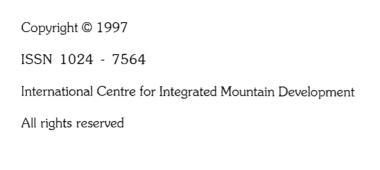
Mountain Enterprises and Infrastructure



Discussion Paper Series No. MEI 97/2

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

S.Z. Sadeque



Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development G.P.O. Box 3226 Kathmandu, Nepal

Typesetting at ICIMOD Publications' Unit

The views and interpretations in this paper are those of the author(s). They are not attributable to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and do not imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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

S.Z. Sadeque

MEI Series No. 97/2

Dr. S.Z. Sadeque is a Professional Staff member of ICIMOD and works in the Mountain Enterprises and Infrastructure Division

July 1997 International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development Kathmandu, Nepal

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.

Contents

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.

Contents

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.

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 Social Assessment The Social Soundness Analysis Human and Social Capital Formation Participatory Rapid Appraisal Gender Analysis	9 13 16 18 20 22
5.	Social and Cultural Sensitivity in Sustainable Mountain Development Mountain Specificities and Mountain Perspectives Settlement and Historical Evolution of HKH Communities Social Knowledge, Institutions, and Local Organisations	24 24 25 27
6.	Conclusions and Looking Beyond: An Agenda for Action	29
Annex 3		34
Refe	erences	35

pact evaluators, or even to managers of devel-

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)