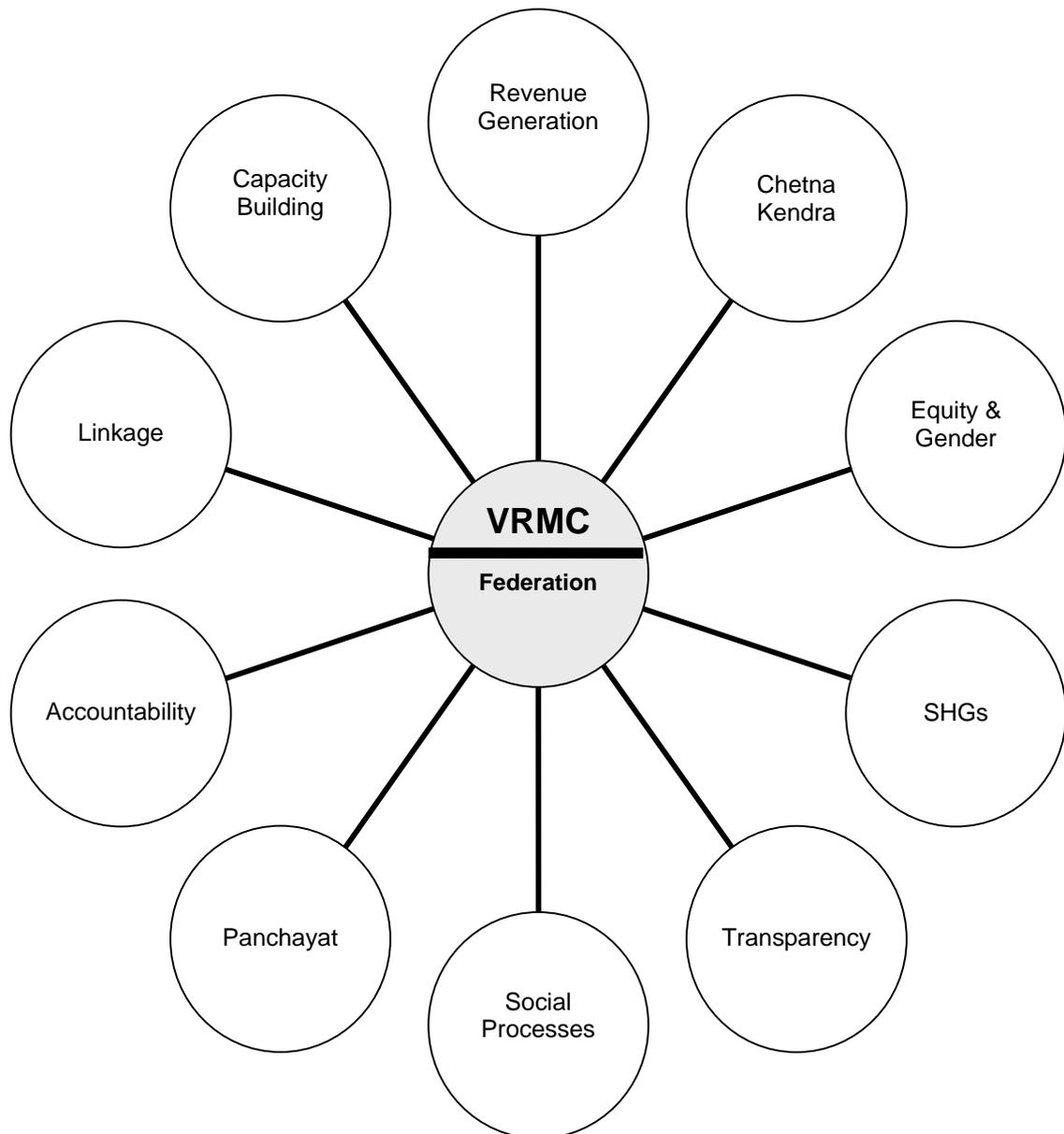


# OUR VILLAGE – OUR FUTURE

## A Handbook for VRMCs



**HARYANA COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECT**

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## FOREWORD

Haryana Community Forestry Project is working with village communities in 300 selected villages from varied socio-economic and agro-climatic zones of the state. The project has developed an intimate relationship with the village communities during the course of its interventions. Many training programmes were conducted to clarify diverse issues generally encountered in this participatory approach. Since the project is due to come in withdrawal mode, it has been decided to prepare an exit strategy so that the communities do not feel themselves to be surrounded by a vacuum.

As a part of this strategy a hand-book entitled “Our Village – Our Future” has been specially made to sensitise the villagers about the importance of the Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs) having members drawn for their own village. This book will serve as a useful guide for both the VRMCs and the village people in organising themselves to undertake diverse activities necessary for the development and prosperity of their village.

November, 2004

S.K.Dhar  
Project Director, HCFP

## **1. HCFP – Objectives and Interventions**

Haryana Community Forestry Project is a community based development intervention to reverse the process of degradation and depletion of natural resources through community forestry and people's participation. The project spreads over 300 villages of 44 community development blocks in 10 districts of Haryana – Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Ambala, Bhiwani, Hisar, Fatehabad, Mahendragarh, Rewari and Sirsa.

The project is funded by European Commission and Government of Haryana and is implemented by Haryana Forest Department. The project life is 10 years since 1998. HCFP is based on participatory approaches where the focus is on strengthening community-based institutions like VRMCs and SHGs for sustainable management of village common resources. NGOs have also been associated in the institutional development and capacity building processes.

The idea behind forming community based groups locally called VRMCs was to organise community members around a common platform, to build leadership resources at the local level, to create a forum, which can ensure accountability and transparency from other local groups, Government etc., and to create a reservoir of resources, which can be encashed to sustain activities when the project withdraws.

***The project aims to improve the natural environment and maintain land fertility through sustainable management of natural resources.***

### **Project Objectives**

- Improved capabilities of village communities to undertake a process of self directed community development, especially through greater involvement and empowerment of disadvantaged groups in village decision making;
- Improved and sustainable management of common property resources that have previously been degraded by loss of biomass and top soil and/or by moving sand;

- Increase in the number of market-led, environmentally friendly and energy efficient technologies introduced into villages.

