

Community Forestry The Language of Life

Report of
the First Regional Community Forestry 'Users' Group
Workshop



Organised by
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
and FAO's Forests, Trees and People Programme, Nepal

22-27 May, 1995
Kathmandu

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Plates: Cover : The forest, the trees
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Foreword

“Community Forestry: The Language of Life”, the title of this document, is an eloquent expression by one of the participants at this workshop of how community forestry has gained importance in planning for sustainable mountain development. Life and livelihood are intricately linked and the forest areas of the Hindu-Kush Himalayas remain a critical source of a diversity of products which make an invaluable contribution to household survival in mountain areas.

Within this context, participatory forest management has emerged as a key for sustainable management of forest resources in the Himalayas. While we recognise the role of government and non-government institutions in promoting this paradigm, mountain communities have played a major role in asserting their rights on forest resources, and women and men from the mountain areas have been at the forefront of forest management. The process of democratisation and decentralisation and the emergence of people-oriented approaches provide us with new opportunities to reflect on what strategies need to be evolved to unleash the latent potential of community-level institutions, so that they can grow into effective vehicles of mountain development.

It was with this objective that ICIMOD, in collaboration with FAO's Forestry, Trees and People Programme/WATCH, Nepal, organised the first regional community forestry users' group workshop. This six day workshop brought together women and men from the countries of the Hindu-Kush Himalayas and from Thailand and The Philippines, engaged in grassroot level forest management.

The workshop participants identified a number of key issues that would be necessary to make community forestry an effective mechanism for sustainable mountain development. These included evolving strategies for strengthening local institutions, establishing national and regional networks to enhance learning and knowledge exchange, building conceptual understanding of advocacy, and enhancing the role of community institutions in influencing policy. Strategies which will give women and the resource poor more control over natural resources' management received particular attention.

The forum went beyond being an opportunity to share experiences and identify barriers to community forestry and also evolved constructive approaches and strategies for the future, ensuring that leadership for such strategies remained vested with the representatives of community-level institutions. Several decisions were taken by participants from different countries to establish new institutional mechanisms and to strengthen existing ones from the perspectives they gained from the discussions.

ICIMOD's continuing support to these initiatives is within our dual mandate of environmental conservation and poverty alleviation. By linking environmental issues and economic aspirations, ICIMOD aims to assist in attaining sustainable development in the Hindu-Kush Himalayas. We hope that this workshop report will be useful to a wide audience of policy-makers, practitioners, and community-based institutions in their goal of sustainable and equitable development of our mountain areas.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Dholaka Ramechap Community Forestry Development Project of the Swiss Development Cooperation, Nepal, and the Ford Foundation, New Delhi, for providing financial support to this important workshop.

Egbert Pelinck
Director General

Acknowledgements

The planning, design, and execution of a workshop which brings together women and men from community based institutions from seven countries for seven days provide a unique challenge. Innumerable institutions and individuals contributed to this forum and, while it is always difficult to name all of them, some deserve special mention.

First and foremost we would like to thank Narayan Kazi Shrestha of the Forestry Trees and People Programme/WATCH, Nepal, for his support to the idea of the workshop and in spending many hours and late nights in planning meetings and for his contribution during and after the workshop. It is appropriate also to express our thanks to the staff of WATCH who contributed in various ways to the workshop organisation.

Members of the core team who were involved in planning and, at the workshop, in facilitating different sessions made an invaluable contribution. We would specially like to thank Hukum Singh of the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project; Ghanendra Kafle of the Nepal UK Community Forestry Project and Patrick Robinson and Khagendra Siktel of the Dholaka Ramechap Community Forestry Development Project of the Swiss Development Cooperation, Nepal.

Cor Veer, Asia Coordinator, Forestry Trees and People Programme, contributed by expanding the regional participation to the workshop by providing financial support to participants from Thailand and the Philippines who provided an added dimension to the workshop.

The wall newspaper, Chautari, which was produced daily at the workshop became popular as a vehicle of communication. For producing this and for film documentation of the workshop we would like to thank Mohan Mainali, Dhruva Basnet, Mohan Bista, Hasta Gurung, Ramesh Dhamala, and Pramesh Bhandary of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists, Nepal.

Manjul Nepal needs to be mentioned specially for coordinating the evenings of song, poetry and dance which created a participatory environment during the workshop and bridged whatever gaps existed amongst participants from different countries. We would also like to thank the team at Sarwanam who specially designed and performed a relevant street play for the workshop participants.

The challenge of translation, rapporting, and putting together a cohesive document to capture the workshop proceedings was tremendous and was ably met by Judith Amtzis, Nivedita Mishra, Rajiv Singh, Shashi Khadgi, Kiran Basnet and Tribhuvan Paudel. Without their diligent support and commitment it would not have been possible to produce this report.

We would specially like to thank the Principal of Budhanilkantha School for making available the school facilities and their beautiful campus to us. Lt. Colonel B.J. Shah, Bursar was extremely helpful and without his cooperation the workshop would not have been possible. We would also like to thank all the Budhanilkantha School staff who assisted with logistics, housekeeping, and catering services.

It is extremely difficult to name all my colleagues at ICIMOD who assisted in setting up this workshop. We would like to specially thank Sameer Karki for planning and facilitation and Reeta Rana and Gobind Shrestha for organisational and secretarial support. Apart from them, we would like to express our appreciation of all the other logistics and administration departments without whose cooperation it would have been impossible to organise this workshop. Last, but not least, it would be opportune to thank the professionals in our publications department who were instrumental in editing and producing this document.

Anupam Bhatia
Regional Coordinator
Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme

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I Introduction

Introduction

Participatory forest management has emerged as an alternative strategy for sustainable management of forest resources in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. Small village-based community organisations have played an important role in asserting their rights to forest resources and in protecting and managing their local environment. People-centered resource management strategies have come to occupy a central position in different development sectors through accounts of their success.

Recognising the critical role community-based organisations play in natural resource management, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), in collaboration with the Nepal Chapter of FAO's Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP), organised the First Regional Community Forestry Users' Group Workshop. The key objective of the workshop was to mobilise resource persons in the forefront of community-based natural resource management in order to share experiences and devise strategies for the future.

The workshop, held from 22 to 27 May, 1995, at Budhanilkantha School, Kathmandu, Nepal, brought together members of forest user groups (FUGs) from Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Thailand, as well as community organisers from The Philippines and Bhutan. This was the first ever meeting in which forest user groups from different countries interacted on common concerns and achievements. It was also the first international meeting on community forestry in which community members were the main actors rather than the subjects of deliberations. The workshop provided a unique opportunity to design user-oriented strategies for sustainable natural resource management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

Participants

A total of 77 participants from six countries attended the workshop. The participants consisted mainly of forest user group members, women's group members, some non-government organisations, and community organisers. Forty-three participants attended from Nepal, twenty-three from India, five from Pakistan, three from Thailand, two from The Philippines, and one from Bhutan.

More than one-third of the participants were women: sixteen from Nepal, eight from India, three from Pakistan, and one from The Philippines. Women's participation was affirmatively encouraged. Letters of open invitation to user groups and NGOs indicated that two out of three invitees had to be women. Child-care arrangements were also offered to facilitate the presence and participation of women delegates.

Workshop Process

An outline of the workshop schedule was prepared in advance, with a focus on making the workshop as participatory as possible. Four types of discussion were planned: cross-country working groups for sharing experiences, eliciting expectations, and arriving at overall recommendations for future action;

concurrent sessions on critical themes that emerged from discussions; country working groups for preparing country presentations and country action plans; and plenary sessions for presentations, questions, and group discussions.

Since participants came from diverse backgrounds, Nepali, Hindi, and English were used for the plenary and small group sessions. Translators and rapporteurs fluent in these languages facilitated all workshop discussions.

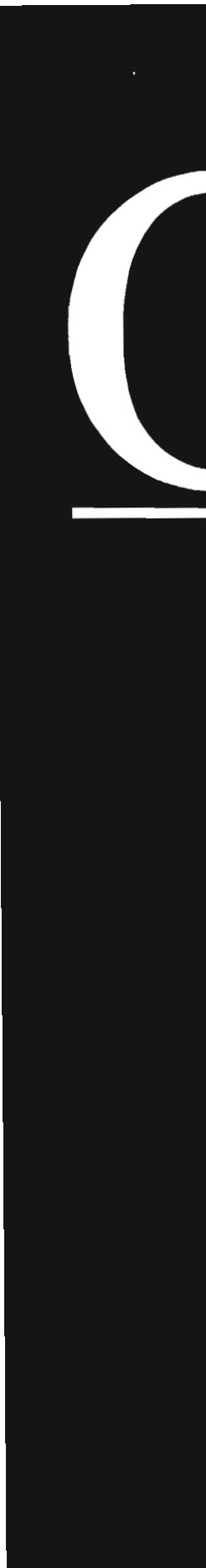
Apart from the first major plenary session of country representations, in which translations were carried out in two or three languages, the remaining presentations were made either in Hindi or Nepali, with translators located in the audience. This arrangement proved much more successful and was used in some of the small working groups as well.

Workshop Communication

A well-equipped secretariat was available to provide communication facilities to the workshop participants and to consolidate and share the outcomes of the group discussions. In order to provide a common medium for communication for the 80 participants to the workshop, arrangements were made to produce a daily wall newspaper for the duration of the workshop. Entitled *Chautari* and produced in Nepali, Hindi, and English, this wall newspaper became a popular place of interaction. *Chautari's* contents included workshop progress, news about unusual events, humour, and even complaints and suggestions.

File Documentation

In order to document the workshop process on film, a film crew was present throughout the seven days of the workshop. There are almost 800 minutes of footage on film, and these include documentation of the workshop and about 30 interviews with participants. The aim is to produce two films related to the issues discussed at the workshop.



Opening
Sessions

Registration, Orientation, Poster Sessions

The participants began arriving on the morning of Sunday, May 21. On registering, each participant received a locally-crafted cushion and cloth bag for use during the workshop and to take home as a memento. Maps and information about the Budhanilkantha School campus were available in three languages.

The participants prepared posters on community forestry issues and activities specific to their region. These posters were displayed in the main foyer of the building where the sessions were held, and they served as effective means of communication.

Following a sightseeing tour of Kathmandu Valley, a plenary session was held to provide participants with information on the logistics. The participants also made fairly detailed introductions, and the session concluded late at night.

Opening Plenary Session

The first formal plenary session began on Monday afternoon. This session consisted of introductions by the participants and identification of workshop objectives by the organisers. Recognising that communities had played an important role in asserting their rights to forest resources, a key objective of the workshop was to bring together individual women and men who had been in the forefront of community-based natural resource management and to provide a forum for sharing experiences and to devise strategies for the future. Although forest officers and members of different NGOs participate in regional forums, village-level user group members rarely get an opportunity to attend a regional seminar. The main thrust of the workshop, therefore, was to prove that rural communities could take responsibility for resource management. Another goal was to consider and explore the possibilities of forming a regional alliance of user groups. It was clearly stated in this workshop that the participants themselves were to take the lead in defining their expectations and the process that should take place.

Cross-country Working Groups

The participants were then divided into four cross-country working groups to begin the first actual workshop task: the discussion and definition of what participants should aim to accomplish during the workshop. Three items were identified for each group's agenda.

- Introductions
- Share expectations from the workshop
- Identify group resources and contributions that could be shared

The groups were constituted to provide maximum diversity. Each group, therefore, was a good mix of participants from different countries, with a gender balance, and including both user group members and community organisers.

Day One

May 21, 1995
Sunday

Day Two

May 22, 1995
Monday

Originally, this process was expected to take a couple of hours, but the groups worked until the informal inaugural ceremony and reconvened after dinner. Independent of one another, each group began with a detailed process of introduction during which group members discussed their groups or organisations, as well as the differences in the rules and guidelines under which they worked. Some groups worked late into the night to prepare their presentations for the following morning.

Informal Inauguration

An informal inauguration of the workshop, exclusively for participants, was held in the evening at the Saraswati (Goddess of Learning) Temple on the Budhanilkantha School Campus. The temple and surroundings were lit in the traditional Nepali style with candles and adorned with flowers. To invoke the spirit of education and learning and to create an atmosphere of harmony and collective effort, all the participants were invited to light a lamp and offer flowers for the success of the workshop. The participants were pleased to be part of this ancient and beautiful custom. The temple itself was located in a grove of trees, with various brightly-coloured flowers planted all around. This opening ceremony created a positive mood for the workshop.

Day Three

May 23, 1995

Tuesday

Formal Inauguration

The formal inauguration began with the arrival of the Honourable Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation of Nepal, **Mr. Salim Miya Ansari**, and several other high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and Department of Forests. Mr. Semai Chaudhari from Sunsari, who had received national recognition for his personal contribution and commitment to reforestation in Nepal, was the Chairperson of the inaugural ceremony.

Welcome Address by Mr. Egbert Pelinck, Director General, ICIMOD

Mr. Egbert Pelinck, Director General of ICIMOD, in his welcome address, stressed the unique nature of the workshop. He noted that, although Nepal had for many years been internationally recognised for its progressive community forestry policy and legislation, the challenge of bringing policies into practice still existed. Mr. Pelinck extended a hearty welcome to the workshop participants who, he said, through their own practices, had demonstrated that community-based forestry was effective and could succeed in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

Mr. Pelinck said that the participants were in the forefront of a new age in forest management and, therefore, their participation made the workshop special. On this occasion, he said, it was not the residents of villages in remote areas that were the subject of deliberations but the main actors at the workshop. The participants had given hope, Mr. Pelinck added, for the future of the forests of the Himalayas, and ICIMOD was looking forward to receiving guidance on the expansion of strategies and approaches throughout the mountains.

Commenting on ICIMOD's dual mandate of environmental conservation and poverty alleviation, Mr. Pelinck stated that by linking environmental issues and economic aspirations, ICIMOD aimed to assist in the attainment of sustainable

development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Bringing countries of the region together was ICIMOD's main mandate, and the presence of participants from different countries of the region was evidence of the regional focus and perspective ICIMOD was able to provide to national issues. Noting that linkages also existed with other institutions, he welcomed the participation of delegates from Thailand and The Philippines.

Mr. Pelinck said that, although each of the Himalayan countries had successful policies to promote people's participation in forest management, more attention needed to be given to sustainable use of forests and to equity in the sharing of benefits of protection and management. User-oriented strategies to implement policies and create appropriate institutions at the local level were now needed, and Mr. Pelinck noted that the best way to design such strategies was in close consultation and collaboration with forest user groups. This being the workshop objective, the meeting was viewed as the beginning of a process, and he hoped that it would elicit practical strategies for future follow-up.

Mr. Pelinck noted that the participants' recommendations would be of interest and would contribute not only to ICIMOD's member countries, but also to the ongoing consultations on Chapter 13 of UNCED's Agenda 21, which focussed on issues related to the development of mountain areas around the world.

Mr. Pelinck also thanked the Honourable Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation, adding that his participation demonstrated the continuing commitment of HMG to people-oriented forestry in Nepal. He also thanked the Ford Foundation, New Delhi, for the continuing support to ICIMOD which had made the workshop possible. He thanked the Swiss Development Cooperation, Nepal, for its financial contribution to the workshop. He then thanked the Board of Governors, the Principal, and the staff of Budhanilkantha School for making their campus facilities available for the forum. He also thanked FTTP/WATCH (Women Acting Together for Change) for collaborating with ICIMOD in planning and organising the workshop.

Inaugural Speech by the Honourable Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation, Mr. Salim Miya Ansari

The Honourable Minister officially opened the workshop by thanking the workshop organisers for giving him the opportunity to address the participants of the First Regional Community Forestry Users' Group Workshop. He stated that Nepal's recent experiences in forest management had shown that peoples' participation was essential for the sustainable use of forest resources. Nepal's forest management programme included the formation and mobilisation of users' groups, the preparation of an operational plan, and the handing over of forest areas. Most of the Nepali population depended on forest resources, and over 75 per cent depended on forests for their daily fuel requirements. The growing population had increased the pressure on forest resources, and, without adequate local support and people's participation, the efforts of the government and NGOs would fail. Due to the socioeconomic conditions of Nepal, women and the poor were the ones most directly dependent on forest resources. Since forest patches managed by women users appeared to be relatively better managed and productive, future programmes planned to involve more women.

