evolved to one of ‘policing’, rather than assisting people and winning their support. Communication between the people and forestry departments virtually broke down, and suspicion and mistrust led to alienation of the people from the forest managers. Forestry programmes, which required negotiation of free access, were viewed with suspicion and distrust.

The problems were compounded by other factors. Liberal grant of *Nautors*, extension of agriculture and horticulture, allotments of common land and Class III forests to landless people during the 1970s and 1980s, and vesting of all types and categories of village common lands in the government through legislation in 1974, all led to mass-scale privatisation of CPRs in the villages, resulting in transference of biotic pressures from the buffer zones to the natural

Table 4.1: Types of Forest Land Managed under the Forest Cooperative Societies	
Category	Area (ha)
Reserved Forest	644
Demarcated Protected Forest	7,066
Undemarcated Protected Forest	12,215
Unclassed forest	2,708
Ban Muafi	69
Shamlat A1	94
Malkiati Shamlat (private shamlat)	429
Total	23,559

forests. This situation continued until the mid-seventies.

4.1.4 Fourth Generation PFM–1975-1980

Significant change in the forestry sector started in the mid-1970s with the release of the report of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976. This report provided the rationale for social forestry and admitted that the needs of the local people for forest products were not being met. It also stated that the free supply of forest produce to the rural population and grant of liberal rights and concessions had resulted in forest destruction, which must be reversed. Some foresters began to realise that the existing levels of forest exploitation could not be maintained, and that the classical protection models would not work. Rather than focussing on protection of the forests from local people, the local people should be directly involved in forest protection and management. This led to the emergence of 'social forestry'.

Several variants of social forestry, such as farm forestry, agroforestry, three-dimensional forestry (the three dimensions of fuelwood, fodder, and fruit), and people's forestry, were suggested in an attempt to halt the pace of degradation and address the forest-based needs of people more directly. Special 'Plantation Forest Divisions' were established and schemes prepared under three-dimensional forestry. The focus of afforestation programmes shifted to plantation of broad-leaved species.

4.1.5 Fifth Generation PFM–1980-1990

Between 1980 and 1990, social forestry brought a whole new series of actors on to the Indian Forestry stage in the shape of international donors. There was increasing donor interest in support for the forestry sector to supply fuelwood and other basic needs, and social forestry seemed to fulfill the necessary criteria. More than US \$400 million was received over a 15-year period in the form of grants and soft loans from donors, and 2.5 million hectares of land was reportedly afforested. Forest policy was no longer determined solely by national priorities, it was

now heavily influenced by the requirements of the international donors. In some respects, Indian forestry became "donor-driven forestry"

In Himachal Pradesh, plantation forestry was started on a massive scale on degraded forest lands between the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although this period saw the emergence of different 'social forestry' schemes, the strategies advocated and adopted were those of classical forestry management. The planning process was an 'add on' exercise and budgetary support heavily biased towards plantation forestry of a few typical species whose silviculture was well known. Meanwhile the alienation of communities whose subsistence depended on neighbourhood forestry resources was complete. Environmentalists started to raise the issues of need for preservation of the Himalayan ecology and environment, of forestry resources, and conservation of biodiversity. The Forest Department responded with more *ad hoc* schemes, seeking external support from bilateral agencies. Two major projects were implemented.

The Indo-German Dhauladhar Project (1980-1988)

The first bilateral project, the Indo-German Dhauladhar Project, was modelled on watershed development. This project was an integrated, multi-sectoral, rural development programme for the upper Binwa-catchment in Kangra district. It was launched in 1980 as a participatory development cooperation programme between the Government of India and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and lasted for 9 years. The main objectives of the Project were

- to rehabilitate the ecological system in the project area and achieve sustained improvement of the living conditions of the people therein; and
- to evolve a replicable approach to mountain region development in the Western Himalayas.

The aim was to attain these goals through effective dissemination of technical knowledge and sustained application of resource-conserving

production methods and creation of consciousness and motivation among the target population for sensitive and responsible management of their natural resources. The project was based on a concept of trust and confidence between the project and the people. The emphasis was on human relationships and getting people organised. Fifty-three village development committees were formed, but whether and the extent to which these are still functioning is not known. Various development indicators showed that the project achieved a considerable success within the period of activity.

The National Social Forestry Project (1985-1993)

In 1984, a World Bank assisted social forestry umbrella project, the National Social Forestry Project (NSFP), was launched throughout the state with the participation of USAID and IDA. This project was initiated to raise fuel, fodder, and small timber species to meet local demands with the involvement and participation of people in afforestation works. Although most of the forest activities under this project envisaged people's involvement in implementation, involvement of people and communities remained minimal until about 1990. The NSFP was originally scheduled to end in 1990 but was extended for 3 years. In the extended phase of the project a scheme called '*van lagao, rozi kamao*' was launched to ensure effective participation of local people in planting and protection and to provide employment. The total project cost was Rs. 570 million

The *van lagao, rozi kamao* scheme aimed in the first year to benefit 1,000 families by providing *kissan* nurseries to 200 families and entrusting raising of 2 ha of plantations to each of 800 families (1600 ha total). The overall target was to provide employment to 75,000 families and afforest 140,000 ha of forest and waste lands through continuation of the scheme over 10 years, but the scheme was discontinued within two years of launching. The scheme was intended to be implemented by setting up committees at state and district/block level, and through formation of Village Forest Development

Committees (VFDCs) in every village (revenue estate). This was the first official step by the Forest Department to formally set up VFDCs throughout the State.

An impact evaluation study of the project carried out at the conclusion by the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Himachal Pradesh University found the following on people's participation in and perception of the programme.

- Less than half of respondents were willing to use their wasteland for social forestry plantations, but 73 per cent of households had received seedlings through village-level workers and 60 per cent were satisfied with the assistance given by the Forest Department.
- Only 9 of 467 respondents appreciated the role of the Forest Department in the programme.
- Ninety per cent of the village institutions formed carried out plantations. They involved 56 per cent of marginal farmers in the plantation programmes. Nineteen of 22 institutions acknowledged lack of technical know how.
- In terms of development of forest resources for higher benefits, 32 per cent of beneficiaries wanted development of government wasteland, 17 per cent development of community lands, and 36 per cent development of their own land.
- Fifty-four per cent of respondents wanted distribution of benefits on an equal share basis, and only 10 per cent on the basis of the labour contributed in the social forestry plantation.
- On average each family was willing to contribute 20 and 14 person days per year to the social forestry plantation for planting seedlings and protection, respectively.
- Half the respondents expected to receive more grass from the community rainfed plantations.
- Nearly 90 per cent of families were aware of the social forestry programme.
- Fourteen village *panchayats* wanted a supervisory role, and eight wanted motivation of the people.

Summary

Although the central theme of the two major donor-funded projects was sustainable development of forestry resources to meet the needs of the local people, the implementation remained very much traditional forestry management oriented. The projects remained target driven and were implemented as any other forestry scheme. The gains were modest and could not be sustained after the projects ended due to the lack of institutionalisation mechanisms.

4.1.6 Sixth Generation PFM-1990-1993

The earliest social forestry programmes had focused on individual people as the main beneficiaries, but later the programmes were modified to focus on communities rather than individuals. The social forestry style of forest management was not as successful as anticipated, as it failed to make any appreciable change from demand-led use of forestry resources to user-led utilisation. The degradation of forestry resources continued unabated.

Analysis of the general failure (but occasional success) of foresters to win over the support of the local communities and arrest the continuing degradation of forests revealed the following situation.

