

**Training Manual on
Village Resource Management
Through VRMCs**

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Haryana Forest Department*

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Revised February 2002

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Session Schedule	i
Introduction	1
1. Importance of Community Participation in VRM	2
2. Types of Village Resources	5
3. VRMC – People’s Instrument for Resource Management	11
4. Developing an Effective and Strong VRMC/VRMS	15
5. Role of Panchayats/Other Institutions in VRM	19
<u>6. Functions and Powers of the VRMC</u>	<u>27</u>
7. Framework of the VRMC	31
8. Conducting Effective Meetings	35
9. Mobilisation and Utilisation of Funds	41
10. Record Maintenance and Reporting	44
11. Role of the VRMC in Village Resource Development Planning	46
12. Village Microplanning and Microproject Formulation	48
13. Microproject Implementation	51
14. Monitoring and Evaluation of Microprojects	54
<u>15. Community Capacity Building for Sustaining Village Resource Development</u>	<u>57</u>
16. Withdrawal from Active Involvement & Microproject Review	60
17. Mainstreaming Women’s Needs and Priorities in Village Development	63
18. Consensus Building and Conflict Resolution Regarding Benefit Sharing Arrangement	69
19. Guiding Principles for Sharing Benefits	71

TRAINING IN VILLAGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH VRMCs

SESSION SCHEDULE

<u>DAY 1</u>	
9.00 AM to 10.00 AM	<u>Introductory Session</u> Ice-breaking, expectations, pre-training evaluation, brief introduction to the course
10.00 AM to 11.00 AM	<u>Session 1</u> Importance of Community Participation in VRM (A brief talk of 15 minutes, followed by ‘Distributing Coats’ exercise)
11.00 AM to 11.15 AM	TEA BREAK
11.15 AM to 12.15 PM	<u>Session 2</u> Village Resources: Types, Problems and Management Issues (Interactive session of 1 hour)
12.15 PM to 1.00 PM	<u>Session 3</u> VRMC – People’s Instrument for Resource Management (Talk of 30 minutes, followed by brain storming)
1.00 PM to 2.00 PM	LUNCH BREAK
2.00 PM to 3.15 PM	<u>Session 4</u> Characteristics of Strong and Effective Village Institutions (Discussion and group exercise)
3.15 PM to 3.30 PM	TEA BREAK
3.30 PM to 5.00 PM	<u>Session 5</u> Role of Panchayats/Other Institutions in VRM (Interactive talk and discussions)

<u>DAY 2</u>	
9.15 AM to 9.45 AM	<u>Session 6</u> Functions and Powers of the VRMC (Talk of 20 minutes, discussion of 10 minutes)
9.45 AM to 11.15 AM	<u>Session 7</u> Framework of the VRMC (Interactive talk of one hour with discussions; group exercise of 30 minutes)
11.15 AM to 11.30 AM	TEA BREAK
11.30 AM to 1.00 PM	<u>Session 8</u> Conducting Effective Meetings (Discussions and role play)
1.00 PM to 2.00 PM	LUNCH
2.00 PM to 2.30 PM	<u>Session 9</u> Mobilisation and Utilisation of Funds by the VRMC (Talk of 15 minutes and discussion of 15 minutes)
2.30 PM to 3.00 PM	<u>Session 10</u> Record Maintenance and Reporting (Short talk, classroom practice of 30 minutes)
3.00 PM to 3.15 PM	TEA BREAK
3.15 PM to 3.45 PM	<u>Session 11</u> Role of the VRMC in Village Resource Development Planning (Interactive talk and discussion of 30 minutes)
3.45 PM to 4.45 PM	<u>Session 12</u> Village Microplanning and Microproject Formulation (Talk and discussion of 1 hour)

<u>DAY 3</u>	
9.00 AM to 9.15 AM	<u>Recap</u>
9.15 AM to 10.00 AM	<u>Session 13</u> Microproject Implementation (Talk and discussion)
10.00 AM to 10.45 AM	<u>Session 14</u> Monitoring and Evaluation of Microprojects (Information presentation and discussion of 45 minutes)
10.45 AM to 11.00 AM	TEA BREAK
11.00 AM to 11.45 AM	<u>Session 15</u> Community Capacity Building for Sustaining Village Resource Development (Group discussion, participant scan, individual self-assessment rating, 45 minutes)
11.45 AM to 12.30 PM	<u>Session 16</u> Withdrawal from Active Involvement (Explanatory talk of 30 minutes and group discussion of 15 minutes)
12.30 PM to 1.00 PM	<u>Session 17</u> Mainstreaming Women's Needs and Priorities in Village Development. (Talk, group discussion, 1 hour)
1.00 PM to 2.00 PM	LUNCH
2.00 PM to 2.30 PM	<u>Session 17 continued</u>
2.30 PM to 3.15 PM	<u>Session 18</u> Consensus Building and Conflict Resolution Regarding Benefit Sharing Arrangements (Role play followed by discussion, 45 minutes)
3.15 PM to 3.30 PM	TEA BREAK
3.30 PM to 4.30 PM	<u>Session 19</u> Guiding Principles for Sharing Benefits (Group exercise and discussion)
4.30 PM to 5.00 PM	<u>Concluding Session</u> Post-training evaluation, summing up

MODULE 1

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT (VRM)**

Format: Brief introduction of 10 minutes.

After independence, a number of programmes have been implemented to improve the lives of millions of people living in the Indian villages. One programme that deserves special mention is the Community Development Programme, which has laid a sound foundation of rural development in the country. Although this programme was purely a government initiative to establish a network of multipurpose developmental agencies, at a later stage the component of community participation was adopted to implement this programme. The Panchayati Raj Act further strengthened the functioning of the programme.

Although the credit of initiating the participatory process of rural reconstruction goes to the community development programme, yet the fact remains that not much has been done to ensure a meaningful community participation in village resource management even after fifty years of independence.

Participation of people in village resource management has emerged as an important element of sustainable development of the rural society. It is true both in case of natural and human resources. Without the active involvement of local communities none of the development efforts of the government can bear fruit.

One of the earliest efforts towards participatory management of village resources was made through the initiation of several national and state level programmes involving local communities in the management of forests. This was done through the adoption of different models of Joint Forest Management (JFM). This approach helped the process of bringing together the government and the people and initiated a new era of meaningful partnership. A positive impact of this approach was an increasing trend in the reversal of degradation of forests.

SESSION 1: Importance of Community Participation in VRM

Format: A short talk of 15 minutes.

The importance of participation of the community in the management of natural resources becomes evident from the fact that any effort of alienating people, who are dependent on forest resources for their survival and sustenance, ultimately leads this valuable natural wealth of the country to the stage of total disaster.

The model of participatory forestry management being adopted by the state governments has started showing positive results in the form of forests being gradually regenerated. What is true of participatory forest management is also true of participatory village resource management, as the only way to ensure sustainable development of the villages in India is to adopt the model of participatory management in the wider context of all natural resources. Importance of PRM in the sustainable development of villages can be explained in terms of the points mentioned below:

- Promoting participatory management systems is the most appropriate strategy, not only for conserving the existing resources of the villages but also for their optimum use to ensure a sustainable development.
- Community participation in VRM also enhances the power of resource users to influence things by increasing their skills, knowledge, confidence and self-reliance to collaborate with the development efforts of the government and ensure the success of different activities and programmes being implemented for removing poverty and raising the standard of living.
- Participatory management of village resources is also an effective instrument of social justice and social equality as it provides an opportunity for the utilisation of common resources for the common good.
- As community participation in VRM aims at changing the status of villagers from the traditional position of beneficiaries to the enlightened position of stakeholders, it also helps the village community to reduce the syndrome of dependence and increase their potentiality of self-help.
- Participation of the community in the management of village resources also helps the process of a positive shift from unilateral decision making to participatory decision making. As such it helps to ensure the protection of the interest of the weaker sections of the society.
- Community participation in VRM promotes the process of social fencing and hence is the best guarantee against misuse of the community resources.

Role Play: Distributing Coats

Objective:

To illustrate the importance and need for community participation.

Material needed:

A coat or shirt and three volunteers.

Time needed:

30 to 45 minutes.

Instructions:

Ask three trainees to volunteer. Explain that you are going to organise a role play where one person would play the role of a 'poor' villager and others would play the role of 'development workers'.

Brief the 'poor villager' and 'development workers' separately.

Instruction for the 'poor villager': You are a poor villager. You have not been getting regular labour work for some time and are facing problems in arranging food for your family. In the meanwhile your child has fallen ill, and you do not have money to take him to a doctor or buy medicines for him. The moneylender from whom you had taken some money last year has been harassing you, and threatening to take over the small patch of land you own. One day you come across a person in your village who is trying to 'gift' you something. He would be trying to convince you to accept and use the 'gift' for your betterment. If he understands your problems and convinces you that your problems would be solved by co-operating with him or manages to convince you that whatever he is distributing is useful for you, then only you co-operate with him and accept his 'gift', otherwise don't.

Instructions for the 'development worker': You are an employee of an organisation working for the welfare of rural poor. The head of your department had been on tour and was quite concerned about the cold wave, and the suffering of poor. He had some funds with which he decided to purchase 'coats' for distribution among the rural poor. However the planning and arrangement took some time, and by the time the coats arrived from the factory it is already summer. You have been given a target to distribute 50 coats, out of which you have already distributed 49. If you manage to distribute the last coat you would get an incentive and promotion. You have gone to a village and you see a 'poor' and 'worried' person. Your job is to somehow convince the person to accept the 'coat' and make him wear it.

During the whole exercise no one is allowed to speak, and the volunteers have to express themselves by acting out whatever they want to convey.

Allow the 'development workers' one by one to try and convince the 'poor villager' to accept the coat. Each of them is given five minutes to convince the 'villager'.

Debriefing:

The role play, in an entertaining way, highlights the need and importance of community participation. The exercise may end in one of the following ways:

- The villager gets convinced and accepts the coat
- The villager is not convinced about the need or utility of the coat, but keeps it anyway as it is being provided free of cost.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- The coat is forcibly given to the villager, who throws it away after the development worker goes away.
- The villager refuses to accept the coat, and the development worker has to go back unsuccessful in his efforts.

The difficulty for the 'development worker' arises because he has been given a task that is decided uniformly for all (blue print approach), without considering the primary concerns of the individual beneficiary. There could be various reasons for which the villager could be unwilling to accept the coat:

- The coat is not of the right size.
 - He wants it for his child who is ill and not for himself.
 - The villager needs something else (e.g. money) more than the coat.
 - He may be uncomfortable with a coat, and would prefer a quilt instead.
1. Discuss what everyone did and how they reacted.
 2. What was each party trying to convey? Were they successful?
 3. Did the 'villager' accept the 'coat'? Why or why not?
 4. Why was it difficult to convince the villager to accept the coat?
 5. Relate the 'role play' with the village common resources and efforts to develop them by outside organisations.
 6. Lead to a discussion on various types of village resources (Session 2).

SESSION 2: Types of Village Resources

Format: Interactive sessions of totally one hour.

COMMON LAND

Introductory Talk (5 minutes)

Natural resources include forests, soil, water, air and environment. Land, which comprises all these resources, is either privately owned or owned by the village community. People use privately owned land to earn income for their own sustenance. Common land is used for providing social, environmental and economic support to the community. The people of Haryana are fortunate to have this resource, which can provide a basis for healthy living. By reserving a portion of the common land for environmental purposes like woodlots and tree groves, Haryana can live up to its name of the “land of greenery”.

Interactive Session (35 minutes)

1. Ask the trainees what they understand by the term community:

Understanding of the term “community”	
Definition 1	People of the same village
Definition 2	People of a particular religion
Definition 3	People of a particular caste
Definition 4	When we go out of the village I call the people of my village my brothers or sisters

The village community comprises all the inhabitants of the village. An inhabitant means a person, whether a landowner or landless person, who ordinarily resides in the village. Temporary absence or absence in relation to work elsewhere does not affect residence in the village.

2. Ask the trainees who should benefit from common land:

Perception of who should benefit from common land	
Perception 1	All villagers
Perception 2	Only land owners
Perception 3	Only specified castes
Perception 4	

Conclude:

Common land is for the benefit of all inhabitants of the village.

- Now ask the trainees who is responsible for managing and developing the common land.

Perception of who is responsible for common land	
Perception 1	
Perception 2	
Perception 3	
Perception 4	

Conclude:

All title, interest and rights in common land is vested by the government in the Panchayat of the village as per the Common Land Act. If any Panchayat is incapable of managing the land for the common good, the government can take over the land and manage it for a period of 20 years.

- Ask the trainees what land is treated as common land.

<i>Perception of what is common land</i>	
Perception 1	
Perception 2	
Perception 3	
Perception 4	

Conclude:

- Land which is not in the exclusive use of any individual and has been reserved for common purposes of the village community or has been acquired for such purposes.
- Land which is in the shamilat deh of any village as per Punjab Common Land Act, amended and extended to Haryana.
- Land described in revenue records as shamilat deh/charand.
- Shamilat tikkas.
- Land described in revenue records as shamilat, tarafs, paatties, pannas and tholas and used for the benefit of the village community.
- Land reserved for the benefit of the village community, including streets and lanes, playground, schools, drinking wells or ponds.
- Vacant land situated in abadi deh and gora deh and not owned by any person as per revenue records.
- Banjar quadim.

- Jumla Malkan va digar haqdaran arazi hasab rasad, jumla malkan, mushtarka malkan.

Land which is not shamilat deh:

- Land formed through river action;
- Land allotted on quasi permanent basis to a displaced person;
- Land acquired before 26th January 1950 by a person by purchase or in exchange for proprietary land from a co-sharer in the shamilat deh and is recorded in jamabandi;
- Land not used as per revenue records for common purposes;
- Land outside abadi deh which was used as gitwar, bara, manure pit, house or cottage industry immediately before the commencement of the act;
- Land used as a place of worship or for purposes subservient thereto.

5. Ask the villagers what are the ways in which common land can be used.

Perception on use of common land:	
Perception 1	
Perception 2	
Perception 3	
Perception 4	

Conclude:

The village Panchayat should utilize the land for the benefit of the inhabitants of the village. Any income from use of Panchayat land should go into the Panchayat account and be used for village development as per plan approved by the village community in Gram Sabha meetings.