The Minister noted that Nepal's forest programme had been proceeding rapidly since the restoration of democracy. A new Forest Act and byelaws had been implemented to institutionalise the programme. This Act legally recognised users' groups and their legal rights over forest products and stated that the income from community forestry would be used for village and community development.

Minister Ansari said that the community forestry programme had also helped in environmental protection, since, given the fragile geographic situation in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, even minor human activities could effect the entire population. For that reason, forest management and its development should be primary considerations.

The Minister hoped that the workshop would help exchange ideas and experiences and, therefore, strengthen future policies. He thanked ICIMOD, FTFP/WATCH, and the organisers and wished the workshop a grand success.

Representatives from the participating countries were then invited to address the gathering.

Kalawati Devi, Uttar Pradesh, India

Recognising that countries such as Nepal, Pakistan, and India were facing serious environmental problems, Ms. Kalawati Devi said that protecting and developing forest products was an important issue. Forests were the direct concern of women, and scarcity of forest products had increased their workload. Women should, therefore, be involved in the plantation, protection, and utilisation of forest products. Women played a major role in forest development. It was essential that both men and women should work together for forest protection. However, she lamented, the domestic workload limited women's participation in these programmes.

Ali Gohar, Pakistan

Thanking the organisers for inviting participants from Pakistan, Mr. Gohar said he believed the workshop would be very beneficial. He felt that it was a good opportunity to gather knowledge from people living within and around the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Despite many differences in culture, ethnicity, and language, there were many common issues and problems to be discussed during the workshop. Mr. Gohar congratulated HMG/N for promoting community forestry and said the participants were ready to learn from Nepal's policy and experiences. He said that learning would help Pakistan and other countries to develop effective strategies for natural resource management.

George Paglinawan, The Philippines

Mr. Paglinawan began by commenting that although The Philippines was not part of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, the country, nevertheless, had common problems with regard to forestry and mountain conservation issues. He said that the delegates from The Philippines were very grateful to have been invited to participate in the meeting.

Mr. Paglinawan noted that The Philippines also had upland areas inhabited by tribal communities, and his purpose for coming to the workshop was to see how the forests were conserved and managed in the Himalayas. He said that, despite the different languages spoken at the workshop, the forest communicated in its one language, i.e., the language of life, and this was the common bond.

Din Singto, Thailand

Mr. Singto began by expressing his appreciation to all the friends from Nepal, South Asia, and South East Asia who had come together to discuss the problems of the forest environment and the people. He said that he represented fishermen from southern Thailand where forests played a significant role in the lives of the fishing community. He had been attempting to develop and implement community forestry in southern Thailand. His efforts had succeeded in a small way and had drawn the attention of the government to the problems faced by poor fishermen.

Laxmi Devi Khatiwada, Nepal

Ms. Khatiwada related the experiences of her forest users' group. Following a flood that had washed away their crops, she and some other women had worked together and planted trees. They had planted saplings for grass and trees according to their needs. The women did all the work themselves, including building a fence by pooling their resources. They also opened a milk collection and marketing depot. The income generated from this depot was used in establishing a school. So far, the group had not received any assistance from the government. Ms. Khatiwada concluded by saying that since women were most dependent on forest resources, their participation in forest management decision-making needed to be improved.

Pitambar Bhandari, Nepal

Mr. Bhandari thanked ICIMOD for inviting the participants to the first South Asian Community Forestry workshop, and expressed his thoughts on the importance of forests through a Nepali poem. The following is a translation.

*The forest is the life of a human being, giving peace in our isolation.
In forest gardens, cuckoo and other lonely birds sing freely.
Wherever mountains are, there is peace.
Wolf, panther and jackal wander without fear.
Beneath the forest, pure cold water is found; within are fruits & vegetables.
Song pervades the forest.
Woodcutters and villagers roam fearlessly; everyone is happy and full
of life.
Before, only the government protected the forest.
Deceived by users, forests everywhere were destroyed.
Forest guards took no care; the government failed.
Now, user groups together manage the forest, growing and cutting
themselves.
Let us look after this forest; let us have greenery throughout.
Thus will our environment thrive and the community forest develop.*

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Forest guards took no care; the government failed.
Now, user groups together manage the forest, growing and cutting themselves.
Let us look after this forest; let us have greenery throughout.
Thus will our environment thrive and the community forest develop.

*'Til now we must purchase timber, but cannot meet our needs.
Grass and fodder we are also without, so we must plant more than
timber.
Not only juicy fruit but also medicinal herbs.
We must spread greenery all over our land.*

Chairperson Semai Chaudhari, Sunsari, Nepal

Noting his pleasure at the attendance of various dignitaries and other friends from different countries, Chairperson Chaudhari stated that he hoped greenery would spread throughout Nepal and other countries.

Plenary Sessions

Working Group Reports

The general plenary session reconvened after lunch for reports on the four working groups' deliberations. **Mr. Pearmsak Makarabhiron**, Division of Community Forestry, Royal Forest Department, Thailand, was the Chairperson for this session.

The presentations were made either with posters or with overheads. In addition, the Working Groups' concerns were consolidated and translated into Hindi and Nepali for distribution to the participants.

Working Group One

This group included 18 members, seven women and 12 men. Ten of them were from Nepal, six from India, and one each from Bhutan and The Philippines. All the participants introduced themselves and the user group or organisation they represented and stated their hopes and aspirations for the workshop.

Expectations from the Workshop

- To learn from others and share experiences

The general goal of most participants was to learn more about community forestry programmes in the region through the workshop. **Bhim Lal Subedi**, of Syangja District in Nepal, related how his user group was formed. He hoped to learn more about the experiences of other user groups in Nepal and other countries and share views with others. **Bhim Prasad Shrestha**, from the Ram Bazaar users' group in Okhaldhunga, Nepal, noted that his group had not received any assistance from donor agencies, and that he wanted to know more about the formation and management of other user groups.

Participants from other countries, such as **Dennis Desmond** of Bhutan and **George Paglinawan** of The Philippines, had similar aspirations. Mr. Paglinawan expected to take back experiences on common forestry. For instance, the term, users' group, was never used in The Philippines because the community had never used the forest and the forest had always been owned by somebody else.

- To work on formulating a clear policy on forest management

There was a felt need that existing government rules, regulations, and policies related to forest management in regard to the functioning of FUGs should be reviewed. Several participants commented that many policies were not formulated for the welfare of the people. The suggested policies ranged from agroforestry demonstrations, protection of natural herbs, and the training of rangers. Some specific suggestions were as follow.

- To ensure that user needs were incorporated while formulating forest workplans and during their implementation.

- Before constituting FUGs, the concerned villagers should be fully informed of the objectives and obligations of FUGs, and the managing body should be elected only with their full participation.
 - There was a need to remove hurdles and irritants and instill a spirit of goodwill and cooperation between forest staff and FUGs.
 - Once forest land had been handed over to FUGs, there should be no interference by the forest staff.
 - There was a need to ensure adequate representation from FUGs in decision- and policy-making forums.
 - A suitable mechanism to resolve disputes and conflicts was needed.
 - Forest laws and rules should be made flexible to suit the changing local needs and situations.
 - FUGs' tenure over forest land and users' rights and obligations should be clearly defined.
- To establish a national or regional organisation

Lack of communication linkages amongst FUGs regarding formation and linkages to exchange information and for training were serious concerns. Many participants recommended that a regional level organisation be established. **Mr. G. Raju** from Ahmedabad felt that, with such an organisation, the regional problems could be tackled collectively. Such an organisation could disseminate knowledge-, information-, and experience-sharing materials to FUGs and provide proper guidance on all relevant issues, and could also coordinate activities and communications between groups.

- To share the experiences of women forest users and ensure greater involvement of women

Kalawati Devi from Chamoli District, U.P., India, who had been chairperson of the local *Mahila Mandal* for 16 years, said: *"Since women have taken over, policies were reformulated and the management of forests improved. The women's group has now become quite powerful. I hope to learn what other women are doing from this seminar."*

Laxmi Devi Khatiwada from Saptari District, Nepal, also shared the experience of her users' group: *"The Malati women's group has opened a nursery and has already produced many saplings. We have not been able to put a fence around the forest so we look after it ourselves. If animals graze on the lands, we impose a fine on the owner ranging from Rs 5 to Rs 51. We collected Rs 10 from each household to open a primary school. I have received this opportunity to come and see what other women are doing around the country."*

Suggestions were also made for improving the functioning of user groups. These included:

- equitable sharing of rights and obligations amongst the members irrespective of their status;

- giving priority to poorer sections in income-generating opportunities; and
- providing training for members of FUGs to develop skills on all related issues.

Working Group Two

This group consisted of 21 participants, including nine from Nepal, seven from India, two each from Thailand and Pakistan, and one from The Philippines. There were seven women and 14 men. The group members began by introducing their organisations and then decided to explain the laws relating to community forestry in the different countries. **Chandi Prasad Bhatt**, from Uttar Pradesh, India, suggested that by listening to all the experiences the group could learn how to generate participation. The participants also discussed the problems facing their user groups.

Some of the main areas of concern included the following.

- How to keep the interest of members from flagging while governments and policies keep changing?
- Conflicts within the user group and struggles within user committees, as elaborated upon by **Sharmila Katwal**, Okhaldhunga, Nepal, who gave a typical example of conflict which had arisen within a successful user group because the chairman, a man, who she felt was dictatorial, wanted to cut down all the trees and plant new ones, while the women wanted to cut down old trees only.
- How to prevent the elite from taking over the forests?
- The need to train NGOs to work in community forestry as the NGO movement was weak in Nepal

Expectations from the Workshop

- To learn from the participants about their natural resources' management techniques and their present forest legislation and policy status. They felt the need to acquire information on the management of natural resources in other hill areas in the Himalayas and in the world. This included the legal and scientific status of the resources.
- To identify common problems of the hills and of the Himalayan people.
- To prioritise the problems to be solved and also see if the problems varied geographically.
- To learn about innovative and progressive forest activities in other countries and the success, failures, and hardships that they overcame during formulation and implementation.

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- To learn about people's need for natural resources' management. To decide what changes were needed in natural resource management and to see if a pilot user group could be set up with an integrated development scheme.
- To discuss ways to encourage women to participate in forest management activities and to increase their role in decision-making.

Participants also shared success stories and experiences on how their groups overcame various difficulties. Some examples are as follow.

- **Din Singto** from Thailand spoke about the successful efforts of the Federation of Local Fishermen in southern Thailand, which had been operational for only three years. Tin mining and big trawlers had depleted the forests and affected fishing. The association worked to solve the problems step-by-step by getting villagers together to first protect the mangroves and then to go on to replanting trees. Eighty villages in 11 provinces were involved; a total of about 10,000 persons. The group was a loosely-organised working group with no institutional framework or paperwork. It actually began in one village, with people sharing their problems.
- **Deepak Thapa** from Kabhre District, Nepal, talked about how his group had been able to return a forest, which had been planted 90 years previously by 28 families, to the community. After struggling with many committees, finally 220 families were protecting the area. Internal conflicts had also been resolved.
- **Feli Piala** of The Philippines was representing the Centre for Peasants' Concerns and Services which had been established in 1986. People were already organised against the government, but the organising strategies had changed to be more positive. At first, it had been a technical organisation to focus on new technology and training instead of discussions. Then, they had organised themselves to lobby for the Agrarian Reform Act. They also networked with other NGOs.
- **Chandi Prasad Bhatt** spoke at length about the *Chamoli Gram Sewa Mandal* which had played a lead role in the *Chipko* movement in India. For fifty years, forests had been depleted by the *gram panchayat(s)* in collusion with local forest officials. Due to deforestation, there had been a massive flood in the area and the organisation had first been set up as a flood relief organisation. Later, the women realised that, as the people responsible for managing the household, they would have to bear the burden of deforestation. Therefore, when the government decided to allow the felling of trees, they had organised themselves and had 'hugged' the trees to stop people from felling them. Since then they had made great strides in forest management and had become a worldwide example of community forestry. Now they replanted trees, protected forests, set up nurseries, provided adult education, and ran primary schools.

Finally, members of this group wanted to appeal to the Indian Government to negotiate with **Sundarlal Bahuguna** of the *Chipko Andolan* who was then fasting in protest against the construction of the Tehri Dam in the U.P. hills.

Working Group Three

This group consisted of 19 participants, 11 women, and eight men. Ten of them were from various parts of Nepal, six from India, two from Pakistan, and one from Thailand.

All the group members introduced themselves and their organisations. Some examples follow.

- **Hari Prasad Neupane** represented the Bokhim and Ahale community forestry users' group of Bhojpur, Nepal. Several years ago, degraded land was given to the FUG under a community forestry operational plan made by user group members. From each house, one man and one woman were members. Fifty per cent of the income went into the community forestry account and the rest was used for wages. The community forestry nursery had 20,000-25,000 plants. The district education committee had introduced adult education. The group wanted the Forestry Act to be clarified in terms of the relationship of the FUG to the district, assistance in seed distribution, and promotion of agroforestry.
- **Mina Khadka** represented the Dwartar Sairivi community forestry users' group in Kaski, Nepal. Under the Forest Act, degraded forest had come under their protection, and about seven people practised agroforestry on one hectare of land. Many types of plants were grown and timber was planted on the edges of these lands. Committee meetings were held twice a month and general meetings once every month. This organisation had provided a modern stove to each house to relieve pressure on firewood and had constructed common toilets.
- **Aman Ali Shah** represented an NGO which was part of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), in Gilgit, Northern Pakistan. It was established to make people aware of the need to protect forests. The forest area covered 20,000ha of land. The committee included both men and women participants. Each member had the duty to plant 200 plants. Banking and loan facilities were also made available to members.
- **Kuldeep Verma** represented an NGO called "People's Action for People in Need" (PAPN) in Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh. This organisation had been established 10 years ago. She said that the forest cover was not sufficient and that ownership was in the hands of the government. People could cut only one or two trees. This organisation included a women's committee called *Mahila Mandal* which worked with problems relating to women. Some useful training was provided to women through this committee.
- **Khagendra Sikdel**, from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), worked as a forestry advisor. SDC's work was to raise awareness and provide training to forest department staff. This organisation served as a link between the forest department and user groups. He expressed the need for a comparative study among different user groups and was eager to learn about the *Chipko* movement in India.

After discussions, this group arrived at the following consensus.

- In Nepal, the forestry user group situation was generally positive. The beneficiaries were the user groups, and women's participation in community forestry was improving at the rural level. In some places, forest user groups had generated substantial savings.
- In India, almost every state had different structures and problems with participatory forest management. In most states, forests were controlled by the government. Therefore, community forestry had not become popular as users did not own the land and did not receive sufficient benefit from the forest products. The participants from India wanted to know about the structure and situation of community forestry in Nepal.

Expectations from the Workshop

- To promote exchange of ideas, experiences, and problems between participants from different countries and districts. Education, seminars, and travel in and outside the country should be arranged to make user groups more active.
- To formulate new and practical policies under existing laws and rules to build district, regional, and central level institutions in order to facilitate understanding among user groups.
- To formulate a clear policy on the promotion of agroforestry in order to develop the sector.

Working Group Four

This group included 18 participants, ten were men and eight women. Eleven of them were from Nepal, five from India, and two from Pakistan. Group members identified their most significant common problem as the constant degradation of forest areas. The causes are listed below.

