No. 3

Forest Participation Series

New Forestry Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh

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Celebrating Twenty Five Years 1983-2008

International Institute for Environment and Development

Preface

Old alliances and new collaborations for local forest management

Today more than ever, government foresters need to pursue policies and create institutions which can control predatory loggers and secure the intergenerational public interest in some form of national forest estate. But they also need to abandon the pretence that they can do everything else besides. Relationships between people who live with trees and foresters who have formal responsibility to look after those trees have always been uneasy. Foresters in many places are now having to re-think their roles in the face of public hostility and disappearing forests. Increasingly they are looking to become supporters of forest management by local people.

The first five papers in this Forest Participation Series[1] illustrate the range of relationships emerging between government foresters and initiatives for community-based forest management. Some of these are entirely local initiatives which have been responded to by foresters. Others are efforts led by forest departments to initiate change and meet local needs. The case studies describe the origins and effectiveness of these initiatives. In all cases a parallel story is told of how the forestry institutions have themselves adapted to changing circumstances and needs.

Mary Owusu Agyemang (paper no. 1) describes how the **Ghana** Forestry Department has acknowledged and overcome the distrust of villagers in the management of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). As in many places, NTFPs are extremely important for people living near forests in Ghana. Yet travel to distant forestry offices to pay for the required permit for collecting wrapping leaves was an unacceptable burden for the women around one forest reserve. Fears that a free permit experiment, introduced by some innovative Forestry Department staff, would lead to all kinds of unlawful activities proved unfounded. The leaf gathering women organised efficiently and protected gathering sites from fires and weeds. The author also describes the way in which the Forestry Department has adapted its ways of working through experiments like this, spearheaded by a Collaborative Forest Management Unit.

Jeanette Clarke, Saiti Makuku, Philip Mukwenhu and **Josephine Ncube** (paper no. 2) describe woodland management initiatives that have developed in a communal area in **Zimbabwe**. It is argued that government woodlot programmes have been largely unsuccessful and fail to address the real resource needs of communities. It is in this context that local communities have evolved their own changing woodland management strategies. These practices are entirely local in their origin, usually developed first by individuals who then lead by example and demonstration to others. Participatory research methods were used in the study and the authors discuss how an emphasis on both methodology and

[1] Paper nos. 1 to 4 stem from presentations made to the forestry session of 'In Local Hands': an international conference on community based sustainable development, held at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, from 4-8 July 1994. The forestry session was facilitated by Dr Gill Shepherd of ODI, and the conference was hosted by IIED.

findings allows a greater understanding of how to document, promote and build on existing resource management practices at local level. The early stages of cooperation with these locally-derived practices by government forest extension staff is also described.

Minkesh Paul Sood's paper (no. 3) is written from the viewpoint of an "enlightened" forest officer in **Himachal Pradesh** state in **India.** He describes change initiated by certain sections at "the top" of the state Forest Department in response to lessons learned from the past 50 years of attempts to resolve its conflicting roles of extension and policing. Sood describes the careful state level preparation for adoption of the Joint Forest Management approach first outlined by the federal government in 1990. An intriguing picture is painted of a Forest Department grappling with the challenges of institutional reorientation towards collaboration with communities. Slow and sporadic progress is being made in training foresters in relevant skills, and there has clearly been an attempt to institutionalise a system for communication, feedback and information sharing in an otherwise strongly regimented forest service. Forest Departments are far from being monolithic entities. Sood's paper highlights the existence of a range of perspectives and enthusiasms at various levels of the Forest Department and the very real structural impediments - low pay, heavy workloads etc - to adopting new ways.

Madhu Sarin and her colleagues in **SARTHI** (paper no. 4), an NGO, describe locally-derived initiatives in **Gujarat** state, **India,** in response to forest resource scarcities. Across a wide area, a diverse range of organisational forms and access controls have emerged, with group membership consisting of actual resource users irrespective of formal administrative village boundaries. The strength and effectiveness of the groups lies in consensus based, open decision-making with equitable sharing of costs and benefits among all members. Their major weakness lies in the exclusion of women from their functioning resulting in women's needs for forest produce, particularly woodfuel, being overlooked in forest management priorities. This results in highly inequitable distribution of the opportunity costs of protection between women and men, and puts in doubt the long term sustainability of their forest regeneration.

This case study is more one of collaborative management *despite* the state, rather than *with* the state. The authors argue that whilst Forestry Department field staff look with pleasure at the "wave in favour of forest protection (sweeping) across villages in the area", villagers do not recognise the Forestry Department. Villagers "do not want to fell their regenerated forests ever again", since the memory of previous large-scale felling during periods of resource scarcity is too strong. And whilst the Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach demands the sharing of benefits - the villagers do not want to share with the Forestry Department at all. The village forestry groups want the right to organise themselves as they see fit, and authority to honour their responsibilities. The challenge for the Forestry Department is clear: to become responsive to locally-initiated forest management by developing powers of facilitation rather than direction.

Calvin Nhira and **Frank Matose** (paper no. 5) develop an analysis of the JFM

approach in India in relation to current and potential "resource-sharing" initiatives in forest reserves in Zimbabwe. Whilst noting major differences in forestry context between the two countries, they point to a number of lessons for Zimbabwe which have been learned the hard way in India. They discuss the influence of policy, the roles of local institutions and mediating NGOs, and the incentives for local involvement. Whilst compared to some places in India the economic interest of local people in reserved woodlands in Zimbabwe may not be high, the subsistence benefits derived may be crucial for poor households. Thus far the Zimbabwe resource sharing scheme has been premised on the state's need to improve forest protection. The authors conclude that a re-orientation is required towards greater community control through negotiation of rights and responsibilities of communities, the state and local institutions. An adaptive management approach is the key - with ways to monitor and learn from experience.