- There was hardly any perceptible change in the forestry management practices and style of functioning of foresters.
- Attempts to reverse people's alienation were made within the existing framework of the state controlled Forest Department.
- The period was characterised by "Forestry for the People" by the state on the people's own lands.
- The Forest Departments were still 'donors' and the communities 'recipients', rather than partners.
- Community forestry was successful in situations where communities were faced by a famine of forestry resources.
- Social forestry approaches were not supported where communities still had abundant or adequate resources.

- The radii of use of forestry resources had become so enlarged that communities in general and women (in particular) were facing great hardships and forests were degrading fast.
- Participatory decision-making and decentralised management were unfamiliar concepts for the Forest Departments.
- The institutional set up of Forest Departments was not adequately geared to meeting the new challenges.
- Foresters lacked the necessary sociological and communications skills and extension mechanisms.

Between 1990 and 1993, the donor driven emphasis on the involvement of people in forestry programmes continued with the extension of the National Social Forestry Project and the launching of another World Bank aided project, the Integrated Watershed Development Kandi (Hills) Project, in the lower Siwalik hills.

The Integrated Watershed Development Kandi (Hills) Project (1990-1998)

This project was planned to cover the ecologically fragile areas of the lower Siwaliks in the catchment areas of five rivers that are strategically important and environmentally sensitive. Its main aim was integrated multi-disciplinary low cost *in situ* biological soil and moisture conservation to arrest the degradation of the natural environment, with overall emphasis on creating an enabling environment for greater people's participation in the management of their natural resources. The project became operational on 9th June 1990 with a total provision of Rs. 370 million, including a 20 per cent state share of the total credit. The project was initially planned for a 7-year period and has been extended for one year up to June 1998.

The project is being executed by the Department of Forest Farming and Conservation with the assistance of line departments like Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Soil Conservation. The project extends over the watersheds of the Markanda, Ghaggar, Sirsa, Swan, and Chakki

rivers, which have a total area of about 3,013 sq.km. Around 500 sq.km. or 50,000 ha of the total, comprising 18 sub-watersheds, was to be taken up during the project period. During the first 3-year pilot phase an area of about 18,000 ha was taken up in 6 sub-watersheds, and the remaining area added after a mid-term review. The overall aims and objectives of the project are:

- to slow and reverse the degradation of the natural environment through the use of appropriate soil and moisture conservation technology;
- to conserve soil and water;
- to increase and improve the production and income from crops, horticulture, fodder, fibre, fuelwood and livestock through the process of soil and water conservation; and
- to reduce flooding and devastation caused by degradation of soil.

Although various indicators of success showed that considerable gains were made, people's participation was still lacking.

Summary

Both the Social Forestry and the Kandi Projects were essentially implemented like any other Forest Department scheme within the bounds of government rules and regulations. Although Village Development Committees were created, this was at the instigation of the Forest Department, rather than people's interest in managing their own resources sustainably. Little success was achieved in seeking people's cooperation, and most of the more than 4000 VDCs constituted during the social forestry era (1985-1993) are now defunct.

The period up to 1993, however, set the scene for the introduction of genuine PFM. Not only did people become more aware of the limitations of the approaches used, the Government of India also laid the foundations for PFM with promulgation of a new people-centred forest policy, and issuance of the 1990 Memorandum.

4.1.7 Seventh Generation PFM—The Situation Today

Criticism of the Forest Department's directive style of implementing PFM increased during the second phase of the Social Forestry Project (1990-1993). Foresters were labelled as inelastic, foes of the people and not paying any heed to their needs. Forestry management under the long-term macro-level working plans was accused of being too technical and devoid of sociological considerations. Moreover, it was considered revenue oriented and propelled by the state's economic considerations rather than by people's economic requirements. At the same time, the foresters, while conceding the need to strive for people's support, did not want to lose their position of authority and control over forest lands and resources.

The critics of foresters failed to realise that management and assimilation of change was not easy for the foresters, or for that matter for anybody. Even the communities were heavily structured and often too fragmented to undertake rational management of an open access resource. There are other important issues involved too. The increasing grazing and fuelwood problems are more of a social than a management issue and are a direct manifestation of the gradual elimination of CPRs. Privatisation of CPRs in the villages has transferred the biotic pressure from within the precincts of the buffer zone to the natural forests. Previous efforts to control excessive fuelwood removals and unabated grazing in forests and pasture lands failed for socio-political reasons. The pressure is so high that even closed plantation areas and regeneration areas are raided for grazing. These "biotic" pressures can only be managed through the willing participation of those involved. A new management strategy would not only require an attitudinal change amongst the foresters but also amongst the communities. This is a difficult task given the non-homogenous social situation in villages, in which equity and fair play is more the exception than the rule. Empowering the weak and the disadvantaged people in community institutions is bound to

be equally, or even more, difficult than asking foresters to shed their hegemony and turn into facilitators. Whereas the latter can be achieved by a fiat, the former requires a massive grass root sociological movement. This is a twilight zone, which will not only require academic discussions but also practical demonstrations. Conscious of the criticism and the failure to gain people's support, the Forest Department attempted to look at the issue of people's participation in a realistic and practical manner, taking into account the interests of all forest users and developing participatory strategies to meet these as far as possible.

The important issues on which forestry development in the state depended were identified as

- sustainable management of forestry resources;
- strengthened community participation at all levels;
- active involvement of women, the real end users in the villages; and
- re-orientation of the attitude and role of Forestry Department personnel, especially Forest Guards, from protection to enabler and agent of change.

Participatory processes need to be introduced to educate people and solicit their cooperation. Since forest lands near villages are mostly degraded to scrub, or even blanks, there is considerable opportunity to introduce participatory forest management under the terms of existing legislation (which does not apply to forest in good condition). Introduction of PFM in Himachal Pradesh is challenging, however, because of the complexities of existing rights and privileges. Hitherto, foresters have considered rights and privileges as an obstacle and a threat to the existence of the forests. The challenge is to convert these threats into opportunities and recognise them as the stake people have in maintaining the health of the forest eco-system.

At the time this evaluation was proceeding, the Forest Department (FD) was negotiating two more major forestry projects, one with the ODA-

UK and the other with GTZ, Germany. During the discussions leading to formulation of these projects, it was realised that to address the issue PFM has to incorporate bottom-up planning and shift the focus from individual people to user communities, linking the strategy with the sustainability of people's livelihoods and forestry resources. The new PFM programme was renamed Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM).

The need to introduce PFM as JFPM arises from three inter-related issues:

- the forest department doesn't have sufficient organisational capacity to control forest land degradation;
- local people have no or very little interest in protecting forest resources unless they benefit directly and have sufficient authority to effectively protect the resources;
- JFPM (micro-plan) and technical (macro) working plan activities cannot be compartmentalised and separated. They must complement and supplement each other.

In the new JFPM strategy, the process of people's participation will not start with VDC formation, rather it will culminate with VDC formation. VDC formation will not be a means to an end but will evolve through a process approach, following a logical sequence of systematically designed activities to facilitate evolution, rather than being determined by Forestry Staff. In JFPM, the capacity of the resource to supply the demands, even if unsustainable, will play the crucial role in determining participatory interventions. This will necessitate a fundamental re-orientation of the role of the Forest Department from policing/adversarial to one of enabler and provider of technical advice, inputs, and land resource.

