



SOCIAL FORESTRY NETWORK



FROM MISTRUST TO PARTICIPATION: THE CREATION OF A PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN NEPAL

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INTRODUCTION

Community forestry development in Nepal is a process which enables communities or more exactly forest user groups to direct the establishment and sustained management of their local forests for their own benefit. The essence of this process is the real transfer of control over the forests, from the government represented by the Forest Department to all the actual users of the local forest.

Community forestry is not synonymous with village-level reforestation directed by government departments or projects. In such activities the people's role is passive. For the purpose of this paper:

"Participation is considered to be an active process meaning that ... the group in question takes initiatives or asserts its autonomy to do so." (Rahman, 1981:3)

Government Policy on Community Forestry

Community forestry development in Nepal has the status of a government policy, enshrined in legislation and supported primarily by foreign aid. The community forests themselves can be created from new plantations established on government land or from areas of existing government forest. The local users group can then apply for legal control.

Community forestry was introduced in response to the failure of previous forest policies over two decades to bring about the protection and sound

utilisation of the forests. The Private Forest Nationalisation Act, 1957, brought all forests under government control. The Forest Act of 1961 provided legislation for state administration of the forest. This latter Act defined forest categories, covering description, registration, and demarcation of forest. It also defined the duties of the Forest Department, listed the forest offences and prescribed penalties (Mahat *et al.*, 1986:227).

By the mid-1970s it was clear that nationalisation had caused many individuals to clear their private forests to retain ownership of their land.¹ Furthermore, the legislative changes had caused the local *Talukdars*² to be replaced with small cadres of government forestry staff located in distant Range and Divisional Forest Offices. The *talukdars* had zealously administered the communally used forests for the hereditary and autocratic Rana regime (1847-1951), a system that although unfair was effective.

The legal basis of local control of trespass or for management was suddenly eroded... Long after Nationalisation, and even after the forests in some areas had been destroyed, bureaucratic capacity for conservation and protection was not instituted. (Shrestha, 1987:9)

Local people soon became forced to resort to illegal and often destructive use of the forests. Indigenous systems of forest management had appeared in some places (Fisher *et al.*, 1989) to compensate for the lack of state control. Feudal control had also remained in particular places. Increasing population, felling of forests for profit and granting access to forest as a reward for political allegiance had also taken their toll.

State control of the forests failed largely because the institutional capacity to implement it did not exist, nor indeed was the policy itself wholly sound, with many forests especially in the Middle Hills being solely for

¹ The 1957 Nationalisation Act often had no real impact in a district until the first Cadastral Survey mapped and registered land ownership in the 1970s.

² '*Talukdars* had responsibility for local forests in the Middle Hills during the Rana period. They were able to fairly effectively administer the forests and provided a reasonable amount of protection and control. The forests under the charge of the *Talukdars* were used only for fuelwood, fodder, small timber, grazing, collection of leaf litter, and other such activities. The local population collected what it needed from the forest without paying any fees, although some sort of gift (*theki*) in return to the functionary had become customary' (Mahat *et al.*, 1989:226)

local rather than national use. By the mid-1970s the policy makers had accepted that the participation of local people was also needed in the management of those forests on which they were dependent. In 1976 innovative legislation was passed to enable the government to promote community forestry.

When the above legislation was first implemented it was intended that community forests would be managed by the local *panchayat*³. However, subsequent amendments provided for management by user groups—those who actually use or would use a particular forest.

Legally before a user group can use a community forest it has to submit an Operational Plan for that forest. The plan is prepared by the users of the forest: not by professional foresters or natural resource planners. Sufficient time has to be allowed for all members of the user group, weak and strong, to reach a consensus on the future management of the forest: this process seldom takes less than three months. The users regard their plan as 'rules for our forest' detailing, for example, access to the forest and forest products as well as protection and decision-making. The plan is sanctioned by the District Forest Officer (DFO) and, until the recent political change, by the local *pradhan pancha*.⁴ An executive forest user group committee is then elected by the user group members to oversee the implementation of their plan.

Progress in Community Forestry Implementation

If the description of community forestry development given above is taken as a yardstick it has to be admitted that progress across the various districts of Nepal so far has been disappointing. Progress has been made in establishing new plantations, but only rarely have people participated in the planning decisions for establishment of nurseries and plantations or management of forests.

There have, however, been pockets of success in the past four years, for

³ A political/geographical unit of a partyless system of Government of Nepal, superseded since April 1990 by a multi-party system.