- Lack of knowledge and awareness about the environment
- Lack of proper coordination between the forest department and FUGs
- Political problems, including lack of coordination between political parties and the forest department.
- Lack of forest technology
- Problems of unemployment and poverty
- Male domination
- Social domination by elite groups
- Forest area boundary problems

- Misuse of medicinal plants
- Need for clear and community-oriented rules and regulations on wildlife as well

Expectations from the Workshop

Group members had certain areas of concern which they wanted to explore at the workshop. These included:

- environmental issues, such as protecting forests against fires, landslides, and degradation and the means to prevent them;
- successful tree plantation, agroforestry techniques;
- conflict resolution techniques, i.e., methods of resolving problems of encroachment on forest land and of managing disputes arising within the users' groups;
- learning about Nepal's successful community forestry programmes;
- formation of a network among the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas which could provide coordination;
- community empowerment and strengthening;
- possible ways to generate funds; and
- simple and detailed programmes to bring awareness at the grass roots' level.

Some introductions from group members follow.

- **Yam Bahadur Ale**, chairperson of the Koidim Community Forest, Tanahu District, Nepal said that the community forestry users' group was started when the forest became depleted due to the *Khoriya Pratha*, meaning the tradition of cutting down the forest for farming. In Tanahu district, the sons were sent to the forest to cut down trees as a test of their strength. The trees that fell were burned and the barren land used for agriculture. This was a result of inadequate farm land and unemployment and led to a large number of trees being cut and burned. However, since the community forestry programme started two years ago, they had been selling vegetables and earning an income of NRs 1,100,000 (US \$ 2,000) annually. The income was used for community forestry development and construction work to improve agriculture, drinking water projects, bridges, and trails. They had not taken any aid from the government.
- **Subhadra Adhikari** from Kaski District, Nepal, a member of an all women's FUG which had planted trees on two hectares of land, said that this group had also received a prize in the district for conservation and that the

community's needs for grass and wood were being supplied from the forest. The user group had formed a mothers' group and was involved in a drinking water project, construction of a 250-metre footpath, as well as plantation and conservation of community forests.

- **Ashish Kumar Shah** from Tripura, India, was representing the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose *Briksha Mitra Sangha*, an NGO which had won the Best State Award for environmental protection. The group provided technical support and encouragement and had four types of forest programme: social forestry, farm forestry, agro-based forestry, and joint/participatory forestry.
- **Jhalabhai Rathvi** was a Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction (VIKSAT) field officer from Gujarat where most of the forest areas had been cleared. Village cooperatives were formed to protect the natural forests and plantations established on wastelands. Some cooperatives had introduced leasehold forestry as a joint programme with the government and VIKSAT. VIKSAT had been functioning as a mediator between the government and village cooperatives.
- **Krishna Subedi** of Syangja, Nepal, related a true story showing how poor people were more dependent on forests than rich people.

"Mote Sarki, a very poor man, had to support his six daughters by cutting trees. A women's group was formed and started protecting the forest, but Mote Sarki did not change and still went around cutting trees. The women's group tried to catch him but failed. Nobody knew when he went into the forest to cut trees. With great effort, he was caught one day and the women's group took him to the police station to be locked up. Soon after Mote Sarki was caught and taken to the police, his wife contacted me and pleaded for help. She said that, since her husband was now behind bars, they had no one to support them. She asked for money or rice. She was given some rice and sent away. But then the group thought, 'Why not employ Mote Sarki to look after the forest? He will also stop cutting trees.' So they paid him Rs. 480 every month and, from that time onwards, he has been doing a good job of looking after the forest."

- **Mr. Pearmsak** summarised the plenary session by noting that the main concerns were about governments' laws and policies and about forest protection. An important recommendation was to work to improve the capabilities of user groups to work effectively and to create networks and other mechanisms with which to strengthen them.

Following the plenary session, participants were divided into country working groups. The groups were asked to prepare country presentations on the status of participatory forestry, including policy and legislation, problems, successes, and failures.

Sarwanam Street Theatre

In the evening, the well-known Nepali street theatre group, *Sarwanam*, presented a play which had been especially written for the workshop. It narrated the story

of a beautiful tree in a village which the community considered sacred. The tree came to the attention of a local politician visiting the village to seek votes by promising to bring development to the village. The politician, along with a big landowner from the area, tried to convince the people that the village would be better off if they cut down the tree. The local community was not convinced and started a campaign to save their tree.

The politician and landowner, thinking of the profit they could make by selling the wood from the large tree, enlisted the services of a local priest. Promising to build him a house in Kathmandu, they persuaded him to convince the community members that the tree was the home of an evil spirit who was bringing harm to their village. Although the community members could not believe that the tree, which had given their community restful shade for many generations, could be harbouring an evil spirit, the priest persisted. Finally, after much protest from the people in the community, the tree was saved.

Field Trips

Day four was devoted to field trips. Two sites had been selected for the participants to visit: a site in Kabhre that was under the supervision of the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Programme and a site in Dhading that was part of the Natural Resources' Management Programme of the United Mission to Nepal. Participants were free to choose one of the two sites.

In the late afternoon, Mr. Egbert Pelinck hosted a tea party for the participants at ICIMOD's experimental and demonstration station in Godavari.

Country Group Presentation

The Philippines

George Paglinawan made the Philippines' presentation. Overhead slides had been prepared in English, and these were translated directly into Nepali and Hindi in order to save time. Mr. Paglinawan first described the *Barangay Patrocenio* Community Forestry Project. This project had started in 1992 with the following objectives:

- to educate farmers about agricultural and forestry activities;
- to augment income from forest products; and
- to conserve biodiversity within forest areas.

The project included 55 households and covered 530ha, including over 100ha of timber forests. The available resources were limestone, second growth forests, and spring water which was the source of the community's water supply. The Project had established linkages with universities, other NGOs, and GOs.

Day Four

May 24, 1995
Wednesday

Day Five

May 25, 1995
Thursday

Plenary Session

One (11:00 am to 1 pm)

Chairpersons

Kamlaben Bhagora and
G. Raju

In Thailand, many criteria were used to identify whether a certain forest patch was a community-managed forest. Based on cultural practices, more than 10,000 forest patches were community managed. However, for official community management, the numbers for different regions of the country are as follow.

North	300 forests
NE	100 forests
South	65 forests
Central	50 forests

The current National Forest Policy sought to promote community forestry. The National Social and Economic Development Plan also recommended promoting community forestry and enacting a new Community Forestry Act. The government policy over the past two years had been to strongly support the empowerment of local organisations to manage natural resources and the environment. The government had been emphasising this as a major issue. Currently, two community forestry acts were being considered in Thailand: one, written by the government, and another, the 'Peoples' version, was drafted by communities and NGOs. Hopefully, a compromise between the two versions would result. Currently, community forests were being managed under the Forest Reserve Act and under traditional management systems.

Pearmsak then showed a drawing of the ecosystem revealing the problems faced by the fishermen. Degraded by mining and big trawlers, fish resources had decreased. The fishermen's dream was the restoration of the ecosystem and elimination of trawlers, with only local fishermen allowed.

Discussion

Q. *What are the differences between the two versions of the proposed forestry act, and why are there two?*

A. "The act proposed by the government gives all control to the government; the one proposed by the people gives all control to the user groups."

Q. *What is the difference between community forestry and the traditional system?*

A. "Community Forestry is undertaken on behalf of the government according to the laws and rules; 'government officials' include the local headman, and, therefore, it is not really an NGO. The government appoints the village chief to manage the forest and it also provides money to be used according to the chief's directions. The forest is managed and protected, but, in the traditional system, local people look after the forest together. Villagers now want a real community forestry system run by user groups."

Q. *How does community forestry now operate in Thailand?*

A. "First, the forest and its users are identified; second, forest products are collected; third, the community regulates itself, can impose fines and/or negotiate over problems, but remains within regulations. Forest products are not sold, and local people use the forests according to their needs. The

Plenary Session

TWO (2:00 pm to 4:30 pm)

Chairpersons

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elected village committee makes the rules regarding use of the community forest and distributes forest products among the users. The income collected from the forest products goes to the village development fund, not to the users' fund."

Q. Who profits from community forestry products?

A. "Profit is mostly on a self-sufficiency basis; for example, community woodlots provide wood for the whole community. The administration depends on the government but all benefits go to the village development fund."

Q. What procedures exist to create consensus between the government and the people's ideas? Who is there to negotiate?

A. "Last month, the Minister agreed to look at the people's proposed act which provides for a 'peoples forum', including community members, government officers, NGOs, academicians, and politicians, to review the act and to negotiate. Some time ago, a massive demonstration was organised in eastern Thailand and the Minister of Agriculture said that he would review the government's version of the act."

Q. In my users' group in Nepal, women are very active in nurseries, etc, but we didn't see any women in your slides. Are women active in Thailand?

A. "Yes, Thai women are very strong, but from behind; no decisions can be made without consulting women. In Thailand, women keep the money and men do the work."

Q. What do you mean by community sea? Do only fisherman use it or the whole community?

A. "Since all the people are fisherman, they all use it."

Bhutan

This presentation was made by Dennis Desmond, a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) working with the forest department in Bhutan. The following information was presented on an overhead slide with explanatory comments.

Bhutan's total area was 40,500 sq. km., and the population only 600,000. Forests covered 64 per cent and scrubland eight per cent of the country. The small population had ensured a large forest cover. Looking at the history of community forestry in Bhutan, the 1969 Forest Act, with a strong forest protection focus, provided for the nationalisation of all forests and trees, including trees on private lands. In 1979, a royal decree had declared the initiation of a social forestry programme which involved free distribution and planting of seedlings by students and encouraging people's participation. However, since all the trees in Bhutan belonged to the government, there was no incentive to protect them, which had created an inherent difference in the 1969 and 1979 Acts.

During the 1980s, the government established National Forest Management Units for forest protection and management. In 1987-88, there were pilot social

forestry trials involving work on policy and legislation. Rules were established on pilot sites with FAO assistance. The period between 1987 and 1992 saw the development of new laws on social forestry, and these focussed on people's participation. A new Forest Policy was approved in 1992, replacing the 1974 policy, clearing the way for regulations on participatory forest management.

Between 1990 and 1993, Interim Social Forestry Rules were approved, allowing private forestry, but the trees were still owned by the government. There was a provision for registration to transfer tree ownership which encouraged tree planting on private lands where a cadastral survey had been conducted.

Community forestry in Bhutan was similar to community forestry in Nepal, involving the transfer of protection and management of community-used forests to user groups. There were requirements for a users' committee and a management plan. Both degraded and plantation areas, as well as natural forest areas, were being handed over, primarily for subsistence. Although the forest products were mostly used for subsistence, 100 per cent of the income earned through community forestry goes to the community to be used, first, for forest management and, then, for community development.

At a forest officers' meeting in 1992, the existing regulations were recognised as restrictive and new guidelines were formulated. A Forest and Nature Conservation Act was drafted between 1993 and 1995, but it was yet to be passed, and the interim rules were still operational. Formal approval of the policy had not been granted, and guidelines were being fine tuned.

Guidelines and technical backstopping remained the responsibility of the Social Forestry and Extension Section (SFES) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Although manpower was inadequate, SFES was responsible for the following.

- Social Forestry: Private or Community
- Forestry Extension
- Afforestation
- Watershed Management

Implementation and regulatory functions had been transferred from 10 Territorial Forest Divisions to 20 District Forestry Extension Sectors (DFES), each with one range officer, one forester, and two forest guards. Four donor-funded projects, covering 12 of 20 districts, were operating in the DFES, each with one range officer, one forester, and two forest guards.

The following issues were identified for the future.

- Further revision of Social Forestry Rules
- Finalising and distributing guidelines
- Training and reorientation of staff

- Rural extension: rules and programme
- Implementation and technical backstopping.

Discussion

Q. *Bhutan's approach seems very top down. Is any traditional user group management being practised in Bhutan?*

A. "Bhutan considers itself small enough to manage on its own; but decentralisation is being considered. The guidelines are not mandatory; the districts can decide whether or not to follow them. The basis of the programme is community-managed forests, and research is needed for traditional systems. Because the forest cover is so large, the government is being careful about introducing social forestry."

Q. *Is the community forestry programme donor-driven?*

A. "Not really, donors provide the support, but the implementation is undertaken by the government."

Q. *Bhutan has 64 per cent land under forest cover, is there any need for forest protection?*

A. "The government is moving slowly because the need is not so great."

Pakistan

Ali Gohar made this presentation providing an overview of Pakistan. Forests covered little more than five per cent of Pakistan's total area, and five categories of forest were identified as follow.

- Government-protected forests
- Government-reserved forests
- *Guzara* Forests: a community forest managed by the government; the income generated belonged to the community but fees were charged
- Private/Commercial Forests: private forests were not individually owned, they may be community owned but operate under a specific management system

Social/Community Forestry was a new concept in Pakistan where a few projects funded by donor countries had recently been introduced by the Forest Department. Some were to generate income and others to regenerate the forests. The main objectives of the projects were:

- production of fuel and fodder,
- generation of income for the rural poor,
- overcoming unemployment, and
- environmental protection.

- To learn about people's need for natural resources' management. To decide what changes were needed in natural resource management and to see if a pilot user group could be set up with an integrated development scheme.
- To discuss ways to encourage women to participate in forest management activities and to increase their role in decision-making.

Participants also shared success stories and experiences on how their groups overcame various difficulties. Some examples are as follow.

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- Male domination
- Social domination by elite groups
- Forest area boundary problems

- Misuse of medicinal plants
- Need for clear and community-oriented rules and regulations on wildlife as well

Expectations from the Workshop

Group members had certain areas of concern which they wanted to explore at the workshop. These included:

- environmental issues, such as protecting forests against fires, landslides, and degradation and the means to prevent them;
- successful tree plantation, agroforestry techniques;
- conflict resolution techniques, i.e., methods of resolving problems of encroachment on forest land and of managing disputes arising within the users' groups;
- learning about Nepal's successful community forestry programmes;
- formation of a network among the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas which could provide coordination;
- community empowerment and strengthening;
- possible ways to generate funds; and
- simple and detailed programmes to bring awareness at the grass roots' level.

Some introductions from group members follow.

- **Yam Bahadur Ale**, chairperson of the Koidim Community Forest, Tanahu District, Nepal said that the community forestry users' group was started when the forest became depleted due to the *Khoriya Pratha*, meaning the tradition of cutting down the forest for farming. In Tanahu district, the sons were sent to the forest to cut down trees as a test of their strength. The trees that fell were burned and the barren land used for agriculture. This was a result of inadequate farm land and unemployment and led to a large number of trees being cut and burned. However, since the community forestry programme started two years ago, they had been selling vegetables and earning an income of NRs 1,100,000 (US \$ 2,000) annually. The income was used for community forestry development and construction work to improve agriculture, drinking water projects, bridges, and trails. They had not taken any aid from the government.
- **Subhadra Adhikari** from Kaski District, Nepal, a member of an all women's FUG which had planted trees on two hectares of land, said that this group had also received a prize in the district for conservation and that the

community's needs for grass and wood were being supplied from the forest. The user group had formed a mothers' group and was involved in a drinking water project, construction of a 250-metre footpath, as well as plantation and conservation of community forests.

- **Ashish Kumar Shah** from Tripura, India, was representing the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose *Briksha Mitra Sangha*, an NGO which had won the Best State Award for environmental protection. The group provided technical support and encouragement and had four types of forest programme: social forestry, farm forestry, agro-based forestry, and joint/participatory forestry.
- **Jhalabhai Rathvi** was a Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction (VIKSAT) field officer from Gujarat where most of the forest areas had been cleared. Village cooperatives were formed to protect the natural forests and plantations established on wastelands. Some cooperatives had introduced leasehold forestry as a joint programme with the government and VIKSAT. VIKSAT had been functioning as a mediator between the government and village cooperatives.
- **Krishna Subedi** of Syangja, Nepal, related a true story showing how poor people were more dependent on forests than rich people.

