Participatory Forest Management in Myanmar

First National Workshop
December 2000

about ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an international organisation devoted to development of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region covering all or parts of eight sovereign states. Afghanistan , Bangladesh , Bhutan , China , India , Myanmar , Nepal , and Pakistan . The Centre is located in Kathmandu, Nepal. 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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Participatory Forest Management in Myanmar

**Implications for Policy and Human Resource Development
in the Mountain Areas**

**First National Workshop
held in YEZIN, MYANMAR
from 1 – 4 December 2000**

On behalf of both the Forest Department and myself, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Anupam Bhatia from ICIMOD, the country representatives, the national experts, and the participants for their invaluable contribution to the promotion of a participatory approach in Myanmar. The personnel from the Forest Research Institute of the Institute of Forestry, Yezin, also deserve commendation for facilitating the successful holding of the workshop. It is with great pleasure that ICIMOD has long been a reliable partner with the Government of Myanmar, in managing the forests of mountain areas, and this partnership will remain so in the foreseeable future. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Forestry, Myanmar, for its support and cooperation in implementing community participatory forest management.

Organised by the:

Department of Forests, Yangon, Myanmar

Institute of Forestry, Yezin, Myanmar

and the

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Foreword

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region is renowned for its biologically-diverse resources, but also recognized as having a harsh environment, extending from the arid west to the humid east, and from the Gangetic plains to the Tibetan Plateau. The mountains of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas are mostly characterised by fragile ecosystems. Community participatory forest management has increasingly been introduced as an alternative approach towards further enhancing the sustainable development of forests so as to ensure the supply of basic needs, including wood and non-wood products, regulation of soil and water movements, and the provision of natural habitat for wildlife and wild plants.

In Myanmar, mountains constitute some 42% of the total geographic area. This substantial area calls for sustainable forest management, which should be essentially based on local people's participation. Myanmar has initiated several institutional advancements: the Forest Policy was adopted in 1995; the new Forest Law was promulgated in 1992, replacing the old Forest Act of 1936; and the Community Forestry Instructions, the first of their kind, were issued in 1995.

The professionals, resource persons and participants alike, who participated in the workshop on Participatory Forest Management in Myanmar to exchange their expertise and accumulated experiences, all made concerted efforts to achieve the identified objectives of the workshop. The workshop deliberations, with active participation by both the country representatives and the national resource persons, centred on such critical issues as capacity building, institutional strengthening, the integration of gender equity with participation, realisation of immediate benefits, extension services, public awareness raising, and compliance with other development programmes. The importance of cooperation, transparency, and empathy as the basis for a functional partnership among the interested parties was also raised and emphasised. Overall, the workshop was a complete success, taking wide-ranging perspectives into account.

On behalf of both the Forest Department and myself, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Anupam Bhatia from ICIMOD, the country representatives, the national experts, and the participants for their valuable contribution to the promotion of the participatory approach in Myanmar. The personnel from the Forest Research Institute and the Institute of Forestry, Yezin, also deserve due appreciation for facilitating the successful holding of the workshop. It is with pride that I recall that ICIMOD has long been a credible partner with the Forest Department, Myanmar, in managing the forests of mountain areas, and I am fully confident that our partnership will remain so in the foreseeable future. Finally, I wish to pay my high regards to the Ministry of Forestry, Myanmar, for its policy support for maintaining the momentum gained in implementing community participatory forest management in Myanmar, with reference to the mountainous border areas.

U Shwe Kyaw
Director General
Forest Department
Myanmar

Foreword

Countries throughout the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region are confronted with the challenge of maintaining their forest resources in the face of increasing demands both for land and for forest products as a result of population growth, increased aspirations, and improved access – which brings with it increased opportunities for exploitation and export. Maintaining forest resources is essential for the well-being of the mountain environment. Loss of forest cover is contributing to problems like increased land degradation, landslides and floods, downstream siltation, loss of habitat, reduced biodiversity, loss of water resources, and even climate change. For mountain people the loss of forest resources can be catastrophic, many are still dependent on forests for fuel, building materials, fodder, and other products. Thus forest resources play a pivotal role in the HKH, and are a central focus in the integrated mountain development of the region.

Historically, in many areas of the HKH, forest management has been centrally directed, and governments resorted to protection and policing where these resources were to be preserved – generally with limited success. Over the past decade, however, there has been a paradigm shift in the approach to forest management. People-centred forest policies have emerged in almost all the countries in the region. An increasing area is being brought under community management in one form or another through different benefit-sharing systems and tenure arrangements. Participatory forest management (PFM) has emerged as a successful strategy in almost all of the region's countries. This approach also builds community assets and strengthens communities' own institutional capacity for effective local governance — as in other parts of the HKH, it is likely to be the most effective, productive, and equitable approach in Myanmar.

