

B Workshop Inauguration

Setting the Context and Agenda for the Forum

Two events completed the inauguration of the workshop and set its context and agenda. The first was an informal Welcome Session, limited to workshop participants; and the second the Formal Inauguration to which a wide range of individuals and institutions were invited.

B.1 Welcome Session

Using creative methodologies to engender participation

The objectives of the informal opening plenary session were to sensitise the participants to the need to use creative tools to communicate with each other, to reinforce the theme of the workshop, and to provide an overview of the diversity of countries in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region.

Each participant was provided with a blank card with a thread and all were requested to find a partner; the only criterion for partner selection was that a participant from outside China had to find a Chinese partner. In the ensuing fifteen minutes, each pair was asked to use a diversity of communication methodologies—gestures, body language, facial expression, visuals—to share with each other their names, the country they had come from, the profession they belonged to and any other personal details related to their family and interests. The cards that had been distributed were used to portray this information and all the participants were requested to hang their card around their necks and mix amongst the whole group. This interactive session brought a sense of informality to the workshop which

provided the basis for candid discussions in the workshop sessions.

The participating country teams were then invited to pin their country flag and names on a map of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. This helped to provide a sense of unity in diversity—while the participants came from different social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, they all belonged to the continuous mountain belt of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, the well-being of which was the focus of the workshop.

This session also introduced workshop participants to the mission statement of HIFCOM. Banners in Chinese and English which enshrined the mission statement were unfurled by Professor Yang Fucheng, President of the South West Forestry College, and Mr. Egbert Pelinck, Director General of ICIMOD. The mission statement is that “*HIFCOM is a regional institution committed to promoting and strengthening participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. HIFCOM is mandated to the holistic management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests, including wastelands. HIFCOM will aim to strengthen the capacity of local, national, and regional institutions in establishing participatory approaches in forest management*”. A brief background on the emergence of HIFCOM, the expectations from the current workshop, and future plans were also shared with the group.

The opening session ended with sharing of the detailed workshop agenda with the partici-

pants, followed by a cultural programme and dinner.

B.2 Formal Inauguration

The pivotal role of people and forests in poverty reduction in mountain areas

In addition to the participants, senior national and provincial level representatives from the forestry, scientific, industrial, research, and administrative sectors of China were invited to attend the formal inauguration. Representatives from bilateral projects and international non-government organizations were also present. The inauguration highlighted the pivotal role of people and forests in poverty reduction in mountain areas.

B.2.1 Welcome Address by Egbert Pelinck, Director General, ICIMOD, Nepal

A milestone in ICIMOD's efforts to strengthen participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

Welcoming the distinguished participants and visitors, Mr. Pelinck said that the workshop marked a continuation of ICIMOD's efforts to promote and strengthen regional collaboration and cooperation at the policy-making level of the forestry sector in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Highlighting the unique features of the forum, he mentioned that this was the first workshop to bring together senior policy-makers in the forestry sector from all the countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, and also the first time a major forum on participatory forest management with a specific focus on mountain areas had been held in China.

Mr. Pelinck stressed that the workshop itself represented a HIFCOM initiative in close collaboration with ICIMOD. Throughout the long preparations, ownership and design of this forum had remained with the HIFCOM members. A major objective of this workshop was to share the results of national and sub-national studies carried out by, and under the guidance of, senior policy-makers from, the different countries. Such a pro-active involvement of policy-makers ensured that major policy and human re-

source development issues in participatory forest management were clearly highlighted.

The emphasis on participatory forest management results from the recognition of the relationship between mountain areas and poverty, and the crucial role proper management of natural resources can play in poverty alleviation. Despite abundant natural resources, mountain regions generally suffer from extreme poverty and lack of development. In China, for example, the conditions found in mountainous regions present the most formidable obstacles to development. These include non-arable, arid, and sloping lands, harsh natural conditions of high altitude and cold climate, inaccessibility, and extremely backward economies with low literacy rates, great health problems, and poor access to medical care.