Each of the papers in this series will be of interest to field practitioners of local forest management because they contain details of the steps taken, their successes and failures. Diversity is celebrated here; it is not the intention to derive generalisable lessons. However, certain themes stand out:

- indigenous managers exist, with rules and practices well attuned to local conditions, but they have suffered from a history of state denial of their abilities

- forest departments are changing; some seeing local management as merely a cheap option in hard-pressed times, others seeking a genuine alternative to ineffective forest protection and resource theft

- both costs and benefits need to be internalised; often the costs of management are internalised within a community, but the benefits are enjoyed elsewhere, ie. if communities are protecting, they should receive genuine incentives (products, guaranteed access to resources or compensation)

- evolutionary not blueprint approaches are needed; recognizing the diversity and complexity of local context, and the importance of exploration and learning

- belief and recognition of ownership of the resource for those expected to manage it is fundamental; local management requires local involvement in decision making, and local institutions providing its authority

- specific consideration of equity amongst participants is needed

- given the above, collaborative management is difficult to bring about, and will clearly not work everywhere; care should be taken not to over-sell its potential where there is little motivation or capacity for its delivery.

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New Forestry Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh

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Note on author

Minkesh Paul Sood is a professional Indian forester who has been working for the Department of Forest Farming and Conservation in Himachal Pradesh, in the Western Himalayas, for about 12 years. After working as a field forester for two years, he served in the Silvicultural Research Division carrying out research in nursery and plantation techniques of tree species and seed multiplication/ plantation of improved varieties of grasses and clovers in temperate regions of the State. Then at Forestry HQ (1989-92), he was associated with the project preparation teams who formulated four (WB, ODA, GTZ, SIDA) externally aided projects and nine Government of India funded projects in HP. He is also a guest faculty for Forestry Training Schools and HP Institute of Public Administration on participatory planning for natural resources management and for developing training material on JFM. He was also a member of the Joint Evaluation Team for USAID-HALWD Irrigation Project (1992) and is a member of the State-level Standing Committee for Participatory Irrigation Management and JFM Working Group.

Minkesh Paul Sood is also a founder member and Key Resource Person for Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samithi, a frontier NGO involved in the Total and Post-Literacy Campaign; and the Working Group on Natural Resource Management; an umbrella organisation of Himachal NGOs involved in Participatory and Sustainable Natural Resource Management. In his present capacity as a member of the JFM Support Team, he has facilitated reorientation and participatory training workshop and study tours and attachments for about 150 local and district-level foresters. He has done pioneering work in facilitating and practising JFM in its present form in Kullu, working directly with field staff and local people in pilot JFM locations. He has produced a series of working documents and operational guidelines for practising JFM. He is also involved in action research on 'Policy and Practice of Forest Management through Local Institutions' through a research degree at the University of Wales, Swansea, UK.

Other titles in this series are:

No. 1
The Leaf Gatherers of Kwapanin, Ghana
Mary M.O. Agyemang

No. 2
Supporting Local Initiatives in Woodland Regeneration: a case study from Ntabazinduna communal land, Zimbabwe
J.M. Clarke, S.J. Makuku, P. Mukwenhu and J. Ncube

No. 4
The View from the Ground: Community Perspectives on Joint Forest Management in Gujarat, India
Madhu Sarin and SARTHI

No. 5
Joint Forest Management and Resource Sharing: Lessons from India for Zimbabwe
Calvin Nhira and Frank Matose

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh (HP) straddles the mid-mountain zone between the relatively low altitude Siwalik hills to the south and high mountains and alpine areas to the north, in the western Himalayas in north India. Himachal is ecologically enormously important for northwestern India and eastern Pakistan as all 55,673 km² of its Himalayan area forms upper watersheds of four major tributaries (Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) of the river Indus and (Yamuna) of the river Ganges. The population of the State is about 5.1 million (1991 census). Over 90 per cent of the population lives in rural areas and is predominantly dependent on natural resources for its livelihood. Any new intervention or approach which involves forests concerns local people, as forests are central to their lives and to the protection of hill farming and watershed systems.

Historically the traditional customary rights of the people living in and around the forests, as well as those of migratory pastoralists, allowed them to use the produce of the forests for their livelihood.

Change in Indian Forest Policy at the National Level

The honest confession and birth of Joint Forest Management

During the last three decades, plantations on large tracts, encroachment and allotments for cultivation have reduced the availability of open common-use lands in India. Due to increasing human and livestock population such lands became less capable of being a continuing source of supply of desired forest products. People became more dependent on reserved and protected forests, managed by the Forest Department, for their essential requirements (Luthra, 1994). This brought foresters into direct conflict with communities. Field foresters at the lower levels started facing difficulties in denying or even regulating access for rural communities. This was acknowledged by their middle level officers.

By the early 1970s, realising the ineffectiveness of the protection strategy inherited and practised by them, some innovative foresters across India experimented with new approaches. These foresters, instead of driving the people out, directly involved them in managing and protecting forest lands from illicit felling, grazing, fire and encroachment. In return, users were granted access to a variety of intermediate products and shares from final returns (e.g. 25 per cent in West Bengal). They jointly worked out product and income sharing arrangements. West Bengal, Haryana

and Gujarat took the lead in this direction in the 1970s, where Forest Protection Committees and societies were formed. Similar approaches were tried and developed in Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Changes in responsibility and roles resulted in villagers deciding the strategies for managing local resources. In Uttar Pradesh, villagers' action in protecting trees and asserting their rights gave birth to the "Chipko Movement".

The success of these experiments and movements influenced opinion throughout the country, and the forestry debate culminated in the formulation of a new National Forest Policy in 1988. This policy reversed the previous focus on timber production for commercial value. It now focuses on ensuring environmental stability, maintenance of ecological balance, and specifies that the domestic requirement of tribals and other poor people living within or near forests should be the "first charge" on forest produce.

In 1990, the Ministry of Environment and Forests complemented the 1988 policy with another government order to all states. The message was to adopt participatory forest management on degraded forest lands with communities and NGOs (the latter as possible facilitators). This was a major shift from the early history of authoritarian forest management. The order outlined guidelines for the development of mutually binding working arrangements between various partners. This official sanction to what is now known as Joint Forest Management (JFM) gave confidence and moral support to a growing number of forward looking foresters. As of 1995, fifteen states have issued specific orders on JFM to suit their particular needs and conditions.

