



Mountain Population and Employment

Discussion Paper Series

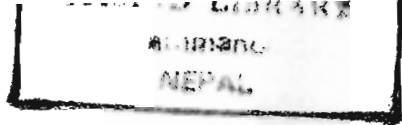
THE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES IN SINDHU PALCHOK AND KABHRE PALANCHOK DISTRICTS OF NEPAL

**Robert J. Fisher,
Hukum Bahadur Singh, Deepak R. Pandey,
and Helmut Lang**

MPE Series No. 8

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Dr. Robert J. Fisher was a Social Scientist with the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project at the time of the study. Hukum B. Singh and Deepak R. Pandey were employed as study team members under special arrangement with ICIMOD. Helmut Lang was at that time a student intern based at ICIMOD.

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal

FOREWORD

The discussion paper presented here by Dr. Robert J. Fisher and colleagues, entitled "The Management of Forest Resources in Sindhupalchok and Kabhre Palanchok Districts in Nepal", constitutes one of six case studies initiated by ICIMOD in conjunction with the Programme on Organisation and Management of Rural Development.

This programme focused primarily on the organisational resources and their relationship to the management of natural resources for sustainable development and increased productivity in mountainous areas. Across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Mountains, rural development projects are relying on different strategies for the achievement of the above goal. These strategies are being implemented within a given macro-institutional and legal framework; presumably with adequate attention given to the sociocultural context. The framework and the context limit, as well as offer, possibilities to development agencies. The purpose of the case studies was to examine innovative institutional strategies implemented in projects (carried out by governmental agencies or nongovernmental organisations) and also to analyse and assess the utility and effectiveness of indigenous resource management systems.

I would like to thank the Aga Khan Foundation for the partial financial support in running the programme. I am also grateful for the assistance we received from the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project, the Dhading District Development Project, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the Pak-German Self Help Project. The programme execution from ICIMOD's side was carried out by Dr. Anis Dani (now with AKRSP) and Dr. Deepak Bajracharya.

ICIMOD was also fortunate to have engaged in collaboration with professionals from various national institutions and project implementing agencies in China, Nepal, and Pakistan. Mutual consultations were held at various planning workshops and orientation sessions in Kathmandu and at the project sites. The participating researchers eventually agreed on the methodological framework and the set of questions that they would try to address. Sufficient flexibility was left, so that, at the discretion of researchers, responses could be made to site-specific situations.

Research Methods. A combination of techniques was used during the course of the research that lasted between six months to one year.

- o Collation and analysis of existing data from government and project records.
- o Selected open-ended interviews with relevant government officials, project personnel, and key resource persons from the region.
- o Field investigations in 8-12 villages within each project area, selected purposively to cover the various strata, the variable impact of development activities, and a range of resource management activities; rapid appraisal techniques were developed and each village was visited two or three times, altogether for about 7 days, to obtain details of specific components after preparation of an initial village profile.
- o Participant observation of project activities.

The **key questions** that the researchers were trying to address included the following:

- o Under what circumstances do existing resource management systems undergo institutional innovations?
- o What elements of existing resource management systems can **intervening agencies** build on: tenurial arrangements? property relationships? organizational structures? functionaries?
- o How do different kinds of interventions compare in terms of their ability to generate sustainable development and sound environmental management?
- o How does the user group internalize the benefits and costs of using the resource? How are risks shared ? If benefits are not equally distributed, how are the losers compensated ?
- o How does the user group ration a scarce resource?
- o How does the user group respond to development opportunities and entrepreneurial endeavours?

Influencing Factors. In addition, the following set of questions, which emerged from the reviews and research already conducted by ICIMOD, were also proposed for investigation during the course of the study:

- o Is the propensity of user investment in future returns related to the resource value, i.e., to the perceived value of the resource?
- o Does the tenurial security of the resource to the user influence the time horizon of local resource management?
- o If actual users have more responsibility for management decisions over their resources, are the resources more likely to be managed for long-term productivity at less cost to the supporting agencies?
- o Does increased equity in distribution of resource benefits encourage greater participation by user groups?
- o Will a resource management function be performed more efficiently if the performer is accountable to the local user group?

Women's Role in Resource Management. A third set of key questions, which appear to be of critical importance, deals with the role of women in resource management. These are:

- o What role do women have in resource management?
- o Is the role of women of particular importance in the use of certain resources, e.g., forests, grasslands, and water ? If so, do they have any role in decision-making about, and the management of, those resources ?
- o What are the constraints on women's involvement in resource management?