## **Interventions**

- Organising VRMCs
- Organising SHGs for strengthening women participation primarily
- Management of sand dune areas affected by wind erosion
- Management of community land for village woodlots
- Water harvesting
- Development of village tree groves
- Agro-forestry development on marginal and small farms
- Development of poplar plantations on prime agriculture land
- Management of kitchen garden and homestead plots
- Promoting alternative income generation activities
- Promotion of energy efficient technologies
- Construction of Chetna Kendras

## 2. Overview of Stages and Processes in HCFP

The project puts importance on processes that strengthen participation, bottom-up planning and transparency. The participatory approach of HCFP focuses on strengthening the capacities of the community for collaborative action. Shift in ownership and management of afforested area and their usufruct sharing, role reversal of the forest staff as facilitators are key aspects that make HCFP different from other government programmes. Following table reflects different stages and processes about what could be expected over years from VRMCs and HCFP:

VRMC	HCFP
<b>Formation stage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem identification</li> <li>• Formulation &amp; implementation of Entry Point Activities</li> <li>• VRMC constitution &amp; selection of Link Workers</li> <li>• Facilitate training of VRMC &amp; Link Workers in Microplanning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulation of norms &amp; criteria</li> <li>• Village selection</li> <li>• Identifying all focus groups</li> <li>• Participatory Assessment</li> <li>• Assist in VRMC constitution</li> <li>• Training of VRMC members</li> </ul>
<b>Set-up stage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulation of Microplan</li> <li>• Identification of plantation areas</li> <li>• Signing agreements</li> <li>• Defining roles &amp; responsibilities</li> <li>• Record keeping</li> <li>• Establishing social fencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise Microplan</li> <li>• Agreement on plantation areas</li> <li>• Formulate agreements</li> <li>• Assist in record keeping</li> <li>• Organise planting and protection</li> </ul>
<b>Developing stage (second year)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen leadership process</li> <li>• Focus on role of women &amp; Link Workers</li> <li>• Stimulate SHG formation</li> <li>• Implement microplans / micro-projects</li> <li>• Fund raising</li> <li>• Monitoring of project works</li> <li>• Identification of areas for new plantation</li> <li>• Farm forestry &amp; fruit tree gardening</li> <li>• Grass harvesting</li> <li>• Identify sites for soil conservation &amp; water harvesting</li> <li>• Conduct Annual General House meeting of VRMC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate training</li> <li>• Assist in SHG formation</li> <li>• Train Link Workers on-the-job</li> <li>• Agreements on plantation areas and catchment areas for water harvesting scheme</li> <li>• Organise planting &amp; protection</li> <li>• Assess capacity development of VRMC</li> <li>• Provide trees to private farmers for planting</li> <li>• Advice on regulated use of grass from the plantation area</li> <li>• Facilitate information sharing with the General House of VRMCs</li> </ul>

<p>Maturity stage (year 3-4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for financial sustainability</li> <li>• Diversification of funding sources</li> <li>• Effective fund utilization</li> <li>• Conflict Handling</li> <li>• Linkages with other VRMCs through Federation</li> <li>• Linkages with other Departments</li> <li>• Convergence with SHGs</li> <li>• Review microplan and ongoing works</li> <li>• Identify areas for plantation, fruit tree gardening and farm forestry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate training for financial sustainability, fund utilisation, conflict resolution</li> <li>• Strengthen participatory processes</li> <li>• Facilitate linkages for IGAs and marketing of VRMC and SHGs</li> <li>• Facilitate linkages with other government and non government institutions through meetings and workshops for microplans and fund diversification</li> <li>• Facilitate cross/exposure visits to other similar projects</li> <li>• Organise plantations and monitor tree survival</li> </ul>
<p>Consolidation stage (year 5-6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VRMC responsible for maintenance and protection of plantation and soil conservation works</li> <li>• Stimulate fund raising to sustain existing works and start new works</li> <li>• Common resource management and benefit sharing mechanisms worked out</li> <li>• Initiate new micro projects with other departments</li> <li>• Organise plantations and protection</li> <li>• Monitor works</li> <li>• Review and modify bye-laws for use of resource management fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate interactions and workshops on technical, institutional management and participatory aspects</li> <li>• Provide support to VRMC on strengthening linkages with other departments and institutions</li> <li>• Support in monitoring activities</li> <li>• Conduct advance training and refreshers on forestry and natural resource management issues</li> <li>• Assess and strengthen VRMC capacities</li> <li>• Identify and develop Local Resource Group (LRG) from amongst the community for capacity building</li> </ul>
<p>Withdrawal stage (7 year onwards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VRMC starts working as a development organization</li> <li>• Develops and review annual development plans</li> <li>• Explore and raise funding for implementation of microplans</li> <li>• Monitor and maintain woodlots and farm forestry trees and water harvesting structures</li> <li>• Review the need and role of Link Workers and look for their continuity if required</li> <li>• Manages common resources/ assets developed under the project</li> <li>• Strengthen participatory processes in the VRMC area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support VRMC in monitoring and maintenance of woodlots and farm forestry trees and water harvesting structures</li> <li>• Provide necessary support for ensuring sustainability of VRMC through training, exposures, workshops, interactions, strengthening linkages</li> <li>• Documentation of the processes and impact</li> <li>• Support in proposal writing and funding from different sources</li> <li>• Training on Participatory Evaluation and Impact Assessment.</li> </ul>

### **3. VRMC – Need, Constitution and Procedures**

The process of community participation begins with mobilisation of people, wherein the thrust is basically to motivate them to accept the programme and continue to do so throughout the project life, thereby creating an environment of mutual trust and respect. Through VRMCs people become active stakeholders in the project. Slowly and steadily they start controlling the processes and work towards the sustainability of the village level institutions. To streamline the working procedures under the project the institutional arrangements are as follows:

#### **Need**

The need for constituting VRMCs was to organise community members around a common platform to address natural resource management issues, to build leadership resources at the local level, to create a forum which can ensure accountability and transparency from other local groups, the Government etc, empowerment of disadvantaged and to create a reservoir of resources, which can maintain community assets created under the project to sustain activities when the project withdraws.

#### **Constitution**

The VRMC is a village level institution of the HCFP in the villages where major plantation work is being carried out on Panchayat land. It is a sub-committee of the Panchayat under Section 22 (v) of the Panchayati Raj Act. All adult members of the village, who are eligible to vote in Panchayat, are members of the VRMC.

Under HCFP the most important component of community participation is the constitution, development and strengthening of Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs). The VRMCs have constituted a General House in addition to the Executive.

The General House constitutes the Executive having average 9 to 15 members with one third representatives each from women and Scheduled Castes. The

Executive has four office bearers - Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Cashier. If the Chairperson is male, the Vice Chairperson will be female and vice versa. The Forest Guard of HCFP cluster team remains ex-officio Cashier with no voting powers. Executive should be representative of all sections of the society.