Forest Policy and Practice in Himachal Pradesh

Established in 1948, the State Forest Department (FD) of Himachal Pradesh imposed rigorous management to undo perceived pre-Independence damage to forest resources. The State formulated its own forest policy in 1980, within the framework of the National Forest Policy of 1952. The State policy is yet to be revised in light of the 1988 National Forest Policy. The State aims to protect the Himalayan watersheds and bring 50 per cent of the area under tree cover by the year 2000, besides meeting all local requirements. At present, the FD is responsible for managing 67 per cent of the State's geographical area[1]. The FD undertook a massive afforestation programme as well as a series of legislative steps to conserve and enhance the forest wealth and continued with management practices evolved over a century ago through working plans. But since Independence, forest resources have come under increased pressure resulting from increased population (which has more than doubled since

[1] 37,561km² out of 55,673km²

Independence), local needs, changing policies and the need for modernisation of a fast developing state. The pressure has been further intensified by improved infrastructure and communication[2], by commercialisation, and the diversification of the economy, including fast expanding tourism. The splitting of joint families, partitioning and allotment of land, and recent prosperity have all put additional direct pressures on forest resources and have undermined traditional local responsibilities towards those resources.

Existing Forest Organisation in Himachal Pradesh

There is a strong tradition of forest management which is perpetuated by forest service training (which has not seen any significant changes in the last few decades). At present about 4,400 foresters and about 2,000 supporting staff are involved at different levels in conserving the forests lands in Himachal Pradesh. The table below shows the existing departmental and field positions.

The positions of DFOs and above are supervisory and advisory, whilst Forest Rangers (and below to Forest Guards) are responsible for implementation. At

Name of Unit	Officer In-Charge	Average (ha) Jurisdiction	No. of Sub-Units
Department of Forest Farming and Conservation	Principal Chief Conservator	statewide	5 sectoral Chief Conservators
(sectoral) Wing	Chief Conservator	sector (eg. wildlife)	8 Circles
Circle	Conservator	600,000	4-5 Divisions
Division	District Forest Officer	120,000	4-5 Ranges
Division	Assistant Conservator of Forests	120,000	Facilitate works
Range	Forest Ranger	24,000	3-4 Blocks
Block	Deputy Ranger	6,000	3-4 Beats
Beat	Forest Guard	1,500	Forests, Villages

[2] Road length increased from 500 km. in 1949 to 21,585 km. in 1989, and the area under fruit trees increased from 1,000 ha. in 1948 to 1,50,000 ha. in 1988-89 (Verma and Pratap, 1990, as referred to in Kirk and Hobley, 1991)

present, annual planning by field foresters focuses on funding requirements, hardly reflecting 'bottom up' activity planning. The major activities, apart from forest protection, include raising nurseries and plantations, carrying out other forestry operations (thinning etc), wildlife management, constructing buildings, roads and bridges in the interior, and grassland and soil conservation measures.

In all these operations, the forest guard (the village based functionary) plays the most important role. His[3] job primarily includes patrolling of forests and organising labour for implementing all activities mentioned above[4]. He negotiates with the panchayats to obtain consent for closing forest areas[5]. Forest guards (FGs) also regulate access and manage the various rights of the villagers, and maintain and send all information requested by the senior levels. The forest ranger and his deputy provide support through close interaction and frequent visits. Incidentally, these three lowest level officials are the only uniformed positions in the Department. Participatory approaches have imposed an extra responsibility on range staff, ie. initiation and continuation of dialogue with villagers, without changing their other contradictory roles (eg. policing). Further, this transition has not been supported by a complementary retraining programme. But the FG's village base, responsibilities and role as regulator and arbitrator makes him the first point of contact and interface between villagers and the Department. Despite their contentious roles, forest guards are often popular and acceptable in the HP villages.

Conflicts in relations between villagers and foresters arise from various directions. From the villagers' point of view, foresters are responsible for:

- closing of their grazing areas through plantations;
- inability to rehabilitate pastures and grasslands;
- severe fines for petty offences;
- favouring influential people in granting rights and furthering their interests;
- danger to livestock and their own lives from wildlife (eg. leopards).

From the foresters' point of view, villagers are responsible for:

- extensive damage to plantations and regeneration areas by uncontrolled grazing and unregulated lopping;
- use and abuse of rights over and above villagers' actual requirements;
- intentional forest fires started by villagers or originating from their fields;

[3] Taking the liberty to use 'he' and 'his' as all territorial forest guards are male.
[4] About 12 million persondays are generated every year through forestry operations and these result in providing a notable off-farm employment to farmers.
[5] Forest Department at a given time cannot close more than one third of the total forest area in and around a village. This is to ensure availability of adequate grazing ground for village livestock. The areas can only be closed with the consent of concerned Panchayat.

- villagers' connivance with smugglers and poachers.

The reluctance to change departmental training has resulted in continuation of regimented and hierarchical services and procedures, by what is still an authoritarian techno-bureaucracy. The training tends to segregate working levels. This inhibits team work, feedback and exchange of information. Meetings tend to look backward for progress reporting rather than discussing problems and solutions. Present performance appraisal methods offer little to achievers and have no scope for evaluating participatory performances.

Professionalism, as described by Chambers (1983) is conspicuous, and like any other department, tasks are carried out according to orders from above. Demands from below have to be modified and adjusted as budgeting procedures do not provide the necessary flexibility. The multiplicity of jobs and large jurisdictions prevent longer visits to, and discussions with, client groups. Women and the poorest are rarely reached, and are often overshadowed by influential people during short, structured meetings. Fear of failure, derision, transfers and other duties deter even the small minority of user-sensitive foresters, who have little leeway for individual initiative.

