

Chapter One

Introduction to the Workshop

Background

Hill/mountain areas all over the world share common characteristics in terms of rapid population growth, patterns of resources use that lead to unsustainability, rapid degradation of the natural resource base, general insensitivity of development interventions in hill/mountain environments, and development trends that appear to be concomitant with resource degradation. Despite accelerated development efforts, these negative trends are much more pronounced in agriculture (including land-based activities such as cropping, horticulture, forestry, livestock-rearing, etc) which sustains most of the hill/mountain population. The whole situation, therefore, calls for a fresh look at the approaches and strategies adopted for the development of the hill/mountain areas.

The above scenario forms the background to ICIMOD's applied research in the field of hill/mountain agriculture. Considering the apparent negative trends as indicators of unsustainability, ICIMOD's Mountain Farming Systems' (MFS) Programme commenced work on the identification and understanding of the factors and processes contributing to them, as a first step towards arresting and reversing these negative trends.

Today, several indicators of unsustainability, i.e., persistent negative trends, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts' (CHT) region are emerging in terms of degradation of the resource base, decline in production flows, and reduced opportunities for sound resource management practices.

As such, the workshop was planned as a first step towards continuing the above task and expanding the Mountain Farming Systems' programme into the main hilly areas of Bangladesh; with the aim of facilitating sustainable development of agriculture in this region through identification and adoption of

technological and institutional options that are appropriate to its potentials and limitations. The workshop was intended to give an opportunity to all those involved in the development and welfare of the people and environment of the region to sit together for in-depth analysis of past experiences and reorient future strategies, wherever necessary. To ICIMOD and international development agencies, it offered an opportunity to choose priority areas for facilitating sustainable development of the region in collaboration with national agencies.

Objectives

The main objective of the workshop was to analyse public policies and programmes in order to understand their sustainability/ unsustainability implications and suggest reorientations accordingly. Furthermore, the workshop had other operational goals as indicated below.

- To assess the agricultural and related development policies and programmes for the hilly areas of the CHT.
- To identify available knowledge and information about the CHT and to develop a better understanding of the area and its people in order to help formulate and implement appropriate agricultural and related development strategies.
- To guide ICIMOD's approaches and priorities for collaborative work in Bangladesh.
- To continue efforts in developing comparative perspectives of agricultural development in different countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region and in facilitating research for replicable experiences.
- To promote interactions among researchers and development planners/ experts from Bangladesh and ICIMOD in order to facilitate future exchange and collaboration.

Apart from the analysis and review of papers, the principal output of the workshop was the bringing together of a whole host of national and local level government development organisations working in the CHT for the first time.

Collaborating Organisations

The Chittagong Hill Tracts' Development Board (CHTDB)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts' Development Board was established in January 1976 with the aim of accelerating socioeconomic development in the Chittagong Hill Tracts' region. The Board, assisted by a Consultative Committee and represented by tribal and non-tribal leaders, is responsible for policy formulation, planning, and coordination of multisectoral development programmes. It has so far implemented 1,007 schemes worth Taka* 456.53 million, through its Annual Development Programme fund from 1976 to 1993/94, covering sectors such as social welfare, education, road construction, agriculture, sports and culture, building/construction, cottage industries, and others.

Through the *Joutha Khamar* (collective farming) scheme, based on planting of horticultural crops, 3,487 landless tribal families were settled and each family was allotted five acres of sloping land. Through another horticulture-based "Integrated *Jhumia* Rehabilitation Programme," 410 tribal families were settled at the cost of Tk 19.3 million and 1,070 families of tribal fishermen were rehabilitated and provided with fishing nets and boats. The UNICEF-assisted "Integrated Community Development Programme" was launched with an allocation of Tk 270 million from 1985 to June 1995.

Under the Special Five-Year Plan period from 1984/85 to 1990/91, the Board, as a coordinating agency with different collaborating departments, spent Tk 2,803.7 million on different schemes; and these included roads, telecommunications, power development, health and family planning, education and vocational training, sports and culture, cottage industries, tourism, agriculture,

horticulture, forestry, fisheries, and livestock development. During this plan period, 1,870 tribal families were settled and afforestation was undertaken on 7,600 hectares of steep slopes.

The biggest project so far undertaken by the Board is the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-financed CHT Development Project (multi-sectoral) comprised of 11 components. The aim of the project was to create necessary conditions for long-term socioeconomic development. Two thousand landless and marginal tribal families belonging to the *Chakma*, *Marma*, and *Tripura* and other communities were settled and provided with necessary facilities under the Upland Settlement Scheme.

Under the project, each settled family received the inheritance rights of 1.8 hectares of land for rubber plantation, 0.8 of a hectare for agroforestry and horticulture, and 0.1 of a hectare as homestead land. Another 300 families were settled under the Afforestation and Settlement Component of the project on 4,000 hectares of sloping land. The settlement scheme sought to address the socioeconomic and environmental problems of the region and succeeded in attracting landless tribal families.

The CHTDB has been entrusted with the implementation of the ICIMOD-assisted project on "Sloping Agricultural Land Technology" (SALT) and other "Appropriate Technologies for Soil Conserving Farming Systems" (ATSCFS) which consist of agroforestry-based, land husbandry of the uplands with soil conservation and food production measures. A Geographical Information Systems' (GIS) centre is also being established in the CHTDB office at Bandarban with the financial assistance of the ICIMOD-MENRIS (Mountain Environment and Natural Resources' Information Service) programme.

In addition, the National Workshop on Development Experiences and Prospects in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was organised jointly by the Special Affairs' Division (SAD), Bangladesh Institute of Development Strategy (BIDS) and CHTDB. A study on institutional strengthening for sustainable agriculture in the CHT has also been undertaken by BIDS with financial assistance from ICIMOD.

* There are 40.3 Taka = 1 US\$

The Special Affairs' Division (SAD), of the Prime Minister's Office, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Special Affairs' Division, under the Prime Minister's Office, has the overall national responsibility for the development of the CHT. It provides development funds and coordinates the development activities of different national agencies in the CHT.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

ICIMOD is the first international centre in the field of mountain area development. It was founded out of widespread recognition of the alarming environmental degradation of mountain habitats and the consequent increasing impoverishment of mountain communities. A coordinated and systematic effort on an international scale was deemed essential to design and implement more effective development responses, based on an integrated approach to

mountain development and mountain environmental management. The Hindu Kush-Himalayan (HKH) Region covers all or parts of eight participating countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Nepal, extending over 3,500 kilometres from east to west and containing a population of more than 120 million people from mountain farming communities.

According to ICIMOD's Statutes, the primary objectives of the Centre shall be "to help promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations, especially in the HKH Region." In pursuing its mandate, the role of ICIMOD is not that of a traditional research institute nor that of an implementor of development projects. Its role can best be defined as that of a facilitator of development operating at the interface between research and development activities.