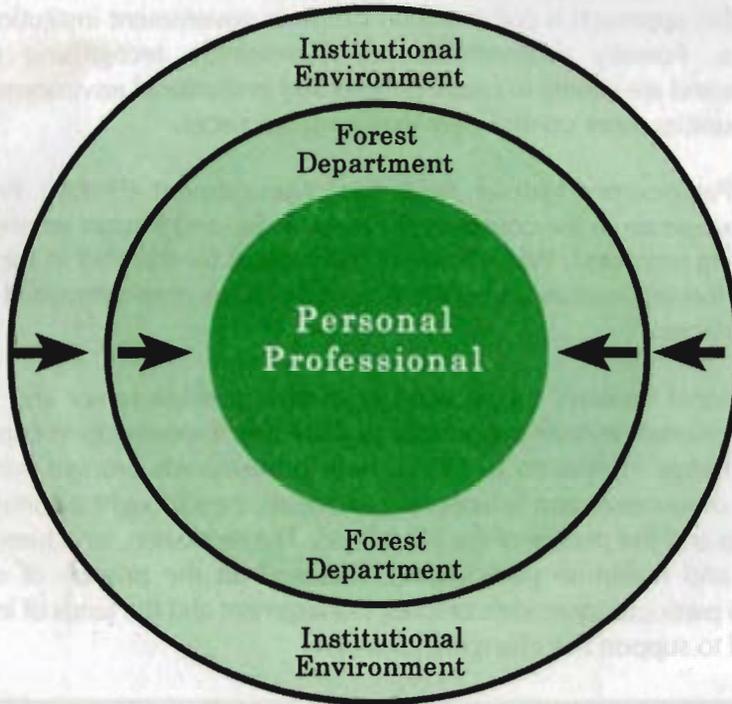


# Background and Inaugural Statements

## Workshop Theme

At a planning meeting held in Kathmandu in April 1995, the workshop organisers agreed that the proposed forum should focus on the process of change from traditional to participatory models of forest management and the challenge this change presented to forestry departments, foresters, communities, and other institutions. This process needed to be analysed at personal, professional, and institutional levels in order to develop appropriate strategies to nurture and encourage change. A schematic diagramme was drawn to represent the relationships between the different levels (Fig. 1).

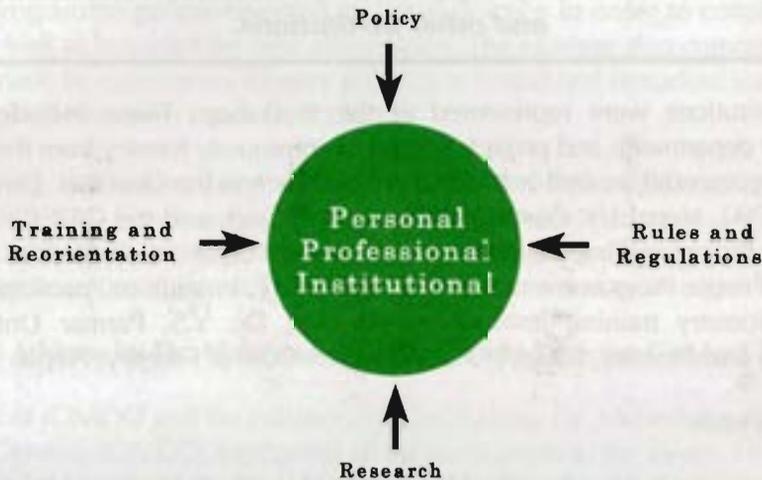
Figure 1



Readiness and resistance to change were recognised as the two major but conflicting considerations, particularly as the initiative for change frequently came from outside agencies. The forum was thus structured to focus on sharing experiences and learning from strategies used by foresters to meet these challenges.

It was agreed that the structure and kinds of institutions needed to support participatory forest management should be the main issue for discussion. Methods of creating a participatory environment, initially within institutions, therefore, could be used as an anchoring principle for consideration of certain key topics as shown below (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2**



### **Workshop Structure and Schedule**

From the outset substantial consideration was given to the structure of the workshop in order to promote informality and maximise participation. A preset agenda, a centralised chair directing the process, and excessive time spent reiterating well-known issues related to community forestry were deliberately avoided. Plans were made for small group discussions on key topics, with reviews and major decisions taken at the plenary sessions. Group composition was designed to facilitate interaction and participants requested to facilitate and chair sessions.