The service is dominated by men, there being only 30 women foresters in the department. Promotion is very hard to come by at the lower levels[6]. Trade unions at the lower levels strive weakly (being a "disciplined force") for better working and service conditions. The department is dominated by technicians and lacks multi-disciplinarity. All this points to a need for an institutional reorientation and restructuring of the department, to gain more trust and acceptability amongst rural communities, especially the poor.

Past History of FD-Community Relationships

Forest settlements and rights in Himachal Pradesh

The detailed forest settlement reports of the late 19th and early 20th century on village-level rights still form the basis for current legitimisation of rights. This basic framework is respected and honoured by villagers and foresters alike.

The various types of rights admitted under different settlements (Anderson, 1886) include:

- grazing cattle, sheep and goats;
- timber for building purposes;
- grass and tree leaves for fodder;
- manure;
- timber for agricultural and domestic implements;

[6] Forest guards generally work without prospects of promotion or salary increase.

- fuelwood, torchwood, charcoal and wood for cremation;
- medicinal and aromatic herbs and plant products;
- bamboo for basket making and other purposes; and
- stones, slates, earth, clay and limestone for building and other purposes.

These rights are described in full detail for each forest area separately. Since all these rights were and still are appended to cultivated lands, the right holders are identified not by individual names, but by the name of their villages. However, those who do not own land have no rights, and thus have to rely on common lands near habitations to satisfy their needs as long as other local people agree to such informal usage.

All the above rights were for domestic use, and not for commercial gain, except the right to medicinal and aromatic herbs. The latter is the only sellable right and income from such sales contributes to much needed cash in the hands of women who are the major collectors of these Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)[7]. With the passage of time, the original spirit of granting rights, especially timber for basic requirements, has been abused and people are selling all or part of it surreptitiously to supplement their income.

Although settlements succeeded in codifying user rights and thus protecting users from outside influences, the formalisation of rights on an individual basis has slowly broken down any existing collective control of forests (Hobley, 1992). The assured and guaranteed individual rights, especially in areas of availability, have made people complacent and reluctant to respond to any collective action. This has formed the basis of the "tragedy of the commons" in Himachal Pradesh.

Approaches by the Forest Department to establish village institutions - pre-JFM

First approach - Forest Cooperatives

The Cooperative Forest Societies (CFSs) in Kangra district were an example of an attempt by the government and foresters to associate villagers in the management of forests, about 50 years ago. They were formed following forest officers' acceptance, in 1935, that fast degrading Undemarcated Protected Forests (UPFs), Unclassed Forests (UFs) and shamlat (village common) lands could no longer be managed with the existing policy. The Commission set up by the Government of Punjab in 1937 investigated and recommended that villagers must be associated in the management of forests, and that profit and benefits from these forests must accrue to them, provided they agree to regular working plan management.

The government accepted the recommendations with some modifications and the first CFSs were formed in 1940. By 1971, when the government decided to stop the grants-in-aid to CFSs, 70 CFSs covering 23,556 ha. had been formed (Dhiman and

[7] Medicinal and aromatic herbs collected by right holders can be sold by them. The annual export of such plant products was about 38,000 quintals in 1991-92 (Source: Brochure on Forests of Himachal Pradesh, 1993).

Bhatia, 1990). The executive committee of the societies worked with the FD to implement working plans which mainly comprised closing forest lands for regeneration, detecting offences and settling disputes.

The membership of CFSs was limited to all heads of households paying land revenue, thus depriving women, the landless, village artisans and other non-agriculturists of membership. In this way the management of CFSs centred around landlords (ie. not user groups): this alienated a large section of society from participating in the protection and management of forests and thus from benefitting directly and legally from the forests. Also the duality and heaviness of control exercised by government through the Cooperative and Forest Departments, being controller of cooperatives (auditing of accounts etc.) and custodian of forests (original managers and planners) respectively, seems to have inhibited local initiative.

The CFSs were a novel and radical idea for the time. In retrospect rules might have been modified to allow participation of all users in planning, use and management of forest land resources. CFSs are 'officially' not active now, though there is evidence to suggest that people in many villages are still using the forest resources within the framework of CFSs. These CFSs provide an important body of experience for reference in the development of new participatory approaches.

Second approach - the TRUCO experience

A more significant attempt to secure peoples' participation in development work was made by an innovative multi-sector integrated project. The Indo-German Dhauladhar Project (IGDP), responding to the fact that problems in the Himalayas are of interdependent environmental and socio-economic character, developed a concept named TRUCO: an acronym for trust and confidence. TRUCO built up an integrated and holistic approach of all the departments with peoples' participation at all stages of the programme. The project had the ultimate objective of initiating a process of social change in the behaviour of people towards the resources, and adoption and sustenance of development processes. The project was implemented from 1980-89 in Binwa catchment, Kangra district of HP, in the foothills of the Dhauladhar mountain range. Forestry formed the core sector, strongly complemented by animal husbandry, agriculture, horticulture and soil conservation. The multi-disciplinary team included a social development section, which played a vital role in winning over villagers' trust and in ensuring a marriage of social skills with the project's techno-economic programme.

The project adopted a "key-unit" approach whereby development work began only in the villages where people made requests for partnership. These were selected based on locally devised criteria to foster further dialogue and communication between key villages and project staff, and key villages and outside villages. This was designed to ensure a uniform spread and distribution of activities over the whole project area.

The project recognised that local village organisations are the best change agent in a traditional mountain society, due to their capacity to influence present norms and attitudes of the people (apart from being powerful multiplicators and disseminators). It developed and strengthened existing village level institutions (VLIs) like Mahila Mandals (MMs: Women Clubs), Yuvak Mandals (YMs: Youth Clubs), Natak Mandals (Drama Clubs) and Panchayats and new ones like Gram Sudhar Sabha (VDCs: Village Development Committees).