1. Sum up the discussion by highlighting the major points emerging. Ask a representative of the trainees to present the summing up.
 - Village Panchayat is the custodian of the common land on behalf of the community.
 - Village Panchayat has to use the land for the village community.
 - Village community comprises all inhabitants of the village and each inhabitant of the village has an equal stake in the common land.
 - An inhabitant is a resident of the village irrespective of his land ownership.
 - Common land is the basic resource that can make village life environmentally sound and healthy.
 - Common land is of great economic use to the community, by providing it fodder, fuel, grazing space, herbs and medicines, space for common facilities etc.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- Common land can become a focus for community mobilization and action transcending sectarian interests.
- We need a proper land use and landscaping plan for development of common land.
- We need a plan, resources and technology for development of common land.
- We need improved management arrangements for common land.
- It is a resource that we need to pass on to the next generation in a better developed and managed condition, rather than using it up for the needs of the present generation.
- We, the members of the VRMC, are the pioneers of a new green revolution in Haryana.

B. HUMAN RESOURCES

In addition to the effectiveness of management efforts relating to the use of natural resources, the utilization of human resources is very important for raising the economic status of the village community. The VRMCs, therefore, need to give equal emphasis to natural resource management and human resource management aspects.

Ask the trainees to list the human resources available in their villages. The possible answers will lead to listing as under:

- Skilled workers
- Unskilled workers
- Educated unemployed youths
- Uneducated youths
- Self employed persons (e.g. shop keepers)
- Small scale entrepreneurs
- Local artisans
- Locally available master craftsmen
- Women

Highlight the following:

- There are certain underprivileged sections of the village community who need special emphasis, e.g. women and the rural poor. It is always advisable that VRMCs should make the best use of this work force, not only to augment the process of economic growth, but also to promote the principle of social justice.
- Women constitute nearly 50% of the human resources, but unfortunately they still comprise the largest section of population living in absolute poverty. Gender discrimination is one of the most pervading forms of deprivation. Lack of education and information, lack of training and low levels of literacy aggravate the situation of deprivation. They are excluded not merely from political, social and economic power, but also knowledge power as well. For the success of any rural development programme it is imperative to recognize the women's role and the negative consequences of neglecting that role.
- While formulating a viable microproject the VRMCs should take into account the availability of community resources, both natural and human. Inventories of both types of resources have been prepared during the stage of PA. In case of availability of different types of human resources, care should be taken to take stock of the skilled work force separately and so also of the migrating/non-migrating labour force. In case of migrating labourers it should be ensured that they are available when there is work on the sites.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- The project will provide required training to all villagers participating in microprojects, in order to enhance their capabilities and to ensure sustainability of the activities.

C. CHARACTERISTICS AND PROBLEMS OF MANAGING COMMON RESOURCES

There are mainly three types of ‘goods’ or resources – private, public and common. They are distinguished on the basis of ‘exclusivity’ and ‘subtractibility’.

	Private	Public	Common
Exclusion	Yes	No	Difficult
Subtraction	Yes	No	Yes

Examples of private goods are your farm land or your house. You would determine who can or cannot use your land or stay in your house. They are for your exclusive use, and your exclusive use is protected by law.

Examples of public goods could be air or road. No one can be excluded from using them, and they do not reduce or get subtracted through use. The public rights are also protected by law, and normally one can not stop anyone from using the public goods.

Examples of common goods could be your shamilat or Panchayat land, forest and irrigation tank. These resources are sometimes meant for the use of a defined group or community. Access to them or their use is supposed to be governed by a set of rules/regulations/terms and conditions that are decided by the institution with which they are vested. If due to some reason, the rules and regulations break down or become ineffective, the resource becomes ‘open access’. ‘Open access’ leads to unregulated over exploitation and degradation of the resource due to rivalrous consumption. You might have seen how the common land in your village has got degraded and reduced in size, because everyone uses it but no one ‘invests’ any time or resources for its development. There may be encroachments by private individuals also. A Common Pool Resource (CPR) is ‘subject to individual use but not to individual possession’.

If a community of users is unable to control the use of its CPRs under changing circumstances, destructive competition or conflict among the users is bound to follow, which eventually results in depletion or degradation of the resources.

Importance of CPRs: Need to rehabilitate & manage CPRs

- CPRs provide certain goods and services that are not available from private resources.
- Marginal and weaker sections depend significantly on CPRs for survival.
- Degradation of CPRs often leads to degradation of private property also.
- CPRs can provide substantial benefits to the community.

The problem inherent in the CPRs require that the actions of all the individual users are coordinated and regulated in a manner that the resource is sustainably utilised for the

benefit of all the members of the community. Operational, working and constitutional rules need to be framed and enforced to regulate access and utilisation. This needs an institution. Hitherto such a role was being carried out, not very successfully, by Government Departments. Under present scheme of things this responsibility is to be carried out by the local community institutions organised on the basis of a village or Panchayat. It is assumed that a local community institution would be more successful where outside organisations have not been so effective. This is so because the livelihood and other interests of the community is intricately linked with the CPRs, and thus they have a primary stake in the development and protection of the resource. The Government has also mandated the Panchayat (the local people's institution) through an Act of Parliament to manage the common resources within its boundary.

The next question could be: What is the need for a separate organisation if there is already a Panchayat existing with the required mandate? Discuss this issue with the trainees, by asking them the reason for creating a separate organisation specifically on the issue of resource development and management.

The creation of VRMC/VRMS should be justified through following points:

- Panchayat has many responsibilities, and a separate institution is needed to focus on the issue of village resource development.
- Even though the institution is separate from the Panchayat it derives its mandate and powers from the Panchayat.
- Management of village common resources need united stand and consensus, that may not be possible in the politically motivated context of Panchayat.

Discuss the Need for a Common Bond

Common economic and social interests of members help to bind a group together. Major social and economic differences between members can lead to friction and conflict.

Discuss carefully the problems that can occur if more influential or richer individuals become group members. Powerful individuals may dominate the group or use it for their own benefit. For example, a trader or big farmer may try to join a group so that he can offer the other members loans or convince them to work for him. In the long run, such people prevent the group from achieving self-reliance. Sometimes, however, such people may bring relevant knowledge or contacts to the group. They should be admitted, as long as they are willing to participate equally and do not try to exploit the others.

Assess the Costs and Benefits of Cooperation

You have just asked the participants what they hope to gain by working together. Then ask them to estimate what it will cost. For example, meeting together regularly requires

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

giving up free time. Members will have to contribute labour and savings to finance the group's activities. Do the benefits outweigh the costs? If so, do all members agree to pay those costs?

SESSION 3: VRMC – People’s Instrument for Resource Management

Format: Discussion and brain storming (45 minutes).

Formation of a Village Resource Management Committee (VRMC) is one of the most important aspects of the Community Institution Strengthening Process being followed by the project. The Village Resource Management Committee is the people’s instrument for optimum utilisation of their community resources, with a view to achieving the goal of sustainable development. In the context of community forestry VRMC is the agency mainly responsible for a collaborative venture jointly undertaken by the village community and the executive agency to manage natural resources.

The objective of the VRMC is sustainable management of natural resources. The major thrust of VRMC activities, therefore, is on self-directed and equitable resource use and management.

The success of such collaboration depends on:

- Participatory decision making for resource use
- Mutually acceptable pattern of benefit sharing
- Enhanced collaborative capacity of the resource users
- Adequate up-gradation of resource users’ managerial knowledge and skills
- Self-reliance in the community’s efforts for optimum development based use of village resources.

In a joint venture each party has at its disposal a certain set of resources that will be used to produce the desired outcome. Such resources may be in the form of land, capital, labour, technology, skills, knowledge and information. Also each party has its own problems to solve, goals to achieve and objectives to meet. Each has also certain missing input resources and services that only others can provide. In the context of Village Resource Management through VRMCs, resources that belong to the villagers as a community or as individuals include:

- Panchayat land
- Institutional land
- River banks
- Private land
- Village ponds
- Other common property resources.

The Haryana Forestry Department, on the other hand, has such resources as:

- Technical knowledge
- Access to wider information

- Capacity to plan and manage resources scientifically
- Required finances
- Other organisational infrastructure facilities.

In addition to these resources the Forest Department has the need to achieve project goals and objectives, which is a mix of managerial environmental, distributive and developmental concerns.

Though project goals, objectives and components have been designed in advance, it is important to make these relevant to the needs and goals of the village community. This can be achieved through:

- Collaborative processes;
- Negotiations of objectives and goals;
- Agreement on access to or exclusion from resources;
- Agreement on roles, responsibilities and sharing of resources.

Collaborative management involves the arrangements for management, which are negotiated by multiple stakeholders, based on a set of rights and privileges. It also involves the process for decision making and control over resource use.

Stakeholders

Another aspect which has to be understood in the context of VRMCs' role in village resource management is regarding the stakeholders of village resource management.

The term stakeholder refers to individuals, social groups or institutions, which possess a stake or interest in the management of the natural resource. They are those parties affected directly or indirectly by management decisions, in a positive or negative way. They include those who can influence such decisions or would like to influence such decisions. The stake or interest may arise out of the following:

- Being dependent on subsistence; e.g. wages, cattle grazing, fodder collection, collection of minor forest produce.
- Being dependent for commercial survival; e.g. lease holders of Panchayat Land for agriculture, brick making/mining.
- Having cultural or historical ties; e.g. village pond/village woodlots;
- Living nearby; e.g. forest villages;
- Holding delegated responsibilities for forest maintenance; e.g. the Panchayat is the custodian of common land;
- Being the prime beneficiaries of development of the resources; e.g. land owners from introduction of trees into farming systems; women from energy saving devices, scheduled castes as farm labour etc.

Thus collaborative management starts with consultation and negotiations with multiple stakeholders. This very process brings the stakeholders in the village community into the centre of decision making, rather than leaving them at the periphery. All stakeholders are to be consulted, not just the influential ones.

Tenure right is the main determining factor in identifying stakeholders. All community land is vested in the village Panchayat, which holds it in trust and manages it for the common good of the entire village community. Every resident of the village has equal right to all benefits from such resource use. But disputes regarding access is very common in Haryana villages. Negotiation of such conflicts and disputes is an essential element of working out collaborative management arrangements. The idea is that resource users agree, within themselves, as well as with the project, about tenure. This provides a foundation for confidence and legitimacy for management. Collaboration implies that there will be a willingness to resolve differences and negotiate an acceptable tenure arrangement, whenever disagreements arise.

Collaboration also requires conditions for resource use limit on use rights and the ways resources are exploited by those who hold rights. The passage from an "open access system" of resource use to a "restricted access" system may be the most difficult aspect of the collaboration arrangements. These can be best achieved by a negotiation process that allows the participation of those who will be affected, rather than by a project imposing these on them. Who will benefit, by how much, and under what constraints are crucial questions that need to be settled.

Need for Institutional Framework for Collaboration

All this requires an institutional framework, giving a forum for multiple stakeholders to participate in decision making and management of community forestry resources. Where the project activities are centering around community land, the Panchayat has to be involved as it is the custodian of such lands and any activity for managing or developing it has to be under the framework of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act. In such situations, the appropriate institutional framework would be a sub-committee of the Panchayat, which will be called the Village Resource Management Committee. In the case of villages where the interventions of the project is on Government Forests, Hill Resource Management Societies will be the appropriate institutions.

Formation of VRMCs is the fourth stage in the Community development process developed by HCFP, the earlier stages being:

- Village Selection
- Village Entry, and
- Participatory Assessment.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

Through these stages it is expected that a large amount of reliable information has been generated on village life and conditions. It is also expected that the project staff by the time have gained acceptance of the Community as catalysts and collaborators in the task of sustainable resource development and that the village community has analyzed its resource management problems, prepared the community baseline and finally identified representatives of the multiple stakeholders to be members of the VRMC. After the completion of all these phases of action the process of formation of the VRMC may be initiated.

What is a VRMC? (Brain-storming; 10 minutes)

The trainees should be initially exposed to a brief brain storming session based on a guided discussion relating to such issues as:

- What is the purpose of formation of the VRMC?
- What is the developmental role of the VRMC?
- What role can VRMC members (General body) play in decision making for development planning?
- What should be the mechanism to ensure fruitful participation of the people in the process of development planning?
- What should be the role of village Panchayats and HFD in the planning and execution of various development activities as performed by VRMCs?

Possible answers to these questions can provide interesting matter for trainees, a thought provoking process making them more receptive to the information input given through the talk which may follow this exercise of brain storming.

SESSION 4: Developing an Effective and Strong VRMC/VRMS

Format: Talk of 30 minutes and exercise of 45 minutes.

Creation of the VRMC/VRMS is only the first step in institutionalising the process of community participation in the management of village resources. How successful it would be depends to a large extent on the ability of the VRMC/VRMS to stand on its feet and start working on its own:

- have the skills, knowledge and understanding to run effective and inclusive meetings;
- be able to organise the management of the resource – post withdrawal;
- have the administrative and financial skills to maintain good records and manage any flows of money from harvesting products or other funds obtained for undertaking resource management activities;
- be able to solve problems and seek outside assistance when the problem cannot be resolved at local level;
- continue to develop and follow democratic and equity principles.

The local community organisation that in your case is VRMC or VRMS should be developed and managed along democratic principles in order for it to be strong and effective. As discussed before your village community is constituted of people from different social and economic backgrounds. They may have different interests, needs and priorities related to the resource. These principles, if followed and incorporated in the working of your VRMC/VRMS, would help it to become a more effective organisation, and help reduce the problems that often beset any community institution.

Principles	Explanation	Operational Mechanisms
Transparency	Everyone sees how decisions are made and who makes them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone is allowed to attend meetings - Everyone has access to records of the VRMC, particularly income & expenditure - Income and expenditure is presented in bi-annual meetings - Decisions are taken in village meetings after discussion
Accountability	Decision-makers are procedurally (i.e. through agreed rules) and periodically answerable (i.e. through user assemblies etc.) to those they represent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Records are properly maintained - Fixed term and election of office bearers - Executive Committee (EC)

		members inform the sections they represent about the developments
Comprehensive	All interest groups are consulted from the outset in defining the nature of the problem or opportunity prior to any decisions about management being taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual General Meetings - Clear identification of various interest groups - Representation / invitation to specific interest groups for discussion on issues - Special provisions related to consulting various interest groups
Inclusive	All those who have a legitimate interest (in particular those whose livelihoods are dependent on the resource) are involved	Special provisions to include and consult marginal sections
Representative	Decision-makers are representative of all interest groups	Proportional representation of different interest groups in the EC
Informed	All interest groups understand the objectives of the participatory process and have adequate and timely access to relevant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provisions to regularly inform the community about developments - Access to records - Everyone is informed about the meetings
Empowered	All interest groups (women and men) are capable of actively and voluntarily participating in decision-making in a non-dominated environment and without being compelled, constrained or otherwise left with no other choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special provisions to help marginal sections articulate their concerns - Decision making mechanism

Adapted from Adnan et. al. 1992 and Bass et. al., 1995.