⁴ Chairman of the village (or town) panchayat.

instance in Kabhre Palanchok and Dhankuta districts where user groups have been enabled to take on the management of both forests and nurseries with encouraging results. The progress made in these two districts leads us to believe that the concept of community forestry is viable and can be promoted under the appropriate conditions.

Conditions Needed for People's Participation

Experience from various community forestry projects indicates three key requirements for success: empowerment of people to reach judicious and egalitarian consensus; decentralisation of decision making; and creation of a participatory environment.

The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (1988) provides a policy framework for implementation of community forestry. It recognises the importance of devolving decision-making and benefit sharing to forest users. However, villagers will begin to participate in the development process only when they believe that:

- a) the outsiders encouraging them to participate are doing so in the villagers' best interests, in a spirit of respect, commitment and support (and are acting within a government remit);
- b) they have equal rights to take part in decisions about the resources and that consensus can be reached; and
- c) they have secure rights to the resources and will therefore receive any and all benefits that accrue.

If these conditions are fulfilled villagers will begin to become involved in the community forestry process, to analyze, to discuss, to interact, and to plan. In short this can lead to the villagers taking control of the process and the resources.

To date very few of these conditions have been met. A study by Koirala (1985) showed that 80 per cent of villagers were unaware of the changes in forest legislation, while 92 per cent voiced scepticism as to who would be the ultimate beneficiaries of the community forestry programme.

Many development workers feel that we can expect initiatives from the people themselves to bring about a change in their situation. There are documented cases in Nepal of villagers developing management systems in response to depletion of forest resources even when they had no legal authority over the land (Gilmour, 1988).

There is another point of view, put by Wignaraja (1984:8), that:

A truly participatory development process cannot be generated spontaneously given the existing power relations at all levels and the deep rooted dependency relationships. It requires a catalyst or initiator who can break this vicious circle, who identifies with the interests of the poor and who has faith in people... Through a process of awareness creation, initiators mobilize people into self-reliant action and assist in the building up of collective strength.

Both points of view are valid — in a real crisis the people will take stopgap action. However, the presence of a facilitator can encourage the building of group consensus for long-term resource management.

The role that a facilitator can play in bringing about participation is further clarified by a villager in this quotation (from a dialogue with members of the Bhoomi Sena Movement):

We need outside help for analysis and understanding of our situation and experience but not for telling us what we should do. (Rahman, 1981:8)

Usually projects facilitate one time participation and then forget the users. If participation is to be sustained beyond the life of the project, a participatory environment has to be created which entails changing attitudes as well as behaviour amongst the users and Forest Department staff. This requires on-going support to build the confidence of the participants until they reach a stage where democratic attitudes and participatory behaviour become a way of life.

It is not the role of the facilitator to convince or persuade. Yet this is precisely the task often given to a forestry extension worker, to persuade the people of the importance of forests, as though farmers were not already well aware of this. As Werner and Bower (1982:2) say:

Community participation' too often has come to mean 'getting those people to do what we decide (emphasis in original).

The Forest Department as Facilitator

Local facilitators can be very effective to create awareness in the villages. Because of their background they are often both committed and credible. They are able to identify with the interests of the villagers. A disadvantage of using such facilitators is that they may have strong allegiance to one section of a community, whereas a facilitator has to be willing to encourage all sections of the community.

Grass roots facilitators should be encouraged, but if community forestry is to be institutionalized then the Department's district-level staff have to be more firmly committed to this approach and have to take a more active lead in its implementation. It is only they who, by handing over their authority, can ultimately create the faith in community forestry policy which is needed to bring about local participation. As Roche (1989:9) says:

Change will only be effective if there is a desire to change from the bottom as well as the top.

The need for field staff to take part in community forestry development as facilitators has been recognized in Nepal at the highest levels:

Rangers and assistant rangers role is to facilitate this (community forestry development) process (**Operational Guidelines**, 1990).

