

Reports by Working Groups on Issues of Themes on Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands

1. **Group I: Priority Activities for the Future Implementation of Rehabilitation Activities**

Methodologies

The activities in each case study were based on the guidelines laid down by the methodological workshop held in Kathmandu in 1992. The Kathmandu methodologies' workshop defined technologies and socioeconomic components that were deemed to be of importance and also recognised that every site did not follow all approaches as site situations differed considerably. It was agreed that, for the next phase, the project activities would build on methodologies already established.

It was suggested that each soil erosion plot should not be smaller than 100 square metres (and not 10 square metres), and this was agreed up on. For the study of socioeconomic impact, it was suggested that a control community with similar socioeconomic conditions to those of the community in which the project had been implemented might give a better idea of the effect of intervention, and this would remain an option to be followed if adequate resources were available.

Rehabilitation Activities and Their Impact

Socioeconomic processes that affect the participation of the local community in rehabilitation activities need to be looked into more carefully, as well as the cost: benefit ratios of such activities. The need to look at interventions and their impact on women was also felt. The need to identify methodologies that looked at off-site impacts of rehabilitation efforts was also felt by the group.

The Rehabilitation Project as a Replicable Model

For the activities of the project to be replicable, it was suggested that monitoring techniques should be such that they could also be replicated by other researchers and by the communities themselves.

Government Policy and Rehabilitation

The group recognised that various government policies impacted directly on how resources were used in a community. One of the most important issues was that of ownership of land or land tenure. It was felt that, as well as these, other policies also needed to be examined and their impact assessed on degradation or rehabilitation of mountain ecosystems.

Workplan for 1995

A meeting of all country coordinators of the project on '**Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands in Mountain Ecosystems of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region**' took place in the presence of the ICIMOD Director General, Mr. Pelinck and Dr S. Tyler (IDRC). The desirability and possibility of the next phase of the project were discussed as the first phase of the project was to conclude on January 15, 1995.

It was unanimously agreed that, after the end of the current phase of the project, ICIMOD would submit a proposal for the continuation of the project for the next three years. The regional project coordinator, Professor Pei Shengji, proposed that, since project implementation had been delayed by a few months initially, an extension until June 30, 1995, should be requested from IDRC, and this, too, was agreed upon unanimously.

It was decided that, for 1995, the stress would be on consolidation of the present work on site development and research and some extension. The nature and extent of the work was to depend on the amount of funds made available by the donor agency. The components of 1995 activities for the project were to include the following.

- Monitoring of water, soil, biomass, and socioeconomic changes in the participating rural communities
- Maintenance of plantations, trails, erosion plots, checkdams, water harvesting ponds, biogas facilities, and other on-site developments by the project
- Additional work on site development and management
- Preparation of training material
- Conduction of training and dissemination

In addition, the country project coordinators were requested by the project coordinator, Professor Pei Shengji, to complete and send a short report for the IDRC on the completion of the first phase of the project by mid-April 1995.

2. **Group II: Types of Training Materials Needed for Future Follow up Activities**

Training on Rehabilitation of Degraded Community Land

In its first phase, the project established five case study sites and selected suitable plant species and technologies for rehabilitation of fragile mountain lands. Monitoring systems for soil erosion studies were also established. The project coordinators felt that sufficient work had been carried out at each site for these to be useful as training on different approaches and methods of rehabilitation of similar degraded lands.

It was reported that the sites were already being used as training sites by various organisations. In Pakistan, for example, the forestry students, who often used a field station situated close to the case study site, had started using the site as a training site. In Nepal, the site at Godavari had attracted local visitors and visitors from many different countries, and the site at Kavrepalanchok was already being used as a demonstration site by the District Forest Office for other forest users' groups. However, for the sites to play a more important role nationally, the need for a more concerted effort was felt.

Training: The Focus Group

The 'clients' for training were identified as government officials, non-government organisations, students, and farmers.

Training components should include technological components, such as biophysical monitoring, as well as socioeconomic components. The need to stress the training of so-called professionals by farmers was also stressed, and Professor Pei made a strong case for learning about and incorporating indigenous knowledge in project activities. It was also felt that farmer-to-farmer exchanges should be the main component of such training. The need to involve more women in training was also highlighted.

It was decided that training would be for professionals and for farmers. The specific components of the training would be as follow.

For Professionals

- a) Tools and methods: analytical data processing, GIS methods
- b) Technology for plantation establishment, plant propagation, and plant nursery establishment
- c) Improved technology for soil-water conservation
- d) Indigenous knowledge for soil-water conservation
- e) Extension/communication skills
- f) Suitable management of plant resources

It was felt that exchanges of professionals between countries would facilitate exchange of ideas and experiences.

For Farmers

- a) Appropriate technology for plantation establishment, plant propagation, and plant nursery establishment
- b) Improved technology for soil-water conservation
- c) Indigenous knowledge of soil-water conservation
- d) Extension/communication skills
- e) Management of plant resources
- f) Alternative rural energy sources and devices
- g) Water harvesting technologies

Training will be carried out by participating institutions in the concerned countries, apart from GIS which will be carried out by ICIMOD.

Production of Training Materials and Dissemination

It was agreed that each site should identify its priority for training and develop methods accordingly. It was suggested that documentation of other successful community-based rehabilitation efforts within each country would provide a much more balanced approach to training.

The role of the media in training and disseminating was also discussed in the meeting. Again, the need for a country-specific approach was highlighted. For example, in China, since television reaches about 70 per cent of the population it was suggested that this could be a very useful medium for dissemination, whereas in Nepal the radio was considered more suitable.

Production of video films on project activities in national and other common languages was identified as one method of disseminating the results of project activities, and for most sites recording of site activities had already commenced.

For the production of materials for training and dissemination, collaboration with national institutions is essential. ICIMOD will standardise and compile training materials for dissemination within the region as well as outside the region.

Institutional Strengthening

Training on institutional strengthening at the local level was identified as a crucial step towards achieving sustainable rehabilitation of degraded community lands. Since all case studies were being carried out with local communities, the need to strengthen their capacity to carry on the work initiated by the project was felt by the group.

The meeting concluded with agreement on the following issues.

Build on Methodologies

For the next phase of project activities, consolidation and continuation of the achievements of the first phase of the project would be the biggest priorities. For the next phase, it was agreed that the projects would build on the guidelines laid down by the methodological workshop held in Kathmandu in 1992. It was decided that the choices in biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring would be according to the site-specific requirements.

A Holistic Approach

Rehabilitation of degraded common lands must be looked into as a part of overall natural ecosystems and farming systems in the mountain areas as they are the vital support areas for agriculture, forestry, and other life-support activities. Gender concerns need to be incorporated in all project activities.

Institutional Strengthening

The meeting overwhelmingly recommended that the project should stress strengthening of local institutions, such as users' groups and local NGOs, for social, economic, and ecological sustainability and replicability.

Training/Awareness

It was decided that training, demonstration, awareness-raising, and farmer-to-farmer exchange of technological innovations would be emphasised. Many felt that, for rehabilitation of degraded lands, the constraints were not technical but socioeconomic in nature, and it was suggested that such outreach programmes with appropriate policies would be of great benefit at both the local and national levels.