The VRMC Executive meets regularly on a fixed date in a month and at least 50% of the members should suffice for a quorum. They update the members on the developments since last meeting, as well as plan future course of action. The Chairperson presides over all meetings of the VRMC and shall sign all the agreements and covenants to be entered into by the committee. In the absence of Chairperson these functions are performed by the Vice Chairperson. The Secretary shall convene meetings, maintain records of the proceedings of the meetings and keep all records and documents. The Cashier is responsible for maintaining accounts books. All decisions should be ratified by a minimum 2/3 quorum in the meetings. 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 consequently.

## **Procedures**

### *Constituting the VRMC*

- During the Participatory Assessment (PA) the need to develop a village institution that will be responsible for planning and implementing HCFP in the village is explained. Along with this, functions and powers of the VRMC are explained in detail to the community members.
- During the final PA meeting, which shall be an extraordinary general meeting of the Gram Sabha, a resolution is passed, nominating /electing the VRMC members who are willing to work voluntarily for the resource management project and willing to devote time for the purpose and have had proven honesty and experience in community service. After this, the Panchayat is requested to formally constitute the VRMC and delegate it powers and responsibilities.
- The Panchayat needs to delegate some of its powers to the VRMC like:

- Assisting the community to plan for development of natural resources including common land
- Entering into an agreement with the HCFP to reserve specified areas of the common land for eco-development for the duration of the project model selected
- Execute and manage the microprojects, receive membership fees and annual subscriptions from households in the village
- Receive and utilize funds from HCFP and other sources
- Enforce rules framed for protection of microprojects
- Subsequently the Panchayat convenes a meeting to act on the resolution and passes its resolution, formally constituting the VRMC, approving its bye-laws and delegating powers and responsibilities. A copy of the resolution is then sent to Block Development & Panchayat Officer, DFO and the project Headquarters.
- On receiving the resolution from the Panchayat, the DFO signs a tripartite agreement with the VRMC & Panchayat and a Bank Account in the name of the VRMC is opened.
- This is followed by membership collection (as decided by the community members) from the village households and the collected amount is deposited in the bank.
- Then comes capacity building where HCFP organises training for VRMC members in village resource management, money management, etc, etc.

#### *Opening and Operating VRMC Bank Account*

- The VRMC passes a resolution authorising the opening of a Savings Bank Account with the nearest branch of a Scheduled Commercial/Cooperative/Regional Bank, with a mention of the office bearers who can operate the account.
- The authorised signatories are Chairperson, Secretary, Cashier and SDO (CFP) concerned.

- For operating withdrawals up to Rs. 1000/- signature of Chairperson and Cashier or Secretary and Cashier shall be sufficient. For withdrawals above Rs. 1000/- signature of the concerned SDO (CFP) shall also be required in addition.
- All withdrawals from the account shall be within the limits of expenditure and purposes sanctioned by the VRMC executive for every quarter.

#### *Obtaining Financial Contributions from HCFP*

- The project provides funds to the VRMC for:
  - Village woodlot maintenance and management fund to be utilized by the VRMC after an establishment phase of 3 years for managing the village woodlot microproject and other plantations on common land.
  - Incentives for survival of trees in the second and third years of establishment of woodlot and farm forestry plantations (excluding poplar).
  - Payment of honorarium for two Link Workers.
- After at least 50% of the households have paid their membership fee, the VRMC requests the DFO to pay to it the seed money of Rs. 30,000 for the Resource Management Fund (on condition that the village woodlot area is at least 10 ha). This amount is then released by the DFO in the form of interest bearing term deposit/bond which on maturity will revert to the savings bank account of the VRMC to enable it to meet the management needs of the village woodlot microproject.
- The survival bonus will be released to VRMC under certification of survival percentage by the microproject monitoring team, duly confirmed by the project monitoring team.

#### **4. VRMC - Roles & Responsibilities and Record Keeping**

It is important to have well defined roles and responsibilities in an institution to manage its functions professionally. HCFP has worked out roles and responsibilities for the VRMC and its office bearers as follows:

##### VRMC

- To prepare and share the agenda and schedule a meeting
- To plan, implement and report about its activities and progress
- To facilitate decision making and conflict resolution
- To maintain discipline and ensure that the constitution is followed
- To delegate tasks for encouraging participation of other community members
- To facilitate training
- To represent the village
- To maintain effective linkage and liaison with HCFP, NGOs, Consultants, and other related institutions

##### Chairperson

- To organise meetings and review progress
- To chair meetings and summarise at the end
- To encourage participation of all members in discussions, issues, decision making and other works
- To ensure that the VRMC constitution is followed
- To ensure that all the Executive members along with other office bearers perform their duties
- To delegate works and assignments
- To represent VRMC in meetings with other institutions and officials
- To maintain harmony in the VRMC

##### Vice Chairperson

- To assist the Chairperson and other Executive members in the interest of VRMC
- To perform roles & responsibilities of Chairperson in his/her absence

### Secretary

- To assist the Chairperson in conduct of the meetings
- To write the agenda and minutes and keep a record of attendance at meetings
- To maintain all VRMC records
- To read out the minutes of the last meeting in the beginning and the current meeting in the end
- To handle the correspondence

### Cashier

- To keep the financial records of the VRMC
- To safeguard and manage the finances
- To report to the members about the financial expenditure and receipts and the balances in cash and bank
- To give receipts for money received
- To maintain the cash book and the receipt of purchases, sales and received money
- To manage effective use of the group fund.

Record keeping is the maintenance of information concerning the group for future reference about the committee itself, its activities, income and expenditure etc. It helps members remember what has happened, provides information and data to monitor progress and provides information and data for evaluation. Records are to be maintained by the VRMC, but should be reviewed by all members at meetings to assess the progress made and the problems encountered while achieving the group's objectives. The VRMC shall maintain the following records:

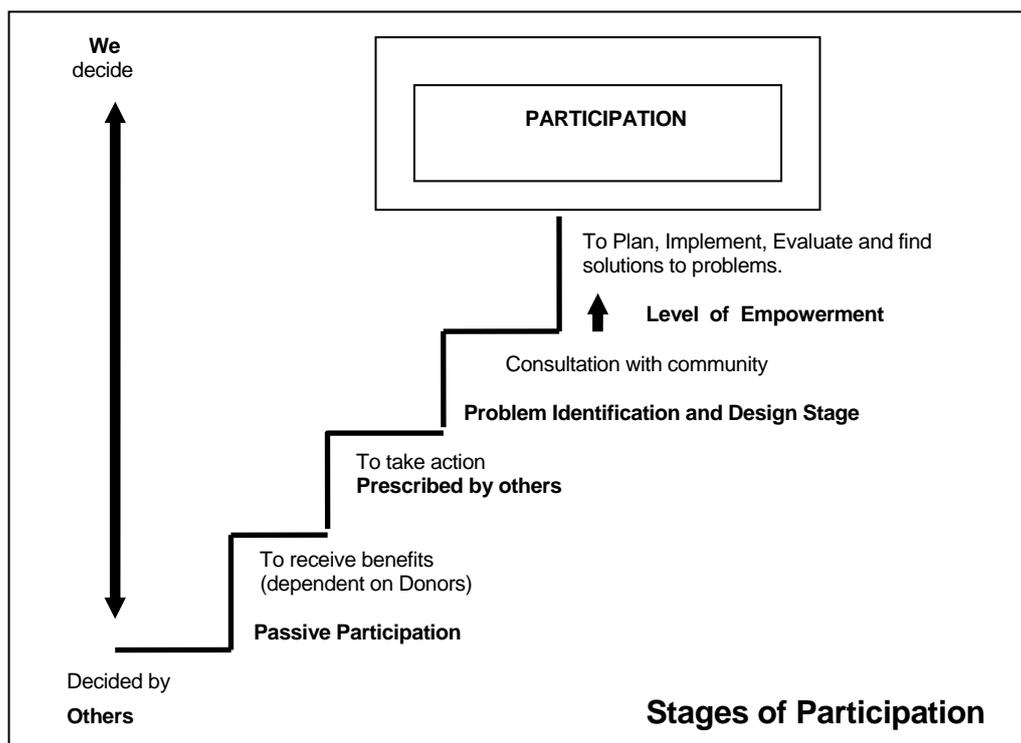
1. Membership register containing details of names of households, number of members (by gender), social group, details of fee, subscription, donations etc.
2. Proceedings Book with date of meetings, members present, agenda and minutes/resolutions passed.
3. Cash book with daily entry of receipts, expenses, cash in hand, cash at bank etc.

4. Receipt book
5. Annual Balance Sheet
6. Village Microplan
7. Microproject Proposals
8. Logbook (Microproject Record book) containing Request Profile Sheets, Input Tracking Sheets and Output/Benefit Tracking Sheets under various plantation models of HCFP.
9. Community Capability Tracking Sheet for self-evaluation of the VRMC.

The VRMC shall share information of its progress with the Panchayat Gram Sabha meetings (Hadi and Savani). The HCFP staff, NGOs and Consultants of the project shall also have access to the VRMC records for review, monitoring and assessment.

## 5. Community Participation and Village Resource Management

Community Participation is a complex concept and is often misused and misrepresented. In development, participation is primarily concerned with location of power in the hands of people who are seen as disadvantaged and are also the ultimate receivers of benefits. It can be defined as an organised effort on the part of the marginalised groups and movement to increase the control over resources, structures and decision-making processes.



As is seen in the above figure, the most basic level of participation is that of receiving benefits. Such participation is passive and lasts only as long as the donor continues to give benefits. In the second level, often the target groups are also asked to contribute in terms of labour, provide land for construction or plantation and protection as is happening in HCFP. This level of participation primarily focuses on contribution, and decision making is limited only to the extent of refusing to contribute.

The third level is that of consultation, wherein the target groups are involved to identify their problems, a tentative wish list is generated which is later on used as a reference by planners and implementers.

The fourth or the final stage of participation places more responsibility in the hands of the people, wherein they plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their own projects. This upward movement from stage one to four is characterised by the power centre moving from the external agencies to the local community or the user groups.

The net benefits of promoting community participation are manifold and as key elements of sustainability they can be summarised as consisting of four "E's".

- *Effectiveness* - community participation allows people to have a voice in determining objectives; supporting project administration; and making their local knowledge, skills, and resources available, thereby resulting in more effective projects.
- *Efficiency* - community participation allows more efficient use of resources available to the project.
- *Empowerment* - community participation increases people's sense of control over issues that affect their lives and helps them to learn how to plan, implement and prepare themselves for participation in broader terms.
- *Equity* - it also ensures an equitable sharing of the benefits.

The importance of participation of the community in the management of natural resources becomes evident from the fact that any effort of alienating people dependent on forest resources for their survival and sustenance, ultimately leads the valuable natural wealth to the stage of disaster. Thus village resource management is the only way to ensure sustainable development of the village. This is important not only for conserving the existing resources of the village, but also for their optimum use to ensure a sustainable village development.

Community participation in village resource management 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 success of poverty reduction programmes, resulting in increased standard of living. This also supports social justice and equity by

providing opportunities for the utilization of common resources by the underprivileged.

Community participation in village resource management helps in participatory decision making process, ensuring the interests of the disadvantaged sections of the village. It also promotes the process of social fencing and is a safeguard against misuse of community resources.

## 6. Capacity Building in the VRMC

Capacity building is an important tool to strengthen the cadre of people involved in a project like HCFP.

The objective of capacity building in HCFP is:

- to enhance the capabilities in terms of knowledge and skills
- to perform roles in a better manner
- ability to train further and
- for innovations.

Capacity building through training and on-the-job efforts to VRMC members is an ongoing activity in HCFP. The contents focus on ideology of HCFP, roles and responsibilities and record keeping among others. This will probably make a difference in the near future in terms of VRMC as an institution that is holistically concerned with the quality of environment, natural resource management, upkeep of records, resource mobilisation, increasing village woodlot, land fertility and innovations, etc

Capacity building initiatives that are important for a good VRMC will include:

- Exposure visits within and outside the state, where village level institutions (VLIs) are managing their activities on their own.
- Facilitating continuous training in:
  - Group management
  - Team building
  - Decision-making
  - Conflict resolution
  - Communication skills
  - Community participation
  - Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
  - Financial management & book-keeping for office bearers of VRMCs

- VRMCs are trained to undertake maintenance of assets created under HCFP, such as minor repair of water harvesting structures, ponds, maintenance of tree plantations, etc.
- VRMCs are trained to handle funds carefully and judiciously. They are linked to local trained foresters and masons who can help in maintenance and up-keep of VRMC assets.
- Facilitate regular and issue based meetings
- Facilitate a process of Social Audit through monitoring teams, for which these teams are trained by the project.
- Facilitate forestry related training – nursery raising, plantation maintenance, monitoring of plantations, etc.

## **7. Sustainability of VRMCs**

Sustainability of the VRMCs means to continue or stay on stable when the project withdraws. Sustainability is a process in any project cycle that envisages continuity of the interventions and along with a withdrawal phase, where role reversal of the project starts by handing over the responsibilities of maintenance and upkeep of the assets created/developed under the project to the village level institutions (VLIs) – VRMCs, Gram Panchayats, Self-Help Groups and the community. This is the time when intensive inputs are required to empower the community and VLIs through technical and management (group and financial) training.