"Mote Sarki, a very poor man, had to support his six daughters by cutting trees. A women's group was formed and started protecting the forest, but Mote Sarki did not change and still went around cutting trees. The women's group tried to catch him but failed. Nobody knew when he went into the forest to cut trees. With great effort, he was caught one day and the women's group took him to the police station to be locked up. Soon after Mote Sarki was caught and taken to the police, his wife contacted me and pleaded for help. She said that, since her husband was now behind bars, they had no one to support them. She asked for money or rice. She was given some rice and sent away. But then the group thought, 'Why not employ Mote Sarki to look after the forest? He will also stop cutting trees.' So they paid him Rs. 480 every month and, from that time onwards, he has been doing a good job of looking after the forest."

- **Mr. Pearmsak** summarised the plenary session by noting that the main concerns were about governments' laws and policies and about forest protection. An important recommendation was to work to improve the capabilities of user groups to work effectively and to create networks and other mechanisms with which to strengthen them.

Following the plenary session, participants were divided into country working groups. The groups were asked to prepare country presentations on the status of participatory forestry, including policy and legislation, problems, successes, and failures.

Sarwanam Street Theatre

In the evening, the well-known Nepali street theatre group, *Sarwanam*, presented a play which had been especially written for the workshop. It narrated the story

of a beautiful tree in a village which the community considered sacred. The tree came to the attention of a local politician visiting the village to seek votes by promising to bring development to the village. The politician, along with a big landowner from the area, tried to convince the people that the village would be better off if they cut down the tree. The local community was not convinced and started a campaign to save their tree.

The politician and landowner, thinking of the profit they could make by selling the wood from the large tree, enlisted the services of a local priest. Promising to build him a house in Kathmandu, they persuaded him to convince the community members that the tree was the home of an evil spirit who was bringing harm to their village. Although the community members could not believe that the tree, which had given their community restful shade for many generations, could be harbouring an evil spirit, the priest persisted. Finally, after much protest from the people in the community, the tree was saved.

Field Trips

Day four was devoted to field trips. Two sites had been selected for the participants to visit: a site in Kabhre that was under the supervision of the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Programme and a site in Dhading that was part of the Natural Resources' Management Programme of the United Mission to Nepal. Participants were free to choose one of the two sites.

In the late afternoon, Mr. Egbert Pelinck hosted a tea party for the participants at ICIMOD's experimental and demonstration station in Godavari.

Country Group Presentation

The Philippines

George Paglinawan made the Philippines' presentation. Overhead slides had been prepared in English, and these were translated directly into Nepali and Hindi in order to save time. Mr. Paglinawan first described the *Barangay Patrocenio* Community Forestry Project. This project had started in 1992 with the following objectives:

- to educate farmers about agricultural and forestry activities;
- to augment income from forest products; and
- to conserve biodiversity within forest areas.

The project included 55 households and covered 530ha, including over 100ha of timber forests. The available resources were limestone, second growth forests, and spring water which was the source of the community's water supply. The Project had established linkages with universities, other NGOs, and GOs.

Day Four

May 24, 1995
Wednesday

Day Five

May 25, 1995
Thursday

Plenary Session

One (11:00 am to 1 pm)

Chairpersons
Kamlaben Bhagora and
G. Raju

Project Activities

- Organising farmers
- Committee formation with men, women, and youths
 - livestock distribution
 - low-impact farming of various types
 - nurseries for trees and fruit
 - forestry
- Seminars/training and practicals
- Exposure programmes
 - farmer-farmer
 - farmer-institutions
- Cooperative education
- Regular monthly meetings
- Monitoring

Project Strengths and Constraints

Strengths

- Support from the local government
- Linkages with universities, the forest department, NGOs, and church groups
- Interest shown by neighbouring areas in replicating the project
- Women's participation
- Harmonious relationship between Centre for Peasants' Concern and Services (CENPECS) and the community
- Community serving as a role model for other government departments, schools, NGOs, and church groups
- Self-sufficiency in gathering and procuring indigenous saplings of trees and fruit trees

Constraints

- Government bureaucracy
- Overlapping with other NGOs vis-à-vis expertise and areas
- Government departments' reluctance to work with NGOs
- Ongoing insurgency
- Land tenure issues

After the presentation on his project, Mr. Paglinawan described The Philippine Governments' Community Forest Programme Agreement. This is given below.

- **Preparation**
 - Area identification

- Consultation with users/occupants
- Selection of an NGO as partner with a defined contract
- **Activities**
 - Organising - leading to committee formation and policy formulation
 - Education
 - Seminars
 - Income-generating projects, pooling initial capital for cooperative ventures
 - Forestry activities
 - Seminar/training on agroforestry
 - Nursery establishment: tree and fruit planting
- **Phase-out**
 - NGO partner phases out after two years
 - Department of Natural Resources takes over
- **Benefits**
 - All agricultural/livestock income goes to the community
- **Financial Aspects**
 - During harvesting of permanent trees, the community has to give a small percentage of the income to the government
 - The community allocates the income

Discussion

Q: Why does the government take over after two years?

A: "Many NGOs ask that question and for that reason our project does not participate with the government in our area. The answer seems to be that NGOs are better than the government at initially organising communities. After the initial organisation, other projects can also be included."

Q: Do the communities want to keep the land or give it to the government?

A: "Actually, the government owns the land in the first place; the land is managed by the community. We felt we were being used by the government in preparing the community for the government to take over later."

Q: Are the nurseries made by people who own land or by the government?

A: "They are community nurseries, made by community members, but they also provide seedlings, etc to people who are not members."

Thailand

This presentation was made by Pearmsak Makarabhiron and Din Singto and began with a brief introduction to community forestry in Thailand, shown on an overhead slide. Thailand's total area was 500,000 sq. km., of which 40 per cent should be covered by forest. However, the existing forest area was only 26 per cent. An additional 14 per cent was required to meet the national objective.

In Thailand, many criteria were used to identify whether a certain forest patch was a community-managed forest. Based on cultural practices, more than 10,000 forest patches were community managed. However, for official community management, the numbers for different regions of the country are as follow.

North	300 forests
NE	100 forests
South	65 forests
Central	50 forests

The current National Forest Policy sought to promote community forestry. The National Social and Economic Development Plan also recommended promoting community forestry and enacting a new Community Forestry Act. The government policy over the past two years had been to strongly support the empowerment of local organisations to manage natural resources and the environment. The government had been emphasising this as a major issue. Currently, two community forestry acts were being considered in Thailand: one, written by the government, and another, the 'Peoples' version, was drafted by communities and NGOs. Hopefully, a compromise between the two versions would result. Currently, community forests were being managed under the Forest Reserve Act and under traditional management systems.

Pearmsak then showed a drawing of the ecosystem revealing the problems faced by the fishermen. Degraded by mining and big trawlers, fish resources had decreased. The fishermen's dream was the restoration of the ecosystem and elimination of trawlers, with only local fishermen allowed.

Plenary Session

TWO (2:00 pm to 4:30 pm)

Chairpersons
Kamlaben Bhagora and
G. Raju

Discussion

Q. *What are the differences between the two versions of the proposed forestry act, and why are there two?*

A: "The act proposed by the government gives all control to the government; the one proposed by the people gives all control to the user groups."

Q. *What is the difference between community forestry and the traditional system?*

A. "Community Forestry is undertaken on behalf of the government according to the laws and rules; 'government officials' include the local headman, and, therefore, it is not really an NGO. The government appoints the village chief to manage the forest and it also provides money to be used according to the chief's directions. The forest is managed and protected, but, in the traditional system, local people look after the forest together. Villagers now want a real community forestry system run by user groups."

Q. *How does community forestry now operate in Thailand?*

A. "First, the forest and its users are identified; second, forest products are collected; third, the community regulates itself, can impose fines and/or negotiate over problems, but remains within regulations. Forest products are not sold, and local people use the forests according to their needs. The

elected village committee makes the rules regarding use of the community forest and distributes forest products among the users. The income collected from the forest products goes to the village development fund, not to the users' fund."

Q. *Who profits from community forestry products?*

A. "Profit is mostly on a self-sufficiency basis; for example, community woodlots provide wood for the whole community. The administration depends on the government but all benefits go to the village development fund."

Q. *What procedures exist to create consensus between the government and the people's ideas? Who is there to negotiate?*

A. "Last month, the Minister agreed to look at the people's proposed act which provides for a 'peoples forum', including community members, government officers, NGOs, academicians, and politicians, to review the act and to negotiate. Some time ago, a massive demonstration was organised in eastern Thailand and the Minister of Agriculture said that he would review the government's version of the act."

Q. *In my users' group in Nepal, women are very active in nurseries, etc, but we didn't see any women in your slides. Are women active in Thailand?*

A. "Yes, Thai women are very strong, but from behind; no decisions can be made without consulting women. In Thailand, women keep the money and men do the work."

Q. *What do you mean by community sea? Do only fisherman use it or the whole community?*

A. "Since all the people are fisherman, they all use it."

Bhutan

This presentation was made by Dennis Desmond, a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) working with the forest department in Bhutan. The following information was presented on an overhead slide with explanatory comments.

Bhutan's total area was 40,500 sq. km., and the population only 600,000. Forests covered 64 per cent and scrubland eight per cent of the country. The small population had ensured a large forest cover. Looking at the history of community forestry in Bhutan, the 1969 Forest Act, with a strong forest protection focus, provided for the nationalisation of all forests and trees, including trees on private lands. In 1979, a royal decree had declared the initiation of a social forestry programme which involved free distribution and planting of seedlings by students and encouraging people's participation. However, since all the trees in Bhutan belonged to the government, there was no incentive to protect them, which had created an inherent difference in the 1969 and 1979 Acts.

During the 1980s, the government established National Forest Management Units for forest protection and management. In 1987-88, there were pilot social

Although all the social forestry projects were designed to involve user groups, they covered only a small part of Pakistan's natural forests, so there had been no major breakthrough. Some constraints restricting their development are listed below.

- Forest legislation and policy--a clear-cut policy was lacking and legislation from 1924, the British colonial period, was still in effect.
- Reluctance on the part of foresters to involve people
- Lack of trust in the forest department
- Financial constraints
- The committees had not been empowered.

The AKRSP forestry programmes were located in the mountainous areas of northern Pakistan, occupying the outer Himalayas, the Karakoram range, and part of the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs. A human population of about 0.8 million covering six districts was spread over a total land area of 74,200 sq. km. Five of these districts suffered from acute shortages of timber, firewood, and fodder, while the sixth district was rich in natural forests, primarily private commercial forests. Forests in the other districts were government-protected forests. The landscape ranged from high pastures (15-16,000 feet) through pine and lower forests to land cultivable with irrigation. Without irrigation, nothing could grow.

Mr. Gohar introduced the programme of the AKRSP as one that included three dialogues with village people. These were as follow.

- Discuss problems and explain the AKRSP approach
- Make a diagnostic appraisal and move to PRA methodology
- Discuss with the community and make participatory plans

Charts presented details on the work of women in forestry development projects, including nursery development and afforestation.

Discussion

Q. Only 0.8 per cent of Gilgit is forest. Is this due to deforestation or natural causes?

A: "Both reasons have contributed to this low forest cover."

Q. How is the firewood demand satisfied?

A: "People use dung and grasses. Some kerosene, available 900km away, is used. The climate is extreme, ranging from 45°C to -35°C."

Q. Was the degradation brought on by the government or the people?

A. "The government supports the AKRSP, and we support government programmes; degradation was due both to government policies and people's activities."

Q. *Why is there no stress on community control of natural forests, and why are people encouraged to start plantations?*

A: "AKRSP is interested in drawing up an integrated plan to incorporate forestry, agriculture, and all other natural resource management. We feel that, first, we have to start with private land."

This session concluded at 4:30 pm. The remaining country presentations, those from India and Nepal, were scheduled for the following morning. During the remainder of the afternoon, participants from India and Nepal held country working group discussions. The evening's entertainment included a programme of traditional Nepali music organised by well-known poet and folk singer, Manjul.

India

The India presentation was made by **Rajeev Ahal** and **G. Raju**, using overhead charts in both English and Hindi. The India country working group discussions had begun with participants from different Indian states presenting the structure and work of the joint forest management (JFM) systems in their respective states. JFM at the central level was also discussed. The presentation as a whole was a collective effort of information and experience sharing among the participants from the states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Gujarat.

The presentation began with a song. It was also stated that the ancient texts and culture of India included many songs and proverbs about environmental protection. Having lost indigenous traditions regarding the importance of trees, awareness about the environment and the realisation that trees were essential had been on the rise since the 1970s. Community forestry came about due to these concerns, but, after a decade, people felt that it had not achieved what it was supposed to achieve.

Joint Forest Management began in West Bengal in 1973. As a result of its success, a government order went to all states in India encouraging them to start JFM in 1990.

Under JFM, control of the forest went to local communities; all non-timber forest products or profits went to the community. However, the profits from poles and timber were shared between the government and the forest protection committee. Fifteen states had started JFM, and the benefit sharing rules varied from state to state, mostly in a ratio of 25 per cent to the community and 75 per cent to the forest department.

National-level Issues in India

- The draft Natural Ecosystem Act was designed to replace the existing Forest Laws which had been enacted by the British in 1927.
- Lease of degraded forest land for industry was a matter of serious concern.
- Forest land was being used for agriculture by indigenous people who did not possess any land; a debate about whether traditional indigenous agriculture was good or bad for the forests had been going on.

Day Six

May 26, 1995

Friday

Plenary Session

Three (9:00 am)

Chairperson
Sosan Qurban

- The national JFM Policy might not be a step forward for genuine community management.
- The relationship between the *gram panchayat* and the village users' group had to be clarified.
 - User groups should be the key agents of forest management. *Panchayat* representation was also essential.
 - Acts/Rules should be revised to give *gram panchayat(s)* a specific role. Provision for funds to *gram panchayat(s)* for forestry activities should be made.
 - The *gram panchayat* could possibly have the role of dealing with inter-village issues.
 - The *gram panchayat*, as a political body, should be kept away from user groups.
 - The *gram panchayat* could encourage forest-based enterprises.
This interaction between the *gram panchayat* and the users' group was complicated when more than one *gram panchayat* was involved, therefore, a federation was needed.
- Forest Land for Agriculture
 - Could users' group forestry provide livelihoods to the poor and landless?
 - Poor people did benefit from user group forestry; community forestry could reach those that land reform could not reach.
 - The issue was not of forest versus agriculture, but that of sustainable natural resource management.

The Concept of a Gram Van (Village Forest)

- Legal provisions should be formulated for ownership, management, and authority. The land still belonged to the government; the tenure rules must be changed.
- Application of rules/regulations should be flexible according to local situations.
- The constitution/framework should be prepared by *Dalit(s)*, women, and the underprivileged.
- JFM/*Van panchayat* should be extended to include all communities with good forest cover.
- The community should have full access and rights (100%) over the forest produce.
- Facilities for small-scale enterprises and marketing for forest produce should be established.
- Alliances of user groups at various levels should be formed.

Attitude of Foresters

The field staff must be motivated to support user groups because the 'policing' attitude of foresters kept people away.

Legal Recognition

- Supporting legal recognition/legislation was necessary for user group forest management. Forests were given not because of a belief in community forestry but because forestry staff were limited, and they could not carry out the protection work. Therefore, a federation of user groups was required.
- The government and the people should jointly formulate policies and procedures.

Women's Role

- The importance of women must be clearly recognised; at least 60 per cent representation for women on executive committees was required in order to give women a decisive role.
- **User group forestry** should be extended to include other lands within village boundaries.
- **Equity** in distribution of benefits and equal opportunities for all participants must be guaranteed.
- **Training** was required for both foresters/communities and NGOs.
- **Integrated development** should be sought by making forest development one component of an integrated development programme for communities.
- **Flexibility**, in accordance with the local situation, was necessary in implementing user group forestry.