A broad programme was designed for the first two days to give the participants an opportunity to set the agenda, keeping within the general guidelines of the main goals and focus of the workshop. The last two days were then largely devoted to group discussions formulating strategies and institutional mechanisms to ensure post-workshop follow-up.

### **Participants in the Forum**

A total of 40 participants from three countries attended the workshop. From India, the participants were from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and New Delhi. Ten participants came from Nepal and three from Bhutan. Three of the participants were women, two from Nepal and one from Himachal

Pradesh. Unfortunately, participants scheduled to come from Uttar Pradesh were unable to attend due to severe forest fires in that state, preventing any forest department personnel from travelling outside the area.

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Several institutions were represented at the workshop. These included various government departments and projects related to community forestry from the countries and states represented, as well as bilateral projects such as the Overseas' Development Agency (ODA), Nepal UK Community Forestry Project, and the GTZ Churia Forest Department Project and international non-government organisations such as the Forest, Trees, and People Programme of the FAO and CARE. In addition, participants came from two forestry training institutions, viz., the Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Solan, H.P., and the Institute of Forestry, Nepal.

### **Workshop Venue**

The workshop was held at the Chail Palace Hotel in Chail, Himachal Pradesh, India. Built in the nineteenth century and surrounded by a thick deodar forest, the hotel provided an excellent setting for the sustained and interactive deliberations that characterised the workshop. With only a small village nearby, the comfortable surroundings enabled the participants to devote their entire attention to both the formal working sessions and the equally important informal discussions and networking that allowed participants to become better acquainted with each other. Thus, the workshop's primary goal of easy networking was achieved.

### **Inaugural Address by the Minister for Forests, Government of Himachal Pradesh, India**

The Honourable Minister for Forests, Government of Himachal Pradesh, India, Pandit Sant Ram, inaugurated the forum at the Chail Palace Hotel on 14 June, 1995. The Minister emphasised the difficulties faced in protecting the complex and precious mountain ecosystem in the changing scenario of increasing biotic and human pressure. Increasing awareness among environmentalists, foresters, social scientists, and development planners had led to changes in the very dimensions of the concept of conservation. He stressed that regional and international forums were necessary in order to share ideas, to make joint efforts, and to update knowledge.

The Honourable Minister noted with concern that unrelenting pressure on the forest resources of the Himalayas was leading to declining biodiversity and threatening the whole Himalayan ecosystem. He advocated the need to evolve a new philosophy and

a new approach to development strategies for the mountains. Such strategies should ensure sustainable and equitable use of the natural resource base in meeting the needs of present and future generations without damaging the environment. He stressed that government efforts alone were not sufficient to conserve these resources, and that mountain communities must be actively involved at all stages.

Stating that the Himachal Pradesh government had always been conscious of the importance of forestry, the Minister declared that his government was fully committed to providing all possible support to the forest department's endeavours to make its forestry programme people-oriented in actual practice in order to conserve existing forests, as well as to undertake new afforestation. The Minister also commented on the progress made by community forestry projects in Nepal and remarked that recently, a beginning had also been made in Bhutan.

In conclusion, Pandit Sant Ram expressed confidence that the deliberations in the First Regional Foresters' Forum would result in sound recommendations and provide a base for the governments on which to establish appropriate policies and laws to make people's participation in forestry development effective and meaningful.

### **Welcome Address by Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD**

On behalf of ICIMOD and the collaborating institutions, Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD, welcomed all the participants to the forum. He highlighted two important aspects of the present forum. First, it was part of ICIMOD's continuing efforts to move out from its base in Kathmandu to other parts of the 3,500km-long Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain chain. Second, it represented an attempt to foster new partnerships and collective efforts with different agencies committed to the sustainable development of these fragile mountain areas.

Dr. Banskota said that the Workshop was being organised by ICIMOD's Participatory Natural Resources' Management Programme. This Programme had facilitated the promotion of regular interaction between governments, NGOs, user groups, and the private sector; commissioned case studies and reviews of ongoing experiences and testing of different approaches for facilitating participatory interactions at different levels; and disseminated available information. He cited the recently held First Regional Community Forestry Users' Group Workshop held in Kathmandu as an example of an innovative forum for participatory interaction.