The project is in its post mid-term phase of implementation. Besides the works and institutional building, the focus will now be on sustainability issues, which at community level will envisage movement from passive to active, individual to group, knowledge to action, external to internal and dependence to independence – that means strengthening the process of *empowerment*. Strategic interventions will be facilitated on community participation, cost sharing and effective networking which are essential ingredients of achieving sustainability in a project.

Sustainability could be seen in three ways:

### **1. Financial sustainability**

- Diversification of sources of funding – look for funding options from other government and non-government organisations
- Initiate group IGAs through VRMCs
- Fixed deposits of unutilized funds in banks
- Increase group fund by providing loans to members for:
  - agriculture
  - cattle purchase
  - shops
  - house repair and construction
  - health
  - marriages/ festivals
  - education

- Annual membership in VRMCs for keeping the interest of the community alive.
- Annual audit of VRMC accounts through Chartered Accountant.
- Establish linkages with banks for credit facilities

## **2. Institutional sustainability**

Developing responsive & representative VLIs which

- understand project goals
- facilitate democratic decision making
- are skilled in conflict resolution
- establish inter-institutional linkages & rapport

Federating VRMCs

- to facilitate cross learning
- to address policy/advocacy/ networking issues (macro & micro level)
- to explore and establish linkages with other government programmes
- to monitor and support activities undertaken by VLIs under HCFP

## **3. Effective and action oriented linkages with**

- Line departments
- Lead banks
- NGOs
- Panchayati Raj Institutions

Ensuring sustainability of VRMCs needs continuous support in terms of capacity building efforts – training, on-the-job support, exposure/cross visits and linkages with Panchayats, Banks, NGOs, government departments, SHGs, etc.

## **8. Linkages with Panchayats**

Panchayati Raj is a three-tier system of local self-governance in the rural areas, consisting of Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block level and Zila Parishad 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 maximum of 20 Panches representing a ward in the Panchayat area, on the basis of population. There is reservation for women (33%) and SCs (on the basis of population). The term of office of the Panchayat is five years. It is mandatory to hold at least two general meetings of the Gram Sabha each year - Hadi (between May 1 and June 30) and Sawani (between November 1 and December 31).

VRMC is a sub-committee of the Panchayat under Section 22 (v) of the Panchayati Raj Act, thus creating an institutional linkage. Where the project activities are centring on community land, the Panchayat has to be involved, as it is the custodian of such lands and any activity for managing or developing has to be under the framework of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act.

Gram Panchayat representatives have been involved in the project through including them as VRMC Executive members and office bearers. The integration of Sarpanch and Ward Members in several villages has supported the process in decision-making and resolving conflicts amicably.

The experience of people with PRIs in general has not been very positive due to political reasons and their limited access to developmental funds. However, under the project efforts have been made to have linkages with Panchayats by involving them in owning the process from day one, where the resolution of constituting the VRMC is passed through Gram Sabha and endorsed by Panchayat for formalisation. With its constitutional status it becomes imperative to explore the best possible ways for establishing linkages with the PRIs. Panchayats can strengthen VRMCs in following ways:

- Promote farm forestry and agroforestry activities
- Develop and maintain grazing grounds and protect the area under plantation from unauthorised grazing by cattle

- Help in formal approval of VRMC formation through a resolution being adopted in the Gram Sabha and subsequently ratified by the Panchayat
- Prepare annual plan for the development of the Panchayat area so as to supplement or complement the efforts of the VRMC
- Make necessary budget provisions for strengthening VRMC activities through ad-hoc grants and financial assistance.
- Maintain essential statistics of the village to make it available for use in the process of microplanning and microproject formulation by the VRMC

There is an organic linkage of the VRMC under the project through a reporting mechanism to Panchayat and the Gram Sabha. Role of Panchayats is also seen in monitoring of project works in the Panchayat area. Besides, the project expects Panchayats to take an active part in the withdrawal phase. However, it is required to involve women Panchayat representative actively instead of having proxy members directed by their family members.

Coordination between VRMC and the Panchayat is very critical for the sustainable management of village resources and issues like sharing of power and responsibilities by the executive of VRMC, prioritisation of community needs for planning and implementing microprojects, demarcation of rights and roles of the two institutions relating to the use of common property resources of the village, sharing of benefits and privileges in relation to the use of community resources, issues relating to accountability of the microprojects, use of infrastructure like Chetna Kendra created under the project etc. needs to be discussed in Gram Sabha & VRMC meetings and resolved through consensus decision or majority voting.

## 9. Convergence with SHGs (Self-Help Groups) and other Institutions

Village level institutions dealing with forest issues are, in most cases, of relatively recent origin. In HCFP these institutions are known as VRMCs. Many of these VRMCs have succeeded in bringing greater focus and awareness of the need for protection and conservation of forests, and they have carried out practical work such as plantation and maintenance work, fire protection, soil conservation and silvi-pasture activities. That said, there remain challenges within these institutions such as the dominance of traditionally powerful groups; unclear boundaries and responsibilities. However, these institutions have generally proven themselves effective in addressing local concerns and issues.

### *Self-Help Groups (SHGs)*

Men usually go out to agriculture fields or in search of employment and labour, leaving behind women and children. This puts additional responsibility on women, who then have to manage the home and education of children. This puts a lot of demand on women in terms of ready cash-in-hand, which always remains scarce. Their basic consumption and emergency needs remain unfulfilled till the time the husbands come back. To address this situation, a well thought-out strategy was required; organising women through SHGs seemed a better option to initiate the process of their integration in the mainstream of the development process. Each SHG has a membership of 10-20 women who are interested in regular saving, working in a self-managed group fund, utilizing the common fund for meeting their emergency and production needs. A committee of three office bearers – President, Secretary and Treasurer, manages these SHGs. The group maintains the following records:

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 attendance & saving register | 2 proceeding book     |
| 3 bank pass book               | 4 visitors' book      |
| 5 cash book                    | 6 correspondence file |

The process of SHG develops through three stages, viz. – organising women around savings and loans, capital formation and income generation with an in-built component of skill and capacity building.

It is important for the VRMC to work in close association with the SHG for ensuring the participation of women in real terms without diluting the efforts of HCFP. Both the institutions can benefit from each other in terms of institutional strengthening, leadership and skill building. SHG members who mostly are related to VRMC members could be involved in income generation activities and empowering women to take an active part in the development process. Women members could be involved in VRMC activities, since it is they who are the actual users of the natural resources, be it grass, fuelwood, water, kitchen gardens, etc. and they only can suggest best ways of sustainable resource management. Besides they can provide loans to the VRMC in times of need and emergency.