Discussion

- Q. *We should clarify that in Nepal also forest land ownership rests with the government. Does the government conduct consultations before JFM is introduced?*
- A. "People who were tilling the land before 1980, even if they were doing so illegally, are entitled to the land. Consultation with the true local level people is inadequate. Many governments still consider they are implementing JFM when they are using the people as labourers."
- Q. *About leasing degraded forest lands to the industry--are these lands inhabited? Who leases this land?*
- A. "This is a government proposal which is being resisted. In fact, it is generally land that is being used by tribal communities. This proposal will create a conflict between the government and tribal communities which are supported by NGOs and sister organisations."
- Q. *What is your thinking about the village people who demand resources for subsistence and the urban people who demand resources for luxury?*

- A. "We are confident that an organised people's movement has great power and will influence the whole system. For example, *Chipko* was a small group with a genuine issue that influenced the U.P. government and changed the policy."

Chairperson Sosan Qurban made the following points at the conclusion of the presentation.

- Ownership and authority of forest areas should be in the hands of users' groups.
- The application of rules should be flexible according to the local situation.
- Women's role was important and should be improved.
- There should be equity in the distribution of benefits.
- Foresters should be cooperative with the local people.

Plenary Session

Four (10:00 am)

Chairperson

George Paglinawan

Nepal

The Nepal presentation was made by **Deepak Thapa**, **K.P. Adhikari**, **H.P. Neupane**, and **Y.B. Ale** with overhead charts in Nepali.

The presentation began with a description of the historical background of community forestry in Nepal. The history was divided into three phases—before the Rana regime, during the Rana regime, and after the dawn of democracy. Basically, during this time the forests were heavily encroached. After the nationalisation of forests, deforestation became more rampant than before. Different political events also contributed to deforestation. The evolution of the Forest Act, laws, and byelaws was also briefly discussed.

Historical Background of Community Forestry in Nepal

Before the Rana Regime. Before the Rana regime, Nepal's forest cover was good, and no special efforts were made for forest protection. In addition, under the provisions of *Jagir*, *Kipat*, and *Birta*, forests were given to army officers and high-ranking palace officials. These forest areas were used for their own interests, which increased encroachment.

During the Rana Regime. Encroachment on forests increased due to conflicts among the Rana brothers over power. Those defeated in the conflicts went to different areas of the country and cleared the forests to build settlements for their followers as well as for other uses. A great deal of timber was also exported to India for construction of railway lines.

After the Dawn of Democracy. During this period, different political movements caused deforestation, particularly the political change of BS 2007 (1950/51) and the political movements of BS 2036 (1979/80) and 2046 (1989/990). An estimated four per cent of the total forest land was cleared during 1979/80. Various government activities, forest laws, and byelaws also contributed to the deforestation.

The Forest Act of BS 2013 (1956/57) nationalised all forests and strictly prohibited people from entering the forest to collect grass, firewood, fodder, or timber. People then began to take forest products without due care or protection. The establishment of the Resettlement Company (BS 2016 - 1959/60) and the Timber Corporation of Nepal (TCN) also accelerated the clearing of the forest areas of the *terai*.

In BS 2018 (1961/62), a new Forest Act was enacted, categorising all forests into national, community, religious, private, and leasehold forests. However, it failed to implement the concept of community forestry with people's participation.

A seminar on forest management was organised in BS 2034 (1977/78). People's participation and community forest management were the main subjects of discussion during the seminar.

The Forest Regulations of BS 2035 (1978/79) tried to incorporate the concept of community forestry, and this was adopted for *panchayat* and *panchayat*-protected forests. The regulation assigned the right and responsibility for forest protection to the local *panchayat*, but the *panchayat* leaders misused the right for their own benefit rather than for the common people. The Forest Products' Regulation of BS 2037 (1980/81) and the Private Forest Regulation of BS 2049 (1992/93) were enacted and the Private Forest Regulation was amended in BS 2044 (1987/88).

Over the past 40 years, different laws and byelaws related to the forest sector had been enacted and amended many times. However, the Forest Act of BS 2049 (1992/93) was the first which made clear provisions for community forestry according to the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector BS 2045 (1988/89). Furthermore, the Forest Regulation of BS 2051 (1994/95) clarified the provisions of the Forest Act of BS 2049 (1992/93). As a result of the continuous efforts of individual people, donor agencies, and the government, the community forestry programme was now underway and progressing in Nepal.

Mountain Development

The second topic concerned mountain development, which included various aspects of the life of the people, i.e., economic, cultural, educational, health, and physical infrastructure.

Introduction. Development meant not only an improvement in the standard of living, but also in the economic, moral, cultural, and educational well-being as well as the health and other physical conditions of the society and the community.

Existing Problems

The existing problems were defined as follow.

- Mountain areas remained inaccessible.
- Illiteracy was still high, contributing to a lack of human resources and technology.
- The population was increasing at a rapid rate.

- Government policies and concerns were inadequate.
- The mobilisation of natural and other resources was not systematic.

Consequences of these Problems

- Difficult living conditions
- Increasing natural disasters due to imbalances in the environment

Role of Community Forestry in Mountain Development

- People could internalise the role of organisation and social unity
- Creation of various other types of community institutions
- Upgrading of private forestry and agroforestry programmes
- Systematic livestock raising
- Increase in local income
- Control of soil erosion processes

Recommendations for Mountain Development

- Government, NGOs, donor agencies, and the people should commit themselves to mountain development
- Local people should be included in selecting, planning, and managing community forest projects/programmes
- Integrated development programmes should provide for the conservation and development of natural resources and wildlife
- Technical as well as material support should be provided to local communities by the government, NGOs, and other concerned agencies
- Small-scale, people-oriented projects without adverse environmental effects should be implemented

Results/Impacts of Mountain Development

- Assists in fulfilling people's basic needs and raising income, thus improving the standard of living
- Raises local community self-reliance
- Improves natural environment
- Develops local resources and skills

Community and Private Forestry Programmes in Nepal

In Nepal, over 3,300 community forestry user groups were legally registered and about 135,151 hectares of forest land had been handed over to them. More than 4,000 community forestry user groups were in the process of being handed over.

An overhead slide map of Nepal was presented with the related figures for community forestry.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Number of forest user groups</u>	<u>Area (ha)</u>
Hill	2987	112,189
Terai	320	22,962
Total	3307	135,151

Institutional Issues

Various stages of the community forestry process, as well as the positive and negative aspects of the programme, were then discussed.

Process for Handing Over Forests

- Identification of the users.
- Preparation of group constitution and forest operational plan with the participation of users.
- Certification and handing over of the forest
- Steps for handing over forests
 - disseminate the rules, regulations, and information about community forestry to the household level
 - organise small group discussions leading to preparation of the group constitution and forest operational plan
 - call a mass meeting for final approval of the constitution, operational plan, and users' committees
 - hold a committee meeting every month
 - hold a general assembly meeting once every two years

Positive Aspects/Strengths

- User groups were legally recognised.
- Changing attitudes of forest department personnel regarding community forestry programmes.
- Technical support was provided by the forest department.
- The provision of 100 per cent of the income from forest products to the users' fund and user rights over the fund had raised the people's interest and efforts.
- People's needs were taken into account in the operational plan.
- The forest department had a provision for preparing a yearly plan incorporating people's needs.

- The sole authority for handing over a community forest had been shifted from the Regional Director to the District Forest Officer.
- The development of community forestry and community forestry funds had encouraged people to formulate other development activities, i.e., education, skill development, provision of drinking water, and income-generating programmes.

Weaknesses/Negative Aspects

- Lack of uniformity in the handing-over process in all areas.
- Lack of trained and committed human resources to educate and encourage people to participate in community forestry management.
- Lack of equal participation among all community members in users' group activities.
- Insufficient participation of women in decision-making.
- Difficulties in mobilising users' groups where the forest area and number of users were very large.
- Forest areas handed over to users' groups were protected while other forest areas continued to be degraded.
- Direct contact of the forest personnel with elected village political leaders for identification had led to problems in identifying actual users due to political pressure and/or prejudice.
- Diverse interests of users regarding the use of forest products (commercial vs. self use).
- Some user groups were facing unnecessary legal problems from the forest department.
- Political boundaries considered as forest and user boundaries had created problems.
- The provision for signing bonds, put forward by the government after formulation of the operational plan, seemed to be unnecessary.
- In some areas, user committees seemed more powerful than user groups.
- Conflicts among groups had created problems.
- Forest field staff were inadequate.
- Political boundaries of districts were not scientifically created.
- Some forest staff were reckless and lacked adequate technical knowledge.
- The traditional mentality of forest staff members from centre to field-level needed to change.
- Users' group funds were not properly handled by some groups.

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- Difficulties in mobilising users' groups where the forest area and number of users were very large.
- Forest areas handed over to users' groups were protected while other forest areas continued to be degraded.
- Direct contact of the forest personnel with elected village political leaders for identification had led to problems in identifying actual users due to political pressure and/or prejudice.
- Diverse interests of users regarding the use of forest products (commercial vs. self use).
- Some user groups were facing unnecessary legal problems from the forest department.
- Political boundaries considered as forest and user boundaries had created problems.
- The provision for signing bonds, put forward by the government after formulation of the operational plan, seemed to be unnecessary.
- In some areas, user committees seemed more powerful than user groups.
- Conflicts among groups had created problems.
- Forest field staff were inadequate.
- Political boundaries of districts were not scientifically created.
- Some forest staff were reckless and lacked adequate technical knowledge.
- The traditional mentality of forest staff members from centre to field-level needed to change.
- Users' group funds were not properly handled by some groups.

Analysis of Policies, Rules and Regulations for Community Forestry

A detailed analysis of the recent Forest Act of BS 2049 (1992/93) and the Forest Regulations of BS 2051 (1994/95), highlighting the positive and negative aspects of both, was presented. Most provisions of the Act and the Regulation were considered positive because of their progressive nature which was suitable for the development of community forestry in Nepal. A few provisions were seen as obstacles to community forestry development.

The community approach to forest management had been one of the best achievements in this field and had brought about much that was positive for the environment and living standards of the people. Based on the Forestry Sector Master Plan, the conditions before and after handing over the forests were considered.

Before Handover

- All the rights over forests had rested with the government. People were restricted from use rights in forest areas.
- Forest policies and rules were not properly people oriented and did not reach people.
- The Forest Act and Regulations and Guidelines were contradictory.

After Handover

- Ownership had increased.
- Women's participation was enthusiastic.
- General consensus existed on the systematic distribution of forest products.
- There was a positive contribution to rural development activities.
- Employment opportunities were generated.
- There was active participation in developing a balanced environment, benefit-sharing, and decision-making processes.

Discussion

Q1. To what extent are forest user groups dependent on the government for resources and technical help? What would be the strategy to make the user groups self-reliant and reduce the dependence upon the government?

A1. "After educating and raising awareness among the people, both the people and government forest staff take the initiative in forming user groups, drafting constitutions, and preparing operational plans with people's participation. The government can only provide technical support and small-scale materials, i.e., pipes and seeds for nursery establishment. The self-reliance and sustainability of the group depends upon the group activities and efforts. Community feeling, general consensus among the users, and internalisation of the role of the organisation lead them to

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sustainability, from which new production activities can emerge such as income-generating activities and systematic livestock raising. Ultimately, user groups become self-reliant and less dependent on the government."

Q2. *I have heard that the forest department of Nepal wants to plant commercial plants in community forests. What is the actual situation?*

A2. "There is no special rule in community forestry giving preference to one particular species. This totally depends on the people's interest and must be appropriate to the location. No special criteria are set about planting commercial species. Moreover, the implementation of the community forestry policy passes through three phases.

- First of all, the forest patches are provided to the community on the preparation of an operational plan for five years or for another fixed time period on the basis of the people's demand and their management capacity.
- In the second phase, all the responsibility for management, protection, and utilisation will be handed over to the users' group.
- Lastly, the users' group will be empowered by provision of all the rights and responsibilities for using forest products according to their needs.

The provision of a five-year (fixed time) contract is not because the forest will be taken back, but to encourage better management. We can reorganise the operational plan for another five years, based on our experiences."

Q3. *I learned from the Nepal presentation that the community forestry programme was introduced and motivated by the government. The situation in India is rather different. In India, there is a vast gap between the forest department and the people. The forest department wants to restrict people from entering the forest. The forest department of Nepal seems more liberal and people-oriented. What is the budget allocated to community forestry?*

A3. "The concept of community forestry is more popular in the hills, because the government alone could not protect the forests and wanted to hand over the forests to the people. The situation in the terai, where the forests are commercial, is quite different. Another reason is that the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector, prepared in BS 2045/46 (1988/89/1989/90), emphasised community forestry as do donors and other sources of resources. There are donors who are prepared to support community forestry implementation programmes. Therefore, if the government is not ready to implement community forestry, there will be no donors. About 47 per cent of the total budget of the Ministry of Forests is allocated to community forestry and private forestry."

Q4. *Community forestry management is better in Nepal and has been implemented for a long period of time, but only two per cent of the forests have been handed over. Why is this process so slow?*

A4. "Some feel it has been a very slow process and others think that the handing over process is going on at a reasonable pace. These ideas are contradictory. People think the process is slow because the government has a target to complete the handing over of all forests to the users by 2010 AD. However, the process of users' group formation, involving the people and making people aware of the rules and regulations, is quite complicated. The other

reason for the process being slow is that, to form one user group—from the stage of identifying of the users and the forest—takes several months if it goes very smoothly without any disturbance. Normally, there are 13 rangers in each hill district who are the grass-root level government forest officials and who are responsible for forming user groups. Out of 13, usually only eight to ten are in the district; the others are always off either on transfer or for other reasons.

Awareness about user groups is still at a very low level. One reason may be that the capacity of the government is limited at that level and another reason, perhaps, is the attitude of the forest staff who are still not enthusiastic about going to the people and saying that they are there to support users' group formation. There is a lot of pressure on the forest department from the community to hand over the forests. You might have seen that almost 4,000 communities have already met their demands from community forests. But all user groups might not be aware of their rights, rules and regulations, and policies of the government. So it takes time to organise them."

Q5. *Since 100 per cent of the income is used by the users' group, how much is generated in a given period of time and how is it utilised?*

A5. "We can give you an example from Tanahu District.

One community forest area of 235ha was handed over to 102 user households in BS 2060 (1993/94). The total amount of funds collected from forest products is Rs. 1,152,260 (US \$ 2,100). Sixty per cent of this amount goes to the users directly on the basis of their contributions, a provision approved by the general assembly. The remaining 40 per cent we invest in rural development activities such as suspension bridges, drinking water programmes, foot trails, and training programmes for skill development as well as income generation. We award prizes for compositions about the environment and economic development.

There are many other examples. Some user groups only fulfill their own needs for fodder and firewood, and there are other groups that are contributing their labour and efforts to reforest and still experience scarcity of fodder and firewood."

Q6. *Since laws and policies about community forestry are progressive, user groups have full authority over planning, managing, utilisation, choice of tree species, and utilisation of funds. What are the problems?*

A.6 "Forest policies, laws, byelaws, acts, and regulations are all good, but the problem is the commitment to implementation. For example, general consensus among the users is required to form the constitution and the operational plan, but these are prepared on the initiative of a few people. There is unnecessary domination from forest officials against the rules. The major problem is the transfer of authority. Government forest authorities are still not mentally prepared to give up their authority."

Concluding Remarks from the Chairperson

Community forestry was a new activity for communities and also for the government, and it might not happen in a hurry. Community forestry user

groups would not be evaluated on the money in the bank or the timber or other products they distributed, but probably on how they had given voice to the voiceless, how far they had been able to mobilise the people to fight for their rights, to struggle for their rights. Only if we achieved this, would community forestry be successful.



