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Social Science and Sustainable Development — Perspectives from the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
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Preface

Despite economic growth, poverty and a low level of human development continue to persist in many developing countries. Mountain areas in general have a disproportionate share of poverty-stricken people. Decades of development initiatives, often associated with huge investments, have done little to change the situation. Academicians, politicians, and others have pondered over this anomalistic outcome of planned change. A common consensus identifies the failure to take into consideration social dimensions in development planning as the major cause of such malaise. Development activities, to succeed, must be sustainable on all accounts. Along with economic and ecological sustainability, social sustainability must also be incorporated into project design and implementation. For mountain areas, this has a special significance as, biophysically and socioeconomically, mountain areas are different and unique in comparision to other backward areas. This is the central theme of this paper.

In addition to the centrality of the social issues, this paper also argues for the inclusion of critical issues like poverty, gender equality, stakeholder participation, vulnerability of minorities and other disadvantaged people, and human and social development in development planning for mountain areas. The paper goes on to show how these critical issues can be incorporated with appropriate tools and methods now available to social scientists.

ICIMOD endeavours to develop and disseminate new knowledge on sustainable development approaches for mountain areas. This paper adds a new dimension to this long-standing effort of ICIMOD by including a hitherto uncharted area. It is hoped that it will generate interest, awareness, and concern among policy-makers, administrators, community and aid workers, and politicians concerned with the development of mountain areas.

Abstract

This study argues that sustainable development can only be ensured if social issues are given due consideration in the conceptualisation and design of development planning. The paper convincingly shows how social, economic, and biophysical variables are interrelated and how they influence the outcomes of programme and project sustainability. A list of important social and cultural issues characteristic of backward areas, in general, and the Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain areas, in particular, are discussed as the agenda for social analysis. Several available methods and tools are also discussed to provide a flavour of social analysis useful for social as well as non-social scientists involved and concerned with sustainable development of mountain areas.

The paper goes on to argue that the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, home to over 120 million of the world's poorest people, but having the potential to affect the lives of a far greater number of people in the entire South Asian region, requires urgent attention from development planners and other activists in charting a course of development initiative that is mountain specific and takes into consideration the historical and cultural heritage and practices of the region. The paper concludes with an agenda of action for looking beyond the current *status quo* and indicating a new framework for studying mountain areas.

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Contents

1.	**Background**	1
2.	**Interdependence of Social, Economic, and Biophysical Variables in Sustainable Mountain Development**	4
3.	**The Social and Cultural Agenda**	6
4.	**Existing Approaches and Tools of Social Science Analysis**	9
	Social Assessment	13
	The Social Soundness Analysis	16
	Human and Social Capital Formation	18
	Participatory Rapid Appraisal	20
	Gender Analysis	22
5.	**Social and Cultural Sensitivity in Sustainable Mountain Development**	24
	Mountain Specificities and Mountain Perspectives	24
	Settlement and Historical Evolution of HKH Communities	25
	Social Knowledge, Institutions, and Local Organisations	27
6.	**Conclusions and Looking Beyond: An Agenda for Action**	29
	Annex 3	34
	References	35

The human capacity to imagine social change is notably limited.... Attempts to imagine a better future have remained simplistic and schematic.... We may simply be unable to conceive of the strictly limited advances, replete with compromises and concessions to opposing forces, that are frequent outcome(s) of actions undertaken under the impulse of some magnificent vision.

Albert Hirschman (as quoted in John Toye 1987: VIII)

Social Scientists' capacity to answer the complex riddles of development practice is growing. Beaten paths do not exist and the need to innovate and experiment is paramount. The variety of roles performed and honed by social scientists in development from field researchers to project designers, to policy formulators, to impact evaluators, or even to managers of development programs - is illustrated and demonstrated .....

Michael Cernea (1994:4)

1. Background

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) mountains stretching around 2,500 kilometres from east to west and covering a vast expanse of 3.5 million square kilometres is home to more than 120 million people in eight South Asian countries. Never before in the region has the challenge of sustaining the livelihoods of an increasing and impoverished population on a degrading resource base been as monumental as it is today. The pace of change sweeping across the region and through the global economy has never been faster. The economic changes and improvements in human welfare that are taking place across the region and elsewhere would be meaningless if the large mountain population of the HKH, which represents the most marginalised populations of these countries, remains mired in endemic poverty with low levels of human and social development; and, at the same time, the rich but fragile natural resources of the region, a global heritage, continues to be degraded and lost forever. The economic and social development of mountain people and sustainable use of mountain natural resources must go hand in hand, and that is the challenge facing the HKH region today.

ICIMOD was established to promote sustainable development of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) mountain areas. More than 120 million people from eight countries live in the HKH and most of them are poorer and more socially deprived than even their own fellow citizens, who constitute a significant portion of the so-called poorest of the poor in the world. The HKH inhabitants, are highly dependent upon the limited, readily extractable natural resources within their reach for their subsistence; and due to their lack of access to social, financial, and infrastructural capital, they are victims of endemic poverty and social deprivation. Therefore, sustainable management and development of the fragile ecosystem of the HKH areas will remain elusive unless the social and economic development of the already marginalised people inhabiting these areas are pursued vigorously through an eco-friendly and socially sound approach.

It is by now widely acknowledged that holistic development of a people not only depends upon an appropriate mix of policy and interventions, but is also largely dependent upon an understanding of their society, culture, and aspirations. Otherwise, policies and investments, however well intended and technically correct, will not bring about the desired changes. This is where a Social Science Perspective comes into play. By a Social Science Perspective, we simply state that, in addition to the dominant paradigms of development, i.e., Technological and Economic, it is very pertinent to realise that numerous other issues emanating from the broad 'Social and Cultural' domain, including the politico-institutional and historical processes, also shape the nature of things in society. This is particularly essential for development policies and interventions that have experienced failure, which is often due to the lack of attention to social and cultural (including institutional and organisational) issues. Nowhere is this more relevant than in the inaccessible and marginalised communities of the HKH

region which are ethnically diverse and often dispersed and fragmented within the boundaries of various nation states. Many mountain communities are minorities within their nation states, and, due to a variety of factors, are often not beneficiaries of mainstream development efforts. Tradition, heritage, and ethnic identity play far more important roles in the lives of mountain people than in the lives of more homogeneous communities in the plains. Also, due to the unique habitat, policies and interventions for mountain communities require a truly multi- and trans-disciplinary mountain-specific perspective that incorporates the multidisciplinary mountain specificities.

ICIMOD's activities, based on a thematic and programme-based approach, address the issues of sustainable mountain development through the multidisciplinary and problem-solving expertise at the Centre's disposal. The Social Science Perspective, hitherto generically subsumed by programmes and activities, will now be a cross-cutting theme with a designated focal person. Social Science Perspective here refers to both social anthropology and sociology, as they have essential overlapping commonalities. These are distinct from other branches of the social sciences, i.e., Economics, Political Science, and so on. However, it should be made clear at the outset that the social science perspective is essentially a broad one, incorporating the so-called social and cultural factors as well as issues and concepts such as 'institutions' and 'organisations' normally thought to be the preserve of Political Scientists. This perspective also takes into consideration the 'historical' view, for, without historical appreciation of changing societies and their values and structure, it may not be possible to realise why people behave the way they do. Thus, the Social Science Perspective can bring about not only a multidisciplinary view but also a trans-disciplinary one through which social scientists can contribute to other disciplinary inquiries. When this perspective is added to the existing economic and technological (natural science) perspectives, the combined effort can be a powerful tool for analysing society and the questions of development and environment in a more holistic manner than can be arrived at from the perspective of a single discipline. Examples of such assertions abound, some of which may be worth citing here. It is widely accepted that deforestation is a major cause of environmental degradation in ecologically fragile mountain areas. The reasons behind deforestation are mostly socioeconomic and so are the mitigation measures. Unless local communities are mobilised and given viable incentives and some form of control over local resources, reforestation of denuded hills will never be possible and, even if technological interventions take place, e.g., aerial seeding, reforestation efforts will still not be sustainable unless the participation of local people is ensured. This whole process requires inputs from social science, including economics.

The Social Scientist at ICIMOD has been urged to define the role and functions of the position by preparing a concept paper. The foremost role of a social scientist is to ensure that activities support 'social goals' , just as an economist's main task is to ensure adoption of sound techniques of economic analysis and

adherence to attain economic goals. Within the broad area of development, social objectives; such as equality and non-discriminatory policies; access to basic social services; special measures for protection of the vulnerable; and, finally, taking into consideration the so-called social, cultural, and institutional-organisational aspects of human life that allow participation of the targeted population; comprise social goals. In support of this, a designated Social Scientist can perform both 'staff' and 'line' functions and provide a disciplinary perspective in support of activities.

In the context of 'staff' functions, these may include regulatory and analytical support, i.e., developing a framework for incorporating social considerations into project and programme development or reviews of and reports on social issues. In an organisation such as ICIMOD, engaged more in networking, research, and training, the staff function seems to be more important. It also dovetails with ICIMOD's involvement in experimental and pilot projects; as the Centre is not directly involved in investment-oriented project implementation activities. The social scientist's staff function here might include providing inputs on social issues and towards a socially- and culturally-sensitive methodological and substantive approach, as well as inputs into various areas such as mountain farming, natural resources' management, and enterprise and infrastructural development activities. For instance, in 'Tourism and Local Community Development', it is important to ensure that increased tourism does not trample upon the locally held social and cultural values, while it should explore, through the local community's social structure and institutions, how best to integrate increased income from tourism in order to translate it into local community development activities. Total dependence on conventional economic planning techniques may not provide enough insight to attain the objectives of community development through tourism in unique hill communities. The point here is to highlight the underlying social organisational factors that support economic activities, particularly for community development activities that have resulted from increased revenues generated through tourism. The centrality of a social and cultural approach is referred to here, while not undermining the economic approach, for, without considering the economic imperatives or adopting the economic planning techniques, projects will not be sustainable or comprehensive enough to attract the people's interest.

The 'line' function, broadly meaning project management duties, may incorporate project monitoring (particularly for the adaptive changes deemed necessary through monitoring the findings) and 'Impact Assessment'. These functions may also be quite critical in view of the importance of an integrated, team approach to project management. This is particularly relevant for ongoing projects of a biological/physical nature which have potential for social and cultural concerns. The other critical contribution of the line function could be to undertake quick but well-rounded impact assessments of completed activities, rather than carrying out conventional evaluation studies that consume more time and resources but which often do not reveal significant findings.