Although community forestry has been recognized for over a decade now, the District Forest staff admit that they have not generally been successful in facilitating a community forestry approach. One DFO wrote:

Even we community forestry workers (the District Forest Controllers, Community Forestry Assistants,⁵ Forest Rangers,

⁵ In the Hill Community Forestry Project there are separate extension staff for community forestry - ranger-level men and women. Called Community Forestry Assistants, they have invariably been involved only in reforestation work.

etc.) have not had appropriate training and are not motivated to take part in this process. (Budhathoki, 1987:26)

In recent times the role of the field staff has been far removed from that of the catalyst described above. Most staff have continued their 'policing' role: trying to maintain some control over the forests, at times apprehending villagers (often the poorer) and harassing them. Their 'community forestry duties' were concerned with planning and carrying out reforestation work by hiring labour. In their policing and development work they were 'tree-oriented and not people-oriented' (Agarwal, 1986:112).

Until the role of the field staff is changed to one that is more people and service-oriented there seems to be little possibility that they will be able to facilitate community forestry development. As Chand and Wilson (1987: 23) assert:

One of the main constraints to the active participation of communities in forest management is the lack of active support, extension and encouragement from the District Forest Office.

Stimulating community forestry development demands the highest level of competence and dedication, including the ability to develop strategies and be self-reliant in the field. It is not possible to do this work as 'just another job'. The field staff must believe in community forestry and be committed to active participation as facilitators.

Conditions Needed for Field Staff Participation

Under what conditions might the field staff begin to change their role and become motivated to participate in community forestry? Our experience⁶ suggests very strongly that, prior to such change, the field staff need to believe that:

⁶ The observation is based on the authors' (a forester and trainer respectively with thirteen years combined field experience of community forestry in Nepal) close work with the district-level staff of the Department of Forest. They have helped develop training manuals, run reorientation workshops and have supported attempts by field staff to form user groups.

- a) policy changes have resulted in a new role for them and old operational systems must now be superseded, *ie*, the time is ripe to participate in community forestry programmes;
- b) they will receive recognition for their new work, *ie*, they are empowered to 'take initiatives';
- c) they will receive the support they need to help them develop new approaches, credibility and acquire new skills;
- d) they will be recognized as active participants in decision making.

Few of these conditions exist at present: many rangers remain unaware of the policy changes and ignorant of the concepts of **user group** and **operational plan**.

The bureaucratic environment that is preventing interested field staff from fulfilling their new role has many parallels with the problems experienced by local people in becoming forest managers:

- Lack of awareness of policy changes
- Lack of security and incentives
- Lack of responsibility and authority
- Existing value systems and vested interests
- Lack of faith in the hierarchical Forest Department bureaucracy
- Lack of meaningful support.

It is interesting to note that no policy maker or adviser has proposed to retrain the villagers. Indeed all seem to agree that the process of involving villagers in the community forestry programme is 'participatory', which is 'about working with them, listening to their problems and needs, and helping them to help themselves' (Malla, 1987:83). It is also an accepted fact that everyone should 'develop communities to be more self-reliant' (*Master Plan*, 1989:9) and that decision-making responsibility should be devolved to the village users.

It is equally interesting to note an inconsistency in the way the decision-makers approach the parallel issues of villager and field staff participation.

The former is gradually being tackled with well thought-out participatory approaches, the latter still with crude imposition:

Retrain the entire staff of Ministry of Forest/Forest Department to their new role. (*Master Plan*, 1989)

In order to orient their (most of the field staff) activities more towards community forestry, fundamental changes will be needed in their present role and attitudes, and these changes will have to be brought about by training. (Malla, 1987:58)

Changes in the field staff's attitudes are certainly needed, but achieving these must involve more than just retraining. Modifications are also necessary to their working style, from directive to stimulative—indeed in the very environment in which they work.

People concerned with broader development issues tend to agree with this latter approach:

When we consider the issue of the organisational structure of Research and Development and extension networks, or the attitudes of the individuals who comprise these networks, a more fundamental change is likely to be needed than a mere 'retraining' of these individuals. (Agarwal, 1986:174)

Traditional training concerns itself with teaching new skills. It is subject-matter focused and does not concern itself with the trainees' attitude and commitment to the task. We suggest that traditional 'chalk and talk' training courses cannot engender the required levels of change, dedication and competence because they do not confront these issues. Conventional training courses perpetuate the field staff's passive stance towards community forestry. The teacher/pupil framework of these courses does not value the experience of the pupil, only of the teachers.

Conventional training methodology — delivering a prepackaged basket of knowledge or skills through lecture and instruction — cannot be used for the purpose of sensitizing people for participatory development work. (Wignaraja, *ibid*:8)

Conventional training also reinforces the pervasive 'extension agent-ignorant villager' attitude. If the field staff are taught in a manner that

emphasizes acquisition of knowledge they will set up their relationship with the villagers in the same way: directing and informing them rather than stimulating and empowering them.

