Voice of Mountain People

Capacity Building of Community-based Organisations in Advocacy in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

Workshop Report

About ICIMOD

The **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development** (ICIMOD) is an independent Mountain Learning and Knowledge Centre serving the eight countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Afghanistan , Bangladesh , Bhutan , China , India , Myanmar , Nepal , Pakistan – and the global mountain community. Founded in 1983, ICIMOD is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and brings together a partnership of regional member countries, partner institutions, and donors with a commitment for development action to secure a better future for the people and environment of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. The primary objective of the Centre is to promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations.

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Workshop Report
Documentation of Conceptual Learning

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Kathmandu, Nepal
February 2005

Internal Report

Acknowledgements

Initiating a capacity building programme on advocacy strategies for community organisations in the countries of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan is a challenge. Advocacy as such is a relatively new concept, particularly in the mountain areas of these countries, and to date the concept has not been introduced into government institutions. In addition, civil society organisations are practicing advocacy in the way that they themselves understand.

This regional planning workshop was the first gathering to discuss advocacy in such depth. Due to the postponement of the workshop from September to November and the change of venue from Nepal to Bangladesh, some of the preparatory processes had to be repeated. The tolerance of the participants, facilitators, and ICIMOD colleagues is much appreciated and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants and supporters of this workshop for their patience, positive responses, and support.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Yogesh Kumar, Dr. Shanta Thapalia, Mr. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, and Mr. Malik Fateh Khan for chairing some of the sessions; and Mr. Subhash Mehandapurkar for giving a summary note of all presentations. Contributions from presenters and other participants were equally important. I would also like to apologise for not being able to mention here all those whom I would like to thank.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Anupam Bhatia for his continuous encouragement. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Gabriel Campbell, Director General of ICIMOD, and Dr. Binayak Bhadra, Former Director of Programmes, for their good wishes.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Anil Kumar Singh and Mr. Khagendra Siktel for their support in workshop preparation, facilitation, and report preparation. Similarly, my sincere appreciation goes to Mr. Moung Thowai Ching and other colleagues from Green Hill, Bangladesh, who hosted the workshop at the local level in Bangladesh.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge Ms. Phunstchok Tshering and Mr. Kiran Shrestha from ICIMOD for their invaluable support during the workshop in Chittagong.

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November 2003

This was the first regional planning workshop for the programme 'Capacity Building of Community-based Organisations in Advocacy Strategies in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas'. Before organising this workshop the preparatory phase of the programme was completed, the main output being the identification of potential programme partners. This workshop began the process of bringing potential partners together to collectively consider capacity building for community-based organisations working in their respective areas. The workshop's primary objective was to finalise future activities for capacity building programmes following a participatory approach.

Past lessons from different programmes and a baseline study commissioned by ICIMOD in 1998 indicate that the very concept of advocacy itself is new to many potential organisations working in the HKH region. Therefore, for conceptual clarity, the planning workshop also included sessions on sharing successful lessons from different programme countries. Accordingly, the workshop incorporated six presentations from four countries. As participants commented, all these presentations were impressive and increased participants' knowledge about advocacy strategies. A summary of the conceptual sharing is presented in this report.

One day of the workshop was organised as a field visit and offered an opportunity for interaction with local organisations of Rangamati District of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The objective was to familiarise participants with realities on the ground, at least in Rangamati District, following their discussions on the theoretical perspectives of advocacy. For example, participants had talked a lot about the Kaptai hydropower dam and the resulting displacement of the indigenous population from the area, but had never seen the actual lake.

The workshop also reviewed the proposed model for collaboration and framing of activities for capacity building in the coming years. Accordingly, workshop participants realised that case studies from potential areas play a vital role in the capacity building of community-based organisations in advocacy. Therefore, the themes, areas and potential institutions to carry out case studies will be crucial for the programme. Participants discussed these ideas and drew important conclusions from the workshop. Chapter 4 of the report presents the conclusions. The programme is optimistic that the workshop conclusions will guide all its activities during 2004 and 2005.

The ultimate aim of capacity building of community-based organisations is to enhance local activists' capacity to frame an advocacy strategy to resolve issues that cause local people to suffer. Therefore, the workshop discussed current issues in the programme countries. When compiling common issues within the counties, poor local-level governance in mountain areas appeared to be the most common and compelling issue at present.

However, governance as such is a vague term, covering a wide range of issues and problems. It was necessary to 'unpack' the notion of governance in the local context. Issues such as equity in resource distribution, gender discrimination, the rights of indigenous people

over natural resources, and displacement become very visible when the problem of local governance is unpacked. Therefore, advocacy strategies for the coming decade should focus on the most important parameters of governance at the local level.

The workshop also discussed the need to establish regional linkages among potential partner organisations to sustainably enhance advocacy capacities in the HKH region beyond the life of the programme. Participants greatly appreciated the idea of establishing a regional forum to supply a resource pool on advocacy. A four-member working committee (one member from each programme country) was formed to take up the necessary preparation work.

Finally, workshop participants agreed that community-based organisations can be the most effective and consolidated force for carrying out advocacy initiatives. Local-level activists generally lead members of community organisations in raising their voice against whatever forces are creating obstacles to achieving the rights of poor mountain people. Throughout this process, federations of community organisations should be responsible for providing intellectual and professional support. Therefore, workshop participants suggested inviting these organisations to participate in the programme in order to maintain such broad outreach at the local level.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADDCN   Association of District Development Committees of Nepal
AI   Advocacy Institute
AKRSP   Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (Pakistan)
ATREE   Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment

CBO   community-based organisation
CEGG   Culture, Equity, Gender and Governance
CFP   community forest programme
CFUG   community forest user group
CHT   Chittagong Hill Tracts

DFO   district forest officer
DISHA   Analysis of Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Development

FECOFUN   Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (an NGO)

GO   government organisation

HIMAWANTI   Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resource Management Association
HKH   Hindu Kush-Himalayas
HRM   human resources management

ICIMOD   International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
INGO   international non-governmental organisation

LACC   Legal Assistance and Consultancy Centre

MNCS   multinational corporate sector
MTAP   Medium-term Action Plan

NCAS   National Centre for Advocacy Studies
NEPAN   Nepal Participatory Action Network
NFIWUAN   National Federation of Irrigation Water Users Association Nepal
NGO   non governmental organisation
NRM   natural resource management
NRSP   National Rural Support Programme

PLA   participatory learning and action
POWER   Participation of Women for their Real Representation
PRA   participatory rural apraisal
PRIA   International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance

RAPE	resist, apply, persuade and engage
RBA	rights-based approach
RLEK	Rural Litigation and Education Kendra
RSPN	Rural Support Programme Network
SEWA	Self-employed Women's Association
SLOT	strengths, limitations, opportunities, threats
SRISTI	Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions
SSI	Social Science Institute
SUTRA	Society for Social Uplift Through Rural Action
ToR	terms of reference
ToT	training of trainers
UNNATI	Organisation for Development Education
VANI	Voluntary Action Network India
VDC	village development committee

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