The present study addresses many, but not all, of the preceding issues, with a particular focus on forest resources in Sindhu Palchok and Kabhre Palanchok districts of Nepal. It examines the features of indigenous forest management systems and draws upon this analysis to assess the effectiveness of externally-sponsored local organisations in the context of the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project. The authors argue that outside agencies should make sure that local organisations are given adequate attention and that existing use-rights are taken into account in order to set up effective forest management systems. I am confident that the readers will find these observations interesting and thought provoking.

Readers might be interested in knowing that all the six case studies mentioned above, including the one presented here, are brought out in the Discussion Paper Series of the Mountain Population and Employment Division (i.e., MPE Series No. 6 through 11). We would be happy if you would write to us with your comments and suggestions and join in the discussion on these important issues. ICIMOD is organising an International Workshop on the Role of Institutions in Mountain Resource Management, 1-4 May 1990, in Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan, to discuss many of the issues brought out by the case studies and provide a forum for interaction among researchers, development practitioners, and policy makers. The results of the Workshop are forthcoming shortly after the event takes place. ICIMOD is hopeful that these efforts would be useful in generating dialogues on organisational and institutional issues of integrated mountain development.

E.F. Tacke
Director

PREFACE

The case study which is the subject of this report was jointly funded by ICIMOD and the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project (NAFP) and is one of a series of case studies undertaken as part of ICIMOD's program "The Organization and Management of Rural Development" (OMRD).

Since 1977, NAFP has operated in Sindhu Palchok and Kabhre Palanchok districts to assist the Department of Forest to increase the forest resource and to develop silvicultural systems and forest management styles consistent with local wishes and HMG policies and legislation. Beginning on a very small scale and subsequently enlarging at a pace set primarily by that of local cooperation, the Project had, by the end of 1988, established about 11,000 ha of new forests.

The main current thrust of the Project relates to forest management in a broad sense. If management is to be successful and to meet the intentions of His Majesty's Government's Decentralization Act, the forests must be managed by user groups and be so treated and utilised as to best meet the perceived needs of the users. This is clearly no easy task. It might best be achieved if new management structures accorded as closely as possible with existing unofficial but indigenous forms of control. The project has, therefore, embarked on a series of studies relating to both indigenous management systems and those developed by the Department of Forest and NAFP at various times. It is anticipated that these will provide evidence as to their various strengths and weaknesses and so be a valuable guide for future action. The cases reported here form part of this continuing Project activity. We are indebted to ICIMOD for initiating the OMRD program and for asking NAFP to be a part of it.

D.M. Griffin
Project Director
NAFP.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of the ideas presented in this paper developed in the context of much debate and discussion with colleagues at NAFP and at the District Forest Offices of Sindhu Palchok and Kabhre Palanchok. Without their ideas and practical assistance the field study could never have taken place and this report could not have been written.

In particular I would like to thank Dr Don Gilmour, Team Leader of NAFP. He has contributed profoundly to the generation and development of ideas and has supported the study from the beginning.

I would also like to thank Dr Anis Dani of ICIMOD for his contribution. He has coordinated the entire OMRD program from the beginning and provided the conceptual and analytical framework for it. He contributed specifically to this case study through many discussions and with incisive editorial comments.

R.J. Fisher
Principal Investigator

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ABSTRACT

This case study examines the features of indigenous systems of forest management in Sindhu Palchok and Kabhre Palanchok Districts and draws upon this analysis to examine externally-sponsored local organisations.

- o The essential feature of indigenous systems is the presence of institutionalised norms based on a degree of consensus among users. Formal organisations, where they exist, are a superstructure (sometimes inessential) built on to this essential substratum. The absence of a formal organisational structure does not mean that no local system exists; nor does the disappearance of the organisational superstructure constitute the disappearance of the system.
- o Committees are often not the locus of decision-making in indigenous systems and it is a mistake to assume that the presence or absence of a committee equates to the presence or absence of an effective local institution or organisation.
- o In externally-sponsored systems formal organisations often exist without institutionalised norms or roles and, consequently these organisations often do not function effectively.
- o Failure to take adequate note of existing use-rights or to make sure that there is an adequate institutional basis for local organisations is a major limitation of attempts by outside agencies to set up effective forest management systems.