Other important aspects to a strong and viable community institution are:

- Adequate funds to accomplish important tasks;
- Adequate powers to make decisions required to complete such tasks;

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- Fair and low-cost conflict resolution mechanisms;
- Ability to frame and enforce appropriate rules collectively for access control and benefit distribution;
- Ensured access to relevant information.

Threats to sustainable community governance of common resources

- (a) Blueprint thinking
- (b) Rapid changes in technology and population
- (c) Lack of second generation leadership
- (d) Over-dependence on external help
- (e) Corruption and opportunistic behaviour
- (f) Policy and operations that undermine the local initiative/efforts
- (g) Lack of institutional arrangements
- (h) Absence of fair & low-cost conflict resolution mechanisms

Adapted from SPWD, 1992.

Features of a Successful Participatory Group (VRMC in this case)

- Members have common interests.
- Members have clear objectives.
- Members are honest and work hard to achieve their objectives.
- Members write the constitution for their group and agree to obey it.
- Members hold regular meetings.
- Members participate in discussions, decision making, activities, savings, record-keeping and sharing benefits.

Explain that in a participatory group, all members benefit from their combined skills and resources.

Exercise

Provide the box given below to the trainees and ask them to fill it for their respective VRMC. You can also ask the Forest Guard of the respective VRMC to fill up the box. Where the answer is 'Yes' the individuals should be asked to justify their views by giving examples of mechanisms that they think take care of a particular principle. Where the answer is "no" – the groups should be asked for suggestions as to how to improve the VRMC in that particular aspect.

Important: Observe whether there are differences of views within the VRMC regarding any particular principle.

Discuss measures and mechanisms that would help the VRMC acquire these characteristics. Discuss:

- What needs to be improved?
- Who is responsible for ensuring the changes are made?
- When will the changes be completed?

VRMC Characteristics		Yes or No
Transparency	Everyone sees how decisions are made and who makes them	
Accountability	Decision-makers are procedurally (i.e. through agreed rules) and periodically answerable (i.e. through user assemblies etc.) to those they represent	
Comprehensive	All interest groups are consulted from the outset in defining the nature of the problem or opportunity prior to any decisions about management being taken	
Inclusive	All those who have a legitimate interest (in particular those whose livelihoods are dependent on the resource) are involved	
Representative	Decision-makers are representative of all interest groups	
Informed	All interest groups understand the objectives of the participatory process and have adequate and timely access to relevant information	
Empowered	All interest groups (women and men) are capable of actively and voluntarily participating in decision-making in a non-dominated environment and without being compelled, constrained or otherwise left with no other choice	

MODULE 2

ROLE OF VILLAGE PANCHAYAT/OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN VRM

SESSION 5: Role of Panchayats/Other Institutions in VRM

Format: Interactive talk of 60 minutes, followed by a discussion of 15 minutes.

Initiate the ice-breaking process by telling the VRMC members that the development strategy of the Haryana Community Forestry Project is self-directed and self-managed development. One of the main reasons for the failure of several development experiments in the past was that people's institutions were not involved in the projects from the planning stage itself. As a result, the goals set for the projects did not match with the needs, perceptions, resource base and social dynamics of the communities. The people – the prime stakeholders – were passive recipients of benefits, creating a dependency mentality. The responsibility for project management and success was assigned to outside experts and officials. Therefore, the Haryana Community Forestry Project conceives institution building as an integral component of the community organisation strategy.

(i) Village Panchayats - Instruments of Democratic Decentralization and Local Self-governance

- The role of the village Panchayat and other local institutions in facilitating the effective and fruitful functioning of VRMCs has to be highlighted in relation to such areas as microplanning, formulation of microprojects and the implementation of different development activities. Tell the trainees that it is always useful to interlink VRMCs with the village Panchayat and other local institutions such as cooperatives and village schools.
- The trainer will explain to the participants the role of women in the Panchayat, especially in the context of Haryana where it has been observed that the majority of women members including women sarpanches are proxy members of the Panchayats. They are virtually keeping the post in the family on behalf of their husbands or fathers/fathers-in-law. All the women representatives of Panchayats have come through the 33% reservation and there are negligible cases of women who have contested on general seats.
- The trainer will tell the participants about the importance of active Panchayat members, that their active participation is required, whether it is attending meetings or discussing women's issues or village development issues. They should be aware of their duties and responsibilities.
- The trainees need to be told that the village Panchayat and other local institutions can act as effective and major partners of Haryana Community Forestry Project. It

has to be appreciated that an association or group is more powerful than a single person. Accordingly, VRMCs working in association with other institutions are always better than those working alone.

- Break the total batch of the trainees in three village-wise groups. Ask the members of each group to list areas of diversified activities which their VRMCs may consider to implement, with a view to promoting sustainable development in their respective villages, keeping in view the way in which a meaningful cooperation of the Village Panchayat and other local institutions can be effectively utilized.
- Let it be clear to the trainees that cooperation is not essentially formal in all conditions. In fact, it has to be well understood that cooperation is usually informal at the beginning. Eventually it can be formalised through an intergroup association which is afterwards recognised and even registered more easily.
- In addition to the need of interlinkage between the VRMC and Village Panchayat, cooperatives, school etc., the trainees should also be told the advantage of linkages between the VRMC and other service agencies like Community Development Block Rural Bank, Industries Deptt., Khadi Gram Udyog Commission, Agriculture Department etc. It should be stressed that better coordination among agencies which provide service to the project provides strength to the VRMC.

Panchayati Raj is a three tier system of local self-governance in rural areas, consisting of Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samities at Community Development Block level and Zilla Parishads at district level. Villages having a population of not less than 500 have their own Panchayats and they comprise a minimum of 6 panches and a maximum of 20 panches on the basis of population. Each panch represents a ward in the Panchayat area. The Sarpanch (President) and the panches are elected by all adults residing in the Panchayat area, while the upsarpanch (Vice president) is elected by the panches in the first meeting of the Gram Panchayat after their election. Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes in every Gram Panchayat in the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by election in the Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area. Not less than one third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat is reserved for women.

The term of office of the Panchayat and its elected office bearers is 5 years. Every Gram Panchayat is mandated to hold at least two general meetings of the Gram Sabha every year. The meetings are called Hari meeting (between 1st May and 30th June) and Sawani meeting (between 1st November and 31st December). The Sarpanch who fails to hold such meetings automatically ceases to be in office. The Block Development and Panchayat

Officer or the Gram Sachiv of the Panchayat shall attend every general meeting of the Gram Sabha.

During such meetings the areas for development activities are identified and their priority fixed in accordance to consensus arrived at during the meeting. The main item of the agenda of these general meetings is the discussion on budget and utilisation of the allotted funds in different activities. The majority of the panches including the Sarpanch will form quorum.

(ii) Role of Panchayats in Planning and Development

The functions of the village Panchayat, which have direct bearing on its planning and development role, are:

(a) Planning Oriented Functions

- Review the progress of different development activities in the general meetings of the Gram Sabha and consider the resolutions of such meetings in the fortnightly meetings of the village Panchayat;
- Prepare annual plans for the development of the Panchayat area;
- Prepare annual budget and submit it to Gram Sabha at its Sawani meeting;
- Maintain essential statistics of the village.

(b) Development Oriented Functions

- Promote and develop agriculture, horticulture and farm forestry;
- Develop waste lands;
- Undertake watershed management programme;
- Develop and maintain lands and prevent their unauthorized alienation and use;
- Improvement of breed of cattle, poultry and other livestock;
- Promotion of dairy farming, poultry and piggery;
- Grassland development;
- Fisheries development;
- Promotion of rural and cottage industries;
- Rural housing, drinking water, rural sanitation, maintenance of buildings and waterways;
- Rural electrification, promotion of non-conventional energy sources;
- Promotion of poverty alleviation programmes, including selection of potential beneficiaries in the Sabha area;
- Education including primary and secondary schools, adult and non-formal education;
- Public health and family welfare, women and child development, social welfare including welfare of the weaker sections;
- Organise voluntary labour and contribution for community works.

It is clear from the above that the Panchayat has wide ranging responsibilities for planning and implementing projects for a variety of development needs, including forestry and development of community land.

(c) Role of Panchayat in Village Development Planning

The facilitator should rapidly analyze the results of the previous group discussion, and explain to the participants any gaps in their knowledge or perceptions regarding the roles of the Panchayat.

A checklist of roles can be introduced here:

- ◆ to carry out a general assessment of the natural resources of the community and maintaining proper records (giving details of the type, number, economic value, use pattern, projected value over the coming years);
- ◆ to provide an assessment of human resources available in the village community (keeping records in terms of age, education, marital status, number of children, total number of the family members, economic status in the family, avenues of employment, migratory background);
 - ◆ to develop year-wise plan of village activities;
- ◆ to mobilize internal and external resources;
 - ◆ to prepare annual budgets;
 - ◆ to implement planned activities;
 - ◆ to coordinate with other development agencies;
 - ◆ to keep data banks relating to village;
 - ◆ to develop infrastructure facilities in the village;
 - ◆ to provide locations and allotment of places for different types of development schemes;
 - ◆ to maintain a complete register of all development works undertaken by the Panchayat or any other department, specifying the costs, the date of completion of work, name of asset;
 - ◆ to organize voluntary labour and contribution for community work;
 - ◆ to prepare accounts of development works and get the same duly audited;
 - ◆ to promote poverty alleviation activities through income generation projects;
 - ◆ to maintain community assets.

In addition to the above general development activities, the Panchayats have to plan and implement other specific activities such as:

a) Agriculture

- Promote and develop agriculture and horticulture.
- Develop wastelands.
- Develop and maintain grazing lands and prevent their unauthorized alienation and use.

b) Animal Husbandry

- Improvement of breed of cattle, poultry and livestock.
- Promotion of dairy farming poultry and piggery.
- Grassland development.

c) Social and Farm Forestry, Minor Forest Produce, Fuel, Fodder

- Planting and preservation of trees on the sides of roads and other public lands under its control.
- Fuel plantations and fodder development.
- Promotion of Farm Forestry.
- Development of Social Forestry.

d) Promotion of Sustainable Development

- Fisheries development both at community and individual levels.
- Promotion of rural and cottage industries.

(iii) Role of Panchayat in Strengthening the VRMC

Panchayats have a vital role to play in strengthening VRMCs. Since community forestry is a participatory development process, which involves collaborative venture of managing natural resources, it is imperative that village Panchayats as custodians of common land and VRMCs as people's instrument of participatory management act as co-partners in this development process.

Panchayats can strengthen VRMCs in the following ways:

- Promote farm forestry and agroforestry activities.
- Develop and maintain grazing grounds and protect the area under plantation from unauthorized grazing by cattle.
- Help the formal approval of VRMC formation through a resolution being adopted in the Gram Sabha and subsequently ratified by the village Panchayat.
- Prepare annual plan for the development of the Panchayat area so as to supplement or complement the efforts of the VRMC.
- Make necessary budgetary provisions for strengthening VRMC activities through ad hoc grants or financial assistance.
- Maintain essential statistics of the village so as to make it available for use in the process of microplanning and microproject formulation by the VRMC.

(iv) VRMC – Village Panchayat: Major Issues in Coordination

Coordination between the VRMC and the village Panchayat is essential for the sustainable management of village resources. Such coordination becomes easier when the VRMC is formed to function as a sub-committee of the village Panchayat. However,

there may be issues like sharing of power and responsibilities by the executive bodies of the two institutions. Such issues can be discussed in the general body and resolved through consensus decision or majority voting.

There may be certain issues relating to coordination between the VRMC and the Panchayat. Some of the probable issues may be:

- Prioritization of community needs for planning and implementing microprojects.
- Demarcation of the rights and roles of the VRMC and the Panchayat – especially relating to the use of common property resources of the village.
- Sharing of benefits and privileges in relation to the use of the community resources.
- Issues relating to the accountability of the community microprojects.
- Use of infrastructure created through the implementation of different development projects, including those under HCFP, e.g. Chetna Kendra.

These issues can be resolved through mutual consultations and adherence to the principle of taking policy decisions through consensus.

(v) Role of Village Schools and Cooperatives in VRM

Areas in which schools can contribute their share in strengthening VRMCs are:

- Providing the facility (school premises) for village meetings and VRMC meetings.
- Providing place for organising training activities, especially until a Chetna Kendra is built.
- Helping VRMCs in mass awakening programme through organising campaigns through students and teachers.
- Helping VRMCs in organising exhibitions and fairs on environment and employment related themes.
- Helping VRMCs to raise school nurseries as models to educate the potential tree growers of the village.

Similarly cooperative societies too can be instrumental in the VRMC's efforts to mobilize funds for different microprojects. In particular, cooperatives can help the process of strengthening the VRMC through:

- Giving higher priority to loan advancement in such areas as community nurseries, individual nurseries, farm forestry enterprises, income generating activities etc.
- Helping small entrepreneurs, especially those trained for the purpose under HCFP, and thereby help in strengthening IGAs initiated by the VRMC.
- Assisting the VRMC in mobilizing funds for microprojects.
- Providing bank guarantee for the loans to members of the VRMC, who also happen to be members of village cooperative societies.

- Providing back-up support to the VRMC in relation to marketing of goods produced under IGAs.

Thus, the combined efforts of the village Panchayat, village schools and village cooperatives can really strengthen the VRMC's efforts to achieve the goal of sustainable development of the village through a well directed strategy of village resource management. In addition, this can also ensure purposeful participation of all sections of the village community in the process of community development in general and the management of natural resources in particular.

To sum up, the village institutions, especially the village Panchayats have a very important role in guaranteeing the success of the VRMC's efforts of utilizing the village resources to the best advantage of the village.

(vi) Technical and Financial Support from HCFP

HCFP will provide technical and financial support for the following:

- Establishment of woodlots on common land.
- Tree plantation on sand dune land, both common and private land.
- Establishment of village tree groves.
- Development of micro-watersheds in Shivalik Hills.
- Multi-species agroforestry on marginal and small farms.
- Poplar plantation on prime agricultural land.
- Improved homestead plots and kitchen gardens.
- Introduction of energy efficient cooking stoves.
- Introduction of energy efficient crematoria.
- Employment generation through the promotion of appropriate and financially viable occupations for self-employment of women and rural poor.