If the new symbiosis 'people-forest-foresters' is to become effective (or restored), it is necessary that the attitude of foresters towards people change. The attitudinal change has to come first within the DFFC, which at present has a vertical top-down DFFC hierarchy. The top-down approach has to yield to consensus,

consultations, and team spirit. Each official at every level has to become an extension worker, and a facilitator. Sociological skills need to be developed and learned. A good beginning has been made in this direction within the DFFC but it needs to be nurtured and to spread to all parts of the state. The foresters must develop an extension approach and bring the “green revolution” to forestry through voluntary participation. Emphasis is being laid on the training of field staff, especially forest guards, in communication skills and participatory approaches. The forest guard is the ultimate interface between the DFFC and the people, and thus plays a very important role. Simultaneously there would be a need to instill confidence in the people, and change their attitude towards foresters and forestry. NGOs could have a key role to play in bridging the gap of confidence. The task of transformation from a directive style of forest management to a participatory style is not easy. But one thing is clear; foresters have now realised that people will look after forest resources effectively if they benefit directly and have sufficient authority to manage and protect them. This realisation must be supported and

reinforced. The basic strategy for the introduction of JFPM is summarised in Box 4.2.

The legal framework for the introduction of JFPM was provided by the Government Order (GO) on Participatory Forest Management issued by the GoHP in May 1993, a direct follow-up of the GOI Memorandum of 1990. The text is given in Annex VIII. This GO was the first step towards empowering communities to manage their forests. It also offered an opportunity to convert informal village-level institutions like *mahila mandals* into formal village development institutions with participation by all on equitable principles. The special features of the GO are as follow.

- The village is taken as the unit for village-level forest management organisation, with uniform representation for all households (all users and a 50 per cent quorum for decision-making).
- It focuses on the special role of women (at least one woman from each household in the General House body (GH) and 50 per cent in the Executive Body (EB)).

BOX 4.2 **The JFPM Approach**

Introduction of the JFPM process in carefully selected pilot locations that have become degraded and are near habitations. JFPM will not effect local people's rights in forests which have not become degraded. These forests will continue to be managed under working plans.

Integration of the JFPM process into working plan forestry will be explored taking a holistic view of forest management. It is hoped this will improve existing forestry working plans and lead to the evolution of forestry practices that can more aptly be described as “people's silviculture” (such things as shrubs, grasses, and species' mix, including rotations and spacing) in harmony with “forester's silviculture.”

Large-scale capacity building programme within the Forest Department. It is meaningless to develop JFPM unless forestry staff are convinced of its value. Re-orientation of forestry staff, and training them in communication skills and extension approaches, will play a vital role in the success of JFPM. Training facilities will be upgraded at the state forestry school. JFPM support teams will be established from within the staff and given special training. These support teams will arrange training of local territorial staff and initiate the information collection process necessary for JFPM. The ultimate aim is to train and equip the forest guards for their role as the active interface between villagers and the FD. The forest guards will ultimately facilitate the establishment of village-level organisations.

Special emphasis is laid on **creating awareness amongst people**. The role of NGOs will be particularly important in this regard. At present, hardly any NGOs are active in this direction in the state. The NGO movement will be encouraged and supported.

- It ensures initiation of PFM as a process rather than a blueprint, has no targets, and advocates consultation and negotiation between FD staff and forest users along with a communication and meetings' structure.
- It allows planning, management, and use of forest lands and outlines a possible mechanism for sharing of usufruct.
- It includes a mutually binding agreement describing amongst others PFM activities, respective roles, responsibilities, duties, powers, and rules for both the partners.
- It is very short, not very prescriptive, and allows a fair degree of freedom and flexibility for foresters in the field to experiment and respond differently to different field situations.

4.2 Present Status of PFM

The new JFPM approach is being tried out within the two projects, the **"Indo-German Changer Project"** supported by GTZ, Germany, in Kangra district, and the **"Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project"** supported by DFID-UK in Kullu and Mandi districts. The focus of the German project was to build on the gains of the earlier Dhauladhar Farm Forestry Project (1980-88) and was site specific, whereas the DFID-UK project was specifically aimed to address the issue of institutionalising the new Planning and Management processes of Participatory Forest Planning and Management. It laid great emphasis on capacity building of forest guards and deputy rangers for their new role of enablers, and inculcating an attitudinal change in forestry personnel at all levels throughout the Forest Department. The emphasis was on introducing changes and modifications in the light of field experience.

4.2.1 The Indo-German Changer Project (IGCP)

This GTZ (Germany) supported project was initiated in 1993 in the lower catchment areas of the Binwa River in Palampur (the previous Dhauladhar Project operated in the upper catchment area). The project was planned as

an integrated multi-sectoral project based upon people's participation with bottom-up planning for developing and managing renewable natural resources. The aim is to narrow down the imbalance between production and use of renewable natural resources. The project area covers over 428 sq. km. with 570 villages, 125,000 people, and 100,000 grazing animals, and covering 37 micro-watersheds. The area is rugged, with a scarcity of water, shortage of fodder, badly treated common lands, and few village organisations. The German assistance is planned for 15 years. During the pilot phase from 1994 to 1999, GTZ will provide technical assistance to develop and test a long-term strategy. For 10 years following, GTZ will support full-scale implementation of integrated watershed-based resources development. The total German assistance will amount to 15 million German marks (more than 200 million Rs.) matched by 130 million rupees from the Indian side.

The project is an integrated development project, of which management of forest resources is just a part. But the approach followed is essentially similar to that for PFM. The objectives of the project are

- to narrow the existing gap between bio-mass production and bio-mass consumption;
- to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of the project area; and
- to enable them to manage the resources available to them sustainably.

The objectives are proposed to be achieved through a basket of inter-disciplinary measures focused on land husbandry, soil and water conservation, forestry, and animal husbandry. A matrix structure of interdisciplinary organisation with specialists and staff drawn from various government departments has been set up. Management of the project is under the aegis of the Indo-German Eco-Development Society.

For the first three years the project followed a strategy of developing bottom-up approaches for social development and extension based on key

villages, and an integrated approach to activities such as agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, horticulture, soil conservation, alternative energy, and self employment.

The project emphasises the strengthening of village self help organisations. Once the village development committees (VDCs) are developed and operational, a strategy of Participatory Land Use Planning will be followed by applying PRA techniques on a mini- or micro-watershed basis. A mini/micro watershed typically will cover an area of between 300 and 500 ha comprising 4 to 6 revenue villages. A multi-layered institutional approach in a mini/micro- watershed from user approach to formation of watershed societies, federations of VDCs in the microshed, will ultimately be adopted.

4.2.2 DFID- Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project

The long-term goal of the DFID-UK supported Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project is the development and implementation of sustainable systems of forest management which will strike the optimum balance between the needs of the local people and environmental concerns. The project was launched in October 1994 in Kullu and Mandi forest circles for a 3 year pilot phase with the immediate purpose of establishing the viability and cost effectiveness of new approaches to sustainable management of forest land including participatory forest planning and management. The aim was to build participation of people into the normal activities of the Forest Department in order to voluntarily curb demanded exploitation of natural resources, through needs-based participatory forest planning and management with bottom-up micro-planning. The process nature of the project was designed to permit experience and lessons learned to be built into the project during its implementation. Due to the flexible design, the project had no targets, but only milestones to be achieved to indicate levels of achievement. One of these milestones was to have 20 active village groups implementing PFM plans prepared by themselves after following a process approach during the three-year pilot phase.

This project is an institutional capacity building programme with emphasis on changing the attitudes of DFFC staff at all levels, especially forest guards and deputy rangers, and of people towards the DFFC. The institutional capacity building activities involve strengthening of the training schools for forest guards and development of JFPM oriented training curricula. Special studies are being conducted on institutional reforms within a legal framework, working plan processes, non-timber forest products, and livestock.

A community's urge to initiate forest management on their own is in direct proportion to the extent of hardships experienced as a result of depletion of the forestry resources needed for subsistence and earning livelihood. Therefore, the agreed strategy under the project envisaged developing partnership relations with communities through the process of Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM). Under JFPM, communities have both the responsibility of managing the forestry resources and the responsibility for planning the activities to be carried out in the forest areas. The process not only enables the communities to manage the forestry resources but also builds their participation into the activities of the Forest Department.