The way we teach can either break down or build up people's self-confidence and community strength... (Werner *et al.*, 1983)

THE REORIENTATION PROCESS

The alternative to re-training is reorientation, the process of **enabling the field staff actively to participate** in community forestry development. Reorientation which encompasses change in value systems and attitude is different from retraining; it tackles the fundamental issues, not just acquisition of knowledge.

The aim would be to create an environment in which reorientation is possible by:

- a) changing Government forestry policy away from policing and towards participation, leading to a change in the field staff's tasks;
- b) changing the value systems and hierarchies government officials and projects advisers impose on the field staff;
- c) establishing relationships of respect and trust between policy-makers and field staff and devolving more decision-making responsibility to the field staff;
- d) promoting experience-sharing, reflection and confidence-building among the field staff;
- e) helping the field staff to identify problems and define new approaches; and
- f) supporting the field staff and applauding their efforts.

We believe that these changes will enable the field staff to:

- take initiatives, change their attitudes and develop commitment to community forestry; and
- participate in community forestry by developing new relationships with villagers and subsequently institutionalizing their new roles and working styles.

If conventional training courses are to be rejected as an inappropriate and inadequate strategy for reorientation, what strategies are appropriate for this process? The participants need to be seen as 'active and creative, as agents in their own right, not simply as respondents to stimuli' (Bannister and Farnsella, 1986:viii). We conclude that three different strategies are necessary: **participatory workshops, field support and institutional changes**. In the following pages, these three orientation strategies are discussed in detail.

Participatory Workshops

The first reorientation strategy is the running of participatory workshops.⁷ In these workshops there is no teacher/pupil relationship, rather it is accepted that everyone has something to contribute to the learning process. The objective is to encourage people to learn from their own experience. If the field staff are to be active in the field then they have to be allowed to be active in the classroom.

It seems obvious that to bring about participatory development we need a participatory approach to training. (Bhasin 1989:17)

In Nepal, as far as we knew, there was no precedent for conducting this type of workshop in forestry. Our ideas and approaches were therefore borrowed from other disciplines. In 1986 a manual (see Gronow, 1987) for conducting such a workshop was prepared and used to conduct workshops with field staff in Dolakha District. In 1988 workshops were conducted in districts in East and West Nepal and the manual (see Gronow and Shrestha,

⁷ These have also been referred to as Reorientation Workshops and Start-Up Workshops (Gronow *et al.*, 1988).

1988) revised—as it should be for every new situation.

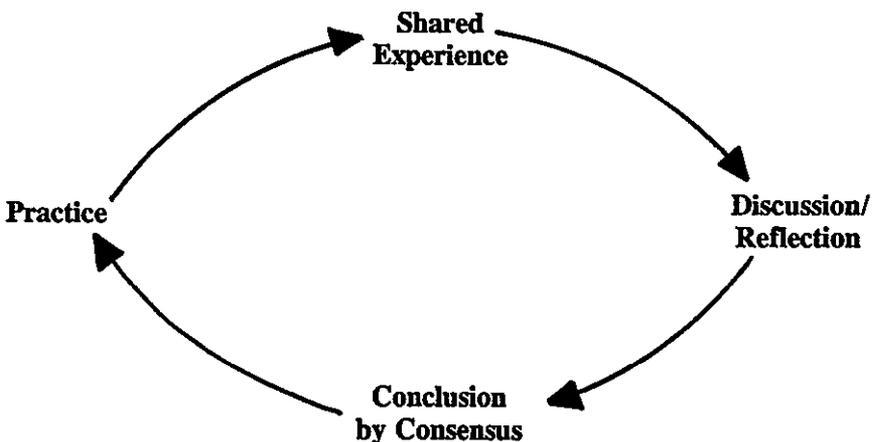
The major goal of these workshops is:

To begin the process of reorienting the participants towards their new roles; that of facilitators of community forestry development and subsequently to help them develop their own approaches, strategies, and work programmes to meet their goals. (Gronow *et al.*, 1988:3)

The District Forest Office is taken as the focal point at which to attempt reorientation. In the past training has often been held centrally in Kathmandu, with only one or two people from each district being invited to attend — it has then been impossible for the trainees to go against the tide and use their training when they return to the field. Ideally therefore all the members of one District Forest Office — officers and rangers together — should take part in the one workshop.

