

Chapter 4

Capacity Building

The capacity building of CBOs in advocacy strategies is the main thrust of this programme. This workshop was an initial activity for the programme's whole capacity-building mission. Discussions related to capacity building processes and possible activities have been pulled together and are presented in this chapter.

Needs Assessment

The need for the capacity building of community-based organisations in advocacy is reflected in the baseline study on which this programme was developed. Another source for initial assessment of needs was the experiences of ICIMOD in different programmes throughout the region. At the beginning of programme activities, the programme coordinator visited mountain areas of the countries involved: Meghalaya, Arunachal, Nagaland, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and West Bengal in India; Azad Kashmir in Pakistan; the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh; and some areas of Nepal. These visits took place between April and September 2003. During these visits, the coordinator discussed the need for capacity building in advocacy with 49 organisations. All the organisations working in these areas indicated that capacity building in advocacy was a felt need.

In addition to visiting the programme areas, the coordinator also visited eight leading organisations in India that work outside the HKH. These were: – Voluntary Action Network India (VANI); the International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance (PRIA); the Social Science Institute (SSI); the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS), the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA); UNNATI – Organisation for Development Education; the Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI); and the Development Initiative for Social and Human Actions (DISHA). All of these organisations are well-known and highly regarded for their excellent work in advocacy. This visit was made in March and April 2003. Discussions with these organisations focused on the needs of mountain areas. Professionals in these organisations suggested that a capacity building programme for mountain CBOs in advocacy was



Group discussion – Bangladesh

needed. This was the evidence and process gathered in order to carry out a needs assessment for this programme.

Identification of Resource Persons

The identification of resource persons took place together with the needs assessment. The coordinator quickly discovered that no resource person was available in those parts of the HKH where needs assessment visits had been made. Available literature and

past performance records indicate that there are some potential resource persons in the western part of the Indian Himalayas, an area not yet visited.

The National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) located in Pune, India, is the nearest systematic forum for advocacy work. This programme has been trying to involve professionals connected with NCAS in its work. Mr. Anil K. Singh from VANI and Mr. Shubhash Mehendapurkar from the Society for Social Uplift through Rural Action (SUTRA), both well connected with NCAS, participated and made excellent contributions to the regional planning workshop.

Some resource persons are also available in Nepal. ActionAid Nepal is known as a leading organisation in Nepal for advocacy initiatives at different levels. A successful advocacy initiative supported by ActionAid and other international organisations in Nepal was the bonded labour movement which took place during 1998–1999. Organisations in Nepal that have been involved in advocacy initiatives include Backward Society Education (BASE), Pro Public, Jagaran Media, the Federation of Community Forest Users (FECOFUN) Nepal, and Participatory Action Network (NEPAN). This programme maintains a close relationship with these organisations, including ActionAid Nepal. Representatives from some of these organisations participated in the regional planning workshop.

Literature Review

The Advocacy Institute (AI) is a global-level organisation for advocacy. AI has produced a considerable amount of literature, which is available on its website. Relevant literature has been accessed for this programme and it is suggested that all potential partner organisations access this website for appropriate literature.

Many publications have also been collected from NCAS, particularly books providing conceptual clarity on advocacy issues. NCAS brings out some regular publications as well, such as advocacy updates, media surveys, and so on. These publications are also available on its website.

Finally, there are several publications in the four programme countries that are useful for the advocacy process, although they may not all use the term 'advocacy'. The programme has undertaken the preparation of an annotated bibliography of available literature to serve as an information bank in the future. If a regional forum for advocacy comes into existence, the forum will be



Presentation of Northeast Indian experiences

expected to manage this kind of information bank and to disseminate information to all connected member organisations.