Yunnan Province itself, where the workshop was being held, is 94 per cent hilly and mountainous, and 98 per cent of the counties, cities, and townships are located in mountainous regions. These facts illustrate what are called 'mountain specificities', the particular qualities of mountain environments which create both problems and opportunities for sustainable mountain development. These specific qualities include inaccessibility, fragility of the natural environment, and marginality. While conventional development approaches have tended to disregard the imperatives of these specific features, new emerging paradigms and innovations such as participatory forest management take advantage of the indigenous knowledge and adaptability of the mountain populations themselves to work towards the preservation and sustainable development of the areas they inhabit.

Governments and communities throughout the Hindu Kush-Himalayas are struggling with the same issues, as mountain environments share many of the same problems and opportunities. Fortunately, many examples are now emerging of successful responses to these challenges —by local communities themselves, government institutions, NGOs, and international organizations. They vary from community forestry approaches in Nepal, to joint for-

est management in India, and social forestry in Pakistan. We are particularly interested to learn more about similar developments taking place here in South West China.

Mr. Pelinck added that HIFCOM as an institution was designed to facilitate a fruitful cross-fertilization of experiences and ideas so that further time would not be wasted in the urgent task of finding solutions to the problems of fragile mountains and their impoverished inhabitants. He congratulated HIFCOM's Regional Committee for its creativity in first conceiving the idea of this forum, and then in having the institutional capacity and organizational strength to bring it about.

On behalf of ICIMOD, Mr. Pelinck thanked President Yang Fucheng, President of the South West Forestry College, and through him the faculty and students of the college who had worked hard to make the workshop a reality. Mr. Pelinck also expressed his appreciation to the other institutions in China that had contributed to the workshop. In particular, he mentioned the International Cooperation Division of China's National Forestry Bureau, the Foreign Affairs' Office of Yunnan Province, the Forest Bureau of Yunnan, the Forest Bureau of Kunming, the Chinese Academy of Forestry, the Kunming Institute of Botany, and the Management and Staff of South Asia Scenery Garden.

Mr. Pelinck said he was also very grateful to ICIMOD's partner organizations in its regional member countries for their support to this important forum and for facilitating the participation of forestry professionals in this workshop. In particular he mentioned the Ministry of Forests, Bangladesh; the Ministry of Agriculture, Bhutan; the Ministry of Environment and Forests, India; the Ministry of Forests, Myanmar; the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Nepal, and the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Pakistan.

He stressed that the workshop would not have been possible without the generous and continuous support provided by the Ford Foundation, New Delhi, India, to ICIMOD's Participa-

tory Natural Resources' Management Programme, and the specific additional support received for this workshop from the Swiss Development Cooperation, Berne, Switzerland; Ford Foundation, Beijing, and the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

He announced that ICIMOD was proud to release at the workshop a Chinese translation of an ICIMOD publication, "Community Forestry: The Language of Life" and a film, "Forest Managers of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas". He hoped that these would enable a better understanding amongst forestry professionals in China of participatory forest management in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas

He wished all the participants a successful exchange of ideas, a pleasant stay, and, among colleagues committed to the sustainable conservation and management of the forest resources in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, enduring friendship.

**B.2.2 Mr. Li Yucai, Deputy
Administrator, National Forestry
Bureau of China, People's
Republic of China**

*The critical role of forestry in integrated
mountain development*

Mr. Li Yucai was asked to unfurl the banner with the HIFCOM theme of institutional change and, while doing so he remarked that this was a "curtain raiser" to this important gathering. He extended a warm welcome to Kunming, renowned as the city of eternal spring, and to the participants and said it was an honour to have so many distinguished professionals in China.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Li provided compelling evidence of the critical role of the forestry sector in integrated mountain development. Forests remain a vital part of the national economy and play a unique role in promoting economic development, rural poverty alleviation, and environmental conservation, all of which contribute to sustainable development.

China, he said, is renowned for her mountainous areas which account for 70 per cent of the

country's total land area and are home to 56 per cent of the total population. Forest resources in mountain areas have tremendous potential and need to be developed together with agriculture, animal husbandry, medicine, fishery, and minerals. An integrated mountain development approach would speed up the process of poverty alleviation and would also improve the local environment and create favourable conditions for industrial and agricultural production. Such an approach would benefit the more than 20 million poverty stricken people who live in the mountain areas of China.