Further, 'in between' activities could include development of appropriate training modules, or participating in various training activities as a specialised resource person, and advisory services whenever the social science input is deemed necessary and important.

2. Interdependence of Social, Economic, and Biophysical Variables in Sustainable Mountain Development

The HKH mountain region is a unique habitation for over 120 million people who eke out a subsistence from a very fragile and geologically-active ecological zone. Climatic variations are broad-ranged, and distance-wise these are very rapidly changing, thereby limiting the diffusion of technologies and innovations. The mountain ridges have been traditional dividers of communities and ethnic groups. The HKH region, thus, boasts of numerous ethnic groups often cut off from one another by physiographic conditions, remaining isolated because of social and cultural factors. Many ethnic groups do not interact with their neighbouring communities, thus remaining isolated from one another even while being within spatial proximity, mainly due to historical events, different lifestyles, notions of pollution and purity, and value systems.

The extent of poverty and marginality and the low level of access to social infrastructure of the HKH people are by now well acknowledged and documented (ICIMOD 1994). Therefore, sustainable and incremental development is an imperative for the countries of the region that share this unique ecological zone. However, as ICIMOD has learned over the years, sustainable management of a fragile ecosystem requires a systemic approach in which mountain specificities are looked at in an integrated manner with the central focus being on human beings living in the area.

Over the years, the concept of sustainable development has been defined and redefined by people of different disciplines and each has voiced the centrality of their concerns. While sustainable development in the most prevalent sense means to *"meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation"*, as defined in the seminal treatise 'Our Common Future' (WCED 1987), the emphasis and approach can differ amongst scientists and researchers. Economists would seek to maximise human welfare, often expressed in quantified terms of increased incomes and so on, with the existing capital stock and technologies available. Ecologists, including most biophysical scientists, would argue for the preservation of the integrity of ecological subsystems, physical regimes, and species within them. Sociologists would argue that social considerations must be incorporated into devising solutions for sustainable development. This indicates that the sustainability of a system will be at stake if social and cultural issues are not given due importance in policy and other interventions. This is the crux of the argument centering around the term 'Social Sustainability' (Cernea 1994). Broadly, this new addition to the seman-

tics of development literature states that if projects are not designed incorporating social and cultural considerations, i.e., predicting the social consequences of interventions and making room for the desired participation of beneficiaries, they will not be socially sustainable in the long run.

While economists, ecologists, and sociologists would all like to emphasise the centrality of sustainability of the system, each of them adheres to their own disciplinary focus in emphasising the approach to attain it. Also important is a set of their own specific priorities that they wish to pursue in order to define the concept and attain the objectives. Thus, the economist's chosen terms for growth and efficiency would stand against the ecologist's preferred emphasis on ecosystemic integrity and carrying capacity and, in turn, the sociologist's concern for empowerment, social and institutional organisation, cultural identity, and so on. In such an environment of different disciplinary perspectives in the quest of the ultimate objective, i.e., sustainability, the term only becomes confusing and perhaps inflicted with contrasting and often incompatible methods. What is needed is an organic synthesis of each of the proponent's concerns in such a way that it does not undermine the centrality of the concept itself. Without delving into the attendant methodological debate over what constitutes valuation of resources, social sustainability, and ecological integrity, one can argue for the superiority of an integrated approach that takes into account the economic value of resources, the importance of social organisations, the necessity of preserving bioresources, and the characteristic interdependence of variables that affect the lives of the people for whose sustenance the concept has been developed in the first place.

When this interdependence issue surrounding sustainability is perceived in the context of mountain regions, particularly the ICIMOD-mandated HKH areas, the holistic nature of the concept becomes even more pronounced. Most HKH residents are overwhelmingly dependent on some form of primary production, utilising the fragile natural resources around them, be they steep slopes for cultivation or high altitude plateaus or other rangelands for animal grazing or slow-growing temperate forests on high mountains and slopes. Heavy rainfall, wind and gales, and snowmelt induces land degradation and infrastructural damage, exposing the vulnerability of those living in and tending to subsistence activities in the fragile ecosystem. Species' reduction and loss are invariably the consequence of such traditional subsistence processes. Being isolated and remote presents another set of constraints that hinder the mountains from benefiting from alternative opportunities. Therefore, the traditional economic wisdom calling for 'growth' and 'efficiency' in the economy and production system, if applied uncritically to the mountain areas, may not provide the desired results, as such an approach, for no fault of its own, would suffer from inherent limitations due to the fragility of the ecosystem and the inaccessability and remoteness of the locales. The main constraint and limitation of a purely 'economistic' approach for mountain areas is that it cannot fulfill the critical environmental and social sustainability aspects of programmes and activities.

What is needed here is to combine the knowledge from different fields of social science in order to be able to appreciate the social setting, as this will certainly influence the economic parameters and therefore should be taken into consideration. Again, the maintenance of ecosystemic integrity and biodiversity protection also should be understood, although these should not be viewed in isolation from the needs of the communities living in the so-called eco-zones. In addition to the needs of the communities, their aspirations and cultural and religious values are also important issues to be considered, if we wish to understand them and consider them to be at the centre of all development activities. This means development planners should endeavour to understand the world view and preference of the communities before devising development plans for them within the centralised planning process. Nevertheless, it also needs to be stated here that the culture and the traditional ways of life of mountain communities, however remote or isolated, should not be looked upon as static entities, as changes resulting from education, exposure to media, and contact with outsiders are powerful enough to be felt all over the region.

The HKH region is also unique as a densely-populated marginal area in which the population is growing at a rapid rate, even in the face of such Herculean obstacles and harsh living conditions. The human activities of such a vast population (more than 120 million) also affect the lives of hundreds of millions of others living in the plains and downstream from this great region. Its people are drawn from numerous ethnic groups, many of them scattered in more than one nation state. They profess all the major religions of the world, namely, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and numerous other forms of nature-ancestor worshipping traditions. Ethnically, culturally, and by religion, they are many different communities, sharing a common and contiguous mountain range which has a great diversity of climatic and physiographic patterns and bioresources. Living under the influence of this gigantic mountain range, people have learned to live with this 'great equaliser' and subsist from the resources that lie within. People's lives, occupations, food habits, technology, aspirations, and myths have all been shaped by the mountains — their altitudes, slopes, and climatic variations. The (physical) verticality has also given rise to very complex and interesting social structures, settlement patterns, and trade-subsistence links amongst communities living at different altitudinal levels.

3. The Social and Cultural Agenda

The social and cultural agenda, in analysing the state of development and sustainability, is recently gaining increasing acceptance from all quarters. The UNDP-sponsored annual publication the 'Human Development Report' is a powerful and strong advocate of this approach. The considered opinion now is that human progress cannot be measured by economic growth alone. To attain continued and sustainable human development, attention must be given to opportunities for social development. Critical social and cultural issues that either

strengthen or thwart human progress, with or without economic growth, need to be considered. This is also true for ecological sustainability. Without being attentive to economic compulsions and social and cultural issues, maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem will remain as elusive as ever. The quest for economic growth through the increased efficiency of production systems and the desire for continued conservation of bioresources will remain unfulfilled, if the ideas forming the interventions are socially and culturally ill-informed or ill-conceived; in which case the affected people and expected beneficiaries will not participate in the implementation of the activity, as they will not have a feeling of ownership; and projects will likely fail if they do not meet the stated objectives. Development projects that have failed to attain their purported goals are not difficult to find, and their failures can be largely attributed to such a lack of understanding. The premise that 'economies exist for people — not people for economies' (Speth 1996), or for that matter ecosystems, must be embraced in order to attain sustainable development of people, economies, and ecosystems. Having advocated the importance of social and cultural issues in the approach to sustainable development, let us now lay out, *inter alia*, an agenda for incorporating social and cultural knowledge.

Social science can be put to use in the analysis of a given situation and beyond, by being predictive and prescriptive. This is a new realisation on the part of social scientists, as well as a new appreciation of the role of social science on the part of project planners and others. That power of social analysis can be transformed into positive social action for change (Cernea 1995) is a growing realisation on the part of the social science community in their quest for being heard by the world at large. Understanding and acceptance of such a premise indicate that sociological knowledge should be incorporated before designing a project or activity and not simply in an ex-post evaluation or critique of what went wrong (Cernea 1985). This realisation also lays out an agenda for social scientists for pursuing the goal of sustainable development. However, it is important to reiterate that the social science perspective should be viewed from the perspective of the social science specificity, which is sufficiently broad but not necessarily all-encompassing enough to render it too superficial and without introspection and focus. Too often, social science has been viewed through other disciplinary perspectives and parameters. To illustrate this point, it is helpful to point out that, to other disciplines, social science is often a 'residual' science that focusses on issues (not taken care of by these disciplines. At the same time, it is also worthwhile to mention that social science is also often viewed opportunistically by other disciplines. For instance, economists would like the social scientist to look at poverty and inequality issues, which to them are more social than technical economics; while physical and biological scientists expect the social scientist to explain why people are averse to some technologies or improved practices that are found to be highly responsive in the laboratory situation. Such flawed tendencies not only render the social science perspective a mere appendage to other sciences, but also diminish the utility of the complete

and holistic framework social science can offer. This attitude also writes off the integrated approach in which all disciplines are supposed to be co-partners.

To emphasise the importance of the social science approach, it is essential to define the terms, social and cultural, so that they are properly understood, contextualised, and do not convey differential and conflicting meanings to different people. Although the terms are a part of our very basic vocabulary, a clear definition is needed to delineate the boundaries of the terms; this is much more than an exercise in semantics. By 'social', we mean those activities that are external to individuals (separating sociology and anthropology from psychology) and not primarily resulting from non-social motivations, e.g., economic, political, or religious. Here, it is important to dispel certain popular misconceptions about sociology, which studies society (interactions) and social forms (organisations) and not individuals and their motivations or actions, which are the prerogative of psychology. Therefore, the term encompasses the social relationships of groups and institutional structures that govern people's lives in society. However, it would be erroneous to assume that anything social is independent of the economic and political and vice versa. In the human world, everything is so interrelated and intertwined to such an extent that strict separation is not feasible.

