



Regional Workshop On Community-Based Natural Resources Management in the Mountains

22-25 April 2003 – NRTI, Lobeysa, Bhutan

[See workshop programme](#)

Introduction

Mountains occupy a quarter of the Earth's land surface. It is estimated that about 10% of the world's population live in the mountains and about 40% occupy the watershed areas below them. Thus, about half of the world's total populations depend directly or indirectly on the mountains.

Mountain ecosystems are highly dynamic by nature. Mountains result from the upthrust of the Earth's surface, and wearing down through weathering processes. Biological systems in mountains are fragile and highly dependent on soils that are extremely susceptible to erosion and mass wasting. When these systems are significantly disturbed, by natural or man-induced forces, ecological stability and productivity can be damaged, usually with major negative effects on people and the environment.

Poverty is a widespread problem for mountain people. Combined pressures from poverty, increasing population, and expanding resource demands are causing environmental degradation in most mountain environments. Environmental degradation in mountains affects millions of mountain people, billions of people who live in downstream watersheds, and the entire population of the Earth through global linkages. Improving people's livelihoods and environmental stability in mountains is important locally, regionally, and globally.

In many mountain areas, local people have lived for

centuries, sustained by livelihood systems based on using natural resources. A combination of relatively low-impact use and customary arrangements to regulate use either maintained a balance between resource use and the regenerative capacity of natural systems, or at least resulted in relatively slow resource degradation.

In recent decades, however, a combination of forces – especially population growth, infrastructure and trade expansion, and technological change – have produced increasing demands on natural resources. At the same time, nationalisation of natural resources and centralisation of resource management authority – which caused a loss of customary use arrangements – have failed to achieve sustainable management of natural resources, especially for common property resources such as forests, upland pastures, and water that are accessed and used by multiple users.

The result has been a radical acceleration in degradation of natural resources, increased insecurity of rural livelihoods, cultural erosion, and political alienation of rural people. These dynamics are particularly problematic in mountains because the damage to mountain environments has relatively rapid local impacts and extensive ‘downstream’ consequences. In the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region, the increasing imbalance between population and available productive land is increasing pressure on natural resources, especially common pool resources, resulting in environmental degradation.

Increasing participation in natural resource management, especially of local people and customary resource users, is now recognised as essential for improving governance and sustainability of natural resources. For common pool resources, establishing and strengthening resource use rights and management regimes among users is critical for resource sustainability, and for avoiding the ‘tragedy of the commons’ that occurs in *de facto* open access situations.

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is an approach to social development and natural resource management in which the “community broadly conceived is where most of the decisions and actions that directly affect natural resources are made” (Uphoff 1998). CBNRM – an “umbrella” term that encompasses approaches such as community forestry (including NTFPs) and community-based water and

pasture management – reflects the recognition that broad participation is essential for effective NRM and that local people who rely on natural resources have a strong interest in sustainable resource management. CBNRM implies that communities have (or can develop) the rights, responsibilities, and capacities to manage the natural resources that they use. CBNRM is an important element in applying the principle of decentralization to natural resource management.

The Regional Workshop

As a post-event to the International Year of the Mountains (IYM), Bhutan is organizing a regional workshop on *Community Based Natural Resources Management in the Mountains*. The topic bears special significance as it offers an opportunity to look at mountain issues from the point of people, institutions, local governance and collective action toward sustainable management of mountain resources.

Many countries, including mountain countries, are today advocating and embracing CBNRM in a variety of forms and strategies, and the body of knowledge and experience in CBNRM is expanding. The mountain countries in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region in particular have increasing policy emphasis and some experience in CBNRM. However, to date there has been no concerted effort to examine the potential for CBNRM and to share experiences between countries.

The proposed Regional Workshop aims to draw the attention of national governments in the region to issues of sustainable management of common pool resources. The workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss issues from the standpoint of increasing local participation based on strengthening local resource-use rights and community-based NRM regimes, especially related to management of common property natural resources.