Because of these factors, integrated mountain development had been accepted as a major challenge for poverty alleviation in China. This commitment is reflected well in the current policy initiatives in China, which include guidelines for integrated development planning for forestry in mountain areas, and the plan of operations for the Ninth Five Year Plan for mountain areas. These documents envisage both protection and improvement in the ecosystem, enhancing outputs and income of farmers, and accelerated economic development in mountain areas. Mr. Li stressed that tourism and processing of products are also being pursued to increase gains from development interventions in mountain regions.

Mr. Li stated that these efforts had already brought prosperity to farmers, and the successful experiences are now being replicated in other parts of the country. While China has achieved a lot of success in rural poverty alleviation in mountain areas, overall mountain development still remains an arduous task for the government. He underlined the fact that the Chinese government had formulated ambitious plans to enhance economic outputs from the forestry sector in mountain areas.

Mr. Li mentioned that his Bureau, which is responsible for nation-wide integrated mountain development, was delighted to have an opportunity to cooperate with ICIMOD and to jointly organize this workshop that would address issues of paramount significance to the overall development of mountain areas. He felt that this workshop would provide a valuable opportunity

to share experiences in evolving forest policy and implementation from various countries. He added that, as a member country of ICIMOD, China maintains a sound relationship of cooperation and he hoped that this relationship would be further strengthened in the future. He also stressed that China was always ready to work together, hand-in-hand, with other countries in the Himalayan region for overall social and economic development.

Finally he wished the workshop great success and hoped that all the distinguished experts would enjoy a pleasant stay in China.

B.2.3 Mr. Huang Bingsheng, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China
The need to seek solutions for the development of mountain areas

Mr. Huang Bingsheng was first requested to release the film, 'Forest Managers of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas', which was the first Chinese language film produced by ICIMOD.

Mr. Huang, on behalf of the Provincial Government of Yunnan, expressed a warm welcome to all the dignitaries, government delegates, and experts to the beautiful city of Kunming. He said that the opening of this important workshop was a meaningful day for the city of Kunming. He added that ICIMOD was an important organization dedicated to the reduction of poverty in mountain areas and that he was confident that ICIMOD's activities would promote both mountain and forest development in Yunnan.

Mr. Huang highlighted the topography, major river systems, and demographic distribution of ethnic minorities in Yunnan. Despite the fact that almost seven million people had already escaped poverty due to development interventions since 1985, approximately five million people in the rural areas of Yunnan were still affected by food scarcity and extreme poverty. He said that because many areas were inaccessible, the rich natural resources had not been harnessed in the mountain areas of Yunnan. Poverty reduction strategies in China had tried

to improve the infrastructure in mountain areas and focus on integrated forestry for overall development. He hoped that the deliberations of the workshop would provide some solutions for the development of the mountain areas of Yunnan.

**B.2.4 Professor Ms. Jiang Zehui,
President, Chinese Academy of
Forestry, and Co-chair,
International Network for Bamboo
and Rattan, People's Republic of
China**

*A new paradigm in integrated mountain
development*

Professor Jiang Zehui was unable to attend the workshop personally and was represented at the workshop inauguration by Professor Guo Jianping, Chief Administrator, International Network for Bamboo and Rattan.

Offering warm congratulations to ICIMOD and the organizations involved in the workshop, Professor Jiang said that South West China was a unique region. This uniqueness derived from the rich natural resources, flora and fauna, and ethnic diversity. The region also possessed great potential for contributing to economic, scientific, educational, and cultural development. The natural and sociocultural diversity of this region was invaluable and needed to be conserved and developed.

Professor Jiang said she was confident that this workshop would usher in a new paradigm in integrated mountain development. She highlighted the fact that the Chinese Academy of Forestry and its sister institution, the South West Forestry College, shared a mandate to develop research, education, and training for forestry professionals in China and to contribute to scientific and technological growth.

She declared that this workshop would be a milestone in strengthening international cooperation between Chinese research and educational institutions with institutions in other countries. She hoped that Chinese institutions would further strengthen and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region and also

strengthen the relationship with ICIMOD in order to contribute to the socioeconomic development of not just the Hindu Kush-Himalayas but also other mountain areas of the world.

She ended on a note of optimism and stressed that she believed great success could be achieved provided all of us are industrious and committed to sustainable mountain development. She offered her best wishes for a successful workshop.