Concurrent
Sessions

organisation in the so-called 'tribal areas' where people were increasingly becoming marginalised. It had been involved in mobilising local communities on a large scale to bring about changes in government policies. The experience of the *Eklavya Sangathan* had been that, for advocacy, power structures needed to be challenged. Information alone was not sufficient but it could be used to mobilise mass support. The combination of mass support, use of information and media, and the legal system could bring about policy changes. In the opinion of the organisers, whenever confrontation had occurred between the poor and the rich, the poor had gained more than lost. Campaigning to give land to tribal people, the *Eklavya Sangathan* had worked with other NGOs and lobbied political parties, the media, and others by distributing leaflets in 1993. Political parties had seen that the votes of the poor masses could be very important to their political futures, and they were more willing to consider the issues that were important to the poor, such as land rights. Publicity and public pressure had brought about the delineation of some land for tribal people and, in November 1984, 80 farmers were given land certificates. However, no progress was made and, sensing a good vote-catching issue, a political party had made handing over land part of its manifesto. With the victory of this party, it now appeared likely that the promised land transfer would take place.

M.D. Mistri, from Development Initiatives for Social and Human Action (DISHA), shared his experiences on the campaign to increase the minimum wage for women picking 'tenda' leaves which were purchased by the government. DISHA had asked for the government's labour department to put pressure on the forest department and a court case had been filed. In 1992, almost 10,000 tribal people had marched into Ahmedabad to demand higher wages for *tenda* leaf pickers and had petitioned the Chief Minister. Bowing to the pressure, the minister had constituted a committee to look into the issue, and the wages had been raised.

Rajeev Ahal shared his experience of networking among NGOs in Himachal Pradesh where over 200 NGOs were involved in natural resource management issues. The groups were not specifically working on forest management issues and had had little opportunity to share experiences and concerns until a three-day state-wide NGO meeting was called in July 1994 on JICIMOD's initiative. At this meeting, agreement had been reached on the importance of forest-related issues as well as water management. The need to have a long-term perspective on natural resource management issues had also been emphasised. A nine member coordinating committee had been formed, and all participating NGOs had become members of the networking group. Meetings were held each month, with member NGOs usually offering their facilities for such meetings.

The group's work had brought about a better understanding of the function and structure of the Forest Department and especially of JFM. The policy document on JFM, previously only available in English, had been translated into Hindi, giving exposure to a larger number of people on the issues and rights. The translation was still being used by the forest department. A critique of JFM had also been produced and distributed among all organisations, including the forest department.

A large meeting in October 1994 had brought together 70 people from environmental organisations and NGOs, universities, and government agencies. The group now planned to produce a 'Himachal Version' for a national policy-

Challenges for the Future

The afternoon of Friday, May 26, was devoted to discussions on 'Challenges for the Future'. The participants were divided into four concurrent working groups, each to discuss one of the following issues.

1. Strategies for Advocacy and Networking
2. Strategies for Enhancing Women's Role in Decision-making
3. Strategies for Strengthening Local Institutions: Institution-building, Capacity-building, and Training
4. Strategies for Enabling Policy, Laws, Rules, and Regulations

The details and outcomes of these discussions were to be used during the preparation of country action plans.

Working Group on Advocacy and Networking

Each participant shared their experiences on advocacy and networking.

In Darjeeling, the networking had begun after many rural communities had introduced forest protection activities themselves and were working in isolation. Many people felt a networking organisation was needed to raise awareness in the communities about their rights under joint forest management and to provide various kinds of support to the local groups, including action research and mediation between government agencies and local communities. Thus, in 1989, the *Paryatouran Sangrakshak Parishangh* evolved out of the existing Darjeeling citizen's welfare society and was officially registered in 1992. Members of the network were environmental protection committees or forest protection committees who paid a small fee. The organisation arranged training for members and provided legal advice. It published a magazine which was received by each member unit. Both regular community meetings and meetings of all member units were organised. To counteract malpractices among some forestry division personnel, the organisation had also been involved in advocacy and 'policing' and had compiled a confidential report on the corrupt practices of a range officer which was submitted to the department. Other national government agencies, such as the National Wastelands' Development Board, had now approached the organisation to promote environmental protection and to start to plant nurseries.

In northern Gujarat, the *Eklavya Sangathan* was established as a membership-based

Participants

1. Ghanendra Kafle, Nepal UK Community Forestry Project
2. D.S. Rasaily, Federation of Societies for Environmental Protection, Darjeeling, West Bengal
3. G. Raju, VIKSAT, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
4. M.D. Mistry, DISHA, Sabarkantha, Gujarat
5. Bhim Lal Subedi, Syangja, Nepal
6. Yam Bahadur Ale, Tanahu, Nepal
7. Rajeev Ahal, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh
8. Bhim Prasad Shrestha, Ram Bazaar Users' Group, Okhaldunga, Nepal
9. Dinesh Pokhrel, Gulmi, Nepal
10. Hari Prasad Neupane, Bhojpur, Nepal

organisation in the so-called 'tribal areas' where people were increasingly becoming marginalised. It had been involved in mobilising local communities on a large scale to bring about changes in government policies. The experience of the *Eklavya Sangathan* had been that, for advocacy, power structures needed to be challenged. Information alone was not sufficient but it could be used to mobilise mass support. The combination of mass support, use of information and media, and the legal system could bring about policy changes. In the opinion of the organisers, whenever confrontation had occurred between the poor and the rich, the poor had gained more than lost. Campaigning to give land to tribal people, the *Eklavya Sangathan* had worked with other NGOs and lobbied political parties, the media, and others by distributing leaflets in 1993. Political parties had seen that the votes of the poor masses could be very important to their political futures, and they were more willing to consider the issues that were important to the poor, such as land rights. Publicity and public pressure had brought about the delineation of some land for tribal people and, in November 1984, 80 farmers were given land certificates. However, no progress was made and, sensing a good vote-catching issue, a political party had made handing over land part of its manifesto. With the victory of this party, it now appeared likely that the promised land transfer would take place.

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A large meeting in October 1994 had brought together 70 people from environmental organisations and NGOs, universities, and government agencies. The group now planned to produce a 'Himachal Version' for a national policy-

level meeting on natural resource management issues and to hold training on Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology. The coordinating committee had been reconstituted in October and a coordinator chosen. Certain issues had been identified as being important for action. However, questions remained about whether the group should be formalised into an organisation and how these NGOs could make a federation.

In Tanahu District, Nepal, representatives of 71 forest user groups had recently gathered together to form a district-level networking forum. An interim committee had been formed to draft a constitution. Yam Bahadur Ale stated that it was felt that such an organisation would enable the groups to learn from each other and help them deal with the District Forest Office on issues of common concern and also help them deal with 'middle men' and 'contractors' of forestry products. The impetus for the forum had initially been provided by the District Forest Office, and the committee had already played a role in conflict resolution with the District Forest Office. Certain important issues remained unresolved, e.g., charging a membership fee and representation of the group in the district coordinating committee.

Similarly, in Okhaldhunga, a group of people who had formed a community forestry users' group felt they could play a wider role in promoting community forestry in Nepal. With the support of FTTP and WATCH, the group organised a meeting of FUGs' representatives and communities that had made requests to the district forest office to hand over forests. Over 90 people, representing 42 FUGs, had recently attended a meeting. During the meeting, various issues had emerged from different parts of the district. Concluding that a network of FUGs was required, an *ad hoc* committee had been formed and charged with drafting a constitution within six months.

Forest users in Gulmi District had also expressed the wish for a networking group during a meeting held by the district forest office on nursery management, but the DFO had discouraged this by stating that current community forestry regulations made no provisions for such a body.

Likewise, in Bhojpur, where forest patches were rapidly handed over, 40 FUGs had met a few years ago to create a district-level coordinating committee. However, due to the absence of a legal provision, this did not happen. Nevertheless, in one of the areas under a range post in the district, 30 out of the 48 FUGs had organised themselves, and, inviting the DFO and legal experts, they had formed an NGO called "*Samudayik Ban Bikash and Gramin Bikash Mandi*" (Community Forestry Development and Rural Development Forum) and registered it at the district headquarters. The organisation had provisions in its mandate to include all FUGs in the district as members. Each FUG sent one representative, not necessarily the chairperson, to the organisation. Each member FUG paid Rs 100 per year. A committee had been constituted from the elected representatives. The organisation saw its role as being in advocacy from the local to central levels and in conflict resolution. So far, the organisation had printed posters warning against forest fires and was making proposals for other work.

There was consensus among the group that effective advocacy could only happen if strong collective institutions were built. This was seen as a common challenge for the future.

- Radha Shrestha, Ramechhap, Nepal
- Krishna Subedi, Syangja, Nepal
- Anil Bhattarai, Chitwan, Nepal
- Devi Adhikari, Sindhupalchok, Nepal
- Meena Khadka, Kaski, Nepal
- Subhadra Adhikari, Kaski, Nepal
- Laxmi Devi Khatiwada, Saptari, Nepal
- Urmilaben Tabiyar, Sabarkantha, Gujarat
- Kinkri Devi, Sirmoor, Himachal Pradesh
- Nimu Devi, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh
- Bhagawati Gautam, Kabhre, Nepal
- Hema Kala, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh
- Dilshad Begum, Gilgit, Pakistan
- Dur-E-Marjan, Gilgit, Pakistan
- Subhash Mendhupurkar, Jubber, HP, India
- Kiran Bhatia, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Chamoli, Uttar Pradesh
- Sharmila Katwal, Okhaldhunga, Nepal
- Gyan Kumari Bhujel, Okhaldhunga, Nepal
- Shrimati Kalawati, Chamoli, Uttar Pradesh
- Kamali Devi Sharma, Baglung, Nepal

Strategies for Enhancing Women's Role in Decision-making

Before organisational presentations, the participants brainstormed to arrive at a list of words associated with the women's movement.

- Women's power
- Freedom
- Job-oriented education and skill development for women
- Employment
- Equal participation
- Inside and outside the house
- Cottage industry
- Cultural heritage of women
- Women's organisation
- Mass experience
- Women's empowerment

Subhash Mendhupurkar, from Social Uplift Through Rural Action (SUTRA), described the history of the women's movement in Himachal Pradesh. Alcohol consumption had been a growing problem which the women wanted to combat. In 1985, a large group of women decided to march to the state capital to draw attention to their protest against alcohol and drugs. The state government had tried to stop the march by instructing the men to prevent their women from participating and by threatening to curtail all development work and aid if the march took place. Defying the threats, 185 women marched for three days and reached the capital at Simla, thereby making the protest successful. Although the protest did not put much pressure on the government, it had encouraged the women's movement and had led to the development of women's leadership.

Four hundred women were now involved in SUTRA, which was working to develop women's leadership capacities. The programme was designed to free women from the fear of the police, courts, and government administration; to teach them about existing laws; and to raise their awareness by introducing them to the lives of great Hindu women such as Devi, Chandi, Sita, and Brikuti. SUTRA also gathered groups of unmarried women, aged 16-19, and instructed them on their legal and personal rights, including knowledge of their bodies and what acts could be considered crimes. The girls were taught to be alert to social, governmental, and physical violations such as teasing, beating, rape, opening bars, refusing to sell goods at government retail shops, and so on. The organisation also built up awareness about protests, provided information about slogans, mass protests, and the like. All of these activities had aided the empowerment of women. Women were becoming able to expose the sufferings they experienced inside their homes. The main subject was empowerment. In evaluating programmes, and discussing and making policies, one had to study how much women could benefit, what rights they would get, and how many women were going to be involved in them.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt noted that the *Chipko* movement in Uttar Pradesh, associated with forests and the environment, had been started by a woman leader, *Gauri Devi*. The movement began by women gathering at the sound of a whistle to prevent the cutting of trees. Women had taken strong and unpopular stands, uniting together and refusing to give in to pressure from the men of their communities or from government officials. The *Chipko* movement was not against the government but was against certain policies and acts, and it had caused the forest department to change its approach. In addition to preventing tree cutting in the forests, the women had organised tree planting on barren land without obtaining permission from the government, bringing greenery to their surroundings.

Krishna Kumari Subedi of Syangja, Nepal, spoke of the opposition her women's users' group first encountered from men in the community. The women had made a plantation on three hectares of land, watching the site themselves, and collecting Rs 400 monthly that the forest department had decided to give to a watcher. Their work was opposed by the men of the community who accused the women of planting trees on their grazing land and making money out of it. The District Forest Officer (DFO) supported the women and locked up the cattle. The forest officers had held discussions with the men which had resulted in changing their attitudes. Tree plantation had now been undertaken on another four hectares of land. The women had now started a movement against alcohol and gambling.

Meena Poudyal described the WATCH programmes that were designed to empower women by going to villages and distributing medicines, vegetable seeds, etc. Although, at first, the community men had discouraged the organisers from talking to the women, saying they were illiterate, knew nothing, and could not even speak Nepali, the WATCH workers had gone to the fields and kitchens to talk to the women. After several months of continuous meetings, the organisers learned about their daily problems and their culture. Their major problems were illiteracy, the six to seven hours required to collect fuelwood and fodder, and their lack of even one spare hour. Deciding to begin with the immediate problem of fuelwood and fodder, which prevented them from having spare time for anything else, they had started planting saplings. A women's nursery group was formed to run a nursery. The saplings had been bought by the forest department for Rs 9,000 and returned to the women for plantation. The men had opposed the women's group until they had seen the money coming into their fund. There were now five groups, including both men's and women's groups, all started by women.

Work in the *terai* had begun with people who had migrated from hill regions. Since there was no community forestry programme, WATCH had started by giving women informal education, which then went on to practical subjects like fertilizers. When they learned about fertilizers, they started to make their own compost fertilizer and stopped using chemical fertilizers. They were also made aware of their rights, injustice, freedom, tyranny, and so on. Later, out of nine informal education groups, a women's freedom group was formed. That group had undertaken several tasks and had succeeded in bringing drinking water to the village. The women had also taken action against a man involved in trafficking women. The man had filed a court case against 11 women which was still in court. The women's freedom group had now started a fund with a contribution from WATCH to establish a candle factory.

Meena said that, in her opinion, two things were needed to empower women: social awareness and a means of income generation. The movements and issues in Nepal and India were similar, and this advantage needed to be exploited. Only empowerment strategies would enhance women's role in decision-making, not just for community forestry but also for human resource development.

Strategies for Strengthening Local Institutions: Institution-building, Capacity-building and Training

On being reminded that the session was to share experiences about local institutional strengthening for recommendations that would feed into the country working groups the next day, the group started with a description of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP).

The AKRSP worked on three basic principles: 1) organisation, 2) savings, and 3) capacity-building. It had developed solid infrastructures at the village and cluster levels. Separate organisations had been created for men and women from different villages. In women's organisations, men could be members only if there were no literate women. The initial dialogue with community members was to facilitate creation of an organisation, bringing certain benefits. Members selected a president and a secretary and began holding regular meetings. Members made their own rules about group formation and took part in work programmes, for which they received increased savings.

The first activity was the saving scheme. Members saved at every meeting, according to their capacity. There could be more than one member per household, and a village accountant deposited the money in the bank after each meeting. The programme had an organised accounting scheme. Hunters who had a

hunting permit must pay an amount of between Rs 7,500 and 25,000 or US\$ 3,000 to the government which then gave 75 per cent back to the AKRSP.

All communities might not have sufficient funds for saving, therefore, AKRSP had five other packages: agriculture, marketing, forestry, accounting, and livestock, all of which benefitted the community. Each section had a specialist who went to the village-level institutions for training and technical support. Training was included in each package and, aided by these packages, the saving capacities of the communities were increased.

Krishna Devi next introduced the *Mahila Mangal Dal* from Uttar Pradesh. In the 'Chipko movement' area, the group had been involved primarily in forest protection. It was ten years old, but still informal. The groups were specific to each small village. Some fruits were being collected, bringing in some

Participants

1. Sosan Qurban, Gilgit, Pakistan
2. Ali Shah, Gilgit, Pakistan
3. George Paglinawan, Philippines
4. Dennis Desmond, Bhutan
5. Bumpen Keowan, Thailand
6. Murari Lal, Chamoli, Uttar Pradesh
7. Krishna Devi, Chamoli, Uttar Pradesh
8. Nimu Devi, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh
9. G. Raju, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
10. Kulbushan Upmanyu, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, India
11. Kuldeep Verma, Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh
12. Narayan Kazi Shrestha, Kathmandu
13. Nand Lal Madji, Sunsari, Nepal
14. Semai Chaudhari, Sunsari, Nepal

revenue. Management was required for the employment centres established by women. All the work in the employment centres had to be skill-based.