Partner Selection Process

The mountain areas of the HKH have many NGOs and CBOs registered with the government administration. Many are working effectively for different purposes at the grassroots level. For example in Meghalaya, India, alone, over five thousand organisations are registered as NGOs, with around half working effectively. Nepal has over twenty-five thousand registered NGOs, with about ten thousand working moderately well. The other countries have similar situations. Identifying potential partners for this programme is therefore a very challenging task, and the partner identification process is not yet complete.

Considering the complexity of the situation, the programme developed partner selection criteria, some of which were incorporated into the initial programme document:

'The programme will be founded on the principle of close partnership and collaboration with civil society networks and non-governmental organisations that demonstrate a clear commitment to community-based organisations. Partnerships may also be forged with committed community-based organisations that have clear leadership characteristic(s) to forge alliances with other like-minded community-based organisations.'

Programme Document, 2001:24

Subsequently, these criteria were elaborated upon and used during discussions with various stakeholders for the purpose of partner identification.

Based on these guiding principles, the programme envisions two types of partners: collaborating partners, and community-based organisations.

Selection criteria for collaborating partners:

- Organisations and institutions representing civil society in the HKH region with a distinct constituency, either amongst forest user groups, women's groups or member-based CBOs
- Non-government organisations with a clear commitment to capacity building of community-based organisations
- Institutions committed to democratic culture – democratic leadership, leadership sharing, social justice, transparency, etc. – within and outside the organisation
- Institutions with experience in advocacy (these will be given preference)

Selection criteria for CBOs:

- Membership-based organisation
- Democratic membership structures and procedures
- Objective of common property resources management
- Articulating issues of equity, poverty, rights, fairness, justice, and entitlements
- Distinct gender-based objectives
- Impressive networks or willing to join with networks
- Exhibiting strong leadership at present and willing to develop second-generation leadership
- Functioning with vibrant participation of members – women, marginalised groups, dalits, or tribal peoples
- Fairness and transparency in organisational affairs – financial and decision-making processes
- Demonstrating potential to generate and sustain campaigns on various issues visualised in local contexts

While summarising all criteria, certain parameters are clear: (a) the programme will focus on civil society organisations; (b) the focus of the partnership will be on networks rather than on individual organisations; (c) partners of all levels will be unbiased in terms of political ideology; and (d) the programme wants committed, democratic and transparent organisations to ensure that the voice of the poor will be influential in all decision-making forums.

Geographical Areas

This programme is being implemented in four countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. These countries have many states and provinces which fall in the HKH region. For example, there are 8 states from India alone, and 55 districts from Nepal. It remains uncertain whether the programme will be able to cover all of these areas.

This issue was discussed at length during the regional planning workshop, and certain suggestions were made, as set out below.

Bangladesh: Advocacy skills are necessary for all CBOs and NGOs working all over Bangladesh. However, three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts which fall in the HKH are the focus area of this programme.

India: Participants from India did not select specific geographical areas to focus on for a capacity building programme in advocacy. Rather, they suggested that capacity building is necessary throughout the whole Himalayan region of India. Therefore, a capacity building programme has to be started strategically to ensure maximum benefit for the NGOs and CBOs existing in many places.

Nepal: The advocacy skills of CBOs all over Nepal are very weak. The focus of the programme should be in the western development region of Nepal.

Pakistan: Geographically, the most appropriate sites for an advocacy initiative are in northern Pakistan: namely Gilgit, Chitral, Phata, and the Ajad Kashmir area. In addition to these areas, the advocacy capacity of the CBOs located in Astore, Nagar, Malakand, and Mansehra should also be enhanced.

The programme is optimistic about using the suggestions from the planning workshop to sharpen the programme focus. Ultimately, the programme will develop resource materials and a pool of resource persons in different geographical locations, and will also initiate regional linkages. These outcomes will lead to further sharing and learning at the local level.

Country-level Issues for Advocacy

The initial baseline study highlighted many issues for advocacy, some of which were subsequently verified during the programme coordinator's field visits to the programme countries. Interactions with various organisations also led to the identification of additional issues. The workshop provided another opportunity to discover which issues the participants thought were important, as follows.