The villagers constituted their own VDCs (53 VDCs and 73 MMs/YMs in all, in about 100 villages) where the existing village bodies such as panchayats were not taking any interest. Villages which asked for cooperation from the project were adopted after a series of meetings. The VDCs, with growing trust in the project staff and self-confidence within themselves, became partners in planning and implementing the programmes. With further increased competence, discipline and efficiency, the VDCs took on responsibility for bigger self-help activities. The VDCs identified the existing land and land tenure as they perceived it and then worked out a list of available options.

The important indicators of effective partnerships visible in different aspects of village life were:

- well stocked nurseries of plants preferred by villagers and planting of broad leaved trees to serve as future fodder banks;
- planting of community orchards and fodder crops;
- development of a more equitable system of distribution of grass strips as opposed to the "might is right" principles that had decided grazing rights previously;
- increased surpluses and returns to most households through livestock improvement and reduction programme;
- improved kitchen hygiene and safety through adoption of fuel efficient and smokeless *Dhauladhar chullahs* (stoves) by most households through mahila mandals;
- quantifiable increases in crop harvests brought about by increased knowledge and use of various inputs.

All these successes were attributable to identification of different users and their development and transformation into an effective local social institution. The TRUCO approach of the IGDP personnel was instrumental in mobilising villagers for collective action.

The project ended abruptly in 1989, on completion of the project period, and thus the last TRUCO principle of gradual withdrawal without disturbing the development process was not implemented. The line departments could not take over the responsibilities. The fallout was an instant break of the communication and dialogue that existed earlier, as well as lack of material inputs. As a result VDCs started losing confidence and collapsed or became dysfunctional.

In some villages, the control of VDCs' work was handed over to the panchayats which has not proved to be effective, due to other priorities and divisions along party political lines.

But more significant was the failure of the line departments to continue providing information, technical advice and funds for inputs (Dhiman and Bhatia, 1990). The handing over of assets and post-project responsibilities was merely mechanistic; the TRUCO approach did not get institutionalised because of an absence of dialogue between project personnel and line department staff. On termination of the project, it disappeared altogether with the subsequent transfer of the project staff and disengaging of about 40 village motivators, who had been specially trained in the TRUCO approach.

Third approach - Social Forestry

The 1970s saw the nationwide emergence of a modified approach to forest management for local needs, triggered by the recommendation of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976. The participating Indian states adopted this as social forestry. In Himachal Pradesh, social forestry was given impetus only in 1985 when the National Social Forestry (Umbrella) Project was started, with a budget of Rs. 570 million. The aim was to raise incomes and employment amongst the rural poor by increasing production of fuelwood, fodder and timber; and to arrest erosion of the natural environment caused by deforestation (USAID/World Bank, 1985, referred to in Kirk and Hobley, 1991). Activities included tree tenure for the poor and landless, community woodlots (self-help and rainfed), regeneration of degraded forests, farmers' nurseries and distribution of seedlings, and planting of a variety of trees on private non-arable lands.

Activities were to be implemented in consultation with villagers, or by villagers themselves. The Forest Department started the dialogue with villagers either through the panchayats or existing VLIs such as MMs etc. VDCs were set up in many villages. Lack of representation of local forest users and elite domination, like earlier CFSs, was evident in most cases. The decision to form VDCs was imposed and not community driven (Sharma, 1993). VDCs were more top down in their approach and local forest guards who were member secretaries of these VDCs formulated Integrated Resource Management Plans (IRMPs) without much consultation with VDC members. Participation was again limited to getting consent from VDCs and panchayats for closure of open access commonly-used lands and for choice of particular species (which were decided by the FD without much discussion with local people) (Sharma, 1993).

Unlike IGDP, this project was much larger in size and covered practically all 12 districts of HP. The project, surprisingly, adopted a separate overlapping social forestry (SF) organisation in 1990 when the project got an extension for two more years. On termination of the project in April, 1993, the SF divisions/ranges reverted back as territorial divisions/ranges. This caused confusion amongst lower staff and villagers.

The project achieved its objective of planting more than 100,000 ha. of plantations, but in the rush to achieve the physical targets, the participatory objective took the back seat and social and equity issues could not be

addressed. However, the project did succeed in making the following significant impacts:

- the recruitment of 25 female extension workers (Women Forest Guards) marked the entry of women to an otherwise male dominated service. They have proved to be very articulate and effective in developing a very good rapport with the mahila mandals;
- the project provided a timely and appropriate training ground for reorientation of foresters towards more participatory approaches (about 3000 forestry personnel and 4900 grassroots level workers and progressive farmers, including women, were trained). The project stimulated fresh thinking in the Department about its role and helped foresters to develop better communication and a new relationship with local people. These new skills are now being used for further experiments in the direction of joint management;
- the project (partly through its difficulties) has also been instrumental in attracting the Department's attention towards more diverse, mixed and local forestry. HPFD, recognising the need, relaxed restrictions on the use of certain species grown by farmers on their private lands.

Lessons Learnt from the Past

The three "approaches" discussed above have together contributed to a (continuing) process of change in forestry thinking and practice in HP. However, up to the 1990s, it has become clear that effective institutional arrangements have not really evolved to take over management responsibilities after the projects have withdrawn.

The following lessons emerge from the experience in HP with these approaches:

1 The need for understanding forest use practices (formal and informal), dependencies, vegetative conditions, local leadership and institutions, and the importance of the forest to the local and regional economy (especially to poor and wholly dependent households).

2 The need to reach, identify, consult and organise all actual users (women, poor, nearly landless farmers and migratory grazers) of natural resources.

3 The need to provide freedom to representative groups for prioritising and planning their activities and selecting their own *modus operandi*. Foresters should provide technical advice, without bureaucratic control, and act as process facilitators.

4 The need to respect and give effect to jointly agreed plans to achieve the desired outputs (not merely planting).

5 The need to ensure compensation to those who suffer most during the early phase of regeneration due to denied access and other restrictions.

6 A need for legislative frameworks for establishing such representative user groups.

7 A need to build capacities in existing staff lines for sustainability (as opposed to temporary structures).

8 The need for appropriate training programmes for field and middle level foresters.

9 A need for reorientation of the Forest Department for effective communication across its ranks and with communities.

10 A more flexible, pluralistic approach to joint planning as opposed to imposition of a blanket prescription of pre-determined components and strategy over the whole state.