#### *Joint forest management (JFM)*

JFM is the mainstream approach of involving the communities into forestry interventions. It becomes important to try linking up the VRMCs under the National Programme for the sustainability of interventions and the institutions too. Options for integrating VRMCs and SHGs into JFM could be worked out in the project area, especially when the focus of HCFP remains environmental issues.

In regard to linkage with the JFM in project areas, efforts will be made to have a common committee for VRMC and JFM committee, meaning that the VRMC/ its members may be recognized as 'the Committee' for JFM activities too. This will facilitate long-term sustainability of the institution and could also avoid multiplicity of local institutions where the majority of the members who belong to the active lot among the community are most of the time common in all such local level institutions. Microprojects could be prepared and submitted to Ministry of Environment & Forests, CAPART, Department of Science & Technology to name a few, for plantation and other forestry related interventions.

#### *Banks and other Institutions*

Banks have a mandate to support community interventions or SHGs through NABARD refinancing scheme, where the members have been able to access cheap and immediate loans.

In the process, linkages with agencies like DRDA, FDA, Milk Fed, Khadi Board, DIC, KVKs (Krishi Vigyan Kendras) sericulture department, animal husbandry department, etc. could be explored to provide support for Income generation activities.

*Non-Project activities for strengthening Empowerment Process*

- Facilitate Functional Literacy for VRMC/SHG members
- Facilitate Health and Legal awareness for VRMC/SHG members
- Supporting linkages with ICDS for opening Anganwadi centres in project villages
- Support linkages with Education Department for regular primary schools in project villages. The infrastructure of schools could be used for village meetings, VRMC meetings and training, environmental awareness camps, etc.
- Village Cooperative Societies could mobilise funds for different microprojects under HCFP – loans for nurseries, farm forestry enterprises, IGAs etc.

Thus each institution that is involved in pursuing the common goal of sustainable village development along with the VRMC is going to contribute and will help develop a model for replication.

## 10. VRMC and Social Issues

To take forward the participatory approach in Haryana Community Forestry Project, Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were constituted. These groups are a means to mobilise and bring the community on a common platform. Their constitution, norms and objectives differ, but the overall purpose remains the HCFP goal. VRMCs, as the name suggests, were constituted to facilitate effective management of natural resources in the area that falls within their jurisdiction.

However, HCFP has just facilitated the forum of VRMC around natural resource management and it is up to the VRMC how involved and deeply it connects with the social problems of the village. Since it is an important village institution that exists along with the Gram Panchayat, it becomes essential that it widens its horizon to understand and address social issues that affect the community. VRMCs need to be involved in social issues related to:

- Women
- Men
- Poor
- SCs/ OBCs
- Handicapped
- Old
- Youth
- Children etc

The VRMC needs to be aware of the status and conditions of women in their village. The issues important here are health and hygiene, water, fodder, fuel-wood, child marriage, dowry, illiteracy, alcoholism, violence against women, economic condition, legal responsibilities and rights, family planning, women groups, widows, deserted/ divorced/ separated women etc. The complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved here can only be handled by a common forum that understands the overall social implications related to these issues. Also, since VRMCs have more men than women, their will to address these issues will carry more weight and will be more acceptable to the community.

Men too have their own very basic needs and issues. Some of these are unemployment/ seasonal unemployment, alcoholism, migration in search of work, illiteracy, health, family responsibilities, agriculture related pressures etc. The VRMC can sensitize the community and families to understand the special problems and facilitate dialogue with families for better understanding of their men. The VRMC can also liaise with the concerned government departments/ autonomous institutions to support and help men in need.

Poverty ridden populace and SCs/ OBCs rarely find voice in collective forums anywhere. It is important that the VRMCs along with the Gram Panchayat and other village institutions understand the difficult economic conditions, the social taboos, lack of basic facilities, poor health conditions, pitiable hygienic conditions etc. Being an important forum the VRMC needs to sensitize the community on the social issues and persuade the community to treat them as equal and facilitate linkages with financial and technical institutions to enable them to be economically self-reliant.

Children, youth and old people all belong to highly vulnerable sections of the society. For children it is nutrition and health along with education facilities; for youth it is having a purpose and being gainfully employed and for the old the problem is of economic self-reliance, healthy body and mind, and a feeling that they are needed. VRMC can play a very critical role here in terms of influencing views of people and motivating them to understand the particular needs and help in identifying and actualising interventions to address the same.

Handicapped population faces problems that in addition to the socio-economic ones are also related to their special needs and requirements depending on the category of disability they fall in, the chances of cure, cost of treatment, education and the ability to be economically and physically self-reliant. VRMCs can, along with other village institutions, NGOs, government departments, enable the handicapped to lead a life of better quality.

Broadly, it is important for the VRMC to understand that its role is not limited to forestry, but goes much beyond it to touch the lives of people in simple but effective manner. The objective must be that of sensitisation, developing capacities, enabling and comforting. It can proactively play a crucial role in facilitating a change towards betterment for the community in real terms. This it can do through:

- Sensitisation
- Capacity building
- Organising seminars/ workshops at village level
- Awareness generation
- Liaison with government departments
- Establish linkages with financial institutions, NGOs, technical institutes, etc
- Work in close contact with Panchayati Raj institutions, SHGs and other village institutions
- Organise regular health camps
- Facilitate cleanliness drives etc.

## 11. VRMC and Maintenance of Water Resources

In the rural development scenario, lands are given to village community for the development of water resources. Usually funds are spent by a project or a government department with cost sharing from the community. The purpose is to increase access to water for irrigation or drinking purposes or both and to reduce pressure on the already existing scarce water sources. Usually the following sources are tapped and interventions are accordingly planned:

- *Ponds* – old ponds are repaired, deepened, and extended for drinking water for the village cattle, washing and bathing by the people and in some cases irrigation is also done. There are usually two kinds of ponds, *Pucca* having toewalls and ghats; *Kutchra* are dug in the initial stage to store rainwater both in plains and hills.
- *Dams* are constructed to store water of streams, choes, small nallahs. They may vary from one hectare to 10 hectares or more in area. In the narrow bed of streams masonry structures of aprons and wing walls are constructed and water is stored upstream. This water is used for irrigation purposes. They present attractive looks during rainy seasons. Some bigger dams also supply continuous irrigation water to agriculture fields. The dams can be made along water channels, choes, streams and drains. The increased availability of water at a later stage results in increased agriculture production, vegetable growing, floriculture etc. Dams are useful in the sense that they facilitate:
  - Storage of water, raise water table in the adjoining lands
  - Flood control
  - Irrigation in channel
  - Fish farming
  - Recreational points where people visit for sightseeing
- *Wells* are mainly for drinking water purposes. Their water is also used for irrigation in the form of persian wheel for agriculture crops, vegetables and gardens.

