

Through this review and policy dialogue, we have come to a better understanding of shifting cultivation, and its usefulness for making the fragile mountain landscape of the eastern Himalayas productive. There are good examples of innovations in shifting cultivation that we can build on to make it more productive in terms of income, food security, forest cover, biodiversity, and social security. While farmers have started to innovate, they require policy changes and research support to optimise the benefits.

We hope that our findings will help the many people involved with, interested in, and having an influence on shifting cultivation to re-assess their ideas about the practice and its practitioners. Further, we are optimistic that the spread of these findings will stimulate policy makers to consider the recommendations and build a policy environment that will help improve and reap the benefits of shifting cultivation. We are optimistic that ways can be found of dealing with the persistent problems that shifting cultivation and its practitioners are facing such as lack of economic growth, increased tenurial and social insecurity, and environmental degradation, by building on the good practices that already exist within the approach and encouraging further innovation. Interested readers can join the discussions of the Jhumia Network at <<http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/jhumias>>.

A number of promising developments have taken place in the policy dialogue in the year between the publication of the Shillong Declaration (see Chapter 6) and this document going to press. Several governments in the participating countries have placed shifting cultivation on their agenda, and development efforts are underway to put some of the findings into practice. The state governments of Tripura and Nagaland in India have taken lead initiatives. In Tripura, the debate on shifting cultivation has regained its vigour, helped by the new opportunities and perspectives presented at the Shillong meeting, and the government has developed a 'Redevelopment of Jhum in Tripura' project. In Nagaland, the government has invested in participatory 3-D modelling to enhance community-based land use planning. In North-East India, the North-Eastern Regional Institute for Water and Land Management has been mandated by the North-East Council to follow up on implementation of the Declaration's recommendations. The recommendations have been advocated during important policy meetings and events and in reports, including the Farmers' Commission Report on North-East India, and an initiative on

participatory forestry. The Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India has set up a task force on 'Rehabilitation of Shifting Cultivation (Jhum) Fallows'; similarly reference was made to the Shillong Declaration in the note for inclusion in the work of a high level committee constituted by the Government of India to set future directions for watershed development in shifting cultivation areas. ICIMOD shifting cultivation network partners were included in the Technical Support Group of the Drafting Committee for the Scheduled Tribes (Protection of Forest Rights) Bill 2005 in India. Most recently (April 2006) the Government of Meghalaya agreed that it would no longer try to suppress the practice of shifting cultivation and would instead examine ways of integrating soil and water conservation measures within it. In Nepal, awareness on shifting cultivation issues has increased among stakeholders. In Bhutan, the Forest Department has expressed keen interest in research on crop and tree species that perform well after controlled burning, a shifting cultivation practice. Even in countries beyond ICIMOD's focus area, including Laos and Thailand, researchers and development professionals have shown interest in the findings and welcomed the new perspective.

We hope that researchers and development services will show appreciative interest in the complexities of shifting cultivation, and that their efforts will help to bring its potential to fruition. On the part of ICIMOD, we hope to find more partners for further research and policy dialogue on the particularities and potentials of shifting cultivation that we and our partners discovered.