

1 Background

The enormous population pressure has posed new challenges to the existence of the fragile ecosystems of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) region. This difficult terrain, with its specialised niches supporting a distinct and rich biodiversity, is inhabited by more humans and cattle than it can support. The region is vital for India's geography and demography, as it is the place of origin of the rivers Ganges, Yamuna, Jhelum, Chenab, and Brahmaputra in the north that flow through the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura and provide water to basins supporting two-thirds of India's population.

The inhabitants of the mountains generally live far from the more developed plains, and the

hardships of survival pose many challenging questions. The unregulated overexploitation of some species, primitive practices of farming, and unregulated extraction of forest resources are posing severe threats to the survival of the region's vital ecosystems. The livelihood of people in these states is highly dependent on the forests. Although most of the states have satisfactory forest cover, foresters have to evolve strategies to sustain the potential of these areas; and a host of social problems like out-migration and alcohol consumption are proving to be disabling factors that loom large in the future of upland societies.

For the reasons outlined above, forest managers have decided to assign a special priority to, and involve people actively in, the management of forest resources. At present, a Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach has been notified

Table 1.1: Land and Forest Cover of Indian States in the HKH

State	Geographical Area (sq. km.)	Forest Cover (sq. km.)	Forest Cover as % of Total Land
J&K	222,235	20,440	9.1
Himachal Pradesh	55,673	12,521	63.6
Uttar Pradesh	294,411	33,994	17.5
Sikkim	7,096	3,129	37.3
West Bengal	88,752	8,349	13.4
Meghalaya	22,429	15,657	42.3
Assam	78,438	23,824	39.2
Arunachal Pradesh	83,743	68,602	61.5
Nagaland	16,579	14,221	52
Manipur	22,327	17,418	67.9
Mizoram	21,081	18,775	75.6
Tripura	10,486	5,546	60

Source: State of Forest Report 1997, Forest Survey of India

by eight of the twelve states in the HKH region (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The aim is to offer a sustainable approach to managing the resources. In the past, in some states, the local inhabitants have exhibited concern and care

for management, thus these resolutions are set in an enabling environment. Even so, human resource development will be one of the most important activities in triggering the success of the JFM process.

Table 1.2: The Trained IFS Cadre in the Indian States of the HKH

State	IFS Cadre	SFS Inducted in the IFS	JFM-GO	Year
J&K	100	4	Issued	1992
Himachal Pradesh	107	4	Issued	1993
Utter Pradesh	283	5	Issued	1995
Sikkim	34	1	Not Issued	
West Bengal	97		Issued	1989
Meghalaya	27		Not Issued	
Aassam	91		Issued	1997
Arunachal Pradesh	34	1	Issued	1997
Nagaland	33	1	Issued	1997
Manipur	44	4	Not Issued	
Mizoram	19	4	Not Issued	
Tripura	44	2	Issued	1991