By 'cultural', to give a more comprehensive definition — culture is a way of life which covers tangible, intangible, material, and non-material aspects. Perhaps this defines the term best. Therefore, culture is not merely rites and rituals, but it also covers people's world view, relationships with technology, political structure, indigenous knowledge about resources and their use, and even preference for economic and subsistence activities. This comprehensive view of culture, is, therefore, essential for many development activities. This particularly applies to activities for the success of which the participation and support of local inhabitants are needed. To achieve that support and participation one must take into account the culture and way of life of the intended beneficiaries. ICIMOD projects such as those on Ethnobotany, Rangeland Management, People and Resource Dynamics, and Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT), to mention a few, all require an understanding of the project areas' inhabitants' culture and could benefit immensely from such an approach. Specifically, the agenda for social scientists engaged in sustainable mountain development (recognising the unique specificities of a mountain region with its people and ecosystem) could include the following issues (Box 1).

The issues identified above take cognizance of the mountain specificities and are indicative of the major areas of concern for social science in sustainable mountain development, but this list is in no way exhaustive and is not in order of priority. These issues broadly cover stratification; rites and rituals; gender roles; economic activities; organisational forms, political rights, and structure; policy and regulatory structure; knowledge systems; and development aspirations of their communities vis-a-vis the nation states that these mountain communities

Box 1

- Social Organisation of Communities
- Ethnic and Cultural Identities and Aspirations
- Gender Roles in Society
- Institutional and Policy Issues
- Participation, Decision-making, and Customary Rights
- Social Mobility and Fulfillment of Felt Needs
- Social Cohesion and Integration
- Traditional Production Systems and Indigenous Knowledge
- Social Processes Related to Impoverishment/Vulnerability
- Access to, Alienation and Exclusion from Resources

inhabit. These concepts/issues are sufficiently important and comprehensive enough for all societies. However, they are part of a generic framework that needs to be developed into workable and field-tested indicators and operationalised for the benefit of non-social science researchers and project managers, if they are to apply these perspectives to their work. It is beyond the scope of this paper to develop along this line, but a short compendium paper will be developed later which will identify and develop the process of incorporation of social and cultural variables into the HKH mountain-specific applied research, training, and development programmes and into project planning.

The above issues, as part of the Social and Cultural Agenda for ICIMOD, are a comprehensive list of issues that can be incorporated into the mandatory functions, e.g., Documentation Networking, Applied Problem Solving Research, and Training and Advisory Services. The challenge here is to integrate these issues into all ICIMOD activities, which are not necessarily project-oriented, whereas the approach incorporating social issues has so far largely derived from the project perspective. Social scientists have developed these concepts with the aim of incorporating them into (investment) project activities. But here, for the purpose of ICIMOD, we have to use them creatively to get the most out of these issues which are generic to societies and interventions.

4. Existing Approaches and Tools of Social Science Analysis

Development of the newly-independent countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America gained increasing attention from researchers, administrators, and the global community after the end of the Second World War. Ever since, a series of development paradigms have evolved and debates have raged over their appropriateness in dealing with the ever-increasing impoverishment of the so-called developing countries. The early thinking on development was dominated by what we may call the 'technocratic' paradigm calling for construction of infrastructure and industries which would be the motive force of (economic) develop-

ment in backward societies. Disenchanted with this approach, because of its negligible impact on improving growth rates and incomes, and as a result of the growing food shortages, an agriculture-led strategy established itself in the sixties.

Combined with new and path-breaking research in high-yielding technologies, the 'Green Revolution' took a hold in vast areas of the so-called Third World. However, by the late 1960s disparities among communities and countries, as a result of the new strategy, gave cause for alarm. A nationalistic resurgence, combined with the revival of the somewhat forgotten Marxist-Leninist tradition, led to newer paradigms of development. Paradigms and perspectives, such as the 'Dependency Theory', 'Underdevelopment Perspective', and 'Unequal Trade', had a powerful influence on development thinkers, challenging the conventional 'Neo-classical' orthodoxy of the 'trickle down' approach, 'Monetarist Theory', and the erstwhile 'Infrastructure' paradigms. A blend of structural, populist, and Marxist ideas flourished under the 'Dependency and Underdevelopment' school of thought which argued that the development of underdeveloped areas was only possible if these countries could thwart the exploitation of international capitalists and their national agents. Armed with new datasets and case studies outlining the exploitation by Multi-national Corporations (MNCs) and their support for oppressive regimes in the Third World, development scholars coined terms with global implications, such as 'Core-Periphery', which can even be applied within nation states. Thus, the idea of Uneven Development among and within nation states found its way into development paradigms. The tricky questions of balanced, regional development, a safety net for the left-outs, and targeted programmes for backward groups and others, increasingly became part of development theory and practice in the period commencing in the 1970s.

Interestingly, the same questions and problems are continuing to be important issues even today. Within nation states, there are communities and regions who have not benefited from mainstream development efforts. They are the peripheral groups of today who deserve a safety net if we are to follow a human-centred development programme. Many of these peripheral groups and regions are isolated or inaccessible, their populations eking out a subsistence on the margins, with access to few resources and little information. Often, these groups are minorities within their nation states, because they are socially and culturally different from the majorities, and they inhabit remote inaccessible areas which are not usually coveted by the prosperous. However, these areas are rich in bioresources and, hence, are an increasing attraction for outsiders. Mountain communities are perfect examples of such peripheral groups within nation states. Because of their conditions and unique characteristics, their development and well-being can be fostered with approaches that suit their livelihoods and niches. Paradigmatic orthodoxies need to give way to an integrated approach that values their social/cultural world, their comparative advantages, and their environmental imperatives. In the rest of the paper, I argue that such an approach must embrace the centrality of social and cultural factors and their roles in the

socioeconomic development of these peripheral communities (mountain people of the HKH areas).

In the pursuit of social and economic development, policies and interventions are developed and implemented with goals and objectives backed by economic, technical, and often environmental and social analysis. Although there has been a long tradition of financial, macroeconomic, and technical analyses, environmental and social analyses are rather new additions to project formulation and design steps, and they are still evolving. The impetus for social analysis largely comes from the realisation that several projects and activities, despite their sophisticated designs and ample investments, often fail to deliver their objectives and result in unintended social consequences, much to the chagrin of project planners and administrators. Many of these unintended social consequences have been brought to light by undertaking various forms of impact assessment and ex-post evaluation. Academic and professional social scientists have always called for more attention to social issues in project design and have demonstrated the consequences of socially ill-conceived projects (Freeman et al. 1983; Cernea 1985). Having access to a plethora of materials and stung by critiques for not foreseeing the unintended and negative social consequences of development projects worldwide, some of the main international development and financial institutions have hired in-house expertise on social analysis and developed a variety of analytical methods and tools.

This change was also part of the shift in the dominant development paradigm over time. The rise of the economic paradigm in the 1960s and 1970s, displacing the engineering paradigm of the previous decades, led to the centrality of the macro-programmatic approach, in which the entire investment portfolio was assessed rather than single projects, as the key to the development of underdeveloped areas (Sirageldin 1994). Subsequently, the dominant economic paradigm was confronted with the predicament of an unprecedented and somewhat unpredicted debt crisis in the 1980s, widespread degradation of natural resources and the biosphere, and unintended social and economic consequences of technology-led development initiatives. All these changing circumstances compelled researchers, policy-makers, and administrators to return to the basics, i.e., the 'look at and listen to people' approach, which was advocated by social scientists even before and during the time when the dominant economic paradigm took root.

Rural sociologists and applied (development) anthropologists have been in the forefront in promoting the role of these non-economic disciplines in the process of development. They also exhorted their fellow professionals to define their professional practices, especially to outsiders and more traditional disciplines, e.g., engineers and economists engaged in the theory and practice of development (Coward 1985; Whyte 1982; Rhoades 1983; De Walt 1985). Although there is no one sociology and anthropology, rural sociologists and applied anthropologists have employed several key concepts and constructs in analysing the social and

cultural issues affecting the process of development (Sadeque 1992). The **household-gender dimension** is one such concept in which social scientists study the structure, role, needs, and aspirations of household members. This is then linked to their perceptions, interests, and abilities to participate and benefit from development activities. The **social organisation-institution complex** is another such concept which provides information on social groups, interactions, hierarchy, and class, as well as the complex rules and systems known as institutions around which community life revolves. The most recent addition to this gamut of concepts is the **empowerment-participation interface** which is critical in ensuring involvement in decision-making of the project affected people or the expected beneficiaries and their participation in the ownership and implementation of project activities. Experience suggests that this is critical in ensuring delivery of project objectives and sustainability of the project itself.

The foregoing discussion provides a short summary of the evolution of the various paradigms and social science perspectives on the process of development. It is, however, important to keep in mind that competing paradigms and ideas in development have evolved precisely because no particular viewpoint could hold sway for a period of time. As circumstances change and intended results fail, dominant orthodoxies have to be shed and thus newer ideas and paradigms have emerge. To recapitulate, the dominant **technocratic** or **infrastructure** or **industrial model** was displaced by the **economistic model** which gave way to the **agriculture-led** model. The economistic and agriculture-led models were also challenged by a variety of neo-Left and dependency perspectives. The free market philosophies of the 1980s are increasingly being supplemented by an emphasis on transparent and accountable governance, public-private partnership, globalisation of economies, and investments in human development and poverty reduction strategies. Historically, the social science perspective has always provided a sobering influence and called for an integrated approach to development, raising its voice against prevalent orthodoxies. The recent emphasis on human development, social sector investment, and so on, which has found its way not only to researchers but also to governments and major national and international management and financial institutions engaged in development planning and management, demonstrates the increasing acceptance of social and cultural perspectives in development paradigms.

One of the limitations of sociological and anthropological research and approaches has been their inability to develop analytical tools and frameworks. This has undervalued the utility of the discipline to practitioners and other disciplines engaged in development activities and theory. From the last decade onwards, applied social scientists at universities, institutes, and international development agencies have addressed this lacuna. As a result, several approaches of and tools for social analysis are now available for incorporating social science perspectives into development planning and management. However, it must emphasised that these tools have emerged from a more pragmatic approach with the view of pursuing development of underdeveloped areas and

disadvantaged sections of society. Therefore, they are inherently loaded with the values of the organisations or people subscribing to a particular paradigm and school of thought. Much work needs to be done to assess the impacts of new global beliefs and convictions, e.g., liberalisation and market orientation, and their resultant impacts upon marginal populations of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas; as well as the utility of uncritically applying these tools with those theoretical underpinnings. However, such a task is beyond the scope of the present paper, and we give a note of caution and point out the caveat before we describe these tools. A few representative ones are discussed in the following pages. These analytical approaches and tools provide the essential elements for sociocultural appraisal which could be used by project planners and specialists engaged in project implementation to incorporate the much-needed social perspectives into development research and programme planning.

