

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses relations between forests and the mixed farming system in the Middle Hills of Nepal, and reviews recent developments in forestry, particularly in light of the experiences of the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project. Since 1978, this project has been exploring ways of introducing effective forest management into two Middle Hills districts. While the experiment is a continuing one, a review of experience to date is felt to be valuable in contributing to the overall exchange of information. The lessons learned may have relevance for land managers and researchers in other areas.

The largely rural population in Nepal makes heavy demands on the forests for subsistence (Gilmour and Applegate 1984; Mahat,

Griffin and Shepherd 1987a;b). Forests are the main source of fuelwood for cooking and heating, fodder for livestock, timber for building construction, and a range of minor products.

Nepal can be divided into three broad geographic zones: the Terai, Middle Hills and high mountains, including the Himalaya (Figure 1). For administrative purposes the country is divided into a number of regions, development zones and districts. The districts are divided further on the basis of population into panchayats. A village panchayat is a political and administrative body made up of nine wards, usually containing 3000-4000 people living in several villages. A Pradhan Pancha (village leader) is elected from among the ward representatives.

Plate 2. Resistant stand of *Pinus roxburghii* with little regeneration; development and degraded shrub forest in the background.