11 Acquiring, mixing and applying contemporary technical knowledge with a more responsive and communicative social development approach.

The department now appears to be convinced that the process of Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) is the best alternative available for integrating participatory approaches in its work. But, learning from past experience in other states, no action was taken in haste either to issue a resolution or to try to implement it straightaway all over the state.

Attempts to Restructure the Forest Department

Participation of HP foresters in the National Workshop on JFM in 1990 was the beginning of the process of change. This coincided with the development of a project for Mandi and Kullu districts. The aim now is to test and develop participatory and improved approaches to forest land management by establishing and strengthening institutions at state and field level (ODA-DFFC, 1994).

The following eight events and components initiated since September 1992 have contributed to the reorientation process in the department.

1: Initial workshops and study tours included tours to JFM areas in India and to community forestry activities in Nepal, as well as workshops on JFM. These workshops were attended by senior and field level foresters (RFO to PCCF), NGOs and ODA representatives.

The working groups in the JFM workshops were unanimous in agreement on suggested priorities for the Forest Department:

- radical attitudinal change at all levels in the hierarchy through change in basic training curricula, reorientation, frequent workshops, seminars and extension oriented field training;
- more emphasis on education, training and extension for local people, school children and institutions;

- development and strengthening of local institutions and their partnership in all stages;
- identification of (i) pilot locations, (ii) user groups and their needs through PRA and RRA, and (iii) following this with an intensive implementation approach using micro-planning and (iv) developing pilot demonstration areas;
- modification of rules, regulations, acts and settlements.

2: Framework for JFPM - Government of HP resolution: The central government resolutions, issued by ten other states at that time, were studied and compared (Sood, 1992), as were the various field experiences and circumstances which led to further revision of these orders in some states. Building on a decade of experience and feedback from West Bengal, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, the FD drafted a JFPM resolution which encompassed the process of forming representative groups. This draft was further revised after a series of visits and discussions at various fora.

Finally an enabling government order for implementing JFPM in its present form and philosophy was issued by the Government of HP in May 1993. This order provides a better framework than the earlier ones and its special features are:

- taking the village as a unit, it ensures uniform representation of all households (all users, with 50 per cent quorum for decision making) and focuses on a special role for women (at least one woman from each household in the general group and 50 per cent in executive committee);
- it ensures initiation of JFPM as a process (rather than a blueprint), outlining procedure and stressing identification, investigation, communication for dissemination of the JFPM policy, negotiation through conflict resolution and consensus building, implementation through formalisation of a JFPM plan which is responsive to local needs;
- it outlines a possible mechanism for sharing of products; and
- it is a very short non-prescriptive order and thus provides flexibility to field staff to interpret it to suit particular field situations.

Learning from the past, no targets were set for establishment of JFPM groups.

3: Women as forest managers: Women, particularly in the hill society of Himachal Pradesh, are the prime collectors, processors and users of most non-timber forest products. In addition, they play key roles in livestock rearing, cultivation and domestic household chores which often go unnoticed. There are reportedly about 2600 Mahila Mandals functioning in the state (Dhiman, 1989). There are many scattered instances where these have successfully demonstrated their effectiveness in social forestry and other rural development programmes.

The State government, realising the department's constraints due to lack of

women staff in its positions of contact with villages, amended the rules to facilitate entry of women as forest rangers. With this done, women can now enter forest service at all levels. This induction process needs to be further strengthened to increase the number of women foresters at various levels.

4: Development of new curricula: A new training module was initially introduced as a stop gap arrangement in 1994 but later in 1995-96, the curricula of forest guards and deputy rangers have been revised through participatory curriculum review workshops attended by all stakeholders and taking in view the experiences from pilot JFM areas. These have been introduced in their respective foundation courses of 4-6 months duration and participatory approaches now take up about 25 per cent of the total training time. Instead of viewing JFM as a separate subject, principles of participation have been built in other technical subjects too. The curricula have shifted from the earlier emphasis on tree-focus forestry to more diverse forestry and similarly training methods have methods have moved from mere lecturing to more interactive sessions. The trainers now need to be supported with appropriate training materials and appraisal and evaluation methods.

5: Overseas training: In this preparatory activity, to date 40 officers have received training in skills such as social development planning, participation, forestry extension, trainers' training, project management and environmental impact assessment. The courses have been improved to meet training needs, but due to time limitations, participants could only be introduced to a limited number of concepts. There is therefore a need to support the participants with back up field training in PRA, communication techniques, community mobilisation and the development of local training material. This is needed to ensure continuation of the reorientation process and building capacities in the long term.

Another positive sign has been the resolve shown by government in posting all these officers after their training in pilot JFPM areas. The skilled trainers are now imparting training at two newly created centres in addition to the existing training school.

However, there remains a need to alter the present curricula in foundation training for senior foresters too, by giving more emphasis to participatory methodologies through theory and practice in the field. Foresters now are expected to be equipped with communication, facilitation and coordination skills to practise collaborative forestry.

6: Inland Study Tours were undertaken to Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, where FDs are moving from conflict to collaboration. A number of communities and FDs have made rapid progress in establishing viable joint management ventures. Vertically integrated teams of all field staff led by their DFO and ACFs gained much from interactions with staff and villagers. The staff members got attached to their respective counterparts in such areas and were able to visualise their own role in this

new management paradigm. Attachments for longer duration may prove to be a better option than the whirlwind tours which have a tendency to interfere with the process (by being disruptive development tourism).

7: Training workshops: Two more workshops were organised in June 1993 to impart training, maintain continuity and enhance flow of information between all levels of HPFD including RFOs. These also served as a forum for exchanging experiences with other agencies and organisations working with the same approach in similar conditions and environment. Representatives from IBRAD[8], TERI[9] and HGVS[10] shared their experience with foresters. Such workshops need to be organised for RFOs, deputy RFOs and Forest Guards for information flow in both directions.

