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Development Experiences and Options in a Hill Region: The Case of Uttarakhand, U.P., India

G. S. Mehta

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Preface

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G. S. Mehta

MEI Series No. 97/4

The paper is being published by ICIMOD in order to stimulate thinking and discussion on developing such approaches.

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August 1997

Preface

This paper reviews the development approach and strategies adopted in Uttarakhand, a small hilly part of the large state of Uttar Pradesh in India, which is mostly covered by plains. The paper particularly examines the extent to which the specificities of terrain, resource endowment, and the relative advantages of the region have been reflected in development planning. The paper concludes that regional characteristics have not been adequately appreciated and incorporated into development approaches and programmes, and that programmes have been mostly extensions of those formulated for the predominantly plains' areas of the state as a whole. Issues of integration between environment and development and between infrastructure and economic activities have thus received little attention. A misplaced attraction to efforts to develop all sectors and activities, rather than promoting a regional advantages, niche-based, and specialised activity structure, characterises the plans and programmes for the development of the region. As a result, even genuine concern on the part of planners and the significantly large inflow of public funds allocated to the development of the region through the successive Five Year Plans have not resulted in sustainable development and alleviation of poverty. A lead-sector approach is, therefore, proposed.

The paper is being published by ICIMOD in order to stimulate thinking and discussion on developing such approaches.

The author, Dr. G.S. Mehta of the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow, India, began work on this paper while on a short-term assignment at ICIMOD during June-August 1996. Drafts of the paper were commented upon extensively by Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Deputy Director General; Dr. Tej Partap, Head, Mountain Farming Systems' Division; and myself, at ICIMOD. The author has tried to incorporate these comments in the present, vastly revised, version, but the conclusions and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author.

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Abstract

This paper argues for an integrated and lead-sector based approach for the development of Uttarakhand, a small hilly area of the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. It tries to identify sectors and activities that could lead to environmentally friendly and sustainable development and broaden income and employment opportunities for the local people. It does not purport to be a comprehensive planning document for Uttarakhand, but suggests an approach, with certain illustrations, that could provide a more suitable alternative to the past strategies.

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