Social Assessment

The World Bank, as one of the premier development finance institutions in the world, by virtue of its global experience and for enlisting non-economic social scientists in its core staff, has very recently (1994) developed a social analysis perspective as a part of its sector work, country assessments, and lending activities. Although a comprehensive framework for incorporating social (development) issues into the Bank's activities is yet to be formulated and is still evolving, the Bank Group's concern with social issues has already resulted in a number of commendable developments. One such very recent (1996) development is a Social Screening Data Sheet that is filled in by the activity's Task Manager at a very early stage of Project Formulation, i.e., the concept paper stage. It is a planning tool comprised of a checklist of critical social information. It includes social screening criteria for the project (Types A to D depending upon the significance of the impact) for gender, social impact, and resettlement issues. Indications of stakeholder participation at all levels impacts upon various stakeholders and the types of social issues to be analysed (gender, ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, poverty, and stakeholder analysis), and mitigation plans. This instrument is a spinoff from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) tradition and is built upon the EIA format. Having conducted a social analysis at such an early stage, it becomes easier, at least from a management perspective, to carry out the task in subsequent stages.

The World Bank approach to dealing with social issues has largely been motivated by the operational point of view, and that is how it is structured. Further, the Bank's concern with participation has also shaped its social analysis methodology. Indeed, social assessment is one of the methods in what the Bank Group loosely defines as Participatory Development.

The Social Assessment (SA) method developed by the World Bank Staff provides a framework to incorporate social analysis as well as stakeholder participation into operational and analytical work performed by the Bank's staff. The

SA, due to its linkage with operational activities, is highly purposive in selecting the social variables to focus upon. Those variables that have most relevance to operational activities are selected for analysis in terms of their criticality in project impact and success. Therefore, the SA is essentially a project-oriented, decision-making tool. Its objectives are as follow (Box 2).

Box Two

- Identify key stakeholders and establish an appropriate framework for their participation in project selection, design, and implementation.
- Ensure that project objectives and incentives for change are acceptable to the range of people it is intended to benefit and that gender and other social differences are reflected in project design.
- Assess the social impact of investment projects and, where adverse impacts are identified, determine how they can be overcome or at least substantially mitigated.
- Develop ability at the appropriate level to enable participation, resolve conflict, permit service delivery, and carry out mitigation measures as required.

Source: The World Bank 1996.

In the context of the project, the stakeholders occupy a very prominent position in the SA. The stakeholders may include the government (the borrower) and its line agencies; directly affected groups, including people and organisations; and at-risk groups such as the poor, children, women, indigenous people, minorities, and marginal communities. Indirectly affected groups are comprised of other vested interest groups, including donors, NGOs, the private sector, and other religious and community groups.

SAs are carried out by social scientists at any stage of the project, but they are recommended at the identification stage to allow maximum incorporation of social issues in project design and implementation. This is an outcome to follow after the Social Screening Data Sheet, if SAs are recommended. The SA, as already noted, are a highly focussed instrument concentrating on key variables thought to be pertinent to operational activities. The following are a sample of common questions investigated in the SA process (Box 3).

From the foregoing account, it is rather clear that the SA as a methodological tool is overly concerned with stakeholders and their participation. For the Bank, lending is critical and portfolio management is the obvious yardstick. Therefore, stakeholder participation (particularly the client, borrowing government)

Box Three

- Who are the stakeholders? Are the objectives of the project consistent with their needs, interests, and capacities?
- What social and cultural factors affect the ability of stakeholders to participate or benefit from the operations proposed?
- What is the impact of the project or programme on the various stakeholders, particularly on women and vulnerable groups? What are the social risks (lack of commitment or capacity and incompatibility with existing conditions) that might affect the success of the project or programme?

Source: The World Bank 1996

is of immense importance. That is why the whole SA is tilted towards that objective. As it has been developed and structured with operational activities (lending and, to some extent, impact) in mind, it is narrowly focussed or rather underdesigned. It is very purposive and strives to identify issues directly related to participation of project beneficiaries and the impact on targeted groups. While in general that is a valid objective and consistent with the institution's (The World Bank) functions, it precludes several key areas and thus becomes a tool only to serve certain needs and not a method to guide scientific investigation. One of the key areas the SA does not foray into is the social organisation of the stakeholders' community and their traditional management systems/knowledge (where applicable). This has been found to be a key element in project success if properly understood and incorporated into project design (Coward 1985, Pollnac 1985, Noronha and Spears 1985), especially in agricultural and natural resource fields. Moreover, despite recognising the centrality of participation, the target group is provided the same or less weightage than other stakeholders. Therefore, people are not necessarily at the centre of the assessment. And lastly, although it is commendable that the largest and most influential development institution in the world has rather belatedly instituted some element of social analysis into its operational and sectoral work, comprehensive compliance with such procedures is far from assured as the Sector Operating Divisions (the project people) and their national counterparts are still far more important in the operations of the institution, characterised by its lending fetish.

However, despite its limitations, it is a welcome addition to the body of management tools for decision-making. When applied along with other tools, such as Gender Analysis, Beneficiary Assessment, and others, the SA can be a powerful tool for providing critical information on social issues.

The Social Soundness Analysis

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) can be credited with the pioneering effort for incorporating social issues into their programme cycle ever since the early eighties. USAID calls the approach 'Social Soundness Analysis', and it is duly incorporated into Handbook 3, one of their operational manuals. The Social Soundness Analysis (SSA), described in Handbook 3, Appendix 3F, PP.1-12, and 'Sociocultural Considerations at Programme Identification Document (PID) Stage', described in the same Handbook, Appendix 2C, P.1-5, provide the procedures and process the agency must employ in identifying and designing a project (technical assistance, investment, or a combination of both). The Social Soundness Analysis has three interrelated components: (A) sociocultural feasibility, (B) spread effect, and (C) social consequences and benefit incidence.

A. Sociocultural Feasibility

The sociocultural feasibility of a project/activity begins with learning about the social and cultural landscape of the country or project area. For this, an assessment of prevailing values, beliefs, social structure, and organisation needs to be studied. This would then lead towards the contextualisation of the project, and therefore would hopefully result in least social disruption in the given project area — an important criteria for project success. In addition to an understanding about values and beliefs, which will help design the project in a socially benign way, exposition of the social structure will provide crucial information on existing groups and power relationships in the society and the nature of the desired structure, if deemed necessary. The sociocultural feasibility approach is sufficiently broad-based and includes the following categories of information (Box 4).

Box Four

- Who lives where?
- Allocation of Time
- Minimum Participator Profile
- Obstacles
- How are they Organised?
- Motivation
- Matching Participators and Projects
- Communication Strategies

Source: USAID 1982

B. Spread Effects : The Diffusion of Innovation

Spread or multiplier effects are critical in ensuring return on development expenditure, as well as for promoting equitable distribution of development benefits. Also, in the case of working with technological innovations or policy re-

forms, the spread effects can bring significant value to allocated resources. Therefore, it is critical to look into the demonstration effect upon indirect beneficiaries of the project, which ultimately ties into project or strategy goals or vision. However, spread effects cannot be achieved automatically, and the success of spread effects hinges upon the willingness and ability of the target beneficiaries and other indirect groups to participate in the project. Achievement of spread effects is a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral issue that must transcend mere economic incentives and consider geographical and social dimensions as well. However, the concern here is more sociocultural than technical and the project must demonstrate that the possibilities of spread effect are not constrained by sociocultural variables present in the society in which the project will operate. The spread effects' component of SSA should look into the following variables (Box 5).

Box Five

- Initial (Project) Setting and Broader Population
- Patterns of Mobility
- Maximum Information and Resource Distance
- Leadership/Authority
- Previous Project Design and Execution

Source: USAID 1982

C. Social Consequences and Benefit Incidence

The impact of any project and its spread to a wider population is likely to affect different groups in different ways. This differential impact raises the question of equity and impact upon vulnerable groups, particularly the poor, women, and other marginalised groups. The increasing concern with providing benefits to the poor, often bypassed in development projects, flags the importance of studying carefully the differential impacts and their possible social consequences. It is essential to bear in mind that provision of goods and services by a project is not a sufficient condition for accrual of project benefits to intended beneficiaries, because benefits can be expropriated by untargeted intermediaries or other powerful forces present within the community. Furthermore, it needs to be carefully observed whether gains achieved through project activities can result in unintended social consequences, contrary to local values, or whether they could negatively affect the social integration of the target groups. The social consequences and the Benefit Incidence Component should look into the following issues (Box 6).

The SSA is once again a project-oriented tool for social analysis. It has been organised and structured to meet the social data needs of USAID project prepa-

Box Six	
Access to Resources and Opportunities Displacement, Migration, and Urbanisation	• Employment • Changes in Power and Participation
Source: USAID 1982	

ration. The guidelines are quite comprehensive and thorough and, if employed to the fullest potential, SSA can yield substantial information that could be used to develop projects that are socially sensitive and sustainable. The data needs of SSAs can be met through secondary sources, field surveys, and qualitative techniques. A rational combination of these sources and techniques can yield the desired database for the analysis. Overall, SSA is a comprehensive tool and, depending upon priority, it can be creatively employed. However, as with SA, it is also a purposive tool developed for a better project design and, therefore, critical lacunae exist. One such omission is the institutional and policy interface which is very important for understanding societies prior to interventions. The other problem with such approaches is the *a priori* assumption about the need for such interventions. People might be poor, but their social and cultural aspirations might prioritise other than project-oriented objectives. It could be erroneous to assume that people want a certain type of development project as opposed to anything else. Finally, having an operational tool of this nature is not always a necessary condition for having sound social analysis prior to project preparation as, often, SSA is not accorded due importance in the project, thus undermining the efficacy and potentials of SSA in project design and implementation.

Both the SA and SSA were developed by international development agencies for their particular objectives and mandates. For this reason they are tied to projects, instead of being a complete framework in themselves. Nonetheless, they can be used, with modifications, by others as practical tools or guidelines for social analysis. Furthermore, it should be noted that these institutions, despite having access to such tools, do not always use them to the fullest extent, for, sometimes other overriding interests or preoccupations abort or cut short the social analysis process.