8: Communication system: The department also adopted "matrix management", which attempts to integrate disciplines and encourage development of social dimensions of forest management in its existing functioning. Specially trained DFOs with skills in social planning, economics and data analysis would form a planning and monitoring team at HQs.

In another such arrangement, the PCCF and seven CCFs form a top level departmental steering committee which collectively decides on all important policy matters. CCFs, besides heading their respective wings, hold meetings in different circles every month to review and monitor the progress of all schemes and discuss other matters pertaining to forest management, policy and staff, etc. These meetings have served as a forum for all sections of employees to voice their views and suggestions. The foresters' trade unions and associations are also involved in decision making processes in crucial matters pertaining to services and management. Besides cutting red tape, these meetings have provided much needed feedback and consistency in decision making.

Problems: The First Alarm

The first alarm was raised in June 1993 when it was realised that, perhaps in enthusiasm to achieve quick success in JFPM or otherwise, either the field foresters were concentrating more on speed than quality, or they had not initiated any action at all in the desired direction. Foresters were once again found to be ignoring the following important basic principles of establishing participatory management systems:

- identifying and consulting "all" users (especially frontline users);
- jointly identifying needs and solutions instead of approaching villagers with a pre-determined list of treatment and areas;

[8] Institute of Bio Social Research and Development in West Bengal is an association of anthropologists.
[9] Tata Energy Research Institute in New Delhi.
[10] Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samithi is an NGO involved in the Total Literacy Campaign in HP.

- working at pilot sites for learning, improving and evolving strategies.

Workshops for assessing the effect of the JFPM order

In an attempt to initiate a debate on JFPM amongst a wider audience in other districts and to assess its impact, PCCF devised a strategy of holding open workshops in all forest circles. The first workshop was held in Kangra district amidst forests where forest cooperatives were once active. Subsequently such workshops were attended by ex-Ministers, ex-MLAs of various parties; women from villages and MM leaders; villagers and panchayat presidents and members; NGO leaders from HGVS, Chipko and SUTRA (Social Uplift Through Rural Action); the media and foresters of all ranks (FGs to PCCF). The number of participants varied from 75 to 150.

The decision to invite people and leaders from all fronts and parties to openly discuss the sensitive issue of forest management raised many eyebrows within and outside the department. The department for the first time exposed itself to open criticism and constructive suggestions from all sections of society.

The workshops were led by the PCCF and CCFs and were steered by the core group working on JFPM at HQ. The participants were briefed about the Government's latest policy on JFPM. The responses of the various groups were as follows:

Response of Public Representatives: There was a mixed response from various leaders of different political parties. Older leaders, while recalling past local management systems, commended the department's initiative. However others, including younger ones, felt that the department should simultaneously continue with its custodian, policing role and as a final authority on decision making, because there is a tendency in unorganised groups to misuse their new found positions and roles. A smaller number even supported modernisation of the department through radios and weapons to combat law-breakers (in smuggling prone areas). The need for more solid legal support for the JFPM groups was emphasised.

Response of village leaders: The village leaders (panchayat presidents and members) welcomed this new approach but expressed apprehension over how these JFPM groups will operate in the present panchayati system and what would be the panchayats' role. Some of them suggested making the panchayat the main JFM unit. This shows the tendency of existing institutions to resist any change in the status quo. This is a crucial area and needs tactful handling by foresters.

Women's view: The women participants in discussions were more forthcoming in some districts than in others. The presence of a woman ex-Minister and a strong women's development NGO (SUTRA) appeared to explain their prominence in two districts. In another district, women's prominence was partly due to the dominant role played by them in the local apple-led economy. The women's response was well explained by the ex-Minister that the present resolve on compulsory minimum membership of women in

JFPM groups truly reflects the potential role which can be played by women as prime users of almost all forest products.

The village women's preference for working with women extensionists again reflected the department's need to recruit more women in its staffing patterns. The demand for grass and leaf fodder from women again confirmed a priority JFPM intervention area.

Response of villagers: Some villagers who participated talked of the failure and ineffectiveness of earlier committees set up by HPFD. Issues like misuse of rights by influential people and the FD's failure to check the end use of timber granted under Timber Distribution (TD) rights were also raised. This supports the viewpoint expressed earlier that the granting of rights to individuals has undermined collective action and initiatives to check their misuse. The concern shown by some villagers in Nahan and Chamba workshops over the diminishing open-access grazing lands due to forestry expansion contradicts the earlier assumption that growing more trees will satisfy basic biomass needs of the local communities, and reminds foresters of the need for understanding ground village realities and needs.

NGO reaction: There are few NGOs in Himachal Pradesh compared to other parts of India. The leaders of different political parties form alternative institutions and paternal networks for providing local people with access to public goods and officialdom (Kirk and Hobley, 1991). But lately some NGOs have emerged in literacy, rural development, environment and health sectors in different parts of Himachal Pradesh. The workshops were attended by local NGOs of the respective districts.

Their reaction was voiced by the leader of a prominent NGO, SUTRA, who cautioned foresters that by parting with their powers and by decentralising decision making to users, *"Aap aag ke nazdeek ja rahe hain"* (you are going near the fire), while Chipko's local representative stressed the importance of grass and fodder production. The workshops highlighted the need for improving relations between government organisations and NGOs for mutual acceptability.

Response of foresters: The workshops seemed to have achieved their objective of initiating a dialogue and free exchange of views between various ranks. But the response from foresters was not immediately forthcoming: foresters as a community find it difficult to speak out openly in multi-rank meetings and particularly so on topics of a non-technical nature. The training and 'target approach' hangover was distinctly visible when questions were raised about the improbability of forming committees in all the 3000 to 4000 villages of the forest circle. However, there was no pressure from any quarter on this issue and no targets for forming VLIs were set.