The plan for the pilot phase was to select approximately 20 pilot locations on degraded forest lands in the project area following a period of intensive training and information gathering exercises. Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques were to be used throughout this process culminating in the establishment of village forest development committee (VFDCs) and the preparation of micro-plans for the selected forest areas by the committees and the local DFFC staff. This plan will form part of a formal agreement between the committee and the DFFC describing the benefits and responsibilities of both parties.

An important institutional development in the project was to develop a new planning process linking the traditional working plan management with site-specific micro-planning under JFPM. For this, an in-depth analysis of working plan

preparation procedures was done and their inconsistencies with the new bottom up micro-planning (JFPM plans) and with changed government priorities, policies, and field level constraints to forest management ironed out in field workshops. A hierarchy of the new planning process “The Big Picture” was developed as a basis for further discussion and consultation.

Specially trained support teams of DFFC staff were planned for each circle to support the process. Their role is to facilitate communication between the forest users and the DFFC. The JFPM process is initiated through a series of participatory training workshops and study tours at circle, division, range, and beat levels for staff, local leaders and communities to enable communication and assessment of forestry resources and the needs of the communities. Field tours for communities are also organised. Representatives of the VFDCs will attend the DFFC planning and coordination committee at divisional level. As JFPM has not been practised in this form in the state, the project laid a very strong emphasis on training in sociological skills of all levels of staff. In the project, PFM is essentially seen as an approach to open communication channels across services within the FD, between the FD and village groups, and amongst villagers on issues

pertaining to forest management on lands which are near to villages and which are used frequently by villagers. The main changes in the approach to forest management as visualised by forest officers are summarised in Box 4.3.

The likely impact of JFPM on forest resources and people’s livelihoods are summarised in Box 4.4.

A detailed account of how the JFPM process was developed in Kullu and Mandi districts is given in Annex 11.

The introduction of JFPM requires development of a new process monitoring mechanism to ensure that locally generated experience and information is fed into and influences planning at all levels. Ten outputs (listed below) that could be used to facilitate monitoring were identified during a team workshop along with verifiable indicators, means of verification, risks, and assumptions.

- Enhanced capacity of DFFC to use PFM approaches
- Capacity of local communities to respond to PFM initiatives enhanced
- Development and testing of JFPM approaches in pilot locations

Box 4.3

Concept of JFPM As Visualised By Forest Officers of Himachal Pradesh

- Centralised to decentralised management of forest resources
- Target orientation to process orientation
- Unilateral to participatory decision-making
- Revenue orientation to resource orientation
- Custodian communities to enabling communities
- Plantation as an option to lower input management and regeneration
- Single product to multiple product
- Assuming homogeneity to recognising diversity
- Production as an end to concern about sustainability

Box 4.4

Likely Impact of JFPM on Forest Resources and People’s Livelihoods

- Communities collaborate with the Forest Department to check illegal extraction
- Communities assist the Forest Department in bringing social pressure to remove and prevent encroachments
- Reduced conflict between communities and field staff
- Increased income to local people/communities
- Increased supply of fodder/fuelwood to VFDCs
- Improvement in biodiversity
- Enhanced NTFP output flows from protection of forests
- Empowerment, collective communities begin to take up other issues

- Development of improved forest management practices and introduced where feasible
- Modification of legal framework
- Phase II project proposals
- DFFC training capacity enhanced
- System for capturing project experience and learning established and operational
- Interdepartmental coordination enhanced
- Process of integration of micro-planning into working plans developed
- The benefits offered and created by community-based participatory forest management may not be more than already enjoyed by individuals under forest settlements (e.g., timber, collection of NTFPs).
- A hundred years of preferring individuals over the community may hinder the development of effective community institutions unless sufficient care is taken.

4.3.2 Informal Community Institutions

A review of the pilot phase noted many improvements with a substantial shift in attitudes of both DFFC staff and village communities in favour of working together in forest management. Micro-plans had been prepared and implemented in 17 of the pilot areas, basic training imparted to most field staff, and new curricula developed for the forest schools. There was need for further work on the representativeness and sustainability of the VFDCs, and study of people's incentives for participation. It was thought that the project would ensure more rapid adoption of JFPM on degraded lands, that the emphasis on institutional strengthening would enhance the quality of the process, and that the results would encourage user-focused approaches in other areas. A consolidation and design phase was planned for 2.5 years, up to April 2000.

4.3 Status Of Community Institutions Relevant for PFM

4.3.1 Individuals versus the Community

Development of different participatory forest management systems in Himachal Pradesh, in particular, in the externally aided project areas, focuses on the establishment of sustainable village-level institutions comprising the users who are the legal right holders to the use of forestry resources. These rights are conferred on individuals in forest settlements and are almost a contract between the Forest Department and the individual. The codification of rights and concessions ignored the existence of local institutions or social control in the management of forest resources. This raises two important issues with regard to the development of village-level institutions.

In Himachal Pradesh, there is a long tradition of informal village committees set up to control misuse of the individual rights accorded under forest settlements. These informal village institutions have persisted and in some cases thrived in spite of the state's sustained antipathy. Forest protection groups have sprung up mainly as a community response to the scarcity of bulk-use resources such as fodder and fuelwood. These groups are characterised by a high degree of participation in decision-making, a focus on local needs, and flexibility to allow for changing requirements. The participation of women has always been higher in such groups than that of men, and in many places women's groups, the *mahila mandals*, have taken the lead in setting up the groups. Typical informal level village institutions include *devta* committees, *mahila mandals*, and Forest Protection Committees. These informal groups often function more successfully than other recognized institutions.

BOX 4.5

The Bhatiyat Forest Movement of 1982

In 1982, the communities of Bhatiyat *tehsil* of Chamba district, challenged the commercial orientation of State Forestry on the grounds of destruction of livelihoods, and successfully negotiated with the Forest Department in favour of introducing pro-people changes in the local forest administration. The movement resulted in a state-wide ban on the planting of eucalyptus on government lands, the declaration of ban oak as a protected species, and the restriction of commercial species such as chir pine to less than 40 per cent in plantation targets in favour of broadleaved species suitable for use as fuelwood.

Occasionally initiatives led by them can have a very marked impact (Box 4.5).

Devta Committees

Many villages have a *Devta* Committee, which is responsible for the conservation and preservation of the sacred grove around the village temple.

Mahila Mandals

The *mahila mandals* are women's groups, informal or formed under various welfare schemes by different government departments. There are hundreds of active *mahila mandals* in different parts of the State. Generally formed for other reasons, they often take on forestry activities as well. The participatory forest management mechanisms evolved by the *mahila mandals* tend to be more dynamic although impromptu in nature. At least 25 *mahila mandals* in Karsog Forest Division of Mandi Forest Circle

are reported to be actively associated with the Forest Department. Box 4.6 describes the typical activities of one such group.

Forest Protection Committees

There are hundreds of informal forest committees in HP. Many have been formed to thwart the threat of other nearby villages in respect of allotment of TD in a particular forest or management of grazing or grass cutting on common lands. Fifty forest protection committees are reported to be functioning in Karsog Forest Division (Mandi Forest Circle) alone. But none of them have followed the prescribed process nor are all of them prospective future VFDCs.

