

1. Introduction

Fundamentally, poverty of an area, or of its people as a group, is a product of any or all of a number of factors such as the inherent limitation on productive resources, the inability to handle the constraints and harness the potentials of its resource base, and the lack of access to gains from associated production and exchange activities. In this broader context mountain (and hill) areas and their communities share attributes of poverty-generating processes that can be found anywhere in the world. In addition, mountain areas are characterised by some specific circumstances that shape the pace and pattern of activities that promote conditions of poverty and obstruct poverty alleviation efforts. These circumstances, in turn, are caused by characteristics and conditions such as inaccessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity, and under-utilised 'niche' of mountain areas. Owing to their overwhelming presence and their operational consequences, these characteristics are described as mountain specificities (Jodha 1990). This paper discusses the dynamics of poverty and poverty removal in mountain (and hill) areas in the context of these conditions. The paper discusses the implications of mountain specificities vis a vis the factors and processes which are central to the economic development and welfare of the people. This will also help indicate the specific nature of poverty-generating processes in mountain areas and the required remedial strategies. The discussion may help to develop a framework through which various poverty, development, and environment-related issues could be integrated. The paper discusses the issues central to the poverty and anti-poverty processes in the mountain context, rather than quantified dimensions of poverty and inter-class or inter-personal inequity aspects. Furthermore, it presents the synthesis of understanding generated through past and ongoing studies. It draws heavily on documentation on the above studies (Jodha et al. 1992 and Jodha 1991).

In Section 2 the aforementioned mountain specificities as a background to the discussion in Section 3, on impediments to economic activities and their consequences in terms of poverty-generating processes in mountain communities, are briefly commented upon. Section 4 briefly deals with the traditional approaches to the said constraints created by specific mountain conditions and with the reduced feasibility and efficacy of traditional measures in the changed context. Section 5 deals with the development interventions as poverty-alleviating measures and the way they manage or bypass the imperatives of mountain specificities. The paper concludes by advocating the incorporation of the mountain perspective into development interventions to make them effective means of poverty alleviation.