- *Hand pumps* are mainly used for drinking water. Their regular maintenance is essential. Such water structures are very useful in the modern life for drinking, irrigation and better environment.

Given primarily these village water resources and that the project is renovating and constructing new structures, it is important for the VRMC to come forward and actively participate in managing water resources. To facilitate this:

- Firstly, the VRMC must motivate the village community to come forward and actively participate in cost sharing. This can be in the form of material, labour and cash.
- Secondly, the VRMC must ensure monitoring during construction and renovation.
- Thirdly, once the structure is complete, the families/households that will be getting some benefit from the water thus made available must get together in a water user group. This group then must charge fees from the members for use of water.
- Fourthly, once the benefits as a result of use of this water start accruing, some amount from earnings must go to the VRMC fund as funds to be kept aside for maintenance of these structures.
- Fifthly, user groups must acknowledge that the VRMC is the apex body created under the project, so some amount must also go into the common pool of the VRMC. This can then be used by the VRMC for common social development activities of the village

Thus VRMC has a critical role to play in maintenance of water resources in the village. How effectively it is able to manage depends on how proactively it facilitates and manages the process.

## **12. Forests and Livelihoods**

Trees and forests are essential for our livelihoods. We use forest ecosystems for a wide range of goods. And we benefit, often unknowingly, from many environmental services. Forest resources still diminish due to competing demands for forested land. There are conflicting views about how we should manage forest resources. HCFP has been working on different strategies to ensure wise use of forest resources.

### **Goods and services**

Forest products and services provide benefits for all parts of the society. People who live in and around forests use them for food, medicines, clothing, shelter and spiritual needs. Nations have been fuelled, fed and formed by forests, and timber still plays an important role in their economies. Locally and globally, trees ameliorate climate, protect soil, regulate water, and maintain biological diversity on which future benefits depend.

### **Who benefits?**

Forests cannot provide all their benefits to all people all of the time. Inevitably there are conflicting demands. Many people - already poor - may pay the costs of benefits that others enjoy. Such facts make forests and forestry controversial topics. Some forest must still make way for farmland, cities and roads. Forest dependent communities, business entrepreneurs, farmers, politicians, scientists, and the general public will have different views about these land use changes. More will be required from less forest, requiring more efficient and effective management.

### **Sharing the task**

Good management should be the responsibility of all who have an interest in the forest's benefits. In the past, governments tended to take on this responsibility alone, declaring forests a national resource, and leaving others as unmanaged common resources. Policing of state resources is giving way to participatory management, where all interested parties have a say. This complicates but helps

improve management of state and community natural resources. HCFP has been able to make significant contribution in this.

### **Government's changing role**

Shared natural resource management often requires support from community-based institutions like VRMCs. This may mean a change in the role of Haryana Forest Department staff from implementers to facilitators. Decentralisation of services may be required, and sometimes privatisation. Policies and legislation will need review, not only in the forestry sector, but also in other sectors which could be an important agenda for the VRMC Federations. Appropriate training will be needed to increase capacity, and to help those involved make the changes smoothly.

### **Increasing supplies**

Forests managed for timber and non-timber forest products must provide a sustained yield. This requires ecologists, foresters and community to work together, developing appropriate cultural and harvesting methods. Faster yielding plantations may need to complement slower natural forests. HCFP has introduced tree species that can help meet demand, provided their constraints are recognised. Multipurpose trees can increase the range of benefits. More integration of trees into farming - agro forestry can benefit both farmer and forester.

### **Reducing demands**

Our ability to increase tree and forest goods and services is limited. Attention is therefore needed to develop alternative products and technologies that reduce consumption. For instance, more efficient wood burning stoves as introduced in HCFP villages or alternative fuels can take the pressure of forest resources, especially near to towns.

## **Generating knowledge**

While it is usually true that nowadays enough is known about forest ecosystems to manage them sustainably, further information is still needed to improve practice. This must come from basic and applied research that balances scientific rigour with the need for rapid application and participatory approaches like in HCFP.

## **Valuing services**

Decision makers, whether politicians, economists or community, can only make right choices on how to use forested land if goods and services are properly valued. Often, the real benefit of maintaining biodiversity, watershed protection or carbon storage is only understood once they have been lost, and costs incurred. Methods of finance and incentives that respect these values are therefore essential, which is the focus of HCFP.

### **13. Organic Farming**

Two decades ago Haryana was always neglected from an agriculture point of view, due to its sandy land and scarce water resources. Now, due to the changing scenario of agriculture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is great scope for the state because of its land topography, natural resources and less polluted soil and water. Land, which was termed waste in the past, is now a potential with great future which could immediately produce healthy and chemical free agro-products.

Extensive use of fertiliser has played a significant role in raising the productivity of Indian agriculture. It is common knowledge that the Green Revolution was based on a package of agricultural inputs which included fertiliser, water, high-yielding varieties of seeds, etc. Today fertilisers are gaining prominence as an important agricultural input in our quest for attaining consistent surplus in the agricultural sector.

The organic sector is emerging as a very big sector in agriculture due to rising demand for organic products in the global market. Most of the area was neglected during the green revolution because of its poor land and water resources, small land holdings, land topography and poor farming community. So intensive chemical farming was not done in the region, which saved it from degradation of its natural resources. Now this will prove a boon for the area to have the potential land, which could produce chemical residual free high quality agro-products.

The concept of organic farming should not be promoted just for the sake of high market premium of organic products, but it should be promoted initially as a tool for sustainable agriculture, which could reduce the input cost of farming and improve the quality of the produce. This will increase the overall profit of the farmer and demand of his produce in the current market. As the organic system expands in a first phase, then it could be certified for national and international organic markets.

In case of existing chemical farming system the immediate shift of the farmers to pure organic culture will cause fall in yields, which could be a major discouraging

factor for a farmer. Shifting strategically towards organic farming in phases would not cause any loss. Farming on new or virgin land could be immediately taken into organic culture. The major potential crops for organic farming could be cereals (pulses, wheat, maize, black gram), vegetables, sugarcane, horticulture crops (aonla, citrus, guava), bee keeping, medicinal and aromatic plants. In case of horticulture the existing orchards could be taken up into organic conversion by motivating farmers that needs integrated approach.