In addition to such assistance, the village communities under the project will also be receiving assistance to promote the process of sustainability of the development activities through the effort of the communities themselves. Special mention may be made of:

Entry Point Activities

These activities will mainly be of self-help type, for which a limited financial assistance up to Rs. 15,000/- per village will be provided to enable the community to initiate the activity of their choice during the first year. The identification of such activities will be made on the basis of the felt need of the community.

The trainees can be asked to suggest ways and means to make the best use of the created facility, so that it can help in generating the interest of the community in the activities of HCFP and initiate a process of participatory management of the village resources.

Chetna Kendras

With a view to creating a positive and creative atmosphere for community participation in different activities of HCFP, a provision has been made to establish one Chetna Kendra (Awareness Centre) in each of the project villages. These Kendras, besides being the venue for activities of HCFP, can also be used for holding meetings of the VRMC. In addition, these Kendras will also provide a physical focal point for the community, facilitating the development of a sustainable resource management institution.

These Kendras will also serve as a model of participatory resource management as, although they will be constructed with funds provided under HCFP, it will be the responsibility of the community to supervise the construction work, contribute labour and provide other amenities. Besides, the community will also have to generate funds and assume responsibility for their up-keep and maintenance in the long run. The role of the VRMC becomes quite crucial for mobilizing the community resources for a viable and self-sustaining community action.

Creation of Resource Management Funds

HCFP will provide initial seed money of Rs. 30,000/- to each VRMC with a woodlot of at least 10 ha. for creation of a Resource Management Fund to be managed by the VRMC.

VRMCs have to understand that the seed money from the project would only be released if the community agrees to a mechanism for further community contribution to the fund. This will promote a sense of belonging in the community, as well as ensuring availability of adequate funds for future maintenance and sustainability.

Social Mobilization and Capacity Building

Social mobilization is one of the most effective tools of capacity building. This aspect has been given priority preference in the overall strategy of HCFP. The basic responsibility of mobilizing the local community rests on the VRMCs.

Social mobilization involves the following:

- Identification of thrust areas of community action, e.g. common land development, farm forestry, IGAs etc.
- Enlisting target groups, e.g. women, landless, marginal farmers, youth, teachers, cultural organisations etc.
 - Involving local leaders, e.g. elected representatives and informal leaders.
 - Interaction with grassroots level functionaries, e.g. Lekhpal, Gram Sachiv, Forest Guards etc.
 - Training in human resource development – courses on management, book-keeping, leadership & communication skills, skills development related to resource management and IGAs etc.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- Provision of Link Workers, one male and one female in each village, for the first three years of microproject implementation.
 - Involving the community in planning and execution of different programmes.
 - Periodical monitoring and evaluation.
 - Experience sharing of success and failures.
 - Media use, e.g. posters, wall paintings, radio, TV, puppet shows, folk songs.
 - Proper follow-up.
- (vii)** Discuss role of other Government Departments with the trainees

MODULE 3

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE VRMC

SESSION 6: Functions and Powers of the VRMC

Format : Talk of 20 minutes, followed by a discussion of 10 minutes.

The guiding principle of community forestry is the participation of the local community and the executive agency in the management of natural resources of a village. The system of such management has to be collaborative in nature and participatory in approach. The effectiveness of such a system depends on the extent to which the shared or exclusive rights to make decisions and benefits from resource use are clearly defined. With a view to avoiding any conflict between the partners every effort should be made to arrive at a mutually acceptable framework of rules and regulations regarding the effective functioning of the participatory enterprise.

Accordingly, there is a need to define clear-cut functions and specific powers of the major participating agency – particularly the members of the executive body of the VRMC and official and non-official functionaries associated with the VRMC.

Functions and Powers of the VRMC

The following will be the powers and functions of the Village Resource Management Committee:

- i) Organise the community to plan for the development of natural resources in the village, including community land, degraded farm land, village ponds and tanks, village institutional land and river bank land;
- ii) Enter into an agreement with the Haryana Forest Department, reserving specified areas of community land and public places for village microprojects for afforestation and eco-development for a period of 20 years. The management of these microprojects shall be undertaken jointly with the Forest Department for the first three years and thereafter by the VRMC. There will be a tripartite agreement between the VRMC, the Panchayat and HCFP. It will outline the responsibilities and roles of the VRMC and HCFP. Also, it will provide the conditions under which the resources have to be managed and utilized, and outline sharing and utilization of benefits. Microproject work will not begin without such agreement;
- (iii) Prepare and execute a management plan for resource development for the entire duration of each of the microprojects, including arrangement for equitable sharing of benefits within the village community and reinvestment of part of the benefits for future afforestation activities within a village;
- (iv) Receive funds from the Forest Department after framing rules for their utilization and replenishment;

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- (v) Participate in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the various village development microprojects formulated during microplanning;
- (vi) Impose and levy fines and others forms of punishment on those who violate the rules of resource management.

Hand-out

Resolution to be Passed by the Panchayat

This resolution made this _____day of _____(month) of _____(year) by the Panchayat of _____(village), hereinafter called the Panchayat, witnesses as follows:

1. That the Panchayat, the agency responsible for promoting social and agroforestry, minor forest produce, fuel and fodder plantations on lands and other public places under its control, and after having had community wide consultations during the Participatory Appraisal exercise, and having received a report from the village community thereon, is desirous of inviting the Haryana Community Forestry Project (hereinafter referred to as the "Project") to initiate a Village Resource Management Project in the Sabha area.
2. That the Panchayat seeks the assistance of the Project in developing community land in its active possession and control as per the annexed schedule.
3. That the Panchayat will permit the Divisional Forest Officer (Forest Division) and his subordinates and collaborating institutions to survey and demarcate such land and set it apart for forestry purposes for a period equivalent to the rotation period of the microprojects to be prepared under the Project.
4. That the Panchayat appoints a sub-committee, called the Village Resource Management Committee (VRMC), under section 22 (v) of the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of forestry and other associated village development activities.
5. That this sub-committee shall consist of the following persons, as recommended in the PA report :

Sl. No.	Name and Address	Position	Occupation	Sex	Social Group
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					

10					
11					
12					
13					

6. That the powers and responsibilities of the Village Resource Management Committee shall be the following:
- (a) to organise the community to plan for the development of natural resources in the Panchayat area, including community land, degraded farm land, village ponds and tanks, village institutional land and river bank land;
 - (b) to survey and demarcate common land vested in the Panchayat under Punjab Common Land Act, 1961;
 - (c) to decide on the area that is to be brought under tree plantation under the Project;
 - (d) to undertake village level planning, formulate microprojects and manage the microprojects, which include forestry as well as supporting income generation and energy saving projects;
 - (e) to plant, protect and enrich tree plantations on common lands;
 - (f) to enter into an agreement with the Haryana Forest Department reserving specified areas of community land and public places for afforestation and eco-development activities for a period of 20 years, the management of which shall be undertaken jointly with the Forest Department for the first three years and thereafter by the VRMC; the agreement shall also specify the management plan for the period of 20 years, arrangement for equitable sharing of benefits within the village community and reinvesting part of the benefits for future afforestation activities within the village;
 - (g) to accept financial support from the Forest Department;
 - (h) to open a separate VRMC bank account to be jointly operated by the Chairperson, Secretary, Cashier and SDO. For withdrawals from the account up to Rs. 1,000 only any two of the authorised signatories need to sign, i.e. the Chairperson and Cashier or Secretary and Cashier, but for withdrawals above Rs. 1,000, the SDO has to sign additionally;
 - (i) to maintain separate books of accounts for the funds received from Haryana Forest Department under the Project, undertake internal audit thereof as well as facilitate external audit by the Project;

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- (j) to supply the Panchayat with copies of plans, projects and accounts for presentation in its Sawani and Hari meetings;
- (k) to frame rules for managing and protecting areas planted under forests and levy fines from villagers violating such rules;
- (l) to collect membership fees, donations and other contributions from households of the village for managing and protecting planted areas;
- (m) to accept donations and other contributions from any other agency for augmenting resource management funds;
- (n) to harvest and distribute forest produce equitably as per the management plan prepared during the microplanning process;
- (o) to receive Resource Management Fund from the Forest Department after framing rules for its utilization and replenishment;
- (p) to implement, monitor and evaluate the various village development microprojects formulated during microplanning.

For and on behalf of the Village Panchayat

xyz
SARPANCH
Resolution forwarded to HCFP

xyz
SDO

MODULE 4

CONSTITUTION AND WORKING OF THE VRMC

SESSION 7: Framework of the VRMC

Format: Interactive talk along with distribution of handouts. The talk may be of 60 minutes, interspersed with discussions, and a group exercise of 30 minutes.

For achieving the desirable level of success in any programme related to community forestry, it is necessary that the local community is fully involved in planning and implementation, as no effort of natural resource management and human resource development can ever succeed without the meaningful participation of the people. This requires, on the one hand, reorientation of the grassroots level functionaries to win the confidence of the people, and, on the other hand, making the community aware of the short and long term benefits of the programme. To achieve this, both field staff and villagers need sensitisation and training in relation to various aspects of the VRMC.

What are the Duties of a Management Committee?

- To prepare the agenda and to schedule meetings
- To report about committee actions
- To make suggestions and give advice to the group
- To promote decision making
- To implement actions after decision making
- To ensure that the agreed constitution is followed and to discipline members of the group
- To delegate tasks in order to encourage participation
- To contact resource persons, groups, and institutions
- To organise training for members
- To report on progress of the group
- To help with problems that group members cannot solve
- To represent the group.

Four Basic Principles in VRMC Formation

• **The Executive Body should be small**

The ideal number of members is between 9 and 15. In a small group all members have the chance to speak and to contribute their energy and ideas to group development. Small groups are less likely to be divided by arguments or dominated by a minority.

• **The Executive Body should be homogeneous**

Members should live under similar economic conditions and have close social affinity. Homogeneity reduces conflict within the group - members with similar backgrounds are more likely to trust each other and accept joint liability for their activities.

- **The VRMC should be formed around income-generating activities**

Income-generating activities are crucial to group development because they produce assets that help build self-reliance.

- **The structure of VRMC should be voluntary and democratic**

Members should decide who can join their group, who will lead them, what rules they will follow, and what activities they will undertake. Decisions should be taken by consensus or majority vote.

Discuss Membership

Remind the participants that membership implies certain rights and benefits, such as the right to attend group meetings and share in profits from group activities. However, it also implies the following obligations:

- To attend meetings regularly.
- To pay a membership fee (this ensures that only serious persons apply for group membership and helps raise initial capital for financing the group activities).
- To elect the group leadership.
- To make regular contributions to the group savings fund if established.
- To repay group loans quickly.
- To help other members when in need.

Discuss Women's Participation

Promoting women's participation in groups when men are around can be difficult. This is because women are reluctant to air their views or challenge the views of males in public. What can be done?

In group formation, be flexible. In many places, the natural tendency may be to form mixed groups, with both male and female members. Be aware that, because men generally dominate such groups, they do not always provide the best learning environments for teaching leadership skills to women.

If a mixed group has already been formed, suggest breaking them into separate male and female sub-groups, so that the women can meet separately from the men and gain self-confidence in speaking and publicly presenting their views.

Women are generally more homebound than men. This may make it more difficult for them to attend meetings. To help them, you should first identify the occasions in which women traditionally meet (e.g. when they go to collect water or gather for certain events).

It is also observed that women have some spare time in the afternoons. You can then identify the most suitable circumstances for getting poor women together to discuss their common problems.

Measures should be taken by the General Body to ensure female participation in group decision making. For example, it might be agreed that a percentage of the members and group officers should be female.

Men may need to be shown the benefit of increased women's participation in decision making. For example, in some rural areas, women tend to be more concerned with details than men and tend to make better treasurers and secretaries than men. Women also tend to save more regularly than men and are more concerned with paying back debts.

Remember that women are less likely to be able to read and write than men. In this case, more attention has to be given to encouraging women's participation. Always encourage the participation of non-literate members in the group.

Village Resource Management Committee: Institutional Initiative for Community Forestry

The Village Resource Management Committee (VRMC) shall be the village level institution of the project in villages where major plantation work will be carried out on Panchayat land. It shall be a sub-committee of the Panchayat under section 22 (v) of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994.

Constitution of the VRMC

All adult members of the village, who are eligible to vote in Gram Sabha elections, shall form the general council. The VRMC shall be constituted through general consensus during Participatory Assessment.

Composition of the VRMC

The VRMC shall comprise 9 to 15 members. At least one third of the members shall be women and one third shall be scheduled castes (including scheduled caste female member, if any).

The Gram Sachiv shall be the ex-officio Secretary of the committee. An Additional Secretary from amongst the VRMC members may also be selected, as the Gram Sachiv is often overburdened and may not be available for the VRMC meetings. The Forest Guard, assigned to the village cluster by the HCFP, shall be an ex-officio member and Cashier of the VRMC. The ex-officio members will have no voting power.

Office Bearers of the VRMC

The office bearers of the VRMC shall be the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Cashier. If the Chairperson is male, the Vice-Chairperson will be female, and vice versa. The first three office bearers shall be selected by consensus at the first sitting of the VRMC after its constitution. The Forest Guard of the HCFP cluster team shall be the ex-officio Cashier.

The Chairperson shall preside over all meetings of the VRMC and will sign all the agreements and covenants to be entered into by the committee. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson will perform these functions. The Secretary will convene meetings, maintain a record of the proceedings of the meetings and cause to maintain all records and documents. The Cashier will be responsible for maintaining proper book of accounts.

What are the Duties of a Chairperson?

- To organise meetings and review sessions
- To chair meetings and summarize them at the end
- To encourage participation by all members in discussion, decision making, work
- To ensure that the group constitution is followed
- To ensure that the secretary and treasurer do their jobs
- To ensure that members pay their contributions as agreed
- To delegate work and assignments
- To ensure that the work plan is followed
- To maintain harmony in the group
- To represent the group at meetings with others.

What are the Duties of the Secretary?

- To write the agenda and minutes, and keep a record of attendance at meetings
- To maintain all group records
- To read aloud the minutes of meetings
- To deal with letters to and from the group
- To assist the chairperson.

What are the Duties of a Cashier?

- To keep the financial records of the group
- To safeguard and manage the money
- To report to the members about expenditure and receipts and the balance available in cash or at the bank
- To give receipts for money received
- To count the money kept by the group, in the presence of the members
- To keep the cash book and the receipts of purchases, sales and received money
- To manage the use of the group fund.

Tenure of the VRMC

The VRMC shall hold office for a period of two years. The retiring member shall be eligible for re-election for a maximum of three terms consecutively.