The primary geographic emphasis of the workshop is the central Hindu Kush – Himalayan region, which stretches 3,500 kms west to east and is the most populous mountain region in the world. To broaden the sharing of experience, selected CBNRM experts and experienced practitioners will be invited from other mountain regions in Asia such as the Mekong highlands. Due to limited facilities, the workshop will be restricted to a total of approximately 60 participants (approximately 30 international participants), based on invitation. Participants

are anticipated to come from Bhutan, China, India, Mongolia, Nepal, and other mountain areas in Asia, to be identified through various CBNRM-related networks.

The workshop is organised by the Royal Government of Bhutan (Department of Research and Development Services, Ministry of Agriculture, in cooperation with ICIMOD, IDRC, SDC, SNV, and GTZ.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop will emphasise interactive sharing and learning among participants, rather than a series of formal presentations. The workshop will be designed to:

- Provide participants with an opportunity to share and exchange concepts, techniques, experiences, and emerging innovations in CBNRM, especially related to the management of common pool resources;
- Enable participants to explore and identify key challenges, dynamics, and strategies for mobilising CBNRM, particularly in evolving policy and institutional environments;
- To advance national and regional agendas for sustainable development of the mountain areas, notably the Bishkek Mountain Platform, by drawing attention of governments to the potential of CBNRM as a key strategy for sustaining mountain environments.

For Bhutan, the workshop will provide an opportunity to share, examine, and gain insights of value to the national CBNRM Framework that is under development.

Workshop Themes and Programme

The Workshop will address cross-cutting themes in CBNRM through a matrix approach, including:

- Ø Overview of CBNRM in Sustaining Mountain Environments: experiences, lessons learned, and challenges
 - § examining topics such as collective action, community organization, and conflict management in forest, water, and pasture resources

- Ø Policy and Institutional Environment: dynamics and change strategies
 - § linking effectively from community to national to regional to global spheres
- Ø Building Capacities: getting beyond teaching to learning
 - § defining institutional strategies for facilitating learning about CBNRM

The workshop programme will include a mix of keynote papers, small-group facilitated sessions with short case studies and presentations, plenary discussions, a field day, and an “information market” in which participants share and exchange ideas and experiences.

[A tentative workshop program can be found by clicking here.](#)

Some participants will be requested to make a short presentation during a workshop session to relate their ideas and experience in relation to an identified workshop topic; invitations and guidelines will be sent to selected participants in February 2003. All participants will be expected to prepare a display for sharing in the “information market” that will operate during the workshop; guidelines for displays will be sent to participants in February 2003.

Schedule and Venue

The workshop is scheduled for 22-25 April 2003. Participants will need to arrive on April 21 (or earlier, depending on travel route and schedule), and depart April 26 or later.

The workshop will be held at the Natural Resources Training Institute (NRTI) in Lobeyasa, Bhutan. NRTI is the premier natural resources training institute in Bhutan and is located in the beautiful Punakha-Wangdi valley, approximately two hours drive from the capital Thimphu.

Optional post-workshop tours (1 to 3 days) to places of historical and cultural interest will be arranged, depending on interest.

Invitations and Costs

Participation in the workshop will be by invitation. Participants will be identified and selected by the Organising Committee, in communication with ICIMOD, IDRC, and SDC. Invitations will be issued by the Organising Committee.

The workshop organizers will provide meals, refreshments, accommodation and transportation during the workshop for invited participants. No per diem will be provided by workshop organizers; and participants will be expected to cover all their own non-workshop expenses, including in-country pre- and post-workshop activities (including optional post-workshop tours). For participants who are unable to cover their own international airfare costs, financial support may be available, based on advanced request and confirmation with the workshop organisers.

It is anticipated that post-workshop tours will cost approximately US\$ 35 per day.

Participants may bring one accompanying person without incurring the normal tourists charges; however, any additional costs for this person will be the responsibility of the participant.

Contact Address

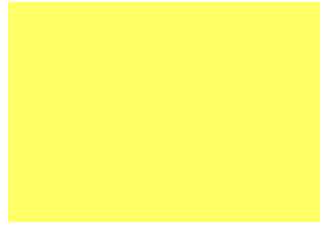
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