

Introduction

relevant to its work on the development and promotion of strategies for sustainable mountain agriculture.

An important terminal activity of Phase I was the International Symposium on "Strategies for Sustainable Mountain Agriculture" held in Kathmandu from September 10-14, 1990. The main objective behind this meeting was to share and discuss the important findings from Phase I of the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme and also related inputs from other ICIMOD programmes. Over 31 papers, covering development strategies, transformation processes, success stories, farmers' strategies, population pressures, infrastructural development, biodiversity, ecological zonation, and institutional issues, were presented at the Symposium.

Throughout the Symposium, the issue of participatory institutional innovations and mechanisms emerged as a very important requirement for sustainable development of mountain farming systems. The need for institutional strengthening, at different governmental and non-governmental levels, was seen as being critical for increasing productivity of farm-level resources, for equity in distribution of development benefits, and for increased adoption of improved technologies. One of the major recommendations therefore was to mobilise support for **institutional strengthening** so that these organisations are more effective in supporting mountain development priorities at different levels. If restructuring of current development thinking in its application to mountain areas is necessary at the policy and planning levels, the programme and project levels require important changes in public support services, research and extension, and related decision-making structures. To a large extent, this has to be achieved through a better understanding of the weaknesses in prevailing systems and through identifying the skills and knowhow needed to organise and implement improved approaches for the development of sustainable mountain farming systems.

Background

The search for new strategies for sustainable development of mountain agriculture constitutes the primary focus of the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme of ICIMOD. The objective and approaches of the programme emerge from the strongly felt need for arresting and reversing declining trends in agricultural productivity in an environmentally sound manner and for greater integration of hill agriculture with the wider market economy. A changed focus on development interventions in mountain agriculture could stabilise and sustain the resource base and increase productivity. The overall goals of the programme as outlined in the Strategic Plan, approved by the ICIMOD Board of Governors, are:

- i) to help evolve alternative and zone-specific methods and procedures for resource assessment, programme designing, and implementation of public interventions in different mountain areas;
- ii) to help identify zone-specific, technological and **institutional options** in terms of resource management and production practices that are more conducive to sustainability of mountain agriculture; and
- iii) to test and implement procedures and options in collaboration with relevant agricultural development agencies.

Phase I (1987-1990) of the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme, supported by the Asian Development Bank and the Ford Foundation, focussed on identification and understanding of factors determining the sustainability of mountain agriculture, identifying policy options, facilitating dissemination of findings, and strengthening ICIMOD's resources and support facilities

A number of important issues in the area of institutional development are beginning to emerge in the context of mountain farming systems. These issues also indicate the types of priorities that need to be pursued in this field.

Effectiveness of Existing Organisations. How effective are the existing organisations that support mountain farming systems in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas? A survey of the findings from Phase I suggests that institutions/organisations supporting certain types of high-value crops (e.g., horticultural) are more effective (based upon productivity of land, farmers' incomes, and some environmental factors) than others if certain preconditions regarding infrastructure and public support systems are fulfilled. In most cases, organisations supporting upland cereals have not proven to be effective, while those supporting irrigated-lowland cereals have been relatively more effective. Thus, while to some extent, the organisational/institutional characteristics are very important, the appropriateness of the technology - support systems' package is equally critical.

These and many other findings are beginning to strongly suggest that, without a major restructuring of policy and planning issues in the context of sustained mountain development, many institutional/organisational roles, functions, and activities will continue to be inappropriate and therefore ineffective. It is therefore important to understand why among existing institutions some are more capable than others. Applied to mountain farming systems, it will mean examining the current performance and impact of institutions engaged in planning, research, extension, public support services, and decision-making. A comprehensive understanding of these activities will provide a better basis for identifying future options.

Replication of Successful Institutional Innovations. One of the important ways of promoting the sustainable development of

mountain agriculture is by replicating successful activities that have been time-tested and which have proven successful elsewhere. However a major difficulty in this context has been replication of the institutional/organisational model. Other aspects regarding technology, resources, and individual skills are relatively more easily replicable than the organisational framework. The preconditions for these need to be examined more carefully.

Implications of Mountain Characteristics for Institutional Organisation Characteristics. Given the importance of mountain characteristics (inaccessibility, fragility, diversity, niche, etc) what are the implications of these factors for different institutions functioning in different mountain areas? Too often, a uniform organisational set-up is extended to all areas - lowlands and uplands and accessible and inaccessible areas - and the results are obviously not the same.

The conceptual work, reviews of public policies, farmer case studies, and examination of success stories in the HKH Region showed that a major gap in development interventions in mountain areas is their insensitivity to the imperatives of mountain characteristics such as inaccessibility, fragility, diversity, etc. In order to utilise scarce resources more efficiently, it is necessary to examine these issues far more carefully and systematically than in the past and clearly identify their institutional implications in terms of area-coverage, gender-specificity, scale of operations, etc.

How to support institutional development that is capable of promoting sustainable improvement in mountain farming systems is thus a very important question before the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme of ICIMOD. As institution building and strengthening is not a one-shot or instant activity and can only be developed gradually through as a step process, long-term support is necessary for bringing about meaningful changes. It is for this activity that ICIMOD submitted a project proposal on 'Institutional strengthening/Restructuring for Sustainable Mountain Agriculture' for support from the

Government of the Netherlands. The support was granted and work under this project began in early 1992.