Exercise

Discuss the various aspects of VRMC constitution, membership, selection/election of members, decision making, fund management, benefit distribution and conflict resolution by using the bye-law of the respective committee. Organise them in various groups according to the VRMC/VRMS and give them a copy of their bye-law to discuss and review various components. Discuss how they could be made more transparent, democratic, inclusive, comprehensive, accountable and empowering. Refer to the principles discussed in Session 4.

SESSION 8: Conducting Effective Meetings

Format: Discussion for 45 minutes, followed by a role play exercise of 45 minutes.

Meetings are very important in the working of the VRMC, as most of the issues need to be decided through discussion among the community members, but it can also be a great waste of time if not properly planned and organised. This session looks at good and bad practice in meetings and how to ensure that you can run and facilitate effective meetings. It also tries to provide understanding on how to develop agendas and write the minutes of the meetings.

Decide When and How Often to Meet

Schedule meeting days and times that are convenient for both male and female members. Frequent meetings (weekly or bi-weekly) are desirable, especially during the early stage of group formation and learning. Stress the need for regular attendance at these meetings.

Discuss the Importance of Attending Meetings

Make it clear that group meetings are the most important place for discussions, learning and decision making. Members who do not attend meetings are not able to participate properly in the group. If a member cannot come to a meeting, he/she should report in advance, giving the reason for absence. The group will record attendance against signature on a sheet like the one shown on page 45.

Tip box: What must be done before a meeting

- ✓ *Arrange the meeting in advance and inform people in advance if there is any change in programme.*
- ✓ *Check that the time & place is convenient in general, and particularly for women & poor.*
- ✓ *Make sure people know the purpose of the meeting, and who should attend.*
- ✓ *Make sure on the day before the meeting is to take place that it is still possible to hold it.*
- ✓ *Make sure that women are able to attend the meeting and that you are holding the meeting at a time and place convenient for them.*
- ✓ *Make sure that the resolutions of the last meeting are properly recorded in the resolution register.*
- ✓ *Follow up all the actions you agreed at the last meeting before going to the next meeting.*
- ✓ *Make sure that any necessary government or other non-government staff are able to attend.*

Planning and organizing a meeting involves:

1. Setting an agenda,
2. Arranging a date and venue for the meeting that is convenient to all,

3. Controlling and managing the meeting's proceedings,
4. Making decisions,
5. Preparing minutes of the meetings,
6. Reporting decisions made to concerned parties,
7. Storing the minutes of meetings for future reference.

The VRMC secretary is responsible for preparing the agenda, organizing the meeting and preparing the minutes. S/he should therefore be literate.

“Seven Imperatives” to manage a meeting efficiently:

1. Always rehearse the meeting proceedings before the day of the meeting, so that, on the day, matters will go smoothly. The secretary should be very aware of the agenda items, and those that can be dealt with quickly and those that are sensitive and will take a longer time to make a decision.
2. Always explain the roles of the office bearers of the VRMC to the members of the committee, especially those of the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and the Forest Guard.
3. Always adhere to the following steps for each agenda item:

ANNOUNCE >->->-> DISCUSS >->->-> DECIDE

4. Always aim to give high quality decisions on each item on the agenda. There should be unbiased, fair, equitable decision making that is within the laws, bye-laws, and rules of the VRMC, and, in the case of activities under HCFP, adherence to the guidelines of the HCFP as set down from time to time.
5. Always leave new business to the next meeting. If the business is not on the agenda it should not be discussed.
6. Do not allow new reporting at the meeting. Reporting on any issues should be submitted to the VRMC members well in advance of the meeting so that they can comment on the report as a fixed part of the agenda.
7. Encourage forward thinking at the meeting. The participants should be able to decide on the agenda items for the next meeting during the current meeting, so that at the end of the current meeting they can suggest items to the Secretary.

Developing Agenda for the Meeting

It is important to complete all items on the agenda for the meeting within the specified time frame. This can best be done by preparing an “Agenda Design” where:

- The first 1/3rd of the agenda items are reading the minutes of the last meeting, announcements and easy items for making decisions;
- The second 1/3rd of the agenda items are moderately difficult, followed by harder items on which to make decisions;
- The third 1/3rd of the agenda is for discussion only and for making decisions on the easiest items.

In addition apply the “Rule of Sixths” which states the following:

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- 1/6th of agenda items refer to past actions;
- 4/6th of agenda items refer to present actions;
- 1/6th of items refer to future actions.

The meeting should not dwell too much on the past and the future, but should concentrate on the present actions that are required for decision making.

Writing Minutes of the Meeting

Explain that there will be a need to follow the “Rules for Managing Written Text” related to the meeting and its decisions. These are as follows:

- a. In the Agenda make sure that each item has:
 1. A number;
 2. A title;
 3. A longer sentence of description;
 4. A named person responsible for the agenda item;
 5. An estimate of time to be spent on the agenda item;
 6. A list of expected attendees.
- b. In the Minutes of the Meeting make sure that:
 1. Agenda headings are used;
 2. There is a summary reflection of the meeting in one or two paragraphs;
 3. Each decision is highlighted in a box in capitals and is separately numbered;
 4. The VRMC attendance sheet is attached;
 5. The date of the meeting is included.
- c. In Reports prepared by the VRMC to the Panchayat or HFD, the format follows the Options Memo technique where:
 1. Problems and issues are mentioned;
 2. Options are provided for solving the problems and resolving the issues;
 3. Recommendations are made by the VRMC.

The VRMC will meet at least once in a month at a place and time decided upon by the members. The agenda for the meetings may include the following as per need:

- Reading and approving minutes of previous meeting;
- Financial report by the treasurer (funds flow and utilization review);
- Preparing resource development plans;
- Reviewing implementation of resource development plans;
- Action points;
- Fixing date for next meeting.

Half the number of the members shall constitute quorum, provided further that at least one female member is present. If on any appointed date, adequate quorum is not available, the meeting will be adjourned for one hour. If on reconvening, quorum is still not available, the meeting will be convened on another day with sufficient notice.

If members stop attending meetings, you should try to find out why. For example, members may stay away because they cannot afford to pay the membership fee. In that case, the group should discuss whether member fees should be reduced.

In other cases, it might be that some members fail to receive any useful information or satisfaction from meetings. You need to find out why. Maintaining group unity and commitment is important and sometimes requires adjustments in objectives and ways of achieving them. Members' interests can change and the group must adjust to these changes if it is to be a success.

Tip box: What to do during meetings

- ✓ Do not come late to the meeting.
- ✓ Do not hurry meetings.
- ✓ Conduct meetings in a public meeting place and not at the house of one particular person.
- ✓ Make sure that everyone sits together with no discrimination in seating arrangements.
- ✓ Do not carry on too long.
- ✓ Ensure that chance has been given to all interest groups to present their views, especially women and poor.
- ✓ Encourage marginalised interest groups to build up their confidence and trust. Ensure that their needs are highlighted and brought into the decision making process.
- ✓ If necessary, arrange for women to conduct a separate meeting to discuss and articulate their views.
- ✓ At the end of each meeting there should be a public agreement to continue or not - the leader should constantly check that everyone is agreed to both the process and the outcome.

Decisions

All decisions of the VRMC shall be by simple majority. The Chairperson will have a casting vote.

Exercise: ROLE PLAY

Ask the participants to enact a meeting of the VRMC. Ask them to assign the roles of Chairperson, Secretary and Cashier to three of the participants. Give them the enclosed agenda, minutes from previous meeting and financial statement as a 'script' for the role play.

After the meeting split the class into three village-wise groups. Ask each group to prepare minutes of the meeting. Give 15 minutes for the exercise, then reconvene the whole class and ask each sub-group to read out its minutes. Discuss merits and demerits, comparing the three presentations.

Handout for Role Play

HYPOTHETICAL MEETING OF A VRMC

Notice

A meeting of Surajpur Village Resource Management Committee will be held on 1 January 2000 at the Panchayat ghar at 5.30 p.m. DFO, Jatusana has been requested to attend as special guest. The agenda shall be the following:

1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 1999.
2. Review of financial matters.
3. To approve the forwarding of the microprojects prepared by the community.
4. To consider the dispute regarding encroachment on common land measuring 1acre by Shri Dayanand, S/o Sant Ram Chandha.
5. Any other matter with the permission of the chair.

All VRMC members are requested to attend the meeting.

**Sd/-
Secretary**

Meeting Register

Present	Designation	Signature
1. Shri Manphool Singh	Chairperson	
2. Smt Omvati	Vice Chairperson	
3. Smt Phoolwati	Member	
4. Smt Mayadevi	Member	
5. Smt Sooraj Kaur	Cashier	
6. Shri Daya Shankar	Secretary	
Not present & reasons intimated		
1. Ram Kiran	Member	
2. Kripa Shankar	Member	

3. Lal Singh Member

Minutes of Meeting held 1 December 1999

The first meeting of Surajpur Village Resource Managing Committee was held on 1 December, 1999. The business transacted were:

- i. To fix rate of membership and annual subscription to be paid by every household;.
- ii. To open an SB account with Gurgaon-Rewari Grameen Bank, Malkapur.
- iii. To approve selection of Link Workers.

After detailed discussions, the following resolutions were passed:

Resolution 1: It is hereby resolved that every household in Surajpur village will pay a membership fee of Rs. 100 and annual subscription of Rs. 11 to the VRMC. It is further resolved that if any household has genuine difficulty in paying the membership fee he may request the VRMC in writing for a waiver in part of the amount payable. The executive committee in its next sitting will decide the case on merit.

Resolution 2: It is hereby resolved to open an SB account in the name of the Surajpur VRMC with the Gurgaon Rewari Grameen Bank, Malkapur, which shall be operated upon by the Chairperson and Cashier jointly or by the Secretary and Cashier jointly. It is further resolved that a copy of this resolution be given to the bank for their records.

Resolution 3: The VRMC had with it a panel of 7 names for appointment as Link Workers. It is resolved that the following be appointed to the post for a period of 12 months commencing 15 January 2000:

Smt Susheela Devi B.Sc, W/o Balwan Singh; Shri Mukand Lal, BA, S/o Harbanslal.
It is further resolved that they be paid an honorarium of Rs. 600 per month, which amount will be paid to the Haryana Community Forestry Project to the VRMC.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair.

Accounts for December, 1999

<u>Details</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
Membership fee up to 31 Dec. 99	10,000.00	Printing & Stationery	1,000.00
Annual Subscription	1,100.00	Meeting expense	50.00
Revolving fund from DFO	30,000.00	Travel	100.00
		Cash in Hand	2,000.00

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

	Cash at Bank	37,900.00
<u>Total</u>	<u>41,100.00</u>	<u>41,100.00</u>

SESSION 9: Mobilisation and Utilisation of Funds

Format: A talk of 15 minutes, followed by a 15 minutes discussion on how to mobilize and utilize funds of the VRMC.

Funds of the VRMC

The funds of the VRMC shall consist of the following:

- i) Membership fee from each household in the village, determined on the basis of land holding and economic status of the household (to be decided by the village community during PA and approved in the final PA meeting);
- ii) Voluntary contributions/ donations from the village community and industrial and commercial establishments/ trusts/ societies/ companies etc, if any, operating in and around the village;
- iii) Grants from Government and non-Government sources, if available;
- iv) Donations/ contributions from the general public;
- v) Resource Management Fund from Haryana Community Forestry Project;
- vi) Incentive bonuses, to the VRMCs that practice sustainable management of woodlot and sand dune plantations, based on seedling survival assessments;
- vii) A lump sum for two village Link Workers for three years, at the rate of Rs. 600 per Link Worker per month, provided that the village provides one male and one female Link Worker.

Discuss the need and importance of member contributions. The facilitators should discuss with the group why and how members should pay contributions.

What are Member Contributions?

Contributions are regular payments made to the group in kind and or in cash by group members. It is important to specify in writing what the money will be used for.

Why are Contributions Important?

Contributing encourages unity, since all members do something visible for the common good of the group. Contributions also help the group cover costs - from small expenses such as writing materials and transportation to larger expenses such as start-up investment for an income-generating activity.

Contributions are also a form of insurance that cushions the group enterprise from unforeseen difficulties or provides emergency assistance to members in time of need.

How should Contributions be made?

Every member should be obliged by the group constitution to pay a fixed amount to the Cashier. The size of the contribution must be set with the agreement of all members and will depend on the proposed use.

It is important that the Cashier gives receipts and keeps proper records of each member's contributions. The Cashier should report to the group in its meetings any expenditure and the current cash balance. If some money was spent, he or she must document how much and for what purpose. If the money was lent, the Cashier must document the size of the loan, to whom it was lent and when will it be paid back.

Sample Form for Recording Contributions

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Balance</u>
4/3/2000	Mrs. D.	10.00	10.00
4/3/2000	Mr. S.	10.00	20.00
4/3/2000	Mrs. K.	5.00	25.00
4/4/2000	Mrs. L.	10.00	35.00
4/4/2000	Mr. D.	5.00	40.00
4/4/2000	Mr. S.	10.00	50.00

Each VRMC with a woodlot of at least 10 ha. will get from the Haryana Community Forestry Project, through the concerned DFO, Rs. 30,000 as a Resource Management Fund. The utilization of the Resource Management Fund shall be governed by the following rules:

- i) The VRMC will open its own savings bank account in a scheduled commercial or cooperative bank and any proceeds from HCFP shall be deposited into this account.
- ii) Proper books of account will be kept regarding the funds received from HCFP. The accounts will be audited at the end of each financial year. The books of accounts will be inspected and audited by an authorized representative of HCFP.
- iii) The fund will be utilized to meet the genuine needs of managing the microprojects, in particular care and maintenance of plantations after three years of planting. Recurring committee expenditure shall be met from own funds.
- iv) At the time of felling, the fund shall be replenished from income of sale of trees up to at least its original level.
- v) In case there is difficulty in mobilizing adequate funds for income generation activities, the people who take up such activities may be provided loan from out

of the Resource Management Fund and such loans will qualify to be counted as assets. These loans shall be interest-free.

- vi) All decisions regarding utilization/ investment of the fund will be through majority vote among the VRMC members.
- vii) The VRMC will provide to the Village Panchayat statement of accounts and utilization of funds as per statutory requirements.

It is extremely important that the VRMCs start managing their fund requirements and start the process of becoming self-dependant financially. This will go a long way in determining their sustainability and success.

SESSION 10: Record Maintenance and Reporting

Format: A short talk of 30 minutes.