**B.2.5 Professor Yang Fucheng,
President, South West Forestry
College, Yunnan Province,
People's Republic of China**

*Adoption of participatory approaches in
forest management in the region*

Before delivering his address, Professor Yang Fucheng formally released the Chinese language version of the ICIMOD publication titled 'Community Forestry: The Language of Life'. Professor Yang opened his address by according a warm welcome to Kunming to the dignitaries and distinguished participants.

Providing a regional perspective, Professor Yang said that since the early eighties many countries in the region had moved to historical institutional reform in the forestry sector. This had led to the emergence of social forestry, which is widely used today as an effective strategy in integrated mountain development. The level of adoption of participatory approaches in forest management in the region was also high, as was evident from its use in research methods and programme implementation in many diverse development sectors.

Professor Yang added that the south-western region of China was mountainous, and it was rich in forest resources that needed to be managed and developed. In this context, the role of the South West Forestry College was important since the mandate of the College was to train professional foresters from the mountainous provinces of South West China. Recognising the importance of social forestry, the College had established a social forestry centre and also offered specialised training programmes.

The workshop, he felt, was an important one as it brought together over 80 participants who were both policy-makers and practitioners to share their experiences and strategies in people-oriented forest management.

Professor Yang said he was honoured to have all the participants here and was confident that his College would continue to establish new and collaborative linkages with other institutions in the region. He hoped that these linkages would enable them to improve the quality of human resources, which would make a significant contribution to the development of people and forest resources in the mountain areas of China. He wished all the participants good health and the workshop a great success.

**B.2.6 Mr. Chen Jihai, Director General,
Forestry Bureau of Yunnan,
People's Republic of China**
*Outlining the benefits of participatory
forest management in the HKH*

Mr. Chen Jihai welcomed and offered greetings to the workshop participants on behalf of the Forestry Bureau of Yunnan. Mr. Chen noted that forest resources played a key role in sustainable development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. All of us are today faced with this challenge—how to develop mountain resources and conserve them. This common goal brings us together and we need to share experiences and learn from each other.

Mr. Chen said that in the past years the Chinese government had made very good progress in afforestation and greening of Yunnan. Progress had also been made in participatory forest management. He added that participatory forest management was not only important for Yunnan but was also an important approach for neighbouring provinces in China and in other countries. As we are on the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is important to promote forest resources. In this context, he said that the workshop was critical as it provided an opportunity to learn from other provinces and other countries in order to promote, upgrade, and improve participatory forest management approaches in Yunnan.

**B.3 Remarks by Country
Representatives**

Sharing expectations from the workshop

A representative from each of the seven countries participating in the workshop made brief remarks to share their expectations of the workshop.

**B.3.1 Mr. S.M. Jalil, Chief Conservator
of Forests, Department of Forests,
Government of Bangladesh**

The desire to learn from China's experience in participatory forest management

Mr. Jalil appreciated the fact that ICIMOD and the South West Forestry College had invited representatives from Bangladesh to the workshop. He said that participatory forest management was a must in places where the traditional approaches of the forest department are unable to ensure adequate protection, conservation, and development of forest areas. Mr. Jalil stressed the fact that the other reason for the introduction of participatory forest management was to enhance the flow of products from forest areas by involving communities who live on the periphery of forest areas and depend on forest resources for their survival.

Mr. Jalil also advocated the need to integrate highland-lowland linkages as a result of the high degree of their interdependence. He said that it was the responsibility of the people of the mountains and the plains to share responsibilities and bring prosperity to the region. He felt that since China was well ahead with its programme on participatory forest management, the workshop would provide an excellent opportunity to learn from their experiences.

**B.3.2 Mr Sangay, Planning and Policy
Division, Ministry of Agriculture,
Royal Government of Bhutan**

*Fundamental changes in attitude of
stakeholders necessary*

Mr. Sangay remarked that he felt great pleasure at being in Kunming for the workshop and,

on behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan, extended appreciation for the invitation to ICIMOD and the South West Forestry College.

Mr. Sangay said that participatory forest management was a relatively new concept in Bhutan. Recognising the importance of people's participation in the management of forests, the Royal Government of Bhutan had recently introduced social and community forestry in the country on a pilot basis. The introduction of this pilot programme was indicative of the great importance Bhutan attached to conservation of natural resources and was only possible through the participation of the stakeholders, especially the mountain farmers. Mr. Sangay pointed out that fundamental changes would be necessary in the attitudes of different stakeholders before participatory forest management would be accepted. While farmers need to take on new responsibilities, the forestry organization needs to let go of the idea that they are the sole custodians of forest resources.