Organic farming is the cultivation of crops by using organic manure like compost, vermi-compost, green manure, leaf and animal manure. In this case no chemical manure or insecticides are to be used. This method reduces the intoxicated and poisonous material in foodstuffs. The use of BHC & DDT in agriculture, poultry, and dairy has resulted in carrying these insecticides to food grains, milk and milk products, eggs, vegetables and fruit. In some cases the human milk has become unfit for consumption by the suckling children. This has created problems like ulcers, cancer, eczema, hypertension, heart diseases and digestive diseases. Thus, though the cost of cultivation using organic manure is higher, but it is certainly safer for human beings. Organic manure can be promoted in the following manner:

- Use of compost and cowdung manure only.
- Use of leaf material of trees for conversion into organic manure.
- Vermi-compost to convert leaf material and residues into granular manure.
- Rotational cropping and raising of green manure crops like dhaincha, guar, barseem, and senji.
- By stopping burning of agriculture waste after crop harvest and ploughing up of stubs which add humus to the field to make the soil fertile and porous. By this method the water retaining capacity of the soil is increased.
- Use of organic chemical like neem to check the invasion of insect/ pest.
- Introduce biological control to kill insect/pest by hudda beetles and other insects.
- Protection of birds, which kill the insects for their food.

- Protection of snakes in agriculture fields to enhance agriculture production by killing rodents and rats, which damage crops, etc.

Organic farming has given better quality cereals, vegetables and fruit crops, which give higher income and are best for people's health.

### **Vermi-composting**

Soil like air and water is essential to support life on earth. Processes of soil degradation have affected about one third of the world's agricultural soils. Soil degradation includes erosion by water and wind, as well as chemical, physical and biological degradation.

Vermi-compost is a 100% organic fertiliser that is made of worm castings and decomposed organic matter. Worm castings are the richest natural fertiliser.

#### *Preparation of vermi-compost*

Select a 1.5 m x 3 m levelled bed under shadow at a place which does not allow water logging. It should be surrounded by a channel to bar insects from entering the bed, as well as to prevent rainwater entering the beds. Put a 5-7 cm layer of household and farm waste on the bed, add another 5-6 cm layer of cow dung, subsequently in the next layer add 500 gms of worms followed by a layer (20 cm thick) of household and farm waste mixed with cow dung, cover this with jute bags and, to maintain moisture, sprinkle water over jute bags, daily in summer and after every three days in winter. Rich manure called vermi-compost will be ready in one and a half month. It will be of brown colour and odourless. Stop sprinkling water and collect the compost using filters for storage after three days. The separated worms can be used again as culture. Do not use chemical fertiliser or pesticides over the heap.

<b>JUTE BAGS</b>
<b>HOUSEHOLD/FARM WASTE</b>
<b>COW-DUNG</b>
<b>RED WORMS (Vermiculture)</b>
<b>COWDUNG</b>
<b>HOUSEHOLD/FARM WASTE</b>

### *How it happens*

Red worms are fast breeders and can consume up to their own weight of food in 24 hours. These worms have a voracious appetite, reproduce quickly and don't mind confinement. Worms eat all food, vegetable and agricultural wastes. They, along with bacteria, excrete juices, which is full of nutrients as well as help in soil conditioning. These worms prefer to stay in humid areas. They cannot stay in water logged areas and can bear temperatures up to 40<sup>0</sup> C. For their best reproduction, the ideal temperature is 25-30<sup>0</sup> C.

### *Characteristics*

It is packed with minerals that are essential for plant growth such as concentrated nitrates, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and calcium. It also contains traces of elements of manganese, copper, zinc, cobalt, iron, carbon and nitrogen. It contains slow release nutrients that are water soluble and are immediately available to plants. It has excellent soil structure, porosity, aeration and water retention capability. It contains high percentage of humus.

### *Benefits*

In addition to getting a good quality fertiliser there are a number of other benefits from vermi-compost:

- Makes plants grow faster and stronger
- Moving towards organic farming reduces effect of traces of chemical fertiliser and pesticides and earns better prices
- Treatment of farm waste including lantana which is not even consumed by animals
- Household waste management
- Eco-friendly – these wastes were earlier put to fire leading to air pollution

#### **14. Farm Forestry and Kitchen Gardens**

Under farm forestry, HCFP's focus is on raising forestry crops in agriculture fields, bunds and compact blocks for fuelwood, fodder, fruits and timber through species like eucalyptus, popular, alainthus, shisham, bakain, neem, ber, mango, jamun, papaya, guava, aonla etc. These plants have been planted by the farmers as per their choice. These give additional yield to the farmer after maturity of the crops and fruits bring income early too. HCFP provided incentive money (Rs. 2+4) for every surviving plant. The project provides technical guidance and training for maintenance of the plantation.

For promoting farm forestry, the type of land holds the key. Some such land types could be:

- Agriculture fields/ bunds
- Compact blocks
- Along water channels, Eucalyptus, Poplar, Bamboo.
- Grassy slopes

Kitchen garden under HCFP is promoted as a component for the villagers who have a sufficient homestead for plantation around their houses. They are provided five grafted fruit plants and hybrid vegetable seeds.

Kitchen garden is very essential for demonstration purposes and promoting domestic consumption of vegetables. Some crops that have been promoted by the project may also be expanded and include:

- Kharif crop – Cucurbita family like Lauki, Kaddu, Karela, Ramtori, Bhindi
- Rabi crop – winter vegetables like carrot, radish, turnip, mint, coriander, peas, tomato, cauliflower, cabbage etc.

For this purpose operation seed kits of approved species have been distributed by the project.

### *Benefits*

- Increased availability of fodder, fuelwood and timber
- Additional income for the villagers
- Increased availability of fresh and nutritious vegetables and fruits
- Increased avenues for self-employment for women, youth, and a small extent also poor.

## 15. Integrated Environment Management

Integrated environmental management encompasses climate, water, soil, forest, wild life, industry, agriculture, animal husbandry. All these are interrelated and one leads to another. If there is good forest cover it gives healthy climate, food for animals, birds and micro-organisms. If there are adequate water sources like ponds, lakes, rivers, wells and rivulets they make good irrigation source and create conducive environment for birds and attractive tourist spots. In Haryana there is a macro-culture of village ponds, which are minimum lakes in the countryside and are a source of solace for dairy animals, birds, fish culture, bathing ghat for the people and drinking water for animals.

In terms of agriculture production, main crops of rice and wheat when harvested, the residue is burnt and this causes destruction of micro-organisms in the soil and pollutes the atmosphere. Similarly, in industries, both urban and rural, a lot of waste water and effluents are carried to nearby rivers and lakes, which kills the water life and water becomes totally unfit for drinking and washing. This water also becomes unfit for irrigating fields and in case of presence of fly ash, adverse effects on soil, water and habitation are seen. Also when cow-dung is burnt and not put to use in gobar gas plants and vermi-compost manure, milch cattle's dung and excessive urine is wasted, then together they create environmental problems. Individual interdependences are described below:

### *Agriculture Vs