□ **Workshop Methodology:**

The workshops emphasize learning from experience. This model can also be successfully used at District Forest Office staff meetings, seminars of local leaders, and during extension work in the villages. The model is useful in any situation where open discussion or team building or reaching a consensus is needed.



The 'experience' shared in the workshops was that of the participants while working as forest officials. It was accepted that:

Learning is not something which can be 'injected' into the participants; it has to emerge from their own experiences to be useful, real and practical. (Wzorec, 1986:4)

The workshop facilitator and participating senior officers also had to make the effort to listen to and understand the perspective of the field staff participants.

The participants came with a wealth of experience, insights, problems and ideas. In addition, role playing, case studies, field trips and the workshop methodology itself provided new experiences. Since agreement by group consensus is a key factor in forest management, the workshops were designed to show the participants how consensus can be reached — by actually experiencing it. In this way the workshops had relevance to what the participants would do in the villages.

'Reflection' enabled the field staff to re-evaluate their attitudes, values and role. Some specific topics on which the participants were invited to reflect critically were reasons for forest destruction, the villagers' ability to manage the forests, the villagers' role in community forestry and the use of extension materials.

Reflection was encouraged by the facilitator posing problems, challenging inconsistencies and using the Socratic method of questioning.⁸ Invariably in the open but challenging climate of the workshop prevalent attitudes gave way to more honest ones. In the workshops it was ultimately agreed that forest destruction was due not merely to ignorance and over population and that it was the villagers' and not the Forest Department's role to manage the forest. The field staff slowly began to accept the villagers' ability to take the leading role in community forestry.

The participants were then encouraged to draw 'conclusions' from their analyses. Coming to a conclusion is important to produce a sense of consensus, commitment to change and increasing self-confidence. It also

⁸ By which the respondent comes to his/her own realisation.

helps people feel they are learning. Conclusions were reached for example on the nature of the community forestry process, field staff role and extension guidelines. The field staff conclusions provided them with the conceptual framework within which they could begin to work.

The participants were encouraged to commit themselves to putting their conclusions into 'practice' both during the workshop by role playing, in field trips and back at work through work plans. This commitment was enhanced by having as many members of the District Forest Office present as was possible.

Workshop Facilitator's Role:

The role of a workshop facilitator is essentially the same as that described earlier by Wignaraja. Just as the facilitator in the village must have 'faith in the people', must not impose, must try to 'create awareness and help people analyze their situation' so must the workshop facilitator.

Throughout the workshop the facilitator should provide a role model for the participants' subsequent work in the villages: of stimulation not direction.

To help ensure the success of the workshop the facilitator must also be responsible for:

- a) encouraging the breakdown of hierarchical structures by helping everyone to take initiatives: officers and field staff equally;
- b) encouraging those taking part to be active and expressive. The facilitator has to create and maintain a non-threatening learning climate; to validate the participants' experiences, *ie*, help them believe their experiences were valuable. This again has parallels with the role the field staff will play in the community. This climate can be created by:
 - keeping each person involved and active by having a common agenda and engaging in small group work;

- ensuring involvement of everyone in decision making so that each participant feels committed to carrying it out;
 - giving and receiving feedback;
 - dealing with conflicts constructively, so that no one feels that they have been excluded;
- c) sustaining self-motivation throughout the workshop; this is not done by 'carrot and stick' methods. To accommodate different learning styles the facilitator needs to use a variety of methods, *eg*:
- large/small group discussion
 - games
 - case studies
 - role playing
 - lectures
 - brain storming
 - interview
 - field visits
 - model building.

The lack of skilled workshop facilitators will hinder efforts to promote this learning model. To date all the Start-Up Workshops⁹ have been facilitated by project staff¹⁰ but this is unlikely to be the long-term solution.

In the short-term advisers can make a valuable contribution to reorientation, but only if they are prepared to commit themselves to working alongside the Forest Department and the villagers. **Projects will not help the field staff by setting up parallel institutions from which they demonstrate how to bring about development — with none of the constraints of working in the Government system.**

⁹ The Start-Up Workshops are those that are conducted before the field staff have begun user group work. Follow-up Workshops are conducted after the field staff have begun to stimulate user groups. These are experiences gained after the Start-Up Workshop.

¹⁰ Hired directly by the donor agency or the contract team.

