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**CONTRACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN MIYI COUNTY,
SICHUAN, CHINA**

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Yu Dafu, Wang Fei, Li Jiguang,
Huang Xiyi, and Li Ling**

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FOREWORD

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FOREWORD

The discussion paper presented here, by Chen Guojie and colleagues, entitled "Contractual Reponsibility System and Rural Development in Miyi County, Sichuan, China" constitutes one of six case studies initiated by ICIMOD in conjunction with the Programme on Organisation and Management of Rural Development.

This programme focused primarily on the organisational resources and their relationship to the management of natural resources for sustainable development and increased productivity in mountainous areas. Across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Mountains, rural development projects are relying on different strategies for the achievement of the above goal. These strategies are being implemented within a given macro-institutional and legal framework; presumably with adequate attention given to the sociocultural context. The framework and the context limit, as well as offer, possibilities to development agencies. The purpose of the case studies was to examine innovative institutional strategies implemented in projects (carried out by governmental agencies or nongovernmental organisations) and also to analyse and assess the utility and effectiveness of indigenous resource management systems.

I would like to thank the Aga Khan Foundation for the partial financial support in running the programme. I am also grateful for the assistance we received from the Nepal-Australia Forestry Project, the Dhading District Development Project, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the Pak-German Self Help Project. The programme execution from ICIMOD's side was carried out by Dr. Anis Dani (now with AKRSP) and Dr. Deepak Bajracharya.

ICIMOD was also fortunate to have engaged in collaboration with professionals from various national institutions and project implementing agencies in China, Nepal, and Pakistan. Mutual consultations were held at various planning workshops and orientation sessions in Kathmandu and at the project sites. The participating researchers eventually agreed on the methodological framework and the set of questions that they would try to address. Sufficient flexibility was left, so that, at the discretion of researchers, responses could be made to site-specific situations.

Research Methods. A combination of techniques was used during the course of the research that lasted between six months to one year.

- o Collation and analysis of existing data from government and project records.
- o Selected open-ended interviews with relevant government officials, project personnel, and key resource persons from the region.
- o Field investigations in 8-12 villages within each project area, selected purposively to cover the various strata, the variable impact of development activities, and a range of resource management activities; rapid appraisal techniques were developed and each village was visited two or three times, altogether for about 7 days, to obtain details of specific components after preparation of an initial village profile.
- o Participant observation of project activities.

The key questions that the researchers were trying to address included the following:

- o Under what circumstances do existing resource management systems undergo institutional innovations?
- o What elements of existing resource management systems can intervening agencies build on: tenurial arrangements? property relationships? organizational structures? functionaries?
- o How do different kinds of interventions compare in terms of their ability to generate sustainable development and sound environmental management?
- o How does the user group internalize the benefits and costs of using the resource? How are risks shared ? If benefits are not equally distributed, how are the losers compensated ?
- o How does the user group ration a scarce resource?
- o How does the user group respond to development opportunities and entrepreneurial endeavours?

Influencing Factors. In addition, the following set of questions, which emerged from the reviews and research already conducted by ICIMOD, were also proposed for investigation during the course of the study:

- o Is the propensity of user investment in future returns related to the resource value, i.e., to the perceived value of the resource?
- o Does the tenurial security of the resource to the user influence the time horizon of local resource management?
- o If actual users have more responsibility for management decisions over their resources, are the resources more likely to be managed for long-term productivity at less cost to the supporting agencies?
- o Does increased equity in distribution of resource benefits encourage greater participation by user groups?
- o Will a resource management function be performed more efficiently if the performer is accountable to the local user group?

Women's Role in Resource Management. A third set of key questions, which appear to be of critical importance, deals with the role of women in resource management. These are:

- o What role do women have in resource management?
- o Is the role of women of particular importance in the use of certain resources, e.g., forests, grasslands, and water ? If so, do they have any role in decision-making about, and the management of, those resources ?
- o What are the constraints on women's involvement in resource management?
- o How do women perceive their own role in regard to resource management? How do they feel their participation can be improved ?

While the study presented here attempts to touch on all the preceding issues, all of them have not been treated equally. The subject matter focuses upon the institution of different kinds of management system, in China, and their specific effects upon the village communities studied. While the approach gives a comprehensive background to the organisation and management in specific farming communities in Miyi County, the subsequent analysis undertaken has underlined the relevance of the findings to the wider rural community. I am confident that readers will find this approach both interesting and enlightening, especially in light of the conclusions drawn and recommendations made by Chen Guojie and his colleagues.

Readers might be interested in knowing that all the six case studies mentioned above, including the one presented here, are brought out in the Discussion Paper Series of the Mountain Population and Employment Division (i.e., MPE Series No. 6 through 11). We would be happy if you would write to us with your comments and suggestions and join in the discussion on these important issues. ICIMOD is organising an International Workshop on the Role of Institutions in Mountain Resource Management, 1-4 May 1990, in Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan, to discuss many of the issues brought out by the case studies and provide a forum for interaction among researchers, development practitioners, and policy makers. The results of the Workshop are forthcoming shortly after the event takes place. ICIMOD is hopeful that these efforts would be useful in generating dialogues on organisational and institutional issues of integrated mountain development.

The views and opinions expressed in the report are our own and we take full responsibility for them.

E.F. Tacke
Director

Chen Guojie

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This report, submitted to ICIMOD, is the result of a study on organization and management of rural development in Miyi County, Sichuan, China. All members of the study team spent an appreciable amount of time in the field conducting investigations and collecting and analysing data. Chen Guojie was in charge of the team and the study project. He wrote Chapters 1 and 6, and parts of Chapters 2 and 4. Yu Dafu, Wang Fei, and Li Jiguang wrote parts of Chapters 2 and 4. Chapter 3 was written by Huang Xiyi and Li Ling. Chen Guojie also assumed the task of designing, organizing, revising, and finalizing the report.

We are grateful to Dr. Deepak Bajracharya and Dr. Anis A. Dani for their guidance, encouragement, and support. Dr. Bajracharya has, in addition, been most helpful in editing the original draft and improving on it to a considerable extent. We are also grateful to ICIMOD for the extensive language editing done on the original draft. We would like to thank Miyi County government, cadres, and villagers for their cooperation.

The ideas and opinions expressed in the report are our own and we take full responsibility for them.

Chen Guojie

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