Keeping Records

It is important for group members to know what actions have been taken by the group, or what or how much has been bought, sold or repaid. If these actions are not recorded, misunderstandings may develop between members. An important building block in group development, therefore, is record keeping.

The VRMC may need to maintain following records:

1. Membership Register
2. Meeting & Resolution Register
3. Accounts books including cash book, subsidiary registers, receipt book
4. Microproject books (proposal, tracking sheets, review sheets)

Like other processes in group formation, the development of record keeping is a step-by-step process. Discuss with the members what records are important to keep. Start with the names of the group and its members and incoming money. Simultaneously they should begin to record the minutes of meetings.

A sample format for recording the minutes of group meetings is given in the chart below. Remember that records need to be understandable to all members, even those who cannot read. If some members cannot read, suggest that records be made using symbols.

What is Record Keeping?

Record keeping is the maintenance of information concerning the group for future reference - for example, information about the group's organisation, activities and income. Keep records simple so that all group members can understand them. Well informed group members are likely to make better decisions than misinformed groups.

Sample Format for Minutes of a Group Meeting

DATE	AGENDA	DISCUSSED	DECISIONS
4/6	Workshop	Yes	3 members to go
	Purchase of feed	Yes	2 will buy 3 bags
6/6	Late arrival of Committee members	Yes	
11/6	Report from workshop	Yes	Adjust constitution

Report sale of chickens Yes All members to advertise at school

Sample form for Recording Attendance at Meetings

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>
	4/6	18/6	15/7	9/8	25/8
Mr. D.	(Signed)	(Signed)	Absent	(Signed)	(Signed)
Mr. N	(Signed)	Absent	(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)
Mr. S.	(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)	Absent	(Signed)
Mrs. G	Absent	(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)

Why is Record Keeping Important?

- It helps members remember what has happened
- It provides information and data to monitor progress
- It provides information and data for evaluation.

Who is Responsible for Record Keeping?

Records are kept by the management committee, but should be reviewed frequently by all members at meetings to assess problems encountered and progress towards achieving the group's objectives.

When is Record Keeping done and where?

Record keeping should be done on a regular basis whenever meetings are held or activities take place. Information should be kept in record books, not on loose sheets of paper. Information about agreements, assignments and finances are important and care should be taken not to lose them.

Annual Report

At the end of each financial year, the VRMC shall prepare an annual report, including statement of accounts, which will be presented at the Savani meeting of the Gram Panchayat. A copy of the report will also be endorsed to DFO, HCFP.

MODULE 5

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MICROPROJECTS

SESSION 11: Role of the VRMC in Village Resource Development Planning

Format: Interactive talk (30 minutes).

Aims of session:

1. By the end of the session, participants know about the general role of the VRMC.
2. By end of session, participants are clear about the role of VRMC in village resources assessment and planning.

Role of VRMC in Village Resource Development Planning (Talk; 10 minutes)

Highlight the importance of development planning in the process of resource management, explaining that a planned strategy has various advantages to the community, such as:

- improved knowledge of resource management policy and legislation;
- better access to information through community baseline setting;
- better community goal setting;
- proper land use planning for optimum and equitable use of resources;
- improved selection and prioritization of resource-based microprojects for development;
- participatory organization and management systems;
- strengthened community financing mechanisms;
- coordinated scheduling of resource mobilization and activities;
- participatory monitoring to enable regular tracking of progress;
- community reviews and evaluations of microprojects;
- sustainability of the whole development process through increased capacity building with the community.

Discuss the steps involved in the process of Village Resources Development Planning by VRMCs in terms of:

1. Preparation of the community baselines, e.g. available resources, socio-economic and environmental conditions.
2. Identification of the issues to be tackled:
 - ◆ resource management (e.g. forest, common land, water, agricultural land);
 - ◆ environmental management (e.g. waterlogging, pollution, wind and water erosion);

- ◆ community capabilities for achieving sustainable village forest systems (e.g. access to information, planning skills, conflict resolution, accessing external resources);
 - ◆ equitable benefit sharing amongst disadvantaged groups (e.g. access to common property resources from common land);
 - ◆ poverty alleviation (e.g. income generation microprojects, employment on microprojects).
3. Community goals and objective setting for forest and non-forest activities by involving the people in the decision making process.
 4. Preparation of a strategic-level and participatory Village Natural Resources Microplan that can be integrated into the Panchayat Development Plan by the Panchayat and the BDO.
 5. Prioritization of the Microprojects to be selected for detailed plan formulation and implementation by the community and various interest group, e.g. women and landless.
 6. Microproject Proposals to be prepared for implementation of community selected microprojects.
 7. Participatory monitoring and evaluation of Microprojects through selection of key indicators of change.
 8. Assessment of community capabilities prior to exit from the village by the HCF Project in order to prepare a proper exit strategy aimed at sustaining the systems established in the village.

<p>Involve local people in the decision making process when developing a plan of action. They should be convinced that the planned action will improve their living conditions and will increase opportunities for raising their family income.</p>

SESSION 12 : Village Microplanning and Microproject Formulation

Format: A talk, group discussions (50 minutes, followed by a break of 10 minutes).

Aims of session:

1. By end of session, participants fully understand the differences between Microplanning and Microproject Formulation.
2. By end of session, participants will have reviewed their own Microplan and confirmed its content.
3. By the end of the session, participants will have compared the goals of the community in the Microplan and the project goals of the HCFP and noted any differences.

1. Defining and Understanding Microplanning and Microproject Formulation (Group Exercise; 10 minutes)

The trainees will already be familiar with Microplanning and Microproject Formulation. They have previously completed the exercises together with forestry extension staff based in their own village cluster. The trainees should be encouraged to discuss the common features of the process of Microplanning and be helped to arrive at its conceptual framework which may lead the group to understand the simple definition as cited below:

Microplanning means overall strategic planning for sustainable village resources management. In other words, it means deciding in advance what is to be done to achieve a set of community approved goals for management of the natural resources of a village. Emphasis will be placed on planning the village forest systems on both community and private lands, although other resources such as land, water, soil and environmental issues in areas of human habitation may also be part of the Microplan as identified by the community.

In the same manner, encourage the VRMC to identify the characteristics of Microproject Formulation, encourage them to arrive at the following definition:

Microplanning differs from Microproject Formulation, the latter referring to detailed planning for specific areas or sites within a village. Microprojects are to be planned, implemented and monitored by the community with technical, financial and administrative assistance from HCFP.

The trainees should have a clear-cut understanding of the importance and necessity of Microplanning as a pre-requisite for Microproject formulation. The Microplan will

identify the needs for resource-based Microprojects in the village, and will rank them in order of priority through the efforts of the VRMC members.

Ask the VRMC to note the following:

No activity (under the HCF Project) which relates to physical works such as construction of a Chetna Kendra, building a minor dam, developing a community nursery and raising plantations on community land is to be initiated until a Village Resources Microplan for that village has been prepared. This is to be done in consultation with all village households.

2. Review of Microplan (Chaired Group Discussion; 20 minutes)

The participants should be asked if they have read their Village Resources Microplan. This was previously prepared by the VRMC together with the NGO or staff from the HCFP. If they have not read it, then, ask them if they are now conversant with the concept of Microplanning after the previous exercise.

Extra copies of Microplans in Hindi should be available at the training venue. Participants who have not read the document should be encouraged to do so in the evenings after the training sessions.

Record the various perceptions as expressed by those who came forward with their answers. The common features of Microplanning as per the expressed views should be listed.

The expressed views will then be moderated through group discussion to arrive at a consensus, highlighting the importance and necessity of Microplanning and Microproject formulation. These points may suggest that Microplanning and Microproject formulation are needed to ensure that:

- The community should be able to identify key resource management problems and issues in the village and suggest actions for solving the problems and issues.
- The community should be actively involved in setting its own short-term (1-2 years) and medium-term (3-4 years) goals for sustainable management of village resources.
- Land utilization and management of common property resources are based firstly on the needs of the main users of the common property and secondly on the needs of the entire community.
- Execution of resource-based development projects should be based on both the existing site conditions and the actually available inputs (human resources, funds, local materials).
- Benefit flows to the stakeholders should be pre-planned, equitably distributed, and regulated through involvement of all stakeholders in the decision making at the

planning, establishment and maintenance/benefit sharing phases of implementation.

Explain that prior to the training of VRMC members the Village Resources Microplan should already have been approved by the VRMC and the Panchayat, and copies distributed to the PMU, BDO and other relevant partners. If this is not the case, establish what the current position is and how the VRMC will get the plan approved.

3. Comparing Community and HCFP Goals (Chaired Group Discussion; 30 minutes)

At this stage it would be useful to remind the trainees that the Microplanning and Microproject activities should aim to also meet the goals and guiding principles of the HCFP which is their major partner. These principles and goals include:

- building up the capacity of rural communities to improve the natural environment;
- maintaining the land fertility even while exploiting the land resources for optimum production in the farm and the forestry sectors;
- promoting a self-directed community development process;
- improving the management of common property resources through the regeneration of biomass and topsoil which were earlier degraded due to water and wind erosion;
- ensuring the sustainable nature of any village resource management system;
- increasing the number of sustainable forestry and agroforestry interventions in farming systems;
- increasing the number of market-led environmentally friendly and energy efficient technologies introduced into villages;
- assisting the weaker sections of the village society to enable more equitable access to village resources through social and economic empowerment, thereby strengthening the process of self-help which may ultimately result in more sustainable development.

The trainees may then be encouraged to analyze the Microprojects proposed for implementation in their villages against these guiding principles of the HCFP in order to confirm that the goals of the community and those of the HCFP are the same or at least very similar.

This exercise can be carried out separately by each of the VRMC groups. The output would be an assessment by each VRMC as to whether the community and the HCFP have the same goals. If the goals are found to differ, then the participants should discuss what can be done to bring the two partners closer together. This should not happen of course

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

since the Microplan and Microproject formulation should have been carried out with the full knowledge of the HCFP guiding principles.

SESSION 13: Microproject Implementation

Format: Talk, group reminiscence, chaired discussion, group exercise (45 minutes).

Aims of session:

1. By end of session, participants understand the need for a Pre-Implementation Meeting and a Pre-Implementation Agreement.
2. By end of session, participants understand the different models of Microproject management, and the participatory nature of all three models.
3. By the end of the session, participants have remembered and reflected on the Outputs (Benefits) described in the Microproject Proposal.
4. By the end of the session, the participants understand their own roles in the Microproject and the roles of the Forestry staff.

1. Microproject Pre-Implementation Meeting (Talk, 5 minutes)

Remind the VRMC members that microprojects will have been identified in the microplanning exercise and will have been further designed in the microproject formulation exercise, which was also part of the microplanning.

Explain to the VRMC members that after approval of a microproject by the HCFP there will be a Pre-Implementation Meeting (PIM). The pre-implementation meeting should be held with the direct beneficiaries of the microproject, and the meeting should be organized by the VRMC together with the DFO and SDFO.

The two main objectives of the meeting are as follows:

- A review of the Microproject Action Plan and the agreement arrived at between the community, HCFP and any other development partners in the previous microplanning meetings.
- During this meeting, the VRMC will appoint a Community Microproject Monitoring Team (CMMT), which will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the microproject on behalf of the VRMC and the community.

2. Types and Organization of Microprojects (Talk; 10 minutes)

Explain that the Forestry Department is no longer willing to manage community plantation activities through a Plant-Maintain-Transfer scheme, as was common under the Social Forestry Project. This method of management has led to failure of many community plantations, since the community was not involved in planning, establishing and maintaining the plantations from the beginning.

Explain to the participants the three types of project management that are possible within the HCF project, as follows:

1. Joint Management Model where the microproject is a joint partnership between the community and the HCFP for the planning and establishment phases. During the maintenance and benefit sharing phase, the community manages alone with monitoring and extension services provided by the HCFP.
2. Assisted Community Management Model where the community manages the establishment and maintenance process with HCFP assisting in planning, monitoring and extension services.
3. Un-assisted Community Management Model where the whole process is planned, implemented, and monitored by the community themselves (maybe with HCFP only providing institutional linkages).

3. Review of Microproject Proposal (Buzz groups, group presentation, group discussion, document review; 15 minutes)

1. Ask the participants if they can remember the Microproject Formulation exercise that they have already carried out.

Those who were not involved in the formulation exercise should be given a copy of the Microproject Proposal to read. They should read this outside the venue hall, and return to their group when they have completed reading the proposal document.

2. Ask the participants to give a summary of the findings of the Microproject Formulation exercise based on their own recollections.
3. Ask them to remember the list of Microproject Outputs (Benefits) arrived at during the Microproject Formulation exercise.
4. Then ask for the Microproject Proposal document to be made available to all the participants to see if their recollections are the same as those agreed.
5. Explain that the project that they previously formulated has now been approved by the HCFP, and is ready for implementation.

Ensure that some of the participants are direct beneficiaries of the Microproject and are from the village in question (these will have been named in a list attached to the Microproject Proposal Form).

4. Comparison of Roles of the VRMC and HCFP (Talk, group exercise; 15 minutes)

Explain to the VRMC that their role will depend on the type of Microproject being implemented.

Provide examples to the participants of the different types of Microproject and the associated management model:

- ◆ Village woodlot under Joint Management Model.
- ◆ Poplar farm forestry under Assisted Community Management Model.
- ◆ Drainage of roads in areas of human habitation under Un-assisted (Limited Assistance) Community Management Model (100% self-help or maybe with limited external support e.g. through the Entry Point Activity Fund).

Ask the participants to detail their roles in their own Microproject proposal. Lead them to at least some of the following:

- ◆ preparation of a Participatory Microproject Proposal;
- ◆ provision of labour for nursery and plantation activities from amongst disadvantaged members of VRMC (poverty alleviation);
- ◆ provision of community land with no disputed claims by third parties;
- ◆ provision of sources of local materials as needed;
- ◆ provision of CMM Team for monitoring project activities;
- ◆ provision of lock-up facilities for any equipment for the microproject;
- ◆ ensure protection and maintenance of plantations;
- ◆ keeping records of management activities, specific inputs and benefits.

Make a list of inputs and activities for which the community will be fully responsible. This can be done for each of the three VRMC groups.

Their roles should have already been included in their Microproject Proposal. Ask them to compare the list prepared in this training with that prepared in the Microproject Proposal.

Ask them to list those Microproject inputs and activities that they expect the project's Forestry staff to be responsible for. Ask them to list what they feel they definitely cannot do themselves. The facilitator should note what the community considers to be its main organization and management weaknesses.

Explain that a formal Training Needs Assessment will be conducted by the Forest Guard responsible for training shortly immediately after this training course in order to strengthen VRMC and Microproject beneficiaries' capabilities.