Too many advisers are unfit to help in field staff reorientation unless first reoriented themselves: professionals are often arrogant, assuming a false superior knowledge and superior status (Chambers, 1983:6). Occasionally the value systems of the advisers are as described by Hancock (1989):

In ... Nepal, the extent of foreign involvement in the national development effort is so great that, in some schemes, it is genuinely difficult to discern whether the real beneficiaries are even intended to be the Nepalese poor, or whether, in fact, the whole exercise has been designed around the needs and interests of expatriate corporations.

□ ***Workshop Content:***

The focus of the workshop should be on those taking part rather than on particular subject matter. As far as possible the participants should be involved in identifying the workshop objectives and topics for discussion and planning the methodology and logistics. Because the participants themselves help identify their learning needs and set the goals, the content is usually highly relevant.

The facilitator does, however, need to be prepared when a topic is suggested. Session guides covering topics which from experience almost all participants want to discuss, are included in the manual and are adjusted for each workshop depending on the demands of the participants. Each guide suggests the purpose, learning objectives, activities, resources and time needed to discuss a topic.

As an illustration, the following are the topics discussed at one of the workshops: the participants decided that the name of their workshop would be 'A New Direction in Forest Protection and Development'. They went on to cover:

1. **Introduction to the workshop**
2. **Community Forestry concept**
3. **How does Community Forestry work?**
4. **The Community Forestry Development process**
— How does it start?

5. **Involvement and confidence building of women and disadvantaged groups**
6. **Involvement of NGOs and other government agencies in the process**
7. **Review of field trip**
8. **Review of community forestry management workshop papers**
9. **Interviews with a local assistant ranger and local forest committee**
10. **Koshi Hills Development Project and the present Koshi Hills forestry situation**
11. **Developing a work programme**
12. **Problems, support systems**
13. **Workshop evaluation**

The process of Community Forestry Development has tended to be the central theme of all the workshops, drawing together all the other topics.

Workshop Evaluations:

We observed that while the participants find the workshop methodology strange at first, they soon begin to take part, working hard and keenly.¹¹ Of the 6 instances where officers and rangers/assistant rangers were together, the officer imposed his view in only one instance. In general the advantages of an officer being present out-weighed the disadvantages.

From evaluations carried out by workshop participants, several issues emerged. Participants felt that weak points of the workshops included: too little variety in activities and our tendency to impose. The later workshops benefited from the evaluations made by participants of earlier workshops and from the services of a Nepali facilitator.

The main indicator of success is that officers and field staff have been asking for Follow-up Workshops. Also several District Forest Offices have run staff meetings, nursery foremen training, user group assemblies and seminars of local leaders following the workshop approach.

¹¹ To date the authors have been involved in running 16 Start-up and one Follow-up workshop.

In all the workshops, field staff defined new roles for themselves and a willingness to go and try out their new roles was generated. We learnt rapidly, however, that the workshop experience was insufficient to enable field staff to begin work in villages on their own. **We cannot emphasize enough that although the workshops can bring about a decision to participate, to actively do so the field staff need follow-up support.**

Field Support

Once the workshop is over, the reorientation process should continue in the field.

The field staff have repeatedly said that working on their own presents difficulties with regard to security, credibility, confidence and political pressure. Their youth in relation to some influential villagers, low official status and the negative reputation of the Forest Department make them feel insecure. The villagers' somewhat justified lack of faith in the Department works not only against their participating in community forestry but also against the field staff's attempts to adopt the new role of facilitators.

Without a role model, the field staff initially also find it difficult to develop the skills needed to initiate and maintain dialogue with the villagers. Without help it is difficult to develop strategies. The type of moral and practical support provided at the workshop now has to be provided in the field until the field staff's role reorientation is complete and instituted (both in the villages and at the Forest Department).

In the districts in which we conducted workshops, project advisers provided support in the field. Advisers can play a useful short-term role here, when competent to do so. In the districts where they are available the Assistant District Forest Officers can also provide support.

The need for intensive field support to staff should only be short-term, until skills develop and until the villagers have faith in the rangers. However, if this field support is not forthcoming the reorientation process goes no further than the end of the workshop.

Institutional Change

A major challenge over coming decades is bureaucratic reorientation (Korten and Uphoff, 1981) including a change from authoritarian to participatory styles and a shift in responsiveness from orders from above to demands from below. (Chambers, 1983:212)

The working environment in which field staff find themselves must also be conducive to their new role. It will be difficult for the field staff to adopt a service-oriented role when the value system they work within encourages them otherwise. Change in the value system of the Forest Department needs to come from the higher levels first—the senior officials and senior project advisers.