Human and Social Capital Formation

During the 1980s, economic growth theorists were beginning to be disillusioned with the prevalent neo-classical orthodoxy which emphasised economic growth as a result of accumulation of physical capital and expansion of the labour force, along with technological progress. Growth was being experienced in many parts of the world, but poverty, inequality, and degradation of the environmental and

natural resource base often accompanied economic growth. Such growth, instead of improving people's lives, was dehumanising human existence and was aptly called 'ruthless growth', 'rootless growth', 'voiceless growth', 'futureless growth', and so on and so forth by a global concern group of leading economists and planners. This group was assembled by the UNDP to devise an alternative development strategy, beginning in 1990. The collective effort of this distinguished group resulted in the publication of the Human Development Report annually since 1990. This group can be credited with developing alternative and more rational measures of progress of nations, e.g., 'Human Development Index (HDI)', 'Real GDP per capita (PPP$)', and the 'Capability Poverty Measure' abandoning conventional and misleading estimates such as GDP and GNP per capita indicators. The increased attention and focus on human development as the primary goal of growth and vice versa have been largely influenced by the works of Amartya Sen and his concept of 'human capabilities'. By human capabilities, the Oxford and Harvard Economics' professor, Sen, postulates that, in choosing the lifestyle its people values, a society's standard of living can be better judged than by income indicators. He also emphasises freedom of choice as the core of human well-being. Economists such as Paul Romer and Robert Lucas also promoted the human development position by pointing out that the real motive force of economic progress is people (UNDP 1996). People's productive capacities were tested as the important factor in long-term economic growth rates. Thus came human capital theories in economic growth and progress.

Some of these new models argue that as 'human behaviour,' reflected by accumulation of productive factors and knowledge, can be changed by policy, it is essential to place an emphasis on human capital. Human capital development is essentially broader than human resource development, and the two should not be confused. Human resource development essentially refers to improvements in the productive capabilities of human beings through education, training, and so on, while human capital formation, by contrast, identifies the well-rounded development of people as the end. Improvement of human capabilities is an essential component of human well-being, whether that results in economic returns or not is a moot point.

Very recently, a new term 'Social Capital' has been formulated to advance the emphasis on human and social development issues in the process of economic growth. The arguments follow that a common identification of people with shared norms and values (social cohesion and integration), with institutions having legitimacy to mediate conflicts and competing claims, and a system of governance that promotes an enabling environment for all these, form social capital. If, social capital is in short supply, then sustainability, economic growth, and even social stability will be hard to attain. Examples are *"all too painfully evident from Somalia to Yugoslavia to Rwanda"* (Sirageldin and Steer 1994: 31). The functioning of social and economic order that we often take for granted is impossible to imagine without this social capital. However, we have to remind ourselves that these are path-breaking ideas and not yet fully tested empiri-

cally. Nevertheless, efforts are underway to demonstrate the crucial linkage. Professor Robert P. Putnam and his associates have convincingly shown that existence of civic society is the precursor and guarantor of good governance and economic growth. Preponderance of voluntary horizontal associations in contrast to hierarchical vertical associations has made the difference for northern Italy in rapid development and welfare compared to southern Italy, which has just the opposite (Putnam 1993 as quoted in Sirageldin and Steer 1994). People acting as a strong cohesive community can achieve more than individuals in an atmosphere of trust and long-term vision, reducing transaction costs and promoting sustainability. In such an environment, transparency is evident, reducing corruption and inefficiency (UNDP 1996). This is the enabling environment that growth of social capital can promote and nurture for sustainable economic development and welfare.

Despite the linkage between democratisation of societies and economic development, in recent years the world has witnessed remarkable economic growth under authoritarian regimes. Mostly concentrated in East Asia, these countries have benefited from a combination of a fortuitious global economic situation and pragmatic policies orchestrated by export-led development strategies. However, many of these miracles were underwritten by a great deal of external financial and administrative support and may go down in history as exceptions. It is important to note also that, whenever these societies were exposed to a downturn in the global economy, they were often plagued with violence and socially disruptive action, as the mediating force within was hardly present because of the lack of democratisation and eminence of values espoused by civil society.

Participatory Rapid Appraisal

Large-scale surveys often precede development project formulation in order to collect the required database, or are employed to evaluate or monitor on-going projects. Large-scale sample surveys or surveys based on total enumeration are useful for providing the wealth of information necessary for decision-making in project appraisal and evaluation. However, the down side is that the requirements of such exercises, in terms of resources and time, often render them too costly and time-consuming to be justifiable. Additionally, these surveys often collect far more data than are needed or definitely used for the purposes stated. Furthermore, such surveys designed and carried out by outsiders are often highly subjective and miss critical insights and useful information, because the methods employed in data gathering can result in response or sample error and bias. Realising these limitations of survey research, during the late 1970s social scientists and other applied field researchers developed several variants of rapid appraisals based on local knowledge, that were undertaken in a participatory mode by experts and beneficiaries or by local people. 'Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA)' is one such tool. Evolving from 'Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)' and

'Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)', with initial emphasis on fields such as rural development, the new Participatory Rapid Appraisal, henceforth referred to as PRA, can be undertaken in any community or region expending far less time and resources, and it introduces the participatory process at a very early stage of the programme or project cycle. The key tenets of PRA are as follow.

A. **Participation:** Local people are key actors in the exercise, both for its value for indigenous knowledge and perception as well as to introduce local partcipation in development.

B. **Teamwork:** The PRA Team consists of local people representing segments of the population and national and/or international experts representing the various disciplines essential for the particular project or activity. Well-balanced teams are critical for the success of the method as it depends largely on informal data gathering within a limited timeframe.

C. **Flexibility:** PRA does not follow any particular given structure. Techniques to be followed depend upon the size and the skill of the PRA Team, topic and location of study, and the time and resources available.

D. **Selectivity:** For the sake of efficiency, the PRA Team gathers just enough information necessary for devising recommendations or action plans. This is also referred to as 'optimal ignorance'.

E. **Validity:** As PRA gathers largely qualitative data, triangulation for assessing the validity and reliability of data gathered is always followed.

PRA is a shared learning process whereby outsiders (experts) have a facilitating role rather than being in control of the process. It uses simple techniques that can be comprehended and employed by the local people whose knowledge is an essential component of the learning process. It also requires transparency and, therefore, strives to take the local people into confidence. For this reason, a series of open meetings involving local residents is part of the process. Although flexible in approach, PRA uses a number of tools to gather the necessary information.

- Semi-structured Interviewing
- Key Informants
- Mapping and Modelling
- Seasonal and Historical Profiles
- Focussed Group Discussion
- Preference Ranking
- Case Studies
- Observations

Although PRA is largely carried out through informal discussion modes, discussion with officials or NGO-CBO workers and use of official records are not precluded from the exercise. Attention to details and sensitivities in dealing with local people, community workers, and government officials are critical to the success of PRA exercises. Finally, establishing rapport with the local people is crucial and team-building has to be well thought out.

As PRAs are more informal and less structured, it is crucial that they are organised well and rather intensively. Typically, the PRA organising process involves logistical arrangements, training of team members, sorting out expectations from and outputs of the exercise, and strict adherence to the time frame, which is inevitably short (from days to months). Furthermore, the reporting structure of PRAs is also different from standard survey-based approaches. Consequently, reports should be short, highlighting people's needs and matching options developed on the basis of a consultative process. Social Mapping, Ranking, and Modelling exercises are common PRA outputs.

Gender Analysis

Over the last few decades, women's issues have gained increasing attention from wide-ranging groups and constituents: from feminists to development theorists, policy planners, legislators, and various other civic groups. In the 1970s, widespread inequality between men and women brought forth the issues and concerns about women within various circles. Policy and programme responses to such concerns translated into concepts such as Women in Development (WID). The earlier notions of the concept had a rather limited meaning and were primarily aimed at reducing the inequality between men and women. This approach soon identified WID with the likes of a special interest group. WID programmes were developed and thought of as an add-on sub-project to main development activities. Subsequently, further research and conceptualisation on the issue led to a dramatic shift in the prevailing thinking. It was shown convincingly that much of the inequality was rooted in the dominant patriarchal nature of societies and due to differential access to resources (on a gender basis). Differential achievements were due to purposive or insensitive policies favouring men and the entire problem was structural in nature. Furthermore, it was noted with increasing alarm that, unless there was substantive reorientation of existing development policies and programmes, half the world's population would not benefit from progress and growth, and, without half of the population moving ahead, societies as a whole could not improve their standards of living or quality of life. Development expenditures, instead of making people's lives better, would only exacerbate inequality between men and women and, consequently, the entire development process would grind to a halt. Acceptance of such a premise led to the development of what is now known as Gender Analysis. Subsequently, Gender Analysis (GA) was linked to development and the term 'women' was substituted by Gender in the reformulated Gender and Development (GAD) framework (Box 7).

Contrary to the misconceptions about or limitations of WID or GAD, what the framework today represents is a much broader and more integrated analytical approach and development paradigm, which has also been operationalised systematically through checklists and questions. The following major issues summarise what can be described as the Gender Framework (Box 8).

Box Seven

- WID or GAD is not a special interest.
- It is not a women-only project.
- It is not a sub-project attached to the main one.
- It is not merely concerned with 'traditional' women's concerns (health, nutrition, education).
- It is not only an equity issue.
- It is not only beneficiary-oriented.
- It is not merely social analysis.

Source: Adapted from a USAID internal note (undated)

Over the years, gender concerns have been systematically factored into methodological tools and analytical frameworks. Several source books, handbooks, and training materials have also been developed. In fact, most multilateral and bilateral development agencies have gender units or focal persons and have their own generic or sectoral training materials. The World Bank has also developed a systematic Gender Analysis Framework based on its country and sector work experience. The Gender Analysis Framework contains the following key concepts and principles (Boxes 9 and 10).

Box Eight

It is a cross-cutting issue
It is an economic variable

- It is an integrated development approach.
- It is aimed at increasing women's productive capacity

Source: USAID internal document (undated)

Box 9: GAD Key Concepts

Practical Gender Needs
Intra-household dynamics

- Strategic Gender Needs
- Inter-household dynamics

Source: The World Bank 1996

Box 10: GAD Key Principles

Planning as a process
Gender objectives
Gender monitoring and evaluation

- Gender diagnosis
- Gender strategy

Source: The World Bank 1996

The Gender Analysis (GA) framework as described is a summary of existing approaches and provides a comprehensive overview of how they may be undertaken in an area or project context. GA essentially comes up with appropriate data and information on incorporating women's concerns and mainstreaming women into development activities.

The preceding discussion on various approaches and tools of Social Analysis points out that these put together form a powerful method for undertaking comprehensive Social Analysis. Some of the tools, particularly SA, SSA, and GA, were developed with projects in mind. Therefore, they have their limitations and are essentially narrow in focus. However, emerging concepts, such as 'Human and Social Capital Formation', PRA, and the general framework of social science concepts referred to earlier hold far greater potential for conducting comprehensive analysis on social issues and development.