Bangladesh: Participants from Bangladesh identified two broad issues: governance and the rights of indigenous peoples. The issue related to governance covers government structure, the education sector, the health sector, and other service delivery mechanisms provisioned by the government. Similarly, the issue of the rights of indigenous peoples includes rights over forest and land resources, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

India: A huge area of the HKH region is in India. Because of geographical and cultural diversity, the nature and gravity of the issues differ widely. Therefore, the Indian participants suggested that advocacy issues should be decided locally and should be based on the local context.

Nepal: Nepal's main issues are human rights management, and gender, equity, and equality. However, protection of the human rights of mountain people is the most pressing issue at present in Nepal.

Pakistan: Participants from Pakistan suggested two priority issues, namely, conflict over natural resources, and access of mountain peoples to decision-making forums and processes.

Although many of the issues identified are rather vague, with one issue incorporating many areas of policy changes and required development interventions for the area, the suggestions made establish grounds for further analysis, verification, and specification.

Regional Issues

Discussions from the planning workshop allowed several common issues for future advocacy initiatives to be compiled. The following are issues common to the four programme countries of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Local Governance

Local governance is an issue for advocacy in all countries. The level of local governance in all the countries is not the same. While there is a uniform structure of local governance mechanisms in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan; in India the Panchayati Raj structure is not followed in all states within the HKH region. Some mountain states follow their own traditional structure.

In Nepal, the structures are good but tremendous problems remain with regard to operation. Most of the problems are invisible and are connected with the society's top-down culture. In Bangladesh and Pakistan the local government structure is not functioning effectively due to political instability.

Rights of Indigenous People Over Forest Resources

Forest resources provide a major means of livelihood for populations residing in the mountain areas of the programme countries. The mountain poor use forest resources to maintain their subsistence livelihoods. As states started supplying forest resources to their urban populations, indigenous people began to face various restrictions regarding access and control over the local forest. After a long struggle, Nepal now has a good community forestry law, although the government mechanism at times creates obstacles to its implementation. In India, the law on social forestry is not implemented in its true spirit in all mountain states. Pakistan and Bangladesh lack clear rules about the rights of local people towards their forest resources.

Land Rights

Land is an important personal asset for all people, especially for the mountain poor who have a subsistence livelihood. However, in many areas, these people do not have

rights over their land. The urban population is taking over the land in the mountain areas and displacing the mountain poor. Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have some legal restrictions and protective laws but these restrictions are not properly implemented. Similarly, while some laws exist to protect the land rights of the tribal population in Nepal, implementation depends upon the interests of major political parties.

Issues of Displacement

Due to huge infrastructure development that mainly benefits the urban population, the mountain poor in many areas face problems of displacement. For example, in Northeast India, the government is planning to construct major dams for electricity production and millions of mountain poor are likely to be displaced in the future.

The situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh is even more serious than in Northeast India. Mr. Sudatta Bikash Tanchangya from CHT gave a stimulating presentation on the issue of the customary land and forest rights of indigenous people living in the CHT. He briefly mentioned the biased decision of the Bangladesh Government regarding the land and forest rights of the CHT people, and he highlighted the issues of displacement of the poor due to the Kaptai hydropower dam. In Nepal, the issue of extending protected areas and displacing poor people is frequently discussed.

Gender Discrimination

The status of women in all programme countries is relatively low, and the women of mountain communities are particularly disadvantaged. There are also legal vacuums regarding the provision of equal property rights to the women of these countries. Following a presentation from Nepal, workshop participants were able to recognise this as a common issue in the region.

Equity in Distribution of Resources

Mountain communities are marginalised in terms of resource distribution, government resources not being allocated equitably. The mountain areas of each country provide a tremendous amount of natural resources – electricity, water for irrigation, forest products, and minerals – for the development of urban areas but receive very little in return from the central government.