Mr. Sangay hoped that through exchange of ideas and experiences in this forum we would be able to broaden the scope of our understanding of participatory forest management and contribute to the sustainable management of forest resources in the mountain region of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas.

**B.3.3 Mr. Wen Haizhong, Director,
Forest Policy Department,
Ministry of Forests, People's
Republic of China**

Aspiring to productive and beautiful mountains

Mr. Wen said that, although it would take a long time to solve the problems of mountain areas, this was still very much a priority activity for China. He felt that through hard work the mountain areas could be made both productive and beautiful. He hoped that the workshop would provide solutions for mountain development and wished the workshop a great success.

**B.3.4 Mr. C.P. Oberai, Inspector General
of Forests, Ministry of
Environment and Forests,
Government of India**

Progressive policies give priority to meeting people's needs

Mr. Oberai said that the concept of joint forest management in India had taken root in many states, particularly in the hill and mountain areas. In these regions, the lives of the people are intricately linked with the natural resources and they depend on forest resources for a variety of their needs such as fodder, fuelwood, timber, and medicinal plants. This recognition had led to the emergence of a new forest policy in 1988 in India which gave priority to meeting the basic requirements of the people rather than to extracting revenue from timber.

Mr. Oberai highlighted the fact that the focus in forest management had changed considerably in India, and schemes are being implemented to improve the livelihoods of poor people and to resolve the problems related to mountain regions and forest resources. He said it was essential to understand that appropriate maintenance of the mountains includes the entire system of forestry. If the mountains are prosperous and healthy, the entire ecosystem downstream would also be prosperous and healthy.

Mr. Oberai added that he and his colleagues from India were looking forward keenly to the workshop deliberations and that he was confident that the outcome would provide new solutions to the challenge of integrated mountain development.

**B.3.5 Mr. Myint Sein, Deputy Director,
Department of Forests,
Government of the Union of
Myanmar**

Introducing holistic and integrated approaches for forest management

Mr. Sein told the audience that Myanmar was an agro-based country with a dominant rural population that was totally reliant on forest re-

sources for its livelihood and socioeconomic development. Myanmar, he said, was also facing the challenge of implementing participatory forest management. As a first step, a new forest law had been issued in 1992 followed by community forestry instructions in 1995. Mr. Sein remarked that a holistic and integrated approach would lead to the successful implementation of any field programmes and human resource development in participatory forest management. Such an approach, he felt, would contribute to sustainable forest management.

B.3.6 Mr. I. S. Karki, Director General, Department of Forests, His Majesty's Government of Nepal
Empowerment of local communities essential for participatory forest management

Mr. Karki indicated that, in keeping with the shift in forest policy in the countries of the region, Nepal had become one of the first countries in the world to empower local communities to protect, manage, and utilise forest resources. Community forestry in Nepal, he stated, is accorded the highest priority in Nepal's forestry sector programmes and almost half of the budgetary allocations were earmarked for this programme.

Mr. Karki added that he and his colleagues were happy to be in such a beautiful venue and that

they were particularly looking forward to the discussions in the workshop. He said he was confident that the workshop would provide an excellent opportunity to learn from each other's experiences, successes, and, perhaps, shortcomings.

Mr. Karki believed that the workshop would also be an important milestone in further strengthening HIFCOM—the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Forum for Forest Conservation and Management. He thanked ICIMOD and the Chinese hosts for their generous hospitality.

B.3.7 Mr. Rafiq Ahmed, Inspector General of Forests, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Pakistan
The need to identify strategies for the mountain people of the Himalayas

Mr. Rafiq Ahmed said that this workshop had brought together a host of forestry professionals, policy-makers, and planners to share experiences and develop future strategies. He felt that it was important to identify strategies for the well-being of the mountain people of the Himalayas. He added that the use of technologies and of indigenous knowledge for resource conservation was important to alleviate rural poverty. He thanked ICIMOD and the South West Forestry College for organizing the workshop and said he was confident that the workshop would produce tangible recommendations.