5. Social and Cultural Sensitivity in Sustainable Mountain Development

Mountain Specificities and Mountain Perspectives

Mountain areas, particularly the HKH areas, are characterised by the uniqueness of diverse ethnic and religious communities, usually cut off from one another due to natural divides. The HKH areas also spread across at least eight countries, with differential composition within the national population. With the exception of Bhutan, and to some extent Nepal, mountain communities are a minority within the remaining six countries. Therefore, mountain specificities and perspectives have to take into account their position and relationship within their nation states.

ICIMOD has been at the forefront in studying the HKH mountain communities and the mountain issues as they affect the communities with a specialised mountain perspective (Banskota 1993). Over the years, the mountain perspective has produced mountain specificities (Jodha 1990). The so-called mountain specificities, 'Inaccesability', 'Fragility', 'Marginality', 'Diversity', and their specific 'Niche', describe the characteristics of HKH mountain areas.

Mountain areas, due to their characteristics and opportunities, present this set of specificities. They have their attendant imperatives and should follow situation-specific development strategies. Thus, inaccessability is a product of slope, altitude, and seasonal hazard; fragility is due to slope, altitude, and the corresponding geologic, edaphic and biotic characteristics; marginality is conditioned by the preceding specificities, especially in relation to mainstream non-mountain areas; and diversity is due to all the other specificities and complemented by human adaptations and settlement patterns. All these specificities also produce their specific niches which are due to unique environmental parameters,

human adaptation, and thus also present a set of corresponding opportunities. Although the environmental settings influence the specificities, the social dimensions are nonetheless present in each of these. Thus, physical inaccessability also produces social inaccessability and, to overcome such constraints, an appropriate media and information flow strategy also merits attention. Likewise, fragility leads to vulnerability of communities in terms of food security and income potentials. Similarly, diversity is as social a characteristic as it is physical. Marginality is more of a socioeconomic term, and the physical factors conditioning such a characteristic are unique not only to mountain areas but to other marginal areas also. All these social characteristics of the specificities are important interfaces of the mountain specificities in general.

However, as with any theoretical framework or construct, these characteristics cannot be applied uniformly across the board, and there is a danger of oversimplification inherent in such approaches that may lead to compartmentalisation and designation of areas and communities. However, a specific mountain perspective can be of great value in studying mountain areas with a mountain focus, rather than being overwhelmed by conventional wisdom and approaches in development. Undoubtedly, mountain areas are different and unique, exhibiting characteristics not commonly found in other areas, e.g., in the plains. Hence the necessity of a specialised mountain perspective.

The generalised conceptualisation of mountain perspectives follows from the mountain specificities. The human and social aspects and potentials of mountain communities in adjusting to life in harsh conditions and their resilience must be emphasised, as well as the specific physico-biological potentials of the mountain ecology which provide alternative means of making a living. Mountain communities have historically dealt with population pressures through migration and through opening up new territories; and overexploitation of resources has been dealt with by diversifying income-earning potentials and through new rules governing the use of common resources. However, such moves have often been constricted by coercive means exercised by central authorities, e.g., restricting trade and other methods (Bista 1991). Notwithstanding, mountain people have continued to be inventive in finding alternative means of subsistence. This is the positive endowment that conventional thinking often misses, and thus reminds us about the utility of methods, such as PRA, that build from local knowledge, insight, and preference ranking to devise sustainable alternative options for mountain communities. Social science methods are also important, as they add participatory processes and take into account issues sensitive to beneficiary communities; issues that are often ignored or overlooked by outside experts who use conventional methods based on dominant paradigms.

Settlement and Historical Evolution of HKH Communities

Unlike the civilisations in the river basins of the HKH region, the historical evolution of mountain communities is relatively less known. Historical research, al-

though it mentions places like Nepal and Kamrup (Assam) in the pre-Christian era (PCE) (Bista 1991) and that the Bactrian empire in the Upper Punjab and Northern Pakistan followed the Macedonian invasion (also PCE), the rest of the HKH region remain in relative obscurity. It is believed, however, that the Hindu Kush and the Western Himalayas were settled by Aryan migrants from Central Asia. In the Eastern Himalayas, settlements began much later, and were settled by Tibeto-Burmese ethnic groups (Roy Burman 1990, Shelley 1992). The Chittagong Hill Tracts were first settled by Arakanese groups following the Burmese invasion of Arakan in the fifteenth century.

Early Nepalese history reports the settlement of the *Kirat* people of Tibetan ethnic origin in eastern areas beyond the Sunkosi, the central areas by the *Magar*, and beyond the Karnali by the *Khas* people of northwestern Indian ancestry (Bista 1991). Settlement of hill areas also evolved into fiefdoms, often incorporated into larger kingdoms, either on ethnic lines or as an agglomeration of similar groups. The eastern Indian and Chittagong Hill tribes have been subjected to a history of intermittent suzerainty and vassalage exercised by central empires based in Northern India. After the British colonisation of South Asia, most of these hill communities remained outside the colonial adminstration, depriving them of the so-called 'Regenerative' aspect of colonisation and capitalism. However, through trade and the proselytising activities of Christian missionaries, contacts with the western world and central authorities were established. The same is the case with communities in northern Myanmar, despite Burma's annexation by the British. Nepal and Bhutan remained outside direct British Control, but civil society, particularly in Nepal, established links with India. The fiercely independent *Pashtun* tribes of northern and western Pakistan were never brought under colonial administration and, along with their neighbours in Afghanistan, maintained their own political and social identities. The Tibetan Plateau, due to its inaccessibility and due to the fact that it was not in the path of major historical movements, remained outside Central and South Asian influences and empires.

Hence, it is evident that most HKH areas remained relatively isolated from larger and powerful external forces with their different social, political, and religious identities and technologies. Therefore, a hamlet-oriented society evolved in the area, characterised by limited trade and largely self-reliant, closed economies, with little diffusion and cultural contact with the outside world, particularly the adjoining plains. This isolationism may have contributed to religious syncretism in some parts of the region and the existence of shamanistic and animistic religious traditions. Due to the physiographic barriers on people's movement, and as a result of being outside the colonial administrative authority, the HKH region evolved into a unique pattern shaped by the dominance of mountain ecology and physical endowments. Fragmented by mountains and powerful rivers, communities have grown into atomistic units with characteristics and cultural manifestations that are unique and often uncommon among similar ethnic groups. To this has been added the sporadic and often unsuccessful attempts at impos-

ing a caste hierarchy and 'Sanskritisation' by the ruling elites (Bista 1991; Roy Burman 1990). Such attempts have not constrained syncretic traditions and indigenous patterns have survived, despite the forces of authority.

The historical evolution of hamlet-oriented enclaves is under increasing pressure from outside forces. Modern education, transportation links, mass media, and contagious acculturation with the influx of tourists are affecting the culture and way of life of mountain communities. Social and cultural changes are inevitable and mainstreaming forces are always at work.

Social Knowledge, Institutions, and Local Organisations

The prefacing of the term 'development' with 'sustainable' since the 1980s has helped interpret and define development in a more holistic way, including concerns for environmental considerations, poverty, inequality, gender, and finally social and cultural factors, all of which contribute towards linking development with human welfare. In Section Four of this paper, the various approaches to Social Analysis were discussed. Together they provide a very comprehensive methodology and content for social analysis that can contribute to the formulation of projects that are socially and culturally sustainable. But the framework is generic (as are all methods and tools), and it is useful to focus on relevant issues with mountain-specific illustrations.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that mountain communities have evolved differently and, because of the sheer physically limiting factors, are a distinct entity compared to the plains; and as our ideas about development are largely derived from our experiences of the latter, it is crucial that we make this distinction in developing a framework for mountain development.

Mountain communities, due to a lack of alternative opportunities, are extremely dependent upon the surrounding natural resource base for their survival. Employment, incomes, and subsistence are largely derived from farming and other natural resource extraction. Traditional productivity-increasing measures, such as, seed-fertilizer-water technology, improved breed and input-based animal husbandry, and the conventional production forestry type of approaches, are of limited value in mountain areas, not only because of environmental considerations but also because of their social and cultural unsustainability. Mountain communities, for a number of reasons, are subsistence-oriented. Therefore, agricultural technologies for them must also consider their needs for a wholesome and socially satisfying life. This should include their traditional food habits, taboos, ceremonial requirements, and opportunities for development of surplus-generating commodities. The improvement of genetic and agronomic potentials of subsistence varieties, therefore, should be accorded priority. Desirability of crops should be looked into, not only from the quantity or the economic value angle but also in relation to the dietary-nutritional and the cultural-social needs. Above all, new and exotic crops may not always be successful, as

the people cultivating them may not have the knowledge and experience for these varieties. Furthermore, new and untried varieties could pose greater economic and agronomic risks which people will be unable to handle.

The so-called 'model' or 'lead-farmer approach' in agricultural extension has often provided the right boost to the best endowed farmer to improve his productivity. This has contributed to the growing inequality associated with the 'Green Revolution'. In mountain areas, this would be socially and culturally unsound and would create disintegration of otherwise cohesive societies. The value of trust and mutual cooperation in societies, for human and social capital formation, was highlighted in Section Four of this paper. Project, policies, and applied research aim at targeted beneficiaries. Therefore, mountain farming projects or dissemination of useful and productive species must ensure that these are consistent with the needs, aspirations, and interests of the stakeholders. In the event that cultural factors affect the adoption of a particular technology, then bypassing them or appropriate mitigation measures to deal with them must be adopted in the project design. There are traditional divisions of labour among men, women, and children, and often amongst caste and occupational groups, that affect all productive and subsistence activities. Furthermore, because of the relatively remote and close-knit societies, labour exchanges and cooperation exist in many mountain communities. Agricultural operations are influenced by these and various other forms of participation, exchange relations, and mutual support. Technology generation and diffusion-extension must take these factors into consideration.

Ethnic origin and religious and cultural traditions influence food habits and preferences. Settlement patterns and movement of people are, therefore, important. As mountain communities are diverse, even within their nation states, and within very short distances great variations of climate and culture can be found, across the board recommendations about improved farming systems should be avoided. Ethnic origin and historical settlement patterns are also very pertinent in devising appropriate technologies consistent with ethnic and cultural identities.