4.3.3 Formal Community Institutions, Village Forest Development Committees

Village forest development committees (VFDCs) have mainly been formed under the aegis of the

Box 4.6

Phirnu Village *Mahila Mandal*, Karsog Forest Division

This multi-caste village has about 40 households (mainly Rajputs, Gujjars, Julahas). The *mahila mandal* has 25 members. The villagers have rights to forest produce in 100 ha of adjoining forest land. The women have decided to close 30 ha of this, leaving the remaining 70 ha open to grazing. The Forest Department has planted species selected by the women on this land at 500 trees per ha including shisham (*Sisoo*), kachnar (*Bauhinia*), daru (wild pomegranate) and chir (*Pinus roxburghii*). The women have taken on the responsibility for protecting the area through a duty roster.

The women's main motivation for starting protection was to improve the availability of fodder and firewood near their village. At present, they use dung cakes and the limited firewood from their own lands for cooking and heating. On average they have to walk 5-6 km to fetch fodder and firewood in winter. The immediate benefit of protection has been profuse regeneration and increased availability of grass. The grass is cut after seeding and reduces the need to collect fodder in winter.

The women had known for a long time that grass and fuelwood could be obtained by voluntary closure of areas to animal grazing. What really motivated them to become organised and start protection was the proposal of the department to collaborate in the process, with its own role limited to one of facilitator. All actions and activities were left to the group. The feeling of empowerment boosted their morale and provided the incentive for sustainable management of the forest resources.

The Phirnu village initiative is informal. As yet no VDC has been formed and no promises made on income sharing. But discussions are now taking place to institutionalise the process and form a VDC. There are many "Phirnu villages" where informal JFPM processes are taking place, and if this relationship between villagers and foresters can be fostered the JFPM process will become self-sustaining.

various donor-sponsored projects involved in introducing PFM.

The Indo-German Dhauladhar Project (1980-88).

The process of formal formation of village development committees (VDCs) in the state began under the Indo-German Dhauladhar Project. During the project period 53 VDCs, 76 *mahila mandals*, 25 *yuvak mandals*, and 7 *natak mandals* were formed. Only a few are still functional.

The Himachal Pradesh Social Forestry Project (1984-1993)

The *van lagao rozi kamao* scheme introduced during the extension phase of the project in 1993 was intended to be executed through Village Forest Development Committees formed in every village (revenue estate). This was the first official step from Forest Department to formally set up VFDCs throughout the State. The VFDC was to have all *willing* right holders as members. The Executive Committee was comprised of the village *panch*; a woman representative, who should be a member of the *mahila mandal* or village *panchayat* and a right holder; two other right holders; and the forest guard (member secretary). All were to be nominated by the Divisional Forest Officer in consultation with the VFDC. The Executive Committee was to help the Forest Department in selection of suitable areas for plantation and of species to be planted, and in selecting *van sevak* families to raise and protect the plantations; to help the Range Officer keep accounts and assess survival percentage of plants; to distribute usufruct among right holders and *van sevak* families; and to protect plantations against grazing, illicit cutting, fires, felling of trees, quarrying, and encroachments. The usufruct sharing scheme was laid down and similar rules were framed for *mahila mandals* and *vidyalaya vaticas* (school forests).

The formation of VFDCs under this scheme was a target driven activity in which the VFDCs were nominated and not formed. DFOs had the

absolute power to form or suspend VFDCs. The function of the VFDC was to assist the Forest Department, not to take decisions. Usufruct sharing was not on equitable principles.

Between 1990 and 1993, more than 4,000 such were formed and 1,431 integrated micro-plans written. Most of the VFDCs became defunct when the project ended in 1993. No monitoring of these VFDCs has been done since. The experience of setting up of thousands of VFDCs through a 'qubta route' and as a conglomerate of the influential people of the village had a disastrous effect on the credibility and sustainability of these institutions.

The Integrated Watershed Development Kandi (Hills) Project (1990-1998)

The process of formation of VFDCs in this project remained ad hoc until 1993 when the State Government issued its order on PFM. Since then VFDCs have been established in accordance with the order. By 1998, 115 VFDCs had been formed. The project is still facing problems related to usufruct sharing mechanisms as these are not well defined, and there are no bye-laws on such sharing.

The Indo-German Eco-Development Changer Project (1994-1999 and 1999-2009)

This project adopted a systematic approach to introducing PFM: a five stage schedule during which a VDC is established and culminating in formulation of a village action plan. By the end of 1997, VDCs had been formed in 216 of 570 villages, 114 of these had developed action plans, and mini- or micro-watershed plans had been developed for three of 37 areas.

The DFID- Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project (1994-97 and 1997-2000)

The role and quality of development of VFDCs envisaged in this project are different to those envisaged under the Indo-German Eco-Development Changer Project. The approach is cautious with an emphasis on process learning

and monitoring. The process of JFPM proceeds in eight stages. VFDC formation follows detailed extension, discussion, and assessment stages.

Three VFDCs were set up in the first 18 months and one micro-plan finalised. A detailed study was made of the characteristics, response to PFM, and expectations and hopes of the first six VFDCs established, and the experience gained was used to improve the process. By the end of 1997, 28 VFDCs had been formed in Kullu circle and 20 in Mandi circle, and had prepared 20 and 11 micro-plans respectively (one in Kullu covering 9 villages).

VFDCs in Non-Project Areas

In the parts of the state not covered by the externally-aided projects, PFM implementation is being pursued rather differently. There is little mention of PFM in the implementation of centrally sponsored or state schemes and there are no reliable figures available on the number of VFDCs formed after the state order on PFM in 1993. Accordingly to one estimate, 581 VFDCs were formed during 1995-96 in areas of the state not covered by projects. According to another set of figures, 1095 VFDCs were formed (constituted and registered) between 1994 and 1997, some 820 of them outside project areas. However many of these had never held a meeting of the General House and in a similar number the Executive Committee had failed to meet even as little as once a year. The quality of the VFDCs formed in the Changer and ODA-HP Forestry Project areas is high, but the quality and sustainability of other VFDCs is still suspect.

4.3.4 The Role of Women

Hill women are the key stakeholders in the use of forestry resources, yet their formal position in the PFM process tends to be marginal and their presence cosmetic. Women have no role in the decision-making process even though they are responsible for grazing cattle, cutting grass for fodder, collecting fuelwood, and collecting NTFPs.

The literacy rate for women in the state is over 50 per cent, but programmes for women are

few. Promotion of the government-sponsored women's groups—the *mahila mandals*—has often been a factor in setting up factions along caste lines amongst women. The rigid rules determining the number of women in a group prevent the real employment of women. Nevertheless, a major step forward has been made with the reservation for women of 30 per cent of positions in *panchayats* and other administrative bodies at district level in 1998. This gives the women their first real chance to participate in administrative and political decision-making and leadership.

In the forestry sector, a step towards gender equity was made under the social forestry project with women officers joining the Indian Forest Service and the appointment of women forest guards. The women forest guards posted in Mandi and Kullu circles are thought to have been an important factor in the successful projection of JFPM amongst women in the villages.

The PFM order of 1993 requires that each household is represented by one man and one woman in the General House, and that half the village representatives on the Executive Committee are women (approximately 25 per cent of the total). This is a step towards equity of women in VFDC decision-making.

4.3.5 The Role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

At present there is no linkage with NGOs. Although there are some 188 registered NGOs operating in the State, only a few are active in promoting forestry development and creating forestry awareness amongst people, and most are small organisations with little mass support. Their range of activities includes education, functional adult literacy, women and child development, health, environmental awareness and conservation, social forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, wastelands and watershed development, drinking water, appropriate technology, rural sanitation, legal aid and legal literacy, promotion of local crafts and culture, promotion of villagers organisations, training of

elected representatives of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions, and women's empowerment.