Regarding capacity building, **Murari Lal** from *Sarvodaya* said that, twice a year, training was given on agriculture, forestry, beekeeping, and wool making. New technology was introduced by the institution. Village women who were somewhat literate were selected for training. Because the role of women was considered to be so important, strategies were designed for their development. These women returned and trained others. The groups also ran a nursery that supplied seedlings during the planting season and helped in marketing local products. What had begun as a tree-saving movement had now become an organisation to train and develop women.

George Paglinawan noted that in his groups' experience in The Philippines, people would not respond unless their basic needs were touched upon. His NGO had prioritised need identification as a first step to organisation. For the achievement of different organisational objectives, different committees were formed.

"Various people are selected and given training for the different committees. Sometimes the group begins with the political aspect, especially with women and the poorer households. We may politicise the community in the sense of asking who is deciding for whom? How am I participating in community decisions? Social investigation is also taking place, who is who? Everything must be discussed in the village.

First we must identify who talks a lot and who is mostly silent but talks sense. The community must be made subtly conscious about different types of people. Regarding institution building, as people start coming together, before selection of their possible leader, community members must know who to choose. Committee formation is based on needs' identification. Training starts from there. The first question is who is to be trained? We begin with basic broad-based education. From the broad information, the community specifies its needs and people move on to more specific subjects and intensive training.

After some initial training is completed, the community must become the group that does nearly everything: the logistics of the training, what is required to begin a nursery, etc. As much as possible, training is done in the community. The NGO gives technical support for whatever cannot be found at the local level. We have in-house expertise in all areas. In every training course practical application of what is learned is very important and must be actually done, correctly. We also stress flexibility regarding rules and regulations. Monitoring and evaluation, and the openness of members to accept criticism, are also important."

Khulbhushan Upmanyu said that his community in Himachal Pradesh had one NGO and one community organisation which dealt in different ways with capacity-building. He said they had been thinking about the conservation of natural resources, and so had created a state-level working group through which to work on environmental issues. The community organisation emphasised the emotional element regarding community feeling and natural resources. Until it began working with the community organisation, the NGO had not had a real grasp of community needs. Now a working group had emerged in which NGOs and NGO workers were trained in natural resources' issues and on how to take

issues to the people. The basic strategy of the training was to make it work like a community movement. Training followed the issues and was used to take them forward. The effort now was on trying to build a network of NGOs and community-based organisations. The network fed itself on natural resource-related issues: water, land, forestry.

Kazi Shrestha discussed the evolution of user groups as an institution in Nepal. Nationalisation had destroyed indigenous forest management systems. When panchayat protected forests had been handed over to local authorities, they had abused this power and destroyed rather than protected the forest. Subsequent reflection on how to manage forests had led to some communities being given the authority, and they had succeeded. Also it appeared that, wherever the forest department had not been, the forest was good, the traditional systems were working. People living near and actually using the forest would protect it. Giving authority to the powerful led to destruction because they wanted to earn money.

Between 1978 and 1984, 413 users' committees were formed, but most members were from the educated elite who never went to the forest. Community forestry was started in Nepal by donors who had wanted the operational plan to be in English. In this situation, the forest committees often did not know what to do, and, therefore, they did not work. The focus was on protection and plantation. A lot of money was spent and went into the pockets of *panchayat* officials. A new initiative and a new process were required. Generally no one knew about the forest rules and regulations, even the forest staff were unaware of them. So the government and forestry projects had decided to begin by reorienting the forest department to work with local people. Two initial training programmes had revealed that no DFO wanted to participate in this training process. Nevertheless, only the forest officials had the authority to hand over the forest to the community.

In the process of handing over a forest, a socioeconomic analysis of the village was done. The village was divided into focussed interest groups of 8-10 people, who were encouraged to make their own rules on how to manage the forest. This was in an effort to prevent powerful people from dominating in large meetings. Groups in conflict were brought together for discussion and a large assembly was convened to decide on the final version. The rules decided whether or not an executive committee was needed. If a committee was established, it had to also follow the rules. Once the forest department approved the rules, the forest could be handed over.

G. Raju from Gujarat talked about raising the capacity of village-level cooperatives. For capacity building there were different federations in different districts of Gujarat. Training was also given. They organised amongst themselves for information exchange.

Dennis Desmond talked about the situation in Bhutan. He said there was a great need to re-orient forestry staff, meaning attitudinal changes as well as training. Concerning knowledge and skills for implementing community forestry programmes, one possible action would be the promotion of more foreign study tours at both the senior level, where major attitudinal changes were needed, as well as at the social forestry and extension level.

Bumpen Keowan said that in Thailand elected village committees decided what products were needed from the community forests. Until now all the products from the forest had been distributed among the committee members and had not been sold. Any income went to the fund of the village development committee, not to the fund of the forest users' group. Regarding the 'community sea', every fisherman was automatically a member.

Strategies for Enabling Policy, Rules, and Regulations

In this group, participants discussed the situations in their different countries.

India

In Gujarat, the government and politicians legislated on the forests and people were not always happy with the results. The government made more profit than the people. The community was not involved in policy-making and government policy always failed. Since the policies would only work when the community benefited, government should consider people's demands and needs.

Nepal

Politics was the main obstacle. Rules and regulations were manipulated by people with authority. For example, a land survey had not been carried out for 30 years so the government was providing ownership on the basis of who claimed what. Many people were being deprived of their land rights. The policy should be clear; ambiguity should not be permitted. The Forest Act and Laws were published but were yet to be implemented. Moreover, the Act and Policy should be changed according to changing needs. In addition, the allocation of financial assistance from the forestry department should be in accordance with different conditions in different areas. In general, agroforestry must be strengthened and the existing natural forests also had to be handed over.

The Philippines

NGOs urged the community to plant trees on barren lands in The Philippines, but the benefits were not shared. Only the labour and wages were given to the community. When an administration changed, the policy also changed.

Thailand

The government had no community forestry policy; only traditional management existed. The government emphasised commercial value, which changed according to the needs. As a result of repeated requests, the government had come up with a policy, but there was still some disagreement which was in the process of being resolved.

Participants

1. Ali Gohar, Gilgit, Pakistan
2. Pearmsak Makarabhirom, Thailand
3. Felicisima Piala, The Philippines
4. Khagendra Sikdel, Ramechhap, Nepal
5. Jhalabhai Rathvi, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
6. Ganesh Bahadur Karki, Dolakha, Nepal
7. Bumpen Keowan, Thailand
8. Din Singto, Thailand
9. M.D. Mistry, Sabarkanta, Gujarat

AKRSP training facilities. The trained cadres had improved the farmers' technical capacities. AKRSP also posted village representatives to other projects and countries to learn new strategies.

Bhutan

Dennis Desmond presented his individual Action Plan, as a UN volunteer.

"I am on a two-year assignment with my main responsibility being to assist in strengthening Bhutan's community forestry programme. Since I cannot talk about an action plan for the whole of Bhutan, I have prepared an individual action plan for myself. I have broken it up into the categories according to the expectations for this workshop.

Policy, Rules and Regulations

Policy and legislation is decided through the National Assembly in Bhutan. Although there is some people's participation, when it gets down to the rules and regulations, the Forestry Services' Division makes the decisions. Possible action would involve discussion about modification of the social forestry rules. If that happens and discussion begins, I would suggest that not only the Forestry Services' Division but also the District Administration should become involved in discussions and modifications of the rules. This would be a kind of first step in moving it down to the people's level.

Gender and Equity Issues

One of the main issues is the scarcity of women professionals in the Forestry Services' Division. This is not something I could influence but I wanted to mention it. Secondly, there is a lack of consideration for women as well as other interest groups in the community forestry guidelines which are being formulated. As this is part of my responsibility and the guidelines are not finished, I am going to suggest changes with regard to identification of the forestry user groups during the formation process as well as in management plan preparation. Advocacy, networking, and coordination among user groups is not really an issue right now, primarily because there is no users' group forum.

Training/Capacity-building and Sharing Experiences

I will be working in training and capacity building; strongly linked to that, for me, is experience sharing. There is a substantial need for re-orientation of forestry staff, more in terms of attitudinal change as well as training. Concerning knowledge and skills for implementation of community forestry programmes, some possible actions include the promotion of more foreign study tours, especially to neighbouring countries. This would include senior forestry officials for whom a major attitude change is needed as well as my fellow counterparts in the Social Forestry and Extension Section and some of the educators. Bhutan has two forestry institutions, one for training forestry guards and the other for forestry training which is class 10 plus 3 years of training. This is for district rangers who are actually implementing community forestry in the districts. Hopefully, in the future, we could actually get some of the forestry users' group members on study tours and workshops like this.

Another area is to develop extension material. Our section produces a newsletter on the latest happenings in forestry in Bhutan. I would like to try and broaden its focus to share experiences about what is happening in other countries in community forestry and to publish notices about training and workshops found in other countries. I would like to publish the rules in the guidelines I mentioned and make it like a primer so that more people can understand it at the village level. They are too technical the way they are written now. I would also like to promote better co-ordination among donors in Bhutan in order to implement some of these activities."

Although the participants from Thailand and The Philippines had to leave before this session, they had prepared an action plan to be presented to the plenary session.

Thailand

Village Level and Community Level

- Organise workshops and seminars to collect information and to set goals and objectives for community forestry in the 14 provinces
- Organise seminars on operational planning for community development
- Implement reforestation activities in the villages
- Undertake participatory action and operational research in new areas for development of community forestry
- Promote community forestry group activities at the village level

Sub-Regional Level

- Support sub-regional and regional networks
- Hold a regional seminar
- Review and develop guidelines for implementation of community forestry
- Cooperate with national institutions in formulating bottom-up policies on natural management and community forestry in particular

National Level

- Strengthen the network for community forestry at the national level
Stimulate more dialogue on community forestry
- Draft guidelines for the implementation of community forestry in Thailand
- Persuade the government to issue a community forestry act

- Information should be distributed and disseminated to all levels in the community.
- Since the user groups can be registered under the Department of Forests, the CDO office also has to recognise the user groups. The user groups should be given the status of NGOs.

Issues Regarding Women's Participation

- Names of both men and women should be included in the users' group name lists.
- A certain number of women participants should be required to make up a quorum for the meeting.
- It should be compulsory to include women's groups when strengthening the community forestry programme by going to each household for small group discussion.
- A special quota should be allocated to women for training programmes and seminars, and they should be made more active in the programme.
- Women should be involved, along with men, in the issue of women's participation in their training programmes and in information sharing.
- A certain amount of income generated from the community forest programme should be spent on women's development programmes and to help make them financially self-sufficient.
- Seminars, training programmes, and publication of material and policies should be directed at women and poorer households to make them more aware.
- Regional, national, and international seminars in which women can share their views and experiences should be organised.

National Community Forestry Users' Group Federation, Nepal

A major decision was taken to establish a national community forestry users' group federation in Nepal. An *ad hoc* committee of 13 persons was formed to give concrete shape to this institutional process.

Regional Women's Community Forestry Users' Group Network

Just before the conclusion of the workshop, a serious issue was raised by women participants. Many felt that they were becoming voiceless even in this forum and that their voices had not been heard properly. They decided to take this occasion to form a regional-level women's network. The workshop organisers welcomed this proposal and encouraged the women to hold a discussion immediately.

About 20 women from Nepal, India, and Pakistan participated in the discussion. Various issues were raised, primarily about the apprehension that women's concerns had not been given due importance and that women had not had a chance to put forward their ideas. One woman noted that, even during the discussion about women and decision-making, the great stories of the women's movement had been told by men. Another woman added that the women participants had been deprived of good opportunities for interaction, for sharing their experiences, and for exchanging knowledge and ideas. Regarding the field trip, the Indian women had been interested in learning the real situation of Nepali village women. For this, there had been insufficient time.

Discussion turned towards establishing a regional mechanism for women and to setting a date for a wider discussion or workshop. This workshop would bring together women user group members and would aim at broad-based discussions on some of the issues that had emerged during the workshop. A regional committee was selected to take up the responsibility of establishing the network.

Nepal

- Padma Sangraula
- Radha Shrestha
- Devi Adhikari
- Maya Khanal
- Bishnu Dhakal
- Kamala Sharma
- Rukmini Karki

India

- Hema Kali
- Kamala ben Bhagora
- Kalawati Devi

Pakistan

- Sosan Qurban

Some of the decisions made are enlisted below.

- The workshop would be held in Nepal and immediate responsibility for the organisation and management of the workshop was given to women members from Nepal.
- The agenda for discussion would be related to women's problems, environment, and forests.
- Members from Nepal would correspond within one month regarding the points for discussion among village women.

- The responses to letters and points of discussion about women's concerns in every village should be sent to Nepal to provide the guidelines for the workshop.
- Women from user groups, concerned NGOs, and individuals committed to social welfare activities would be invited to the workshop.

ICIMOD to Introduce Regional Newsletter for Community Forestry Users' Groups

Impressed by the demands for sharing knowledge, strategies, technology, and approaches, ICIMOD's Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme announced the decision to start a regional newsletter aimed at community forestry user groups. Although workshops provided a good opportunity for sharing and dissemination, it was important to design an instrument that could share issues and information with a larger number of persons on a regular basis across the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

In this context, a multi-language quarterly newsletter would be launched. ICIMOD hoped to introduce the process by a commitment to produce four issues over a 12-month period, after which the response and viability would be assessed. The theme of the first issue would be the Budhanilkantha workshop issues, strategies, and action plans. The participants welcomed this announcement and committed themselves to supporting and contributing to the newsletter.

Closing Plenary

After dinner, the final evening of the workshop began with songs by the folk-singer Manjul and a Tharu dance troupe from the *terai*. Participants from all countries joined in.

The closing plenary session began at 11:00 pm.

Narayan Kazi Shrestha began with some announcements about departure for the following morning. He also requested all participants to return their workshop evaluation forms. He then invited participants to say a few words about the workshop.

Bhim Lal Subedi

"We would like to thank the organisers for organising this large workshop. The opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas have helped us all. Sharing ideas with international institutions has inspired us to return to our work with additional impetus to make our FUGs more people oriented. I again thank the organisers for the opportunity to share our common problems with other user groups."

D.S. Rasaily

"I would like to thank all participants from different countries, states, and districts of Nepal. Also, a big thankyou to ICIMOD. I had not expected to learn so much from the

workshop. We would like to request ICIMOD to include Sikkim and Darjeeling in future programmes as it would benefit us greatly."

Aman Ali Shah

"I greet all participants and thank everyone, including the organisers. When I first came I was a little wary, everyone sat and behaved differently, but in the last few days I feel we have become part of one family. I speak from the heart. Tomorrow's separation will be painful. When I heard everyone's problems, I felt depressed and thought how long will these problems last? But when we went to the temple and sang the group song, my heart and mind felt lighter. I would like to see a big day when all people are united, a day in which all the world's humanity and people will be one. Language and other barriers should fall away and we should all take a step towards the evolution of humanity. I say farewell on this note."

H. P. Neupane

"I would like to thank ICIMOD, FTTP, and WATCH for this unique workshop. I will always remember my interaction with brothers and sisters from Bhutan, India, The Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan. The problems of other FUGs and how they overcome them is invaluable knowledge for us. This interaction was stimulating. I bid a painful farewell to all participants. I request the organising committee to have a follow-up workshop so that we can meet and develop our ideas further."

The main achievement of the workshop will be when ideas generated here will be followed up by individual user groups in their villages. The FUGs of the suppressed people have long been voiceless. We have to bring them forward. That is the commitment of the people here and we should drop our egos in the process. The exploited need a little support which we will give. We should support them to enhance their capacities. Those who oppose programmes empowering the people should be boycotted. Empowerment of the people is the great thing. First, we should prepare ourselves, then we can empower the people. We should work together for people's rights. Again, I would like to thank all the participants."