There are numerous examples of slow diffusion of energy efficient stoves and biogas technology and preference for traditional fuels such as leaves, crop residues, and twigs from natural forests over the fast-growing fuelwood in block plantations. This slowness to diffuse is either fully or partly due to lack of social and cultural sensitivity in design and dissemination efforts. Reforestation or afforestation efforts with exotic varieties have often met resistance from people living in the area who had a vested interest in indigenous varieties which provided wildlife/game habitats and provided minor forest products or timber that were valuable or useful to them. Similarly, understanding traditional and customary rights over rangeland, watersheds, and forests is absolutely critical in the formulation of improvement strategies for them. Without local-level decision-making and some level of control and user rights, ownership and empower-

ment of beneficiaries will not be possible, and project sustainability will be in jeopardy. ICIMOD's involvement in natural resources' and watershed management might have much to gain from understanding these issues.

Mountain specificities dictate that diversifying mountain economies could be a viable approach to increasing incomes and employment opportunities for mountain people in a relatively environmentally-benign way. Such views gain credence as pressure on fragile land resources can be alleviated. Production and trade in high-value speciality products attainable from mountain niches and services, such as tourism, are examples. In addition to attention to increased value addition, efforts should also be focussed on local institutions and organisations in order to orchestrate useful mechanisms to ensure that incremental benefits remain in the communities and can be channelled into community-social development activities. In addition to formal and structured local organisations and institutions, e.g., the local government, voluntary agencies, private enterprises, there are a host of indigenous local organisations and institutions, such as kinship groups, work groups, commodity markets, and local informal, supra social units, that outsiders often do recognise. These social units and organisations often provide the building blocks of formal organisations. They can be extremely important in ensuring local-level planning and local support for development activities (Esman and Uphoff 1982). This can be crucial for most mountain communities which have strong local identities, loyalties, and characteristics. ICIMOD-supported Tourism and Local Community Development studies can explore these ideas further in several member countries where the studies are currently taking place. The Annapurna Conservation Project, undertaken by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, is currently experimenting with a novel method of funding local community development and environmental conservation with income generated from tourism.

6. Conclusions and Looking Beyond: An Agenda for Action

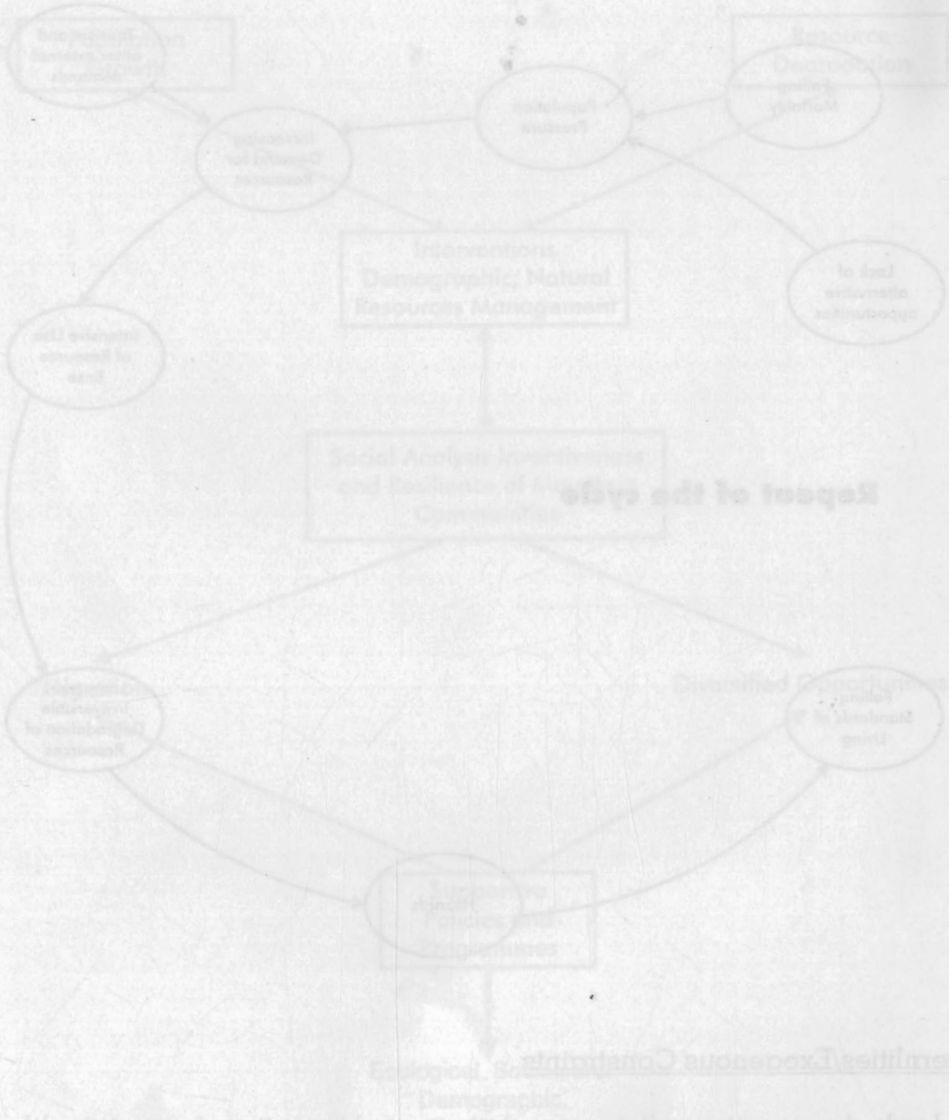
The HKH region is the major mountain ecosystem in the world. It is also home to more than 120 million people, comprised of numerous ethnic groups and spreading over eight countries. Besides, the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region is also the watershed area for all of South Asia and parts of South East Asia where more than a billion people live. Therefore, the well-being of the HKH people and the sustainable management of the HKH ecosystem is a concern of the region as well as the global community. Being a complex eco-social system, the sustainable management and development of the HKH region, to bring about positive changes in the lives of its inhabitants, will require a truly multidisciplinary and systemic approach. A Social Science Perspective can add substantively to the existing richness of mountain research, policy, and project development and other activities currently underway in the region, by adding the systemic perspectives of putting people at the centre of all thinking and planned changes. This can come about by recognising the interdependence of social and eco-

nomic (including cultural and institutional) and biological and physical factors in the sustainable management of such complex eco-social systems. The recognition of this interdependence paves the way for a discussion on the Social and Cultural Agenda necessary for mountain research and development. An array of existing approaches and tools of social analysis has been discussed in this paper. Based on their generic features, a stronger social analytical component can be added to all the ICIMOD and other agency-specific activities in the region. To that, a new mountain perspective must be added. The 'New Mountain Perspective' builds upon earlier approaches, such as the Mountain Specificities, but also goes beyond, i.e., by putting human beings at the centre of planning. The new perspective, therefore, calls for a fresh look at human potentials in the face of adverse physical conditions. This potential can and should be harnessed to embark upon a path of sustainable development that is socially (and culturally) sound and economically feasible. The hamlets and locales of the HKH region, however remote, are being affected by these changes. Although the changes may not often bring the desired improvements in the quality of life of mountain people, nor are they able to support the maintenance of the fragile ecosystem, nonetheless we can expect changes to sweep across the region (Shrestha 1993), because change is eternal and inevitable.

In the process of choosing a holistic framework of analysis for the sustainable development of HKH areas, contentious issues will arise – devising appropriate measures to benefit the inhabitants and their physical surroundings; mainstreaming versus protecting and nurturing identities of minority groups; striking a balance between increasing income and ecological sustainability; area-based planning versus national and regional interest; and so on and so forth. But planners must remain steadfast in protecting the interests; of the mountains through a commitment to the mountain perspective, as too much is at stake. The Annexes (1-3) provide some illustrative views and matrices showing the Mountain Vulnerability Cycle, a new Mountain Perspective, and the role of social science in current ICIMOD activities.

The issues facing poverty, social development, and environmental management in the HKH areas pose the greatest challenge for the countries of the region. Over the years, ICIMOD has carefully studied the issues and has come up with identifying, and to some extent experimenting with, activities that can address the issues facing the future comprehensively. Based on the mountain specificities and their specific niche, strategies to overcome the odds against sound and sustainable development in the HKH have been put forward by ICIMOD. The 'Agenda for the Future' contains strategies to deal with the poverty and vulnerability of mountain communities, recognising their comparative advantages and strengths (Sharma 1993). Additionally, an agenda for action needs to place special emphasis on social and human development of HKH communities, as the current experience and wisdom suggest that economic growth and social-human development should never be put into separate boxes. An objective but empathic understanding of the people and their choices and their ways of life

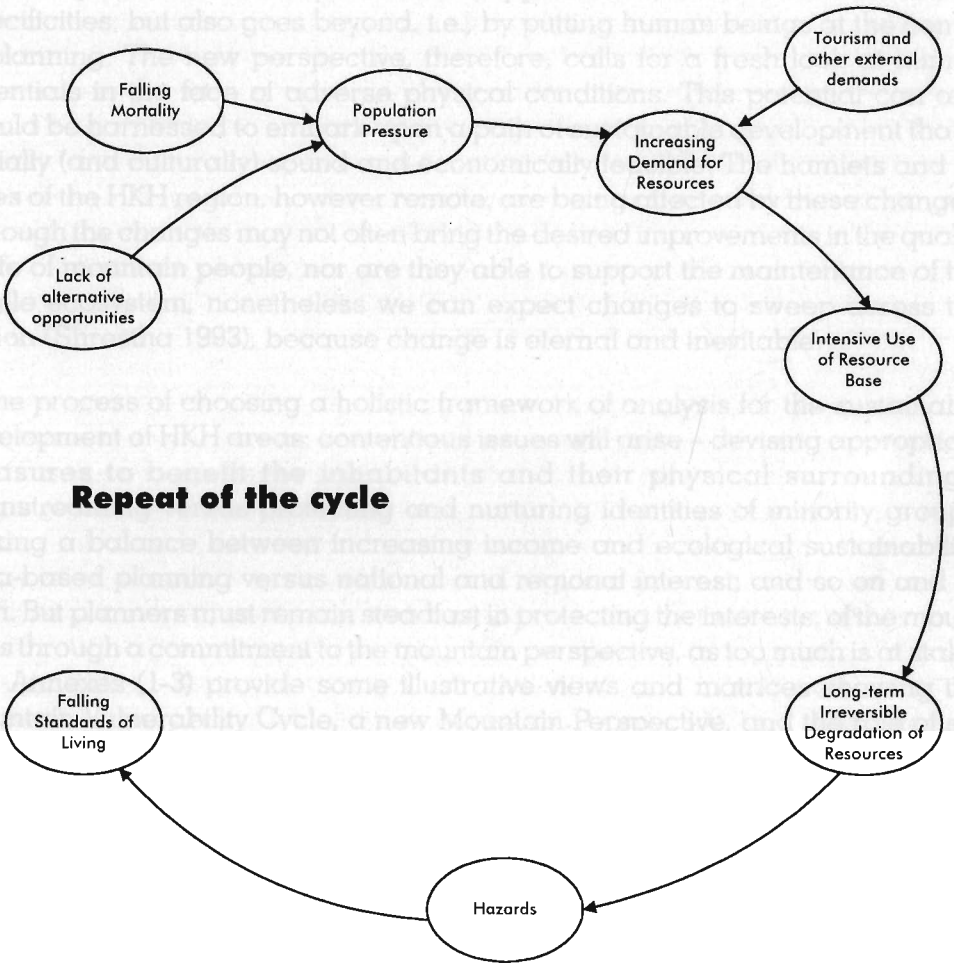
must accompany all planning and strategic action plans. The Social Science Perspective and tools must guide this understanding and follow up with strategic choices in the best interests of the mountain communities, as well as in the best interests of the nation states they inhabit.