Dr. Banskota expressed hope that this forum would forge new partnerships in the region, and that the next time participants would come from the other ICIMOD member countries.

### **Address by Mr. V.P. Mohan, PCCF, DFFC, Himachal Pradesh**

Mr. V.P. Mohan, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Department of Forest Farming and Conservation (DFFC), Himachal Pradesh, touched on the history of participatory forest management (PFM) in the state. He noted that attempts to involve

communities in forest management started in the 1940s when forest cooperatives were established in one of the districts of the state. However, to be truly participatory, forest management required a substantial attitudinal change on the part of the foresters. This was the current challenge.

Mr. Mohan said that the community forestry which was practised in Nepal was somewhat different from similar approaches in other countries, and the forum would provide an ideal occasion for debate and discussion leading to a new synthesis of these approaches.

**Address by Professor L.R. Verma, Vice Chancellor, Dr. Y.S. Parmar University, Himachal Pradesh**

Professor L.R. Verma, Vice Chancellor of Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, was invited to address the participants. Professor Verma elaborated on the serious threat to India's forest cover from increasing human and livestock populations. Half of the land areas in India were estimated to be degraded, particularly as a result of deforestation. Such large-scale destruction of forest resources, which was gaining alarming proportions, had resulted in adverse socioeconomic and environmental conditions. Solutions to these problems must be sought in the context of people's participation in forest management. Local communities had a symbiotic relationship with forests and should be partners in forest development efforts, he said.

He gave a brief overview of the work and achievements of the Dr. Y.S. Parmar University, which had an impressive record in the areas of education and research but needed to strengthen its extension aspects. Professor Verma concluded with an appeal to the forum to cooperate in an effort to attain excellence in forestry education, research, and extension for the economic and ecological security of the mountains and their people.

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**Statements by Participants**

In her speech, Major Krishna Mohini, Member, Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh, raised the crucial issue of the ongoing crisis of forest fires. Pointing out that protection of forest wealth was as important as plantation, she urged the experts to provide equipment and training and to devise effective methods of combatting forest fires. She recommended the involvement of local people in fire-fighting efforts.

On behalf of the delegates from Bhutan, Mr. G.K. Pradhan, Joint Director of the Forestry Services' Division, Royal Government of Bhutan, conveyed greetings from the foresters of Bhutan. Thanking the workshop organisers, he said that the Bhutanese delegation was honoured and excited to be among the other expert colleagues at the workshop.

Mr. K.B. Shrestha, Chief, Community and Private Forestry Division, Department of Forests of the Government of Nepal, expressed happiness on behalf of the Nepali participants to be in such a beautiful mountain retreat with ample opportunity to share experiences and develop strategies for furthering people's participation in forest management. He said that this workshop could be a milestone on the way to achieving genuine community participation.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Mr. G.C. Gupta, Chief Conservator of Forests, Himachal Pradesh, thanked the Honourable Minister for Forests, Pandit Sant Ram, for his presence at the forum. He assured the Minister that his concern for the sustainable development and management of the Himalayan forest resources is shared by all the delegates. Mr. Gupta stressed the special significance of the workshop for his state where a large number of externally-aided projects was being implemented with a strong focus on PFM. He said he hoped that the workshop would focus on the process of change from traditional to participatory models of forest management.

Mr. Gupta noted that the concept of participatory management was not new to Himachal Pradesh, where various forest settlements allowed rights to and concessions in the forests to communities who, in turn, were expected to help manage, protect, and maintain them. However, the conference outcome should be of particular interest to the state in the context of evolving an integrated mountain development perspective.

Mr. Gupta thanked ICIMOD for selecting Himachal Pradesh as a venue for the workshop, saying that they were honoured by the participation of the many delegates. He also thanked Professor Verma, Vice Chancellor of the Dr. Y.S. Parmar University, for extending all possible cooperation for holding the workshop. His personal thanks went to the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation for their efforts to provide an ideal setting and logistical support for the workshop. Special thanks were given to Mr. A.K. Gulati, Conservator of Forests, DFFC, Mr. K.D. Sharma, DFO, HP Foresters' Training School, Chail, and the staff of the DFFC for the hard work carried out in organising the workshop in Chail. In conclusion, Mr. Gupta hoped that the participants would have a comfortable and fruitful stay.