Anupam Bhatia

"I want to say something about reporting. All the reports presented here and notes made by participants will be collected within one month. Then we will send you a small summary report. After a few months when we complete all the reports and rapporteurs' notes, those will also be sent to you. The main report will be in three languages: Hindi, English, and Nepali. We will send a letter with the summary report. If there are any mistakes and shortcomings, please correct them and send them to us to be incorporated into the main report. Our friends are preparing a video film as well. We have been concerned about communication, dissemination, and exchange of ideas among the countries from the beginning of the workshop. On behalf of ICIMOD I would like to thank every participant for their contribution to the workshop. We must remember that the end of this workshop is also the beginning of our collective goal of people-oriented development. I propose we end with the same song we sang when the workshop opened."

The workshop ended with a chorus of "We Shall Overcome" in a three-language relay, and the First Regional Community Forestry Users' Group Workshop was then formally declared closed.

A nnexes

Annex 1

Workshop Schedule

May 21, 1995; Sunday	Registration, Orientation, Poster Preparation, Sightseeing
May 22, 1995; Monday	Opening Plenary Session Four inter-country working groups Informal Inauguration
May 23, 1995; Tuesday	Formal Inauguration Poster Display Working group presentations in plenary Country working group discussions Street Theatre performance
May 24, 1995; Wednesday	Field trips to two community forestry sites and the ICIMOD site at Godavari
May 25, 1995; Thursday	Country working group discussions Country working group presentations: The Philippines, Thailand, Bhutan, Pakistan Nepali Musical Evening
May 26, 1995; Friday	Country working group presentations: India, Nepal Concurrent working group sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategies for Advocacy/Networking• Strategies for Enhancing Women's Role in Decision Making• Strategies for Strengthening Local Institutions: Institution Building,• Capacity Building, and Training• Strategies for Enabling Policy, Laws, Rules and Regulations
May 27, 1995; Saturday	Plenary session - general discussions Country Action Plan preparation Country Action Plan presentations Regional Women's Network discussion Nepali Musical Evening Final Plenary session
May 28, 1995; Sunday	Departure of Participants.

Annex 2

List of Participants



Nepal

1. Dilip K. Adhikari
Chairperson,
Kapilakot Forestry Users' Group
Dhamile, Dhamile Post,
Sindhuli, Nepal
2. Ms. Devi Adhikari
Chairperson, Gramin Mahila
Sirjanasil Pariwar
Pangretar VDC - 1, Dhusine
Sindhupalchok, Nepal
3. Krishna Ram Adhikary
Chairperson
Sirandada Community Forestry
Users' Group
Begnas VDC - 5, Pokhara, Kaski
c/o CARE-Nepal, Nepal
4. Ms. Subhadra Adhikary
Vice Chairperson
Kalomudho Adhikari Commu-
nity Forestry Users' Group
Begnas VDC - 7, Kalimati
c/o CARE
Pokhara, Kaski
Nepal
5. Tika Bahadur Ale
Chairperson
Dhusa Vikas Samaj
Budhaap, Dhusa VDC -2,
P.O. Charowndi
Dhading
Nepal
6. Yam Bahadur Ale
Chairperson,
Koidim Forestry Users' Group
Byas Nagar Palika - 2
Tanahu, Nepal
7. Anil Bhattarai
Gunjanagar, Chitwan
Nepal
8. Nil Prasad Bhandari
Chairperson
Thokarpa Community Forestry
Users' Group
Thokarpa, Sindhupalchok
Nepal
9. Pitamber Bhandari
Jaimire Ambuta Forestry Users'
Group, Kieul VDC - 1
Sindhupalchok, Nepal

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Dhusa Vikas Samaj
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Dhading
Nepal
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Kalomudho Adhikari Commu-
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c/o CARE
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Nepal
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Dhusa Vikas Samaj
Budhaap, Dhusa VDC -2,
P.O. Charowndi
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Nepal
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Gunjanagar, Chitwan
Nepal
8. Nil Prasad Bhandari
Chairperson
Thokarpa Community Forestry
Users' Group
Thokarpa, Sindhupalchok
Nepal
9. Pitamber Bhandari
Jaimire Ambuta Forestry Users'
Group, Kieul VDC - 1
Sindhupalchok, Nepal

10. Gyan Kumari Bhujel
Member
Nagjidanda Community Forestry
Users' Group thulochap VDC 4
Nisunke, Dharapani
Okhaldhunga, Nepal
11. Lal Bhumjun
Chairperson
Samikhel Community Forestry
Users' Group
Chaimale VDC-5, Bhandar
Kharka, Kathmandu, Nepal
12. Badri Prasad Chaulagai
Bhotechour VDC -1
Sindhupalchok, Nepal
13. Semai Chaudhary
Majeli VDC - 2,
Sunsari, Nepal
14. Ms. Bishnu Dhakal
Secretary, Shanti Ban Users'
Group, Ward -6, Dhandapur
Rupendehi, Nepal
15. Ms. Bhagwati Gautam
Member
Bajrapare Community Forestry
Users' Group Bajrapare,
Ravi Opi VDC - 1, Kabhre,
Nepal
16. Deepak Gelal
Member, Bajrapare Community
Forestry Users' Group Bajrapare,
Ravi Opi VDC - 1, Kabhre, Nepal
17. Dev Bahadur Ghale
Member
Thamdanda Community Forestry
Users' Group, Singa VDC - 2
Tatopari, Myagdi, Nepal
18. Kushal Giri
Tulsipur Nagarpalika -5
Tulsipur, Dang, Nepal
19. Ghanendra Kafle
Nepal UK Community Forestry
Project, Kathmandu
Nepal
20. Ganesh Bahadur Karki
Chairperson,
Salleri Forestry Users' Group
Magapawaa VDC - 4
Karki Tole, Dolkha,
Nepal
21. Ms. Sharmila Katwal
Member
Thulochap VDC - 6, Nisunke
Okhaldhunga, Nepal
22. Ms. Meena Khadka
Member
Dwartase Community Forestry
Users' Group
Majdanda VDC - 1
Pokhara, Kaski
Nepal
23. Ms. Laxmi Devi Khatiwada
Vice Chairperson
Malati Women's Forestry Users'
Group, Mauli Mohanpur
Bagdua -7, Saptari
Nepal
24. Ms. Kamla Lamichane
CARE/Nepal
Mahotari, Bisnu Dhakal
Motipur, Rupandehi
Nepal
25. Kapil Mainali
Secretary,
Kankai Community Forestry,
Suranga, Jhapa
Nepal
26. Nand Lal Majhi
Member
Backward Society Improvement
Centre (BASIC), Duhabi -3
Sunsari, Nepal

27. Hari Prasad Neupane
Member, Aahale Community
Forestry Users' Group, Bokhim,
Nepal
28. Ms. Maina Poudyal
Member
Bajrapare Community Forestry
Users' Group, Bajrapare,
Ravi Opi VDC - 1, Kabhre,
Nepal
29. Rajendra Pokhrel
Advisor
Kankai Community Forestry,
Suranga, Jhapa
Nepal
Tel: (013-20204)
30. Dinesh Pokhrel
Chairperson
Ripa Community Forestry Users'
Group
Jaishithok VDC - 9
Rautadi, Dhurkot
Gulmi, Nepal
31. Ms. Padma Sangraula
Yakumba Community Forestry
Users' Group, Athrai, Sakranti - 8
Tehrathum, Nepal
32. Ms. Kamala Devi Sharma
Member
Pahatkat Forestry Users' Group
Jaidi VDC - 2, Baglung,
Nepal
33. Ms. Radha Shrestha
Member, Budhikhoriya Commu-
nity Forestry Users' Group
Chisapani-6, Manthali
Ramechhap, Nepal
34. Bhim Prasad Shrestha
Chairperson, Okhaldunga - 5,
Ram Bazar, Okhaldhunga
Nepal
35. Khagendra Sikdel
Swiss Development Cooperation
(SDC), Ekanta Kuna,
Jawalakhel, Lalitpur
P.O. Box 113, Nepal
36. Ms. Thuli Singdan
Pandheri Danda Community
Forestry Users' Group,
Chaimale VDC - 4, Bhandur
Kharka, Kathmandu, Nepal
37. Hukum B. Singh
Nepal Australia Community
Forestry Project
P.O. Box 208, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 527224, 524725
38. Uma Prasad Sitaula
Chairperson,
Kankai Community Forestry,
Suranga, Jhapa,
Nepal
39. Bhim Lal Subedi
Chairperson,
Ghongkhola Forestry Users'
Group, Waling Ward - 3, Syangja
Nepal
40. Ms. Hemkala Subedi
Member
Majau Community Forestry
Users' Group, Mauli Mohanpur,
Bagdua - 7, Saptari,
Nepal
41. Ms. Krishna Subedi
Secretary,
Ghongkhola Forestry Users'
Group, Waling VDC - 3
Dhapkhola, Syangja,
Nepal
42. Prem B. Thapa
Kalpabrikshya Community
Forestry Users' Group, Sindhuli
Nepal

27. Hari Prasad Neupane
Member, Aahale Community
Forestry Users' Group, Bokhim,
Nepal
28. Ms. Maina Poudyal
Member
Bajrapare Community Forestry
Users' Group, Bajrapare,
Ravi Opi VDC - 1, Kabhre,
Nepal
29. Rajendra Pokhrel
Advisor
Kankai Community Forestry,
Suranga, Jhapa
Nepal
Tel: (013-20204)
30. Dinesh Pokhrel
Chairperson
Ripa Community Forestry Users'
Group
Jaishithok VDC - 9
Rautadi, Dhurkot
Gulmi, Nepal
31. Ms. Padma Sangraula
Yakumba Community Forestry
Users' Group, Athrai, Sakranti - 8
Tehrathum, Nepal
32. Ms. Kamala Devi Sharma
Member
Pahatkat Forestry Users' Group
Jaidi VDC - 2, Baglung,
Nepal
33. Ms. Radha Shrestha
Member, Budhikhoriya Commu-
nity Forestry Users' Group
Chisapani-6, Manthali
Ramechhap, Nepal
34. Bhim Prasad Shrestha
Chairperson, Okhaldunga - 5,
Ram Bazar, Okhaldhunga
Nepal
35. Khagendra Sikdel
Swiss Development Cooperation
(SDC), Ekanta Kuna,
Jawalakhel, Lalitpur
P.O. Box 113, Nepal
36. Ms. Thuli Singdan
Pandheri Danda Community
Forestry Users' Group,
Chaimale VDC - 4, Bhandur
Kharka, Kathmandu, Nepal
37. Hukum B. Singh
Nepal Australia Community
Forestry Project
P.O. Box 208, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 527224, 524725
38. Uma Prasad Sitaula
Chairperson,
Kankai Community Forestry,
Suranga, Jhapa,
Nepal
39. Bhim Lal Subedi
Chairperson,
Ghongkhola Forestry Users'
Group, Waling Ward - 3, Syangja
Nepal
40. Ms. Hemkala Subedi
Member
Majau Community Forestry
Users' Group, Mauli Mohanpur,
Bagdua - 7, Saptari,
Nepal
41. Ms. Krishna Subedi
Secretary,
Ghongkhola Forestry Users'
Group, Waling VDC - 3
Dhapkhola, Syangja,
Nepal
42. Prem B. Thapa
Kalpabrikshya Community
Forestry Users' Group, Sindhuli
Nepal

59. M. D. Mistry
Development Initiatives for
Social and Human Action
(DISHA),
1/1129 Kamdar Building
Garden Area, Himmatnagar
Dist. Sabarkanta, Gujarat
India 383001
Tel: (02772) 22190

60. G. Raju
Vikram Sarabhai Centre for
Development Interaction
(VIKSAT), Thaltej Tekra,
Ahmedabad 380 052,
India

61. Jhalabhai Rathvi
VIKSAT, Thaltej Tekra
Ahmedabad 380 052
India

62. Asis Kumar Saha
Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose
Briksha Mitra Sangha
Vill. P.O. Rudijala (Melaghar)
Dist. West Tripura
India 899115

63. Subodh Ranjan Sur Secretary
Acharya J.C. Bose *Briksha Mitra*
Sangha, P.O. Vill. Rudijala
(Melaghar),
District West Tripura West
India 799115

64. Urmilaben Tabiyar
Village Rampuri P.O. Rampuri
Bhiloda Taluka
Dist. Sabarkantha, Gujarat
India

65. Khulbushan Upmanyu
Vill. Kamla, P.O. Garnota
Dist. Chamba, H.P.
India 176207

66. Kuldeep Verma,
Peoples Action for People in
Nepal (PAPN),
Andheri, Dist. Sirmour H.P.,
India 173023
Tel: 01702-8158

Pakistan

67. Dilshad Begum
AKRSP, P.O. Box 506
Babar Road, Gilgit NAS
Pakistan

68. Ali Gohar
AKRSP, P.O. Box 506
Babar Road, Gilgit NAS
Pakistan
Tel: (0572) 2480
Fax: 92-572-2779

69. Dur-E-Marjan
c/o AKRSP
P.O. Box 506
Babar Road, Gilgit NAS
Pakistan

70. Aman Ali Shah
c/o AKRSP
P.O. Box 506
Babar Road, Gilgit NAS
Pakistan

71. Sosan Qurban
AKRSP, P.O. Box 506
Babar Road, Gilgit NAS
Pakistan

Bhutan

72. Dennis F. Desmond
UNVP
P.O.Box 162
Thimpu, Bhutan
Tel: 975-2-23138
Fax: 975-2-22657

Thailand

73. Bumpen Keowan
The Coastal Province Revival
Project,
18 Soi Montee Petkasam Rd.
Muang District
Phang-nga Province 82000
Thailand
74. Pearmsak Makarabhirom
Division of Community Forestry
Royal Forest Department
Bangkok 10900
Tel: 5795416
75. Din Singto
156 Moo 3 Lamsak
Aoluk District
Krabi Province 8111
Thailand

The Philippines

77. George Paglinawan
CENPECS
P.O. Box 693
8100 Tagum
Davao del Norte
Philippines
Tel: +63-08421-28782
76. Felicisima Pinal
CENPECS, P.O. Box 693
8100 Tagum, Davao del Norte
Philippines
Tel: +63-08421-28782

Resources

78. Judy Amtzis
P O Box 2633
Kathmandu
Nepal
Tel: 414303

79. Kiran Basnet
Jaya Bageshwori
Kathmandu
Tel: 476507
80. Shashi Khadgi
Kumbheswor 22/47
Lalitpur, Kathmandu
Tel: 522271
81. Nivedita Mishra
Asst. Lecturer
Sanskrit Dept.
Padma Kanya Campus
Bagbazar, Kathmandu
(Vishwa Bhasa Campus)
Tel: 226713
82. Tribhuvan Paudel
c/o Giridhari Sharma Paudel
Family Planning Association of
Nepal
Pulchowk, Lalitpur
Tel # 221663 (c/o Surya)
83. Rajiv Singh
G.P.O. 1545
Pulchowk
Kathmandu
Nepal
Tel: 526716

WATCH

84. Kazi Narayan Shrestha
85. Meena Paudyal

Wall Newspaper/Com- munications/NEFEJ

86. Dhruba Basnet
NEFEJ
Thapathali
P.O. Box 5143
Tel: 231991, 227691

87. Mohan Bista
88. Pramesh Bhandary
89. Ramesh Dhamala
90. Hasta Gurung

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91. Anupam Bhatia
92. Sameer Karki
93. Reeta Rana
94. Govind Shrestha

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Kathmandu, Nepal**

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- ◇ China
- ◇ India
- ◇ Myanmar
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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT (ICIMOD)

4/80 Jawalakhel, G.P.O. Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal

Telephone: (977-1) 525313
Facsimile: (977-1) 524509
(977-1) 536747

Telex: 2439 ICIMOD NP
Cable: ICIMOD NEPAL
email: pubs@icimod.org.np