NGOs in Himachal Pradesh can be classified into four types: welfare organisations, development organisations, networks, and mass organisations (see report commissioned by Indo German Changer Project on "Status of NGOs in Himachal Pradesh (1994)") on the basis of their activities. A range of village-based organisations (associations of groups of village residents working for their common interest like *mahila mandals*, *yuvak mandals*, and village development committees), some promoted by government agencies and some by NGOs, constitute a fifth type. The organisations can also be grouped into three groups on the basis of affiliation: voluntary organisations (VOs: non-profit making, area based, autonomous, registered under the Societies Registration Act); village organisations (VLOs: village-level, community based, promoted by government or NGOs/VOs, informal or sometimes formal registration with departments, membership by choice, need-based activities); and semi-government agencies (government sponsored welfare boards, corporations, and agencies).

Although NGOs in Himachal Pradesh are at an early stage of building up technical and training capacity for Participatory Forest Management, those working at the grass roots' level are familiar with the issues involved and the problems and perceptions of the villagers in relation to forests. The significance of Himachal's rural women in any participatory work is reflected in the fact that most NGOs in the state are working with *mahila mandals* who represent one of the most dynamic constituencies at the village-level. It is in reaching, organising, and empowering rural women that the NGOs in the state have attained considerable competence and experience which the DFFC should draw upon for strengthening its training and overall capacity building for JFPM.

A few mass organisations have made some progress towards participatory management of forest resources. *Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samiti* (HGVS) is the state unit of *Bhasat Gyan Vigyan Samiti* (BGVS) and one of the 36 member

organisations of the All India People's Science Network. HGVS has about 50,000 members from all walks and disciplines of life in well-organised state and district units. It is mainly involved in the total literacy campaign (TLC) and has made considerable progress in forming village-level *gyan vigyan kendras*. It has expertise in campaign movements through such media as *kala jatha* and street plays, an ability to attract professionals, and a strong grass roots' level presence and is thus an ideal NGO for developing an environment in villages supportive for the introduction of proper PFM. HGVS has produced material on family health, environment, local management, and empowerment for neo literate people, has started action research with tools like participatory rural appraisal (PRA) on PFM, and is collaborating with the FD on related issues. There are also a number of village-level organisations keen to undertake responsibilities pertaining to forest management, including the *mahila mandals*, *yuvak mandals*, *gram sudhar sabhas*, and VDCs. These have a potentially valuable role to play, as long as care is taken to ensure that they are not reduced to a vehicle for intercaste, intergroup discrimination.

The main ways in which NGOs, VOs, and VLOs can contribute to JFPM processes are listed below.

- Training to staff and users
- Creating a mass campaign/movement for developing an understanding and acceptance of the need for JFPM throughout the state
- Undertaking research and field investigations in specific social, technical, and economic aspects of JFPM
- Providing expertise and resource persons for training, documentation, and research activities
- Developing demonstrations on participatory approaches to show and lead in areas of conflict
- Establishing networking of VFDCs for organised and quality spread of JFPM
- Preparing and implementing JFPM plans
- Establishing a local monitoring system for JFPM

- Pressurising for policy changes to facilitate JFPM

NGOs and PFM Training

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has commissioned several training institutes and agencies to initiate training for PFM. While some professional training institutes have excellent training competence, their lack of direct access to field experience and non-familiarity with the issues confronting PFM is a limiting factor. Most available training for PFM is confined to specific aspects such as community institutions in PFM, micro-planning, and attitudinal change in short modules of one to three weeks. There is a tremendous need to create capacity for more comprehensive training courses of longer duration dealing with all facets of PFM.

The NGOs are characterised by a wide diversity in their size, orientation, understanding of grass roots' issues, competence, and availability of infrastructure. While some have developed excellent training skills and competence in particular aspects of PFM through experience, others are inexperienced newcomers in the field in response to the tremendous demand for training services. There is no mechanism for monitoring the quality of training being provided by them and no strategy for developing NGO capacity for training. There is an almost total absence of any systematic training for PFM related training.

Of all the NGOs, *Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samiti* probably has the most potential to play an important role in the introduction of JFPM in the state. One early result of collaboration between the DFFC and *Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samiti* has been the promising JFPM work with *mahila mandals* initiated by the DFO in Karsog Forest Division.

NGO Working Group on Natural Resource Management In Himachal Pradesh

The working group is a state-level initiative of NGOs set up in July 1994 to focus on Participatory and sustainable natural resource management (PSNRM) concerns in Himachal

Pradesh. It seeks to create an informal forum for regular exchange of knowledge, experience, concerns, and ideas created around PSNRM between NGOs, government departments, and other institutions working with user groups and village organisations to enhance their ability to empower people's organisations.

The working group already has 33 NGO members, 20 resource persons/activists on PSNRM issues, and links with support organisations such as the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD), the Indian Social Institute, the DFFC, and the State Council for Science, Technology and Environment. Its focus is on issues related to

- forest resource management;
- agricultural-horticultural systems for hill farming;
- animal husbandry linkages; and
- water resource management.

Its aims to facilitate

- information dissemination;
- action research and development; and
- capacity building activities for its members.

The working group has already initiated and/or completed the following activities:

- translation of Himachal Pradesh's PFM order into Hindi for wider dissemination (made available to the DFFC which only had an English version);
- an analysis of the PFM order and identification of its shortcomings;
- initiated preparation of a number of case studies of people's initiatives for PSNRM in the state for wider circulation;
- initiated action research by its members in their work areas;
- carried out capacity-building activities for its members;
- information dissemination on various acts, structures of the DFFC, and other pertinent issues both within and outside the state;
- policy research and proactive advocacy for policy reviews with the government departments and ministries concerned.

There is a need to encourage this working group and foster a relationship with it to promote the extension activities of the DF.

4.4 Participatory Forest Management Issues and Risks

4.4.1 Perception of Forestry Staff and Communities Towards PFM

In 1996 a workshop was held as a part of the JFPM process in the Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project to look at the issues involved and develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the JFPM process. The participants included 17 forestry staff of different levels, and 20 VFDC members (four from executive committees), 11 of them women. Five sub-groups were formed representing five hierarchies in the PFM process: VFDC (communities group); forest groups (FGs) and beat officers (BOs) (interface group); deputy rangers and range forest officers (RFOs) (supervisory group); assistant conservators of forest (ACFs) and divisional forest officers (DFOs) (direction giving group); headquarters (policy). Each of these groups identified issues concerning PFM development and ranked them in order of priority, then together they developed a consolidated ranking list. The results are shown in Table 4.2. The results were used to

develop a set of indicators for monitoring and to identify problems and possible solutions.

Forest Guards and Deputy Rangers are the first point of contact of the FD with the communities and the interface between the FD and VLOs. They perceive JFPM as an approach that will ease their responsibility for protection as villagers will become active partners and share the responsibility. FGs expected that settling of disputes over the use of forest products at village-level will save them from criticism and help them become more acceptable in villages. But they also fear the loss of authority and see a possible conflict between their custodian and facilitator functions, since there has been no change in their responsibilities under different enactments.

ACFs, DFOs, and RFOs are apprehensive that the provisions of various acts are in contradiction to PFM policy. They believe that the mandate given to them under the policy and legal framework is not conducive to collaborative management and does not provide for transfer of power to the VFDCs. The initial tendency is to take JFPM as merely another government scheme, an 'add on' activity. They think that, although productive in the long-term, the approach is initially very time consuming. They also fear the loss of traditional authority. At the

Table 4.2: Issues Identified in JFPM, and Ranking by Different Groups

Issue	Ranking by group of				Consolidated ranking
	VFDC	FGs, BOs & RFOs	DFOs	Head-quarters	
Changes in the thinking and attitudes of forest staff	6	1	1	1	1
Collaborative relationship between FD, DFFC, and VFDC for PFM	1	2	6	5	3
Changes in the thinking and attitude of villagers	5	3	2	2	2
Participation of women	3	4	5	3	4
Participation of poor people	4	5	4	4	5
Day to day requirements	2	7	8	6	6
Social conditions	12	8	4	10	9
Strong and lasting committee	7	6	3	7	7
Condition of the forest productivity	8	11	7	8	8
Policy and institutional environment	9	9	0	9	10

policy and government level community-based forest management is still viewed as participation without empowerment.

