

## **2. THE CONTEXT AND RATIONALE**

Urbanisation of the Kathmandu Valley is occurring rapidly and the present, growing population has limited access to basic utilities such as drinking water, drainage, sewerage systems, electricity, and sanitation. The valley has been subjected to haphazard and increasing industrialisation and commercialisation over the years. Carpet and garment manufacturing units have mushroomed over the past two decades. The establishment of large numbers of industries and manufacturing units in the valley is causing water and air pollution. These industries have attracted many migrant labourers who account for approximately 30 to 35 per cent of the valley's estimated total urban population.

The natural resources of the valley, particularly the forests, have decreased substantially over the last two decades. Quarrying, on both a large and small scale, has increased in the surrounding hills, causing an increase in soil erosion and frequent landslides and floods. This has also led to a decrease in the quality of sites for tourists and for public recreation. Prime agricultural land has been taken over by urban development and industry. Cultural heritage sites and historical monuments are in bad shape and the open spaces around monuments are subject to severe encroachment (IUCN and NPC/HMG Nepal 1995).

The growing problems of the Kathmandu Valley environment are among the important issues addressed by the Nepal Environmental Policy and Action Plan (NEPAP) endorsed in September 1993 by the Environmental Protection Council of His Majesty's Government of Nepal. The development and implementation of an 'Environmental Action Plan' for the Kathmandu Valley was identified as a priority.