SESSION 14: Monitoring and Evaluation of Microprojects

Format: Informative presentation, group discussion, group exercise (40 minutes and 5 minutes break).

Session Aims:

1. By end of the session, participants clearly understand the concept of monitoring indicators and activity tracking.
2. By the end of the session, the participants have listed a set of key indicators for their Microproject that they wish to monitor themselves.
3. By the end of the session, the participants understand the need for the Community Microproject Monitoring Team for their Microproject.

Indicators and the Microproject Monitoring Team (Talk, group discussions and presentation, document review, election exercise, group work; 40 minutes)

1. Ask VRMC members from each village to select one Microproject Proposal for further discussion, analysis and preparation of a monitoring plan.
2. Explain to the VRMC participants the need for monitoring and evaluation and ask them "how will they know that they have achieved their objectives?" and "who will ensure that these objectives are achieved?" Microproject Objectives are defined in the Microproject Proposal Form.
3. Start discussions on monitoring and evaluation with the participants by asking "how will they identify verifiable indicators of the achievements for the Microproject?", "what type of indicators will be measured e.g. bio-physical, socio-economic, social, gender or other?", "how will the indicators be measured?" and "who will measure them?"
4. Review each of the agreed objectives (defined in the Microproject proposal) with the community and identify what are the standards of achievement (indicators) for each objective.
5. Lead the participants to identify indicators that measure the achievement of the following (as defined in the Microproject Proposal):
 - Project Objectives
 - Project Purpose
 - Inputs
 - Benefits
 - Sustainability
 - Impact on Gender

- Impact on Environment
6. Ask the VRMC members and the Microproject beneficiaries who will be the best judge of the Microproject's success. Encourage them to establish a Community Microproject Monitoring Team (CMMT) to collect and analyze data during implementation.
 7. Explain that the CMMT will look very carefully into the contents of the Microproject Plan agreed during the PIM, and will track activities carried out during implementation, and the eventual outputs (benefits) that accrue to the community.
 8. Explain that the VRMC and CMMT should review the standard set of indicators prepared by the Monitoring and Evaluation Division for typical Microprojects when they have finalized their own list of indicators for tracking the Microproject's progress. They may have missed some key indicators and will wish to add them to their list.
 9. Explain that the CMMT will be responsible for tracking progress and reporting back to the community. The CMMT will report at the monthly VRMC meetings, and will prepare updates for Community Microproject Monitoring Boards, which are to be strategically placed within the village.
 10. The CMMT will also advise the VRMC and HCFP on the best Community Exit Strategy for HCFP after a period of time defined in the Microproject Proposal. They will assess the maturity of the Microproject and its stakeholders in order to do this. explain that the next lesson describes indicators for community capability tracking.
 11. Ask the participants "who would be interested to join the CMMT?" The members of the team (2-4 in number with at least one being a woman) should be literate, numerate and resident in the village; where possible some members should be degree holders with a natural resource or socio-economic background.
 12. The VRMC Trainer should give instructions to the participants on how to fill up the Microproject Monitoring Sheet (Annex) for tracking Microproject activities. The Monitoring and Evaluation Division will provide standard Microproject Milestones for each type of microproject (see Microplanning Working Paper for reference purposes). There may be other activities and events outside the standard milestones that will need to be included by the community on an ad hoc basis, e.g. extra-ordinary meetings, study tours etc.
 13. Explain that the CMMT will start performing its monitoring tasks after the PIM is over.

14. Explain that the VRMC will ask other Microproject stakeholders to start engaging in the tasks assigned to them after formation of CMMT.

Annex (Hand-out)

MICROPROJECT MONITORING SHEET

Milestone/ Activity/ Event	Date	Number of persons attending	Key Outputs or Results	Remarks

SESSION 15: Community Capacity Building for Sustaining Village Resources Development

Format: Group discussion, chaired discussion, participant scan, individual interviews and individual self-assessment rating exercise (40 minutes and 5 minutes break).

In order to sustain village resources (village forestry) development, it is expected that the capabilities of the community need to be strengthened in a number of key personal development areas. Once strengthened, the community may then be considered to be mature enough to manage its own natural resources in a fully sustainable manner. Monitoring community capabilities will provide continuous information for deciding on the community exit strategy for each village.

Highlight the following:

- The overall objective of HCFP is to build up the capacity of rural communities to improve the natural environment and maintain soil fertility through sustainable management of natural resources undertaken in a participatory manner.
- As HCFP lays emphasis on greater involvement and empowerment of disadvantaged groups in village decision-making, the need and role of capacity building becomes quite important.
- The capacity building efforts under HCFP will raise the competence and technical skills of the villages.

Eight community capabilities have been identified, although the VRMC members themselves may define further capabilities. The eight capabilities are as follows:

- ability to gather and appraise community information on village resources
- ability to prepare village resource plans through consensus and to prepare feasibility studies for new resource-based microprojects
- ability to resolve conflicts in the village with regard to use of natural resources and common land
- ability to access and mobilize resources for implementing resource-based microprojects
- ability to identify local adult education resource persons, and to carry out resource management training within the village or nearby
- ability to protect and rehabilitate common property resources and other degraded land
- ability to identify and promote new income generating activities, targeting resource poor households

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- ability to monitor and continuously evaluate microprojects and to adjust direction as needed, and to carry out an assessment of village resource plans & to organise re-planning as needed.

It is suggested that the following learning steps be carried out with the VRMC members for 'Community Capabilities Learning'.

- Step 1 Start an open discussion by asking the participants "what do they think are the characteristics of a sustainable community?"
- Step 2 From the identified characteristics, "define the community capabilities needed to achieve a sustainable community".
- Step 3 Divide the open forum into three groups based on the three villages, and ask each group "do they think that their own community is already sustainable?"
- Step 4 If the answer is negative, ask the group(s) "what specifically do they want to achieve in each of the community capabilities in order for the community to become sustainable?"
- Step 5 Record the responses and link them to the 'Community Exit Indicators' as shown in the "Community Capabilities Tracking Form" (Annex).
- Step 6 Present and explain the "Community Capabilities Tracking Form" to the open forum.
- Step 7 Ask all the participants to rate their own community capabilities using the rating form.
- Step 8 Once all participants have completed the rating form, present the findings to the participants.
- Step 9 Explain that a Community Monitoring Team will be formed from amongst the VRMC members in order to monitor the development of these capabilities in each village.

COMMUNITY CAPABILITIES TRACKING FORM

Community Capabilities	½ year	1 year	1½ year	2 year	2½ year	3 year
To gather and appraise information						
To prepare village plans through consensus						
To improve the community's capability to resolve conflicts over management of village resources						
To access and mobilize resources						
To monitor microprojects and assess immediate effects of village resource management plans						
To provide trainers at village level knowledgeable in a range of resource management skills						
To protect and rehabilitate common property resources						
To identify and promote new income generating activities amongst disadvantaged						

Levels:

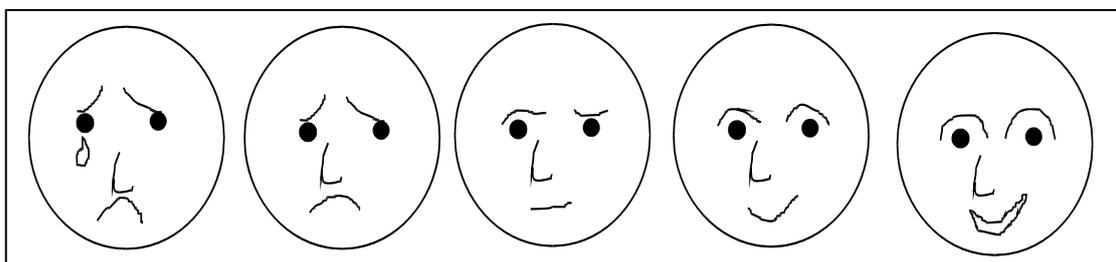
Very Poor

Poor

Moderate

Good

Excellent



SESSION 16: Withdrawal from Active Involvement & Microproject Review

Format: Talk, explanatory talk (30 minutes), group discussion (15 minutes).

Withdrawal from active involvement in the microproject by HCFP staff will follow an Establishment Phase of up to four years, depending on the type of microproject. Village woodlots may be divided into plantation sites that are phased for implementation over more than 4 years. On the other hand, establishment of an income generating project based on local resources such as babbar grass for rope making may be 1-2 years. It is expected that each village will have a number of microprojects identified in the village resources Microplan. Some may be 100% self-help, some may be implemented with development partners other than the Forestry Department. Explain that during this lesson, only microprojects supported directly by HCFP are considered.

1. Community Microproject Review

Most microprojects will go through two main phases:

- Establishment Phase
- Maintenance and Benefit Sharing Phase

The HCFP considers a microproject to be complete when the Establishment Phase of microproject implementation comes to an end. This will normally be 3 or 4 years after approval of the strategic village resources Microplan by the community, formation of the VRMC and appointment of Village Link Workers. Monitoring of the Maintenance and Benefit Sharing Phase will be carried out by the Forest Guard (based in the village cluster) and the Forest Guard (M&E, based at Sub-Division).

Prior to completion of the Establishment Phase of the Microproject (after 3-4 years for plantation models and less than 3 years for most IGA and rural infrastructure microprojects), there will be a need for a review/evaluation of the implemented Microproject. This evaluation is known as the "Community Microproject Review".

A Review is defined as a "thorough examination, at specified points in time, of projects or microprojects, usually with emphasis on impacts and additionally on efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, replicability and sustainability".

The review will normally consider the following:

- The efficiency of the microproject as defined by the amount of outputs created and their quality in relation to the resources (capital and personnel) invested.

- The effectiveness of the microproject by expressing to what extent the planned outputs, expected effects, project purposes and intended impacts (overall objectives) are being or have been produced or achieved.
- The relevance of the microproject by assessing the extent to which the microproject is addressing or has addressed problems of high priority, as viewed by the stakeholders in the village, especially the microproject's direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries.
- The impact of the microproject which are the longer term, largely indirect consequences of the microproject for the intended beneficiaries and other indirect beneficiaries of the sustainability of the microproject, meaning the maintenance or augmentation of positive changes initiated by the VRMC with support of the HCFP after the microproject has been completed.

For forest-based microprojects, it should be realized that impact and sustainability cannot be measured in the time frame of 3-4 years. Harvesting of main benefits may be in the 10th, 15th or 20th year. Consequently, the CMR completed at the end of the third or fourth year can be considered a Mid-term review, and will emphasize potential for sustainability of the microproject.

2. Community Maturity Assessment (Talk, Review of Session 15)

Once the VRMC general body has approved the village Microplan, it is envisaged that HCFP will directly support new Microprojects for three years; this is the microproject's Partnership Phase. After three years the only HCFP presence in the village will be the Forest Guard attached to the VRMC, who will provide general extension advice on forestry matters, as well as support to the running of the VRMC; this is the VRMC Management Phase. Each Sub-division will have Forest Guards who are subject-matter specialists in monitoring & evaluation and training & communication, and who will keep in contact with the VRMC.

Before the HCFP phase-out from the village, an assessment is needed as to whether the community is sustainable, i.e. able to manage and maintain the existing Microprojects without external assistance. A review of the Community Capabilities in the village will be carried out by community self assessment facilitated by the two Forest Guards who are responsible for monitoring and evaluation and training in the village. They will use the monitoring reports from the Community Capability Tracking sheets as a basis for reviewing capability changes in the community, but will be responsible for carrying out their own independent assessment as a check against the community assessment.

3. Reviewing the Strategic Village Resources Microplan (Talk)

The community microplan review should be carried out periodically by the VRMC. The M&E Division will prepare a participatory monitoring tool for this at a later stage. The

first review should take place after all Community Microproject Reviews (CMR) have been completed in a village.

4. HCFP Exit Strategy (Talk, Group Discussion)

How the HCFP will exit from the village will be decided by the DFO in conjunction with the CF. The VRMC should remember that they will have contact with the Forestry Department through the Forest Guard who is a member of the VRMC, through the Forest Guard subject matter specialists in training and M&E, both of whom are based at the Sub-Division offices.

The DFO and SDFO will together prepare an Exit Strategy Document for each village, after all the Community Microproject Review documentation has been completed in any one village. The strategy will vary in each village depending on the review/evaluation at the end of the Establishment Phase. Villages that are considered mature may go straight into the Maintenance and Benefit Sharing Phase. Other villages may be considered immature, needing a Consolidation Phase before embarking on Maintenance and Benefit Sharing without direct support from the HCFP. Some villages may remain very immature, unable to stand alone, and strategies may include complete withdrawal from the village or an extended period of consolidation with further NGO intervention.

It is unwise to predict at this stage what levels of maturity may be reached by villages, although experiences in the Aravalli Hills project have shown that only 1/3 of all villages could be considered mature after 9 years of intervention. Guidelines on preparing exit strategies will be developed by the HCFP in the light of initial experiences in the Preparatory project year and thereafter.

MODULE 6

WOMEN AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SESSION 17: How to Mainstream Women's Needs and Priorities & Thrust Areas for Women's Active Role in Village Development

Format: Talk, group discussion.

Time: One hour.

1. Women's role in natural resource management and gender issues in forestry

- Ask the participants about their knowledge of gender activities under HCFP.
- Explain to the participants the importance of women in managing common property resources. It has been observed that traditionally women have been responsible for subsistence and survival economics and for water, food, fuel, fodder and habitat. Their experience reveals to them that soil, water and vegetation necessary for their day-to-day living requires care and good management.
- The trainer can also give examples of the Chipko movement in Garhwal Himalayas and the WID programme under the Aravalli project (also see the handout).

2. Gender sensitization of VRMC members

- Discuss the Gender Analysis Matrix in the PA exercise, especially the activity profile which includes division of labour (inside and outside the household) and spare time activity.
- Ask the participants about the difference they find in men's activities and women's activities and reasons for that.
- Ask the participants to give their opinion/perception on women's role and their contribution towards our society.
- Give them some facts on women's status (see the handout).
- Discuss the indicators of empowerment that are given in a handout.
- Discuss women's needs and priorities by using paired ranking exercise and ask them to give reasons for different needs and priorities, if any.
- Explain to them the difference between practical needs and strategic needs; The definition of practical or basic gender needs includes food, shelter, income, employment, health etc. Meeting practical needs does not, however, change the

relationships which maintain the subordinate position of women as a disadvantaged group.