The communities see PFM as an opportunity to exercise collective control against misuse and abuse of user rights, small-scale management of adjoining forest land resources, and equitable distribution of the timber distribution right, the most contentious right that people enjoy. However, in the absence of proper institutional arrangements, they cannot take action against offenders. The villagers have less interest in the final usufruct sharing arrangement as this is covered in existing settled rights but they are concerned about the forest's capacity to supply their needs indefinitely. They hope that JFPM will give them more power to decide who the needy users are as well as to restrict benefits for those who do not contribute. The villagers, especially women, have shown keen interest in grassland management and forest regeneration operations. Communities are ready to share responsibility with the FD, but they want more frequent interaction with forestry staff, transparency in the forest department's working, and the power to take decisions about nearby grasslands. They prefer very few plantations with local species like oaks, figs, and alder and some enrichment planting in existing timber bearing forests.

4.4.2 Emerging Issues

In the 5 years since the Government Order on PFM was issued in May 1993 there have been many changes but attention has remained focused on the emerging dynamics of people-forest-forester's relationships. The (re)-introduction of PFM in the state has brought to the fore many issues that need to be addressed. These relate to the

- multiplicity of PFM processes and approaches that are being followed in different areas;
- changes required in rights and concessions;
- modification to the legal framework;
- changes required in the Government Order;
- capacity building of forestry staff (training needs);

- how management of forests covered under working plans can be brought under the PFM process;
- linkage of PFM with other forestry schemes;
- institutional processes in PFM at field level;
- empowerment of women;
- role of NGOs; and
- support to PFM by top management of the Forest Department.

Multiplicity of PFM Processes and Approaches

Of the five externally aided projects in operation, two (the Indo-German Eco-Development Changer Project and the DFID-HP Forestry Project) are developing different types of PFM systems and strategies. In all other areas of the state, the 1993 Government Order provides the basis for the PFM process.

There is a danger that by the time the PFM systems in the projects have reached a level where they can be replicated in other areas, other (less successful) modes of PFM would be so far advanced in these areas that it will no longer be possible to start in the best manner. Critics say that the absence of a uniform approach to PFM indicates that the Government is not totally committed to PFM and its processes.

The issue has been further complicated by a continuing debate from hardliners who say, "What is new in PFM? It has been practised in the state before in many forms, albeit through

BOX 4.7

The Timber Distribution Right

Two micro-plans developed in Kullu circle deal with this question clearly. Both plans show a social commitment, with villagers agreeing not to exercise this right until trees reach a particular level of maturity. The sarpanches responsible for issuing the certificates for TD rights are happy to pass on this responsibility to the VFDCs. Their contention is that the political office they hold requires them to be nice to everyone, and while they are fully aware of the deteriorating conditions of the forests, they have perforce to give the certificates. This shows that the village communities are willing to take difficult but sensible decisions.

classical forest management. Why formalise it? Too much empowerment of the people would be disastrous to the forests of the state.”

There is a need to set up a working group to rationalise the PFM processes and ensure uniform processes are followed throughout the state.

Changes Required in Rights and Concessions

The rights and concessions conferred upon individual rightholders in relation to PFM raise two specific issues.

- The benefits offered and created by community based participatory forestry management may not be more than those already enjoyed by individuals under forest settlements. The contentious issue of Timber Distribution (TD) needs to be addressed in PFM with communities.
- A hundred years of preference to individuals over the community may hinder the development of effective community institutions unless sufficient care is taken.

The present situation of individual rights divorced from responsibility needs to be replaced with a situation of community rights to forest produce associated with responsibility. This would enable VFDCs to carry out the task of deciding extraction levels collectively. (This is already being done by many village communities informally.) A precedent exists in the state in the form of the Kangra Forest Cooperatives, where individual rights were surrendered to the collective for the sake of better management.

Modification to the Legal Framework

The existing acts and rules are too restrictive and not in conformity with the PFM philosophy of encouraging people to develop plantations and NTFPs for future trade and sale. The legal provisions need to be modified to allow the free movement, trade, and sale of forestry resources developed through PFM. In particular, amendments are needed in the HP Forest (Sale of Timber) Act, 1968 and Rules of 1969; the 1984 Forest Produce (Land Route) Rules 1978; the HP

Forest Produce (Regulation of Trade) Act, 1982 and Rules made under it; the HP Resin and Resin products (Regulation of Trade) Act of 1981 and 1982; the Indian Forest Act 1927 (declaring forests under the management of communities to be village forests under sections 29 and 30); and the Himachal Pradesh *Panchayati Raj* Act 1994 (declaring community institutions (VFDCs) to be the fourth tier of the system of self government below the village (*gram*) *panchayats*).

Another legal imperative that needs to be addressed is the government's intention to hand over village common lands (*shamlat* lands) (out of whatever common lands are left) to village *panchayats* for management and to lease out some of these common lands to selected people of influence. PFM assumes the practice of community forestry on these lands and is in conflict with the government's intentions under the HP *Panchayati Raj* Act 1994.

It has been suggested that villages should be given an area of common lands to be managed by communities (not by *panchayats*) that would be sufficient to meet the fodder and fuel requirements of the village for the next 50 years. This would necessitate amendment of the HP Village Common Lands (Vesting and Utilisation) Act 1974 and its rules.

Changes in the Land Preservation Act, 1978, and rules made under it are also required with regard to the number of trees which a person may fell on his own private land for his own bonafide domestic use and for sale. Bonafide use can be ascertained through VFDCs. Relaxation of the HP Forest Produce (Land Routes) Rules 1978 is required to allow free transit of more species and cover trees raised by communities under PFM.

Finally, a uniform NTFP Act is required with provisions for collection, cultivation, harvesting, and trade of NTFPs by communities.

Changes Required in the Government Order (GO) on PFM of May 1993

Several changes that need to be made to the GO of 1993 have been suggested in the past 4 years. The main ones are as follow.

- According legal status to VFDCs

At present, VFDCs are being registered by DFOs as per the GO, but questions are already being asked about

- what happens to the agreement if one partner changes their stance;
- what will happen to the villagers if the next official incumbent does not honour the agreement;
- what will happen if 'free riders' within a village do not recognise the VFDC and its bye-laws and rules; and
- what legal sanctity and authority does the VFDC possess to implement its micro-plan and enforce rules and fines?

Some of these issues are emerging at national level as well. It is important to find an early solution to this problem of providing more legal authority to JFPM groups to save them from vested interests within the villages and the whims of individuals in government organisations.

Similarly, The Indian Forest Act may have to be amended to recognise the bye-laws and rules devised by village groups to enforce local management.

- The Management Unit

After an area is decided, the next important stage is choosing the management unit. At present, a village is the unit for constitution of a VFDC, but experience has shown that the location of coherent user groups sometimes extends beyond village boundaries. It can be very important to include users of other villagers in a single VFDC – particularly when people of more than one village have rights in a common forest under the settlement of rights. Thus VFDCs can encompass 7-8 small hamlets, or a *phati* or *tika*. The area covered by a VFDC should be left flexible for field foresters to decide taking into account the local situation and settlements.