The main objective of this programme was to strengthen institutional capability in the member countries and at ICIMOD for the promotion of sustainable mountain farming systems. Specifically, this will be attained by:

- i) identifying specific ways to improve and reorient mountain farming systems-related institutional arrangements in research, extensions, support systems, and decision-making processes in different types of mountain farming systems (such as dry arid areas in Western Pakistan, the dry cold areas of Xizang in China, and the mid-hills of Nepal);
- ii) develop training programmes for generating the skills needed for facilitating the development of sustainable farming systems; and
- iii) support national and local interaction and exchange among institutions engaged in the development of mountain farming systems.

Improving Institutional Arrangements and Capabilities

Most of the institutions working in mountain areas are still largely organised along conventional, sectoral, and disciplinary lines, while the challenges of integrated mountain development and, primarily, sustainable farming systems call for approaches that cut across disciplines, sectors, ecological belts, and institutions. Furthermore, focussing on decentralised approaches, sustainable use of natural resources, gender sensitivity, indigenous knowledge, etc are new areas where experiences are limited and far between. In many cases, the models/approaches to choose from are simply not there and new ground must be covered, based upon what is considered desirable by the people working in the specific areas.

The proposal here was, in close collaboration with the participating national/local institutions:

- i) to develop a better understanding of the actual roles of key institutions/organisations with regard to planning, research, extension, support services, and decision-making in specific farming systems;
- ii) to identify specific mechanisms/approaches by which institutions/organisations can be made more effective in planning, research, extension, support services, and decision-making, using a sustainable farming systems' development approach; and
- iii) to develop a practical long-term programme for improving institutional/organisational roles/performances in planning, research, extension, and support services.

Develop Skill Enhancement Training Programmes

These training programmes will focus on transferring knowledge and knowhow regarding the practical lessons learned by ICIMOD in integrated mountain development in general, and, more specifically, for institutional strengthening roles in sustainable mountain farming systems. Based upon the work carried out under Phase I and the currently ongoing Phase II of Sustainable Strategies for Mountain Agriculture, it is fairly evident that significant reorientation from a mountain perspective is needed in development thinking, strategies, and approaches. At the same time, work on mountain development also calls for specific types of understanding and skills that can integrate biological, physical, and social science components.

The proposal under this objective was to organise a number of training programmes at ICIMOD and in some of the member countries

for promoting planning skills related to mountain farming systems. ICIMOD can only train a select group of trainers. Support was also needed for these trainers to implement training programmes in their own countries so that the impact of these training programmes is multiplied.

National and Local Institutional Interaction, Exchange, and Networking

Currently many of the member countries have important agencies, departments, and other organisations working in mountain areas. While the number and coverage vary enormously, the extent to which effective linkages exist among them is not easily established. Given the concerns of sustainable farming systems, the need for effective linkages among different government departments and among government and non-government agencies is indeed very great. Networking and direct collaborations with these different agencies would go a long way towards identifying and developing sustainable solutions through mutual interactions and exchanges on a regular basis. Cost-effective mechanisms should be identified and promoted to sustain networking and exchanges.

The Workshop

During the first phase of this Dutch government-supported project on Institutional Strengthening/Restructuring for Sustainable Mountain Agriculture, institutional arrangements dealing with (a) policy and programme formulation, (b) agricultural R & D, and (c) agricultural support services were reviewed.

In order to synthesise the results of these reviews into usable lessons, to collectively discuss the weaknesses and strengths of these institutions, and to identify and formulate a future strategy for the project, a workshop was organised in Kathmandu from July 28-30, 1993, by the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme of ICIMOD.

The Objectives of the Workshop

1. *To examine the comparative experiences of agricultural institutions (dealing with agricultural policies and programme formulation, agricultural R and D, and agricultural support services) in mountain areas of the HKH countries.*
2. *To identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing institutions with a view to reorienting/strengthening them.*
3. *To examine what re-orientation is required in the institutions to sensitise them to 'mountain perspectives' (i.e., specific mountain conditions and their imperatives).*
4. *To explore possible ways for mutual exchange of experiences among different countries, especially innovative ways to render the institutions more effective and relevant.*
5. *Based on all of the above objectives, identify the future directions of and contents for the ICIMOD project.*

Expected Output

1. *Synthesis and documentation of the country reports giving a comparative picture (status, mandate, performance, and impacts) of agricultural institutions in the HKH countries.*
 2. *Development of an operational framework to integrate the mountain perspective into institutional planning/implementation in mountain areas.*
 3. *A broad outline of action guidelines for project operation in future with a direct focus on practical problems, mutual exchange of experiences, etc.*
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statements from Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan; (ii) resource persons from the above-mentioned countries; (iii) selected participants from several international organisations; and (iv) ICIMOD participants.

The Workshop lasted for three days from the 28th to the 30th of July, 1993. After the opening session on the first day, Dr. Jodha gave a presentation on 'Sustainable Mountain Agriculture: The Crucial Role of Institutions'. This was followed by country reports on Policy and Planning Institutions from India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar, after which a synthesis report was presented by Kailash Pyakuryal. On the second day, country reports on 'Agricultural Research and Development Institutions' and 'Agricultural Support Services' Institutions' were presented, followed by synthesis reports on each by Tej Partap and Sugandha Shrestha respectively. At the end of each session, issues emerging from the country reports were discussed and conclusions drawn. On the final day, discussions on how to improve institutional systems and the role of ICIMOD were held, followed by a closing session.

Chapter 2 of this report contains the concept paper presented by Dr. Jodha, and Chapters 3 to 5 present the synthesis report from each session. The main discussions and conclusions from the Workshop are given in Chapter 6. The Workshop Programme is included in the report as Annex 1 and the List of Participants as Annex 2.

Considering the importance of the country presentations, they have been published as individual country reports.

Workshop Participants and the Programme

Thirty-eight participants took part in the Workshop. These included (i) authors of country