- Strategic or structural gender needs:

Needs relating to equality issues of equal pay for equal work, rights to land and other capital assets, freedom from sexual harassment, freedom of choice over child bearing etc.

- Divide the participants in 3 village-wise groups and ask them to summarize microprojects where women are main stakeholders (mahila nursery, employment and income generating activities) and ensure that women's needs and demands are being taken care of in the projects.

3. Women's participation in village development

- The trainer needs to brief the participants on the importance of women's participation in development programmes. It is often observed that participation means participation of men only, due to erroneous notion that 'women do not know' or 'women are not interested'.
- Women's participation in the selection, design, construction and implementation of any programme has often been the first step in the acceptance of change.
- Give information on various schemes like *Mahila Samrithi Yojna*, *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh*, Self Help Groups, *Swaranjali Yojna*, Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) and other state government programmes meant for women and children.
- Importance of formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)/ Women's groups etc. If there is a defunct *Mahila Mandal* in the village ask the VRMC to revive it.
- Ask the VRMC members to explain women's participation in their respective Panchayat and ensure their active participation in Panchayat meetings and their own participation in VRMC meetings as well.
- Give example of SEWA – a success story (see the handout).

4. Strategies for the involvement of women and landless in afforestation/income generation activities

- Discuss microprojects related to IGAs (also see handout – A Success Story).
- Give information on training and skill availability in the villages.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

- Ask the VRMC members about any new skill that can be introduced and accepted by the village women. Also discuss issues like demand of a particular product and market outlet for it.
- Ask the VRMC members to promote energy saving devices in the community (see the handout).
- In case of Mahila Nursery, women's choice in selection of species is to be taken into account.

Handout - Part 1

GENDER ISSUES IN FORESTRY

Women are not only consumers of forest products, but a large part of the labour force in forestry is provided by women. They are often responsible for cattle grazing, collecting fuel, fodder, food and seeds, making handicrafts and carrying head-loads of wood. They have more at stake in forest development. The Forest Department has certain schemes to involve women. They are employed in nursery work, where they fill up polypots, transplant seedlings and participate in tending, weeding, forking and sorting. In plantations also women dig pits and fill them up. The Department pays them a daily wage based at minimum wage rate. Rural, particularly 'advasi', women are major actors in India's forestry. Women's employment in forest based enterprises is estimated to be approximately 571.85 million labour days per year, of which 90% is in small scale enterprises using non-timber forest produce as raw material (Khare, 1987, Small Scale Forest Enterprises in India with special reference to the Role of Women, ISST, New Delhi).

To tackle the issue of environment and development the strategy is to work with women as partners, recognizing their wealth of indigenous knowledge, experience and the significant role they play in environmental conservation and management.

Handout – Part 2

WOMEN'S SITUATION IN INDIA

The Fundamental Rights and Directive principles of State Policy provide the mandate for and guarantee of the equality of sexes. Despite this equal status women in our society are not treated equally. Social and cultural factors are responsible for a woman's inferior status. There is a need to change the attitude towards women.

Following are some statistical examples to show women's position in India:

- According to 1991 census women constitute just about 48 % of the total population in India.
- The sex ratio, which was 972 females per 1000 males in 1901 has declined to 927 in 1991. The main reason for the decline in sex ratio is attributed to higher mortality among women as compared to men. Limited access to health infrastructure, contributing to high maternal mortality, female foeticide and infanticide and relative deprivation of the female child from nutrition, health and medical care have been identified as other contributory factors.
- Female literacy is still below 40%.

- Nearly 90% of women work in the unorganised sector.
- Women are invisible in the household economy, as their work is not considered as work.

Handout – Part 2

INDICATORS OF EMPOWERMENT

- Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence.
- Increase in articulation, knowledge and awareness levels on issues affecting the community at large, and women in particular, such as women's health, nutrition, reproductive rights, legal rights, literacy etc.
- Increase or decrease in personal leisure time and time for child-care.
- Increase or decrease in workloads of women as a result of the new programme.
- Changes in the roles and responsibilities in the family and in the community.
- Increase or decrease in the level of domestic violence and other forms of violence perpetrated on women and girls.
- Visible changes in women's participation levels, e.g. more women are attending public meetings, training programmes etc.
- Increase in bargaining/negotiating power of women as individuals in the home and the community, as well as in collectives of women.
- Increased access to and ability to gather information and knowledge, not only about the project, but about what affects their lives.
- Formation of cohesive and articulate women's groups.
- Positive changes in social attitudes amongst the community members towards women.
- Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household.
- Women's decision making over the kind of work they are doing (is her income and expenditure in her control, or is she still subservient to male members in the family?).

Handout – Part 3

SUCCESS STORY

Women's Co-operatives - The SEWA Experience

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a trade union formed and registered in 1972 in an effort to reach out to poor, illiterate, self-employed women. SEWA develops their economic potential through formation of co-operatives. The 30,000 women members of SEWA, including vendors and traders, home based skilled and semi-skilled workers, have formed their own cooperatives. SEWA now has 67 urban and rural co-operatives.

SEWA's first cooperative, a credit society formed through the collective effort of 4,000 women, who contributed Rs. 10 per share in 1974, has bloomed into a full-fledged Cooperative Bank with 43,000 members having a share capital of Rs. 28,12,000 and a working capital of Rs. 8,47,000 in 1994.

Mahila SEWA Bank, the first women's bank of its kind in the country, works with and for poor, illiterate, self-employed women. Women operate their own savings accounts, obtain loans for domestic, social or vocational uses, buy tools, equipment and raw material through credit facilities and borrow capital to initiate or enhance their trade. Experience has shown that the entire process from skills up-grading to registration to economically viable units of self-reliant cooperatives is attained over a period of decades. It has to be an exercise in patience and faith. Attempts are made to ensure regular markets for the cooperatives by linking them to institutional buyers. After seven years of persistent negotiations with the Government authorities, SEWA along with other women's organisations, has been able to initiate a policy of the government to buy goods and services from women's cooperatives.

The pricing policy ensures that artisans earn well from their production and it must be comparable to the wages of organised sector workers in the same grade.

Handouts – Part 4

SUCCESS STORY

A DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas – a government programme) group consisting of 15 women was formed in Mavatoor village, Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh in 1987-88. The vicious cycle of poverty and isolation forced these women to form the group.

The group began to extract and sell sisal fibre and earned about Rs. 15,000 per month. Besides using the revolving fund for income generating activities the women also saved on a monthly basis and rotated the savings among the members. After two years they were thus able to save Rs. 48,000.

With this amount the group members took five acres of land in the same village on lease in 1990 and raised vegetables, mulberry and ragi crop and earned enough to purchase the same land in 1992. They deepened an old well on the land and are now raising mulberry crops and rearing silk worms. In 1993 a shed for rearing silk worms was also provided by the Government with 40 percent contribution from the women. The group was also assigned three acres of Government land adjacent to the five acres.

NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES

For over a decade now, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) has been a nodal agency of the Government of India for implementation of the National Programme on Improved Chulha (NPIC) and also more recently the National Programme on Biogas Development (NPBD). Through its branches all over India and other small NGOs AIWC has taken appropriate technology to remote villages.

The NPIC has proved to be a major programme for the development of women, wherever they have been trained properly. Because of the improved wood stoves, fuel consumption has fallen drastically. Women spend less time collecting fuel wood and cleaning soot-laden vessels and black walls. Reduction of smoke thanks to building of better chimneys improves women's health by saving them from the hazards of smoke related diseases like bronchitis, asthma and eye ailments.

Village women are trained by experts to make and maintain wood stoves. These entrepreneurial women can earn reasonable sums of money, which they control, resulting in an improved self-image and status in the community.

MODULE 7

BENEFIT SHARING MECHANISMS

SESSION 18: Consensus Building and Conflict Resolution Exercise Regarding Benefit Sharing Arrangement

Objective: To enable VRMC members to understand the importance of evolving benefit sharing arrangements for sustainable management of the community forestry project of their village.

Tool: Role play of different interest groups in a hypothetical village.

Background to the Role Play

Village Sukhpura has 30 ha of Panchayat land. 10 ha is under cultivation, 5 ha is under various common land uses and 15 ha is available for raising a woodlot under community forestry project. 40 percent of the households are landless labourers, 20 percent are small and marginal farmers, 10 percent are big landowners and the rest are artisans, traders and people engaged in other occupations. Women have little wage earning opportunities, cover their faces while in public and are skilled in handicrafts. The land earmarked for woodlot provides grazing for animals for about 45 days in a year. A few landless women collect berries for sale from *Tind* bushes standing on the land. A few landowners have also installed sugarcane crushing machines on some plots in the earmarked land, which need to be shifted when plantation work starts. The landless are apprehensive that no benefit will accrue to them from the plantation.

Role Play (30 minutes)

1. Ask the participants to identify the social groups in the village who have differential interest in the project:
 - Women
 - Youth group
 - Landless labourers
 - Small farmers
 - Large farmers
 - Traders
 - Others

2. Ask the participants to decide among themselves who will play which group.

Training Manual on Village Resource Management through VRMCs

Make sure that the participants know about the objective of the exercise and the background of the hypothetical village. One person may be selected as chairman and another as rapporteur. The chairman's rulings are final and binding on all.

3. Ask each group what benefit they have to forego if the 10 ha plot is planted as a woodlot.

	Group	Benefit Foregone	Major/minor
	Women		
	Landless labourers		
	Small farmers		
	Large farmers		
	Traders		
	Others		

4. Ask the groups what benefits they expect from the woodlot over a period.

	Group	Short Term Benefits	Medium Term Benefits	Long Term Benefits
	Women			
	Landless labourers			
	Small farmers			
	Large farmers			
	Traders			
	Others			

5. What items should the groups get free and what should be paid for?

Free items:

Paid for items:

6. How should people who have major losses from alternative land use be compensated for?

How should proceeds from final products be distributed?

Distribution arrangement	Women group	Landless group	Small farmer	Large farmer	Others
70 % to Panchayat for village development and 30 % to VRMC for replantation					

7. After discussions, arrive at a consensus, prepare a report. End with a presentation by the rapporteur and final discussion.

SESSION 19: Guiding Principles for Sharing Benefits

Format: Group exercise, group discussion, and talk (25 minutes, 15 minutes, 5 minutes).

Aims of session:

1. By the end of the session, the participants will understand the mechanics of preparing a benefit sharing plan for a microproject.
2. By the end of the session the participants will be aware of the concept of equitable benefit sharing, especially through involving disadvantaged groups such as women, the landless and resource poor farmers.

A. Preparing a Benefit Sharing Plan for a Microproject; Group Exercise (25 minutes)

1. Divide the participants into three village-wise groups and ask them to identify one microproject each (the one they perceive to be most important).
2. Ask the trainees about the potential benefits that may be expected from the microprojects that have been formulated in their respective village.
3. Ask them to prepare a table which includes:
 - ◆ the name of microproject;
 - ◆ type of benefits from the microproject;
 - ◆ who are the beneficiaries from the microproject;
 - ◆ what are the physical benefits;
 - ◆ what is the value of the benefits;
 - ◆ in what time frame are the benefits available;
 - ◆ what benefits are in kind or in cash.

4. Below is a possible chart for them to fill in for their selected microproject:

Type of Microproject	Type of Benefit?	Who Benefits?	Expected volume or weight of Benefit	Expected value of Benefit (kind/cash)	Years in which Benefit is expected														
					Year														
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	

5. Ask the three sub-groups to fill out the above chart with an analysis of the expected benefits.
6. Types of benefit might be:
 - ◆ Sales of timber after 8-12 years for cash sale through auction, with 70% of profits going to Panchayat for village development projects and 30% to VRMC for maintenance of community plantations.
 - ◆ Sale of cuttings from pruned trees (in year 5 after plantation), given as a contract to a women's group in the village, who then sell the produce for their group activities (only applicable to certain tree species).
 - ◆ Free collection of dead wood and leaf litter by landless families in all years.
 - ◆ Grass fodder collection by landless families and women, free of charge, based on a sustainable number of headloads per week.
 - ◆ Employment provided to landless and women in plantation activities and maintenance activities as per the action plan in the microproject proposal.
 - ◆ Women's group allowed to collect medicinal plants from plantation area.
 - ◆ Local shepherders allowed grazing animals inside the plantation after the fourth year of establishment.
7. Ask the groups to assess the amount of benefit in terms of volume and weight and the value of the benefit expected.
8. Ask the groups to assess the annual benefits. Is there any way that the microproject will provide benefits every year? In other words, can some form of multiple-use be made of the land, in addition to pure planting of mono-purpose trees?
9. Ask each group to present their own findings for discussion with the other groups.

B. Microprojects Specifically Linked to Support to Disadvantaged Groups in the Village; Group Discussion (15 minutes)

1. Ask the participants in a general discussion to identify disadvantaged groups in their villages.
2. Ask them to identify what microprojects will directly benefit the disadvantaged groups.
3. Ask them if they have included them in the previous benefit sharing exercise.
4. If they have not done so, ask how their village can include them more directly in benefit sharing from community based projects.

5. Ask them to suggest some types of community based project that could be developed into a microproject for implementation by the HCF Project.

C. Some Guiding Principles for Benefit Sharing; Talk (15 minutes)

You can initiate the discussion with a small exercise. Present a bag containing eight or twelve "toffees". It is important that the bag contains much less number of toffees, than the actual number of trainees. Ask the trainees to evolve mechanisms for distributing within themselves. Note the responses, and discuss the underlying principles.

1. Explain to the participants that there may be certain situations that demand special benefit sharing mechanisms by members of the village community.
2. These will be especially related to the following types of microprojects:
 - ◆ benefits from village woodlots on common land;
 - ◆ benefits from sand dune fixation on common land;
 - ◆ benefits from water harvesting dams.
3. It is in case of these microprojects that care will be needed in arriving at an equitable sharing of benefits, so that the weaker sections of the society are not excluded or further disadvantaged by the microproject. This includes:
 - ◆ women;
 - ◆ landless;
 - ◆ resource poor farmers (marginal farmers).
4. Explain to the participants that there is always a possibility of a conflict situation when it comes to benefit sharing with village women or the landless. It is likely that there will be forceful opposition to such a move by the village community, particularly from the elders who are more traditional in outlook as compared to the younger generation.
5. Explain that this situation can be resolved by good leadership from the VRMCs.
6. Such efforts can also be supported by the village youth that are educated and forward-looking. The village Link Workers recruited under the project represent this category of youth (both male and female). They can play a useful role in persuading and motivating the older generation to be conscious of the changes in the value system and appreciate the principle of social justice and social equity, so that women and the landless get their due share in society.