ICIMOD recognised this emerging trend and in 1993 established the Participatory Natural Resources Management Programme with a clearly defined focus on participatory forest management. With its regional mandate and convenorship role, ICIMOD has been able to document success and provide regional and national forums for the exchange of views and experiences. The present workshop in Myanmar has been an important step in this process. Resource people from China, India and Nepal, countries with considerable experience of community forestry in various forms, gathered together with participants from Myanmar – officials from the Ministry of Forests, Forest Department officers, faculty and students from the institutes where foresters are trained, members of user groups, and others – to exchange experiences and information and to help Myanmar in its efforts to develop a strong and effective community forestry approach. The workshop addressed participatory forest management in Myanmar's mountain areas and the policy changes and human resources that would be needed for community forestry initiatives to thrive. The resultant Action Points provide clear guidelines for the next steps to be taken, and the issues to be considered.

I am delighted now to be able to present the results of this workshop to a wider audience. Much information was brought together that will be useful to other practitioners of community forestry as well as those interested in the processes leading to strong community support for and participation in such activities. Those specifically

interested in Myanmar and its forest resources will find valuable accounts of situations, problems, and solutions.

The Centre remains committed to its work with the Department of Forests and other institutions in Myanmar, and to the collective effort to elevate participatory forest management in Myanmar and in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas to a new level. We hope that this book will prove a useful resource to the many dedicated foresters and supporters of foresters in the region.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Ministry of Forest, Myanmar for their continuing support to this workshop and to the senior advisors who participated so actively in the discussions and shared their considerable experiences.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank U Kway Tin, the then Director General of the Department of Forests for his leadership and support to the organisation of this workshop. I would also like to place on record my deep appreciation of U Shwe Kway who was then the Deputy Director General of the Department of Forests and is currently the Director General. I remain confident that U Shwe Kway will continue to translate his vision and commitment to community forestry in the mountain areas of Myanmar and we look forward to working together with him and his colleagues.

I would also like to place on record the contribution made by U Aung Than, Rector, Institute of Forestry, Yezin, Myanmar and his colleagues and staff who managed the organisation of the workshop with ease and efficiency.

I also am pleased to acknowledge the work of my colleague, Mr. Anupam Bhatia, in skilfully creating and facilitating this initiative from ICIMOD's side.

J. Gabriel Campbell
Director General
ICIMOD

Executive Summary

This document summarises the presentations, discussions, and findings of the 'First National Workshop on Participatory Forest Management: Implications for Policy and Human Resource Development in the Mountain Areas of Myanmar', held in Yezin, Myanmar in December 2000. The workshop was organised jointly by the Department of Forests, Yangon, Myanmar, the Institute of Forestry, Yezin, Myanmar, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal.

In almost all countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, participatory forest management has proved to be a successful approach to managing forest resources on which so many communities rely. However, the introduction of community-oriented forest management in mountain regions presents its own specific challenges, many of them related to the policies and practices of the national institutions traditionally responsible for managing the forests. Experiences from other countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas indicate that successful community forestry requires attention to two major areas: enabling forest policy and the development of human resources trained to implement participatory forest management programmes.

The Myanmar workshop was attended by foresters at all stages of their career, representatives of forest user groups, and others. Resource persons from Nepal, India, and China shared their experiences of community forestry in their own countries. Foresters from Myanmar described the situation in areas like forestry education and training, community forestry to protect mangrove forests, and gender considerations in participatory forest management, as well as experiences and constraints encountered in selected areas.

Workshop participants formed groups to identify the factors for successful participatory forest management in general and within the mountain areas of Myanmar in particular, and the findings were summarised in the form of action points to be taken up and implemented by the relevant authorities.

Both the foresters from Myanmar and those from other countries in the region agreed that they had learnt a great deal about community-oriented forest management from the workshop and that they returned to their forestry work inspired by the many useful suggestions for improving their programmes and projects.

The issues raised by the various speakers and the findings of the group discussions are summarised in the following pages. They will provide the reader with information about the problems and successes encountered with community forestry in the region, the present situation in Myanmar, and the suggested way forward.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CF	community forestry
CFDTC	Central Forestry Development Training Centre
CFI	Community Forestry Instructions
CFM	community forestry management
CFUG	community forest user group
DFO	district forest office
DoF	Department of Forests
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FD	Forest Department
FUG	forest user group
GO	government organisation
ha	hectares
HIFCOM	Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management
HKH	Hindu Kush-Himalayas
HMGN	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
HP	Himachal Pradesh
HRD	human resource development
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IEC	information, education, communication
IGA	income-generating activity
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IoF	Institute of Forestry
JFM	joint forest management
JICA	Japanese International Co-operation Agency
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NTFP	non-timber forest products
OP	operational plan
PFM	participatory forest management
PRC	People's Republic of China
SALT	sloping agricultural land technology
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SWFC	Southwest Forestry College (Yunnan, PR China)
ToT	training of trainers
TRUCO	trust and confidence

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