

Land Policies, Land Management and Land Degradation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

Bhutan Study Report

**Policy and Planning Division
Ministry of Agriculture
Royal Government of Bhutan**

**International Centre for Integrated
Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal
1999**

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the reports were revised for publication.

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We believe that, by publishing these studies, ICIMOD will
for a wider audience, in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

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Preface

The Mountain Farming Systems' Division of ICIMOD, with support from the Global Mountain Programme, initiated a comparative study on the effect of land policies on land management and degradation in six regional countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan; sharing the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range. One study was commissioned in each country. The exception to this was India where two studies, one in the Northwest and one in the Northeast, were conducted to capture the diversity and size of the Indian Himalayas. Each of the country studies was carried out by a team of experts from biological as well as socioeconomic disciplines.

The study was based on a concept paper developed by Professor Piers Blaikie in association with ICIMOD staff. The Team Leaders of the country studies came to ICIMOD in May 1997 to discuss the concept paper and agree on the methodology and operational aspects of the project. Each of the studies was to investigate four sectoral policies, e.g., Agriculture, Forestry, Wildlife and National Parks, and Tenure and Property Rights. Additionally, each study looked at the national and or provincial environmental policy and its implementation. The idea was to investigate thoroughly all the sectoral policies and their impact on land management. Each of the studies also chose one particular issue of interest for the country or area that had a significant impact on land management. The study period was between June-October 1997 and final reports were presented in a workshop at ICIMOD in early November. Subsequently, the reports were revised for publication.

We believe that, by publishing these studies, ICIMOD will facilitate an important contribution for a wider audience, in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region and beyond, who would benefit from the detailed information and analysis of this very important topic.

ICIMOD would like to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Piers M. Blaikie, of the University of East Anglia, U.K., in the design and implementation of this study. From within the Centre, Professor Blaikie was assisted by Dr. Syed Zahir Sadeque, Social Scientist, ICIMOD, and Dr. Tej Partap, Head, Mountain Farming Systems and coordinator of the Global Mountain Programme at ICIMOD. In addition, a multidisciplinary advisory team of ICIMOD professionals, namely, Dr M.Banskota, Dr N.S.Jodha, and Dr T.S.Papola, provided valuable inputs during the study.

Tej Partap

Syed Zahir Sadeque

Abstract

BAP
BCCI
BTF

Biodiversity Action Plan
Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation

The present study on land policies, land management and land degradation in Bhutan is part of the overall efforts of ICIMOD to assess the impact of land policies on land management and land degradation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. The study highlights the clarity of vision of the RGOB on pro-environment land policies. The land policies in Bhutan are process oriented and are mainly related to agriculture, forests, and livestock.

Limited availability of arable land in the country is seen as a major constraint to further improving the livelihoods of mountain households and a challenge to balancing agricultural land needs with environmental conservation. Similarly, the livestock population is rising beyond the carrying capacity of the rangelands.

Key issues that emerged from the study are that presently environmental degradation is limited to a few pockets and necessary changes to policies and programme are being contemplated to reverse the process. Implementation of holistic programmes has helped maintain forest cover over 72 per cent of the country's area. The government policy is to maintain the forest cover well above 60 per cent, even though some land will have to be brought under agriculture to cope with the increasing scarcity of cultivated land. Policy implementation on phasing out shifting cultivation is being followed strictly, and there are clear policy guidelines about causing minimal damage to the environment during infrastructural development.

NCS
NEC
NES

Nature Conservation Section
National Environment Commission
National Environment Secretariat

Acronyms

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BCCI	Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
BTF	Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation
CSO	Central Statistical Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FNCA	Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995
FSD	Forestry Services' Division
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated for Mountain Development
LUPP	Land Use Planning Project
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHE	Ministry of Health and Education
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoTI	Ministry of Trade and Industries
NCS	Nature Conservation Section
NEC	National Environment Commission
NES	National Environment Secretariat
PPD	Planning and Policy Division
REID	Research, Extension and Irrigation Division
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RSPN	Royal Society for Protection of Nature
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	World-wide Fund for Nature

Glossary

Contents

chhuzhing Irrigated paddy field

dungkhag Subdistrict

dzongkhag District

Abstract

geog Block

Gup Elected leader of a block

kamzhing Dryland farm areas under annual field crops that are not irrigated

tseri Slash and burn agriculture

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2.2 Land-Use Patterns

Chapter 3: Policy and Legislative Framework and Their Impacts

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