Most foresters were identifying JFPM with some new donor project package instead of an approach. Interestingly some middle level foresters regarded JFPM as "old wine in a new bottle". A small section was more radical in

suggesting distribution of standing trees of even valuable species amongst users for protection, management and use. Yet the general response from middle level officers was typical of a cautious, non risk-taking, techno-bureaucracy.

The most interesting comment came from a deputy ranger who categorically stated that JFPM meant additional work and a new set of responsibilities for already over-burdened forest guards (in particular) and foresters at all levels (in general). Foresters at lower fringe levels perceived an improved role without tensions or conflicts through JFPM in future. But they reiterated that with present service conditions and promotional avenues, they find very little or no motivation to do so, a factor which may prove vital to the success of JFPM. This is true to some extent. Bleak promotional prospects and limited monetary incentives reduce the motivation of FD staff to adopt new approaches.

The field staff were, however, appreciative of the lead taken by top foresters in breaking down and bridging a communication gap by directly exchanging views with lower level foresters and were hopeful of its continuation. Foresters regarded it as the beginning of the end of the century old traditions, norms and attitudes in the forest services.

Commitment at the top: The highlight of the workshops was again the determination shown by the top hierarchy and working group. Like other forest departments in the process of major management transitions (Poffenberger, 1993), the rapid and pioneering changes in HPFD are also led by senior foresters. They again showed no haste and urgency in pushing the idea. Instead a 'wait and watch' signal was sent through workshops so that experience from pilot areas could be drawn upon. Arabari (West Bengal), Harda (Madhya Pradesh), Surat (Gujarat), Pinjore (Haryana), parts of Orissa, van panchayats (Uttar Pradesh), Western Ghats (Karnataka) were cited as possible locations for organising further study tours and attachments.

In short, the workshops revealed a need for a massive training and reorientation programme for foresters at all levels.

Prospects for the Future

The Forest Department in Himachal Pradesh is beginning to change and to adopt participatory approaches to forest management at a stage when the mountains still show abundant resources. This forest abundance along with the following complex peculiarities put additional responsibility on HP foresters to increase efforts in organising individuals and communities into becoming effective partners:

- legitimate rights and relative certainty to exercise them resulting in complacency amongst villagers - need for careful identification of pilot areas;
- complex village-forest linkages arising out of settlements where more

than one village has rights in the same forest - need for careful identification of management unit (which villages?) and boundary (which forests?) and JFM group networking;

- divergent sectional interests or disinterest due to reduced resource dependence of the wealthier section of society;

- receiver-provider culture and dependent attitude of the villagers resulting from past practices;

- longer gestation period of tree crops due to shorter growth period - need for developing grasses, shrubs and NTFPs for quicker outputs to interest the majority of users.

This does not imply that foresters should wait for forests to become degraded before attempting any improved management. But it does make the identification of pilot areas an important step in the process and in the initial success of the JFPM approach. A growing number of villagers and foresters do realise that although timber bearing forests may show such abundance, the fodder and fuel gathering areas are fast being depleted.

The communities comprising individuals and interest groups will continue with the present use-responsibility pattern unless, sensing and assured of short and medium-term gains, they organise themselves to effect changes in that pattern. Foresters have to be the key external agent to galvanise individual efforts and responses into a collective and solid action. The common rallying point for villagers, besides stake and authority in decision making on matters of common interest, has to be a mix of many incentives (not subsidies). These may include security in fulfilling their basic needs of fuel, fodder, organic manure and timber; income from medicinal plants; assured access to, and continuation of present land use of, grasslands or/and productive employment leading to increase in assets for their use.

The present JFPM resolution identifies the village as a unit and degraded protected forests as prospective intervention areas: only experience will decide the future course of the JFPM process. But it will be wise to leave this flexible, as experience elsewhere has revealed the need to go below the panchayat and even the village level, to inter-village clusters of user households.

The department has a growing number of skilled facilitators and trainers who have started identifying pilot areas and imparting training to forest guards, who are to play the most important role in this transition phase. It is up to these foresters to make best use of their new skills and new job descriptions, and further strengthen the institutional change within and outside the department. The change must move towards responsiveness to changing and evolving social and techno-economic dimensions of natural resource management. It is too early to comment on the outcome, but the foundation for a new approach of more participatory management involving all villagers through groups founded on principles of more egalitarian and transparent management of local resources appears to have been laid.

Acronyms

ACF	Assistant Conservator of Forests
CF	Conservator of Forests
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forests
CFS	Cooperative Forest Society
DFFC	Department of Forest Farming and Conservation
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
DR	Deputy Ranger
FD	Forest Department
FG	Forest Guard
HGVS	Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samithi
HP	Himachal Pradesh
HQ	Headquarters
IBRAD	Institute of Bio-social Research and Development
IGDP	Indo-German Dhauladhar Project
IRMP	Integrated Resource Management Plan
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFPM	Joint Forest Planning and Management
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MM	*Mahila Mandal* (Women's clubs)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
PCCF	Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RFO	Range Forest Officer
SF	Social Forestry
SUTRA	Social Uplift Through Rural Action
TERI	Tata Energy Research Institute
TD	Timber Distribution rights
UF	Unclassed Forests
UPF	Undemarcated Protected Forests
VDC	Village Development Committee
VLI	Village Level Institution
YM	*Yuvak Mandal* (Youth clubs)

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New Forestry Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh

This paper describes change initiated by certain sections at 'the top' of the state Forest Department in Himachal Pradesh, India, in response to lessons learned from the past 50 years of attempts to resolve its conflicting roles of extension and policing. The paper describes the careful state level preparation for adoption of the Joint Forest Management approach first outlined by the federal government in 1990. An intriguing picture is painted of a Forest Department grappling with the challenges of institutional reorientation towards collaboration with communities. Slow and sporadic progress is being made in training foresters in relevant skills, and there has clearly been an attempt to institutionalise a system for communication, feedback and information sharing in an otherwise strongly regimented forest service. The paper highlights the existence of a range of perspectives and enthusiasms at various levels of the Forest Department and the very real structural impediments to adopting new ways.

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