Annex 1

Mountain Communities: The Cycle of Vulnerability

From Self-contained Hamlets to Regional and Global Integration

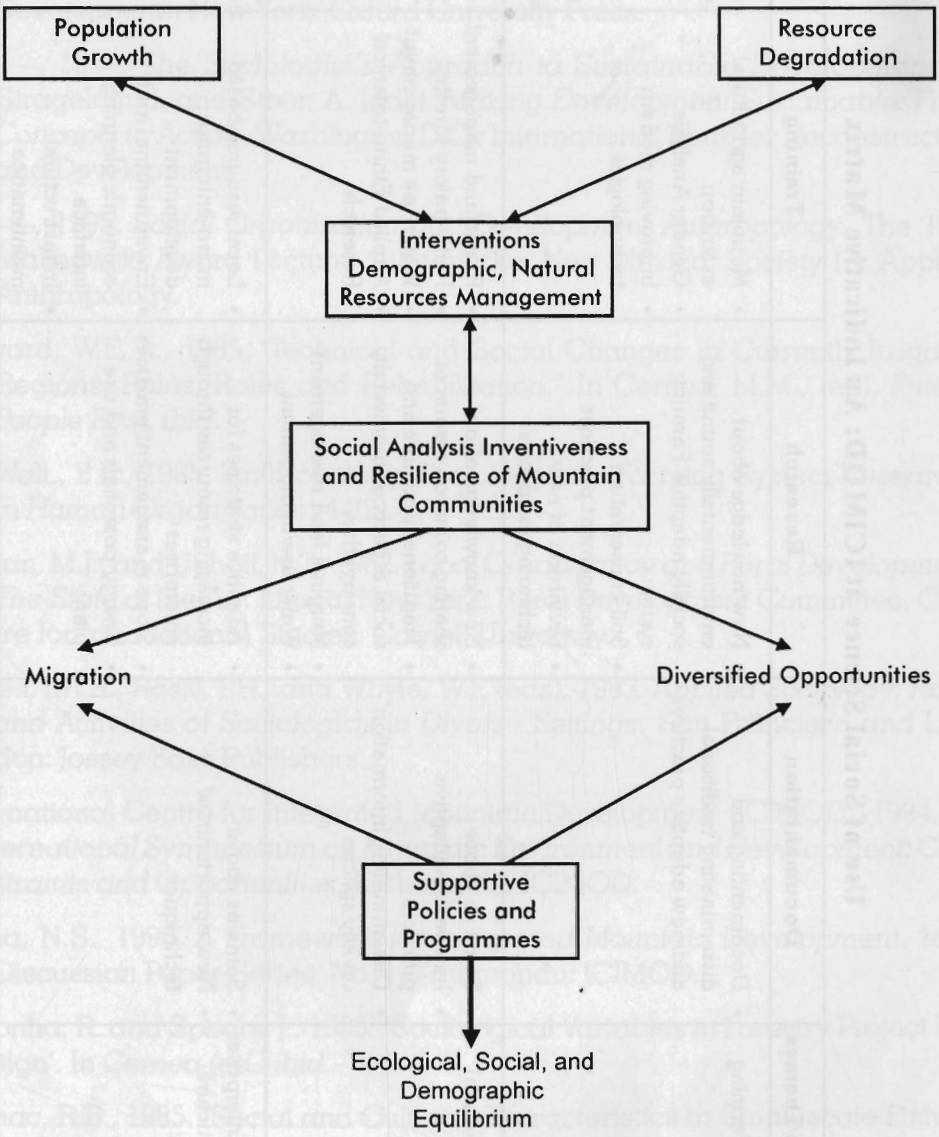


Externlities/Exogenous Constraints

- Lack of supportive policies, regulations, and incentives for sustainable use of mountain natural resources
- Inadequate policy response, development interventions based on area-specific focussed research

Annex 2

The New Mountain Perspective



Annex 3

Use of Social Science at ICIMOD: An Indicative Matrix

Functions/Themes	Documentation	Research	Training	Advisory
Mountain Farming Systems	• Documenting and disseminating traditional and new adaptive practices	• New nowledge about environmentally sound and socially adaptive Farming systems • Soil conservation management practices • Divvusion of new technologies/species	• Mountain agricultural extension • Gender Analysis • Improving modern technologies	• Offer specialised services to bilateral multilaterial and member countries in project/plan preparation monitoring, evaluation
Mountain Natural Resources	• Same as above • Innovative-adaptive practices • Disseminating information on key species	• New knowledge about sharing common resources • Traditional practices and social aspects of biodiversity conservation • Marginal land management • Water use/management	• Rangeland management • Participatory forestry • Water-use management • Applied Ethno-totanical Research	• Same as above
Mountain Enterprises and Infrastructure	• Same as above • New opportunities/ techniques	• Adaptive strategies for increasing resources through enterprises • Slope management practices • Energy potentials and use plans	• Local resource-based micro-enterprise development • Environemtnal and economic planning interface • Infrastructural maintenance	• Same as above

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ICIMOD

ICIMOD is the first international centre in the field of mountain development. Founded out of widespread recognition of environmental degradation of mountain habitats and the increasing poverty of mountain communities, ICIMOD is concerned with the search for more effective development responses to promote the sustained well being of mountain people.

The Centre was established in 1983 and commenced professional activities in 1984. Though international in its concerns, ICIMOD focusses on the specific, complex, and practical problems of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region which covers all or part of eight Sovereign States.

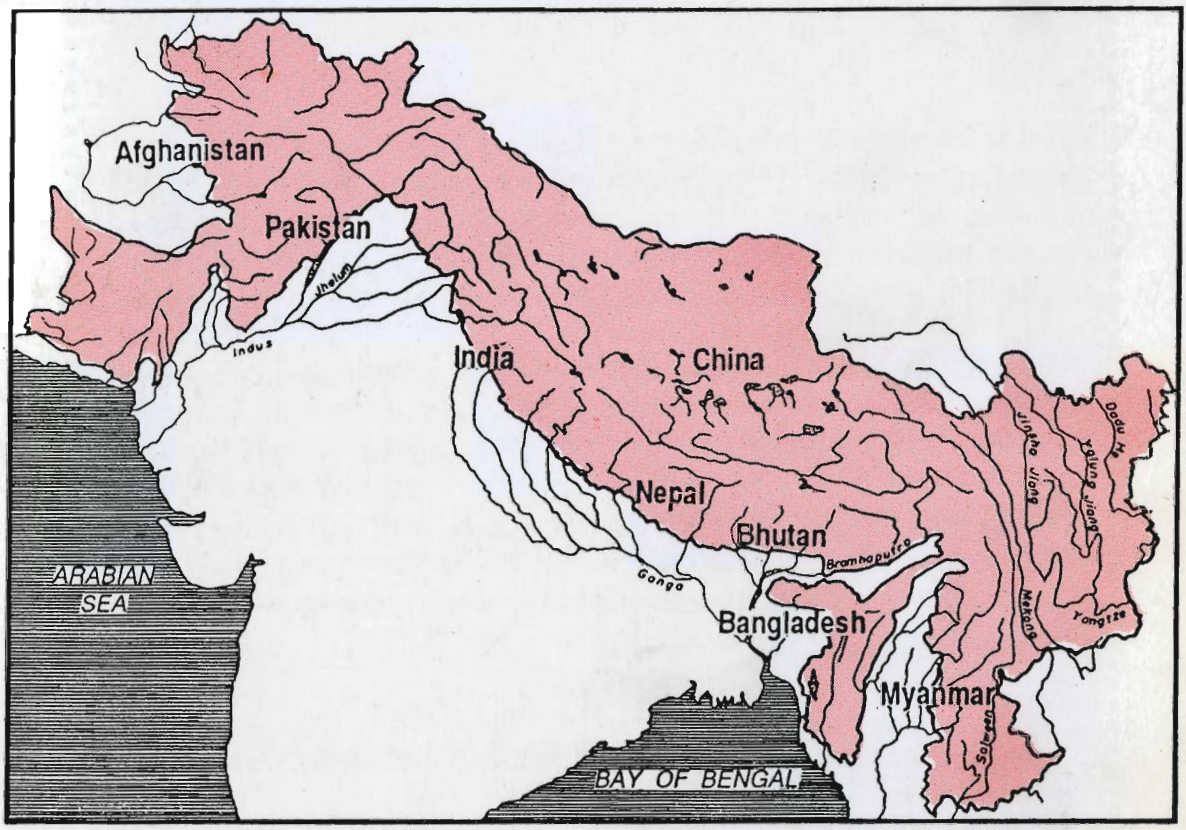
ICIMOD serves as a multidisciplinary documentation centre on integrated mountain development; a focal point for the mobilisation, conduct, and coordination of applied and problem-solving research activities; a focal point for training on integrated mountain development, with special emphasis on the assessment of training needs and the development of relevant training materials based directly on field case studies; and a consultative centre providing expert services on mountain development and resource management.

Mountain Enterprises and Infrastructure Division

Mountain Enterprises and Infrastructure constitutes one of the thematic research and development programmes at ICIMOD. The main goals of the programme include i) gainful enterprise development and income generation; ii) harnessing mountain specific advantages; iii) infrastructural development (social and physical); iv) sustainable energy resources for mountain development; and v) capacity building in integrated mountain development planning.

Participating Countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region

- Afghanistan
- Bhutan
- India
- Nepal
- Bangladesh
- China
- Myanmar
- Pakistan



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