- Constitution of a VFDC

The General Body shouldn't be limited to one male and one female from each household, rather

it should have a minimum of one male and one female from each household and be open to all other willing villagers, but ensuring 50 per cent women representatives. The upper limit for the size of the Executive Body should be left open and replaced by a minimum limit of 9-12 members with a minimum of 50 per cent women in the body including nominated members.

- Participatory Planning

The word IRMP should be replaced by participatory micro-planning as planning for other sectors would unnecessarily raise villagers' expectations and foresters responsibility.

- Budgetary Support to Micro-plans

Another critical area is the provision of continuous budgetary support for the micro-plans prepared by the VFDCs. At present, the village plans are likely to be funded by projects, but the sustainability of efforts beyond project periods is a big question. In the future the micro-plans should be integrated in the FD's budget system, which would provide continuous budget inflow as well as the flexibility needed to implement the diverse needs of the villagers for which there are no norms in the present system. The accounting procedures may have to be modified to account for the new budget utilisation procedures, e.g., through VFDCs, or to account for voluntary inputs by villagers.

- Monitoring of JFPM

This important aspect of collaborative management needs to be paid immediate attention, as the present monitoring procedure is driven largely by numbers. New criteria for baseline indicators and subsequent monitoring need to be devised in a participatory way with the VFDCs so that they too are in a position to monitor the progress made. Although 'number' criteria are important from a strategic point of view, the criteria should also include social, ecological, and economic indicators.

- Bye-laws for Distribution of Usufruct

In the absence of clarity on the mechanism of distribution of usufruct, problems are already

being faced in the distribution of the benefits which have started to accrue in plantations raised by people under the Integrated Watershed Development Project Kandi (Hills).

Capacity Building of Forestry Staff (Training Needs)

“Personal, professional and institutional change are essential if the realities of the poor are to receive recognition. Self-created awareness and greater changes in concepts, values, methods, and behaviour must be developed to explore the new high ground of participation and empowerment” (Robert Chambers in his latest book, ‘Putting the Last First’). How apt these remarks are in the context of PFM processes.

How Management of Forests Covered Under Working Plans Can Be Brought Under the PFM Process

At present, only degraded protected forests can be brought under active JFPM, that is Class II Forests, UPFs, UFs, and other open-access common use lands near villages. Restricting participation in this way is a debatable issue. Forest in ‘good’ condition (covered under a silvicultural management system under working plans) cannot be managed in isolation as such forest is generally interspersed with degraded forest. The working plans themselves have severe limitations (see Box 4.8). There is also a danger that introducing PFM in the degraded areas alone might shift biotic interference to the main forest. Since management of biotic interference is the key to successfully reversing the trend of degradation, it is imperative that management of ‘high’ forest near habitations can also be brought under the mantle of PFM. Some progress has been made in developing a new planning process.

After an in-depth analysis of existing working plan procedures, a conceptual framework for a new integrated planning process was developed under the DFID-HP Forestry Project in 1996. The detailed methodology has yet to be developed. Range Level Management Information Systems (RaMIS) are currently under development for this.

Linkage of PFM with Other Forestry Schemes

There is virtually no mention of PFM in the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes and the state sector forestry schemes. This issue needs to be addressed at the time of formulation of micro-plans. At present this is not done.

Institutional Processes at Field Level

“Treat a community as it is and it will remain as it is. Treat a community as it can and should be and it will become as it can and should be.”
(Adapted from Goethe’s teachings)

Various problems can be seen in the present institutional processes. For example, the presence or status of existing and functional VFDCs, *mahila mandals*, or other relevant organisations is generally overlooked in the micro-planning process. There is also a tendency to adopt short-cut procedures to show results. The high turnover of Joint Forest Planning and Management Support Teams is also an issue. Similarly, the complete dependency of most DFOs on these teams to initiate the PFM process is a cause for worry. There is no linkage in micro-plans of other forestry schemes from the central or state sector or integration of people’s needs. The Range Officer remains marginalised in the PFM

Box 4.8

The Need For A New Planning Process

There is general feeling amongst most foresters that the traditional working plan approach is incompatible with both existing policy and site-specific conditions, and even more so with the new micro-plans being developed under JFPM. The working plans are limited. They don’t cover Class III forests, UPFs, UFs, and similar areas; are not site specific; do not have enough emphasis on NTFPs; are not used by field staff (except for data); are still based on revenue/commercial objectives; do not reflect the complexity of forest planning; are not responsive to new clients (users); and are not practical. Therefore, there is a need for a new planning procedure which can respond to new challenges.

process. Conflict resolution amongst forestry staff and within communities is still a challenge.

The type of conflicts encountered within communities in the PFM process include inter and intra village rivalry; family/household disputes; male domination in meetings; economic status of individuals; political affiliations of groups; influence with government officials and agencies; desire to control among members of *panchayats*/societies/other institutions; and empowerment and the status of women. The types of problems with forest staff include pressure to achieve targets in other schemes; lack of attention to protection duties; and favouring of certain persons or groups.

Empowerment of Women

The marginal role of women in decision-making is beginning to be debated in the VFDCs. It is heartening to note that women are increasingly asserting themselves in VFDC meetings.

Role of NGOs in PFM

NGOs are seldom included in the PFM process although their role is specifically mentioned. Some active NGOs (such as the working group on Natural Resource Management in Himachal Pradesh, Palampur) can help considerably in breaking the impasse between the Forest Department and communities and in raising awareness within communities.

Support for PFM by the Top Management of the Forest Department

At present the Forest Department is at a point where the desire to change and support change is strong. The process of capacity building now needs to be extended beyond the project areas for synergy of operations and total institutionalisation. The PFM process has not yet developed as a way of working in the Forest Department. The top management voice support for PFM, but their actions show little commitment. The strong mindset of top management in the Forest Department is a strong inhibiting factor in PFM implementation. The field staff (Forest Guards and

BOX 4.9 **The Ten Commandants of PFM**

PFM

- can resuscitate degrading forest resources;
- is the only way to ensure sustainable use of forestry resources;
- can make the people-forest-forester relationship dynamic;
- is a paradigm of trust, trustworthy, and trusteeship;
- requires an attitudinal change amongst foresters and people alike;
- builds a sense of pride of ownership and respect amongst forest dependent communities;
- means decentralisation and delegation to forest dependent communities;
- can be institutionalised through developing skills and training;
- cannot be successful by adopting short cut methods; and
- is the lighthouse of Indian forestry.

Deputy Rangers) receive no clear-cut directions from top management on PFM, and the Forest Department is also not involving other people like NGOs and other organisations in the propagation of PFM.

The foundations for PFM have been laid down over the past 5 years. The need now is to build up this strength, strengthen the process, and implement it in all forest lands in the State.

4.4.3 Risks for PFM

The (re)introduction of PFM in HP has been carried out in a positive frame of mind. There is a feeling of a **do or die, now or never** situation among forestry staff. Half-hearted attention or slackness in the process could spell failure for PFM. There is a great risk that by the time the projects develop PFM approaches that can be replicated in other areas, the pitch will have been queered by a variety of developments and multiplicity of other approaches. There is also a risk of the development of too many processes, which may complicate the PFM implementation

process beyond redemption. There is also a great risk of too much reliance on developing complicated social processes to the neglect of fundamental, technical tenets of scientific forestry principles. There is also a risk to the whole PFM process of losing continuing support from the Forest Department in the post-project period. Although there is apparent commitment to support PFM, interest and enthusiasm is waning

at the top level. Field staff and support teams feel lack of top support. There is no core group at headquarters to look at institutionalisation of PFM or to develop linkages in PFM processes between different projects and in non-project areas. So far the PFM process has not become self sustainable. There is a great risk that interest in PFM will only continue as long as outside donor support to the PFM programme continues.