Furthermore, the present hierarchical working style of the Forest Department is not suitable for sustaining community forestry development. An example of one area in which change is needed is field staff meetings. These are at present often in the style Chambers (1983:211) describes:

In meetings subordinates are upbraided, cajoled and given orders. They are asked for reports of targets achieved, not for problems encountered. Poor performance of deviant initiatives are rewarded by punishment of posting. Promotion comes, if at all, through compliance or through working in headquarters. Real problems of implementation or impact are repressed; appearances of achievement applauded. Senior Officers do not learn from their subordinates and subordinates do not learn from their rural clients.

A more appropriate style of working would be stimulative and supportive rather than directive and punitive.

In the long-term the Forest Department needs to build up its own capacity to support its field staff. The level of support need not be so intense as that given at the beginning but it is necessary if reorientation is to be sustained. This will require institutional changes in working style and in setting up staff meetings and follow-up workshops.

Another change that is needed if the field staff's commitment is to be sustained is that good work should be recognized. At present field staff

rarely receive recognition for their commitment to supporting community forestry user groups. Furthermore, policy makers have to demonstrate as strongly as possible their commitment to this approach as a long-term strategy. The problem of the field staff's inadequate remuneration needs also to be considered.

The users also need to get used to making decisions by consensus. Different extension strategies are required to build their confidence. Regular users' assemblies and users' committee meetings, if properly conducted in a participatory way, can inculcate the necessary environment for participation. User group networking activities can strengthen users' position and enable them to put pressure on the Forest Department to be more people oriented.

Progress in Field Staff Participation

In districts where workshops have been held and where follow-up support has been available to field staff we have witnessed very encouraging progress. But where follow-up support has not been provided there has been very little field staff activity.

A case in point is the example of Bhojpur and Dhankuta Districts. The DFOs have played very positive roles, and three project staff have provided a high level of post-workshop support in the field. Since the workshops, almost all the field staff in these districts have involved themselves in user group related activities. With many dedicated and capable staff in these districts, we observe that there are signs of institutional change as well.

The District Forest Officers have become the role models; they have changed their working styles and priorities and are supporting their field staff by running lively staff meetings, deputing Attached Officer to the field, and providing moral support to their field staff. In these districts a significant level of support is also being received by the Forest Department from local forest user committees. As hoped for, field staff's trust and participation in community forestry have led to villager trust and participation. It remains however, to be seen whether or not the changes can be sustained in these districts.

CONCLUSIONS

It is now publicly accepted that widespread people's participation in community forestry will only follow on from widespread support by the Forest Department. It has not yet been recognized that the very kind of participatory methodology advocated to bring about villager participation is needed to bring about field staff participation: open discussions, a climate of trust and devolution of responsibility as well as authority.

There is no consistency in the way in which the villagers and field staff are dealt with. Thoughtful participatory methods are proposed for dealing with villagers yet retraining and directives are proposed for dealing with field staff. Full reorientation of field staff requires more fundamental changes than retraining. Conventional training courses which are subject matter-based cannot address the field staff's own problems, cannot recognize the need for officials and advisers to change too and cannot provide experience of participatory development.

We feel that reorientation is possible only through a deliberately sympathetic approach to field staff. Our experience suggests very strongly that there is no other way of enabling the field staff to become dedicated to community forestry and become professional in their job than for those in positions of authority to trust them, support them and treat them professionally.

A reorientation process based on participatory workshops and field support can bring about necessary changes as is evidenced by the cases of Dhankuta and Bhojpur Districts. But it is an ambitious process that will not be easy to replicate across the country.

Even when field staff reorientation has been brought about through workshops and field support it can only be sustained by long-term institutional change within the Forest Department. All concerned with community forestry should be mindful of a statement from *Foreign Aid and Development in Nepal* (Banskota, 1983:63):

The Pilot Phase emerges where money, manpower and materials are poured in to such an extent that initial results are 'forced' to be encouraging.

Community forestry is a bold and innovative policy that holds the promise of benevolent systems of forest renewal and utilisation for all. If this promise is not fulfilled the policy will have failed in the main not because of the villagers' shortcomings but for the same reason that nationalisation of forests failed; because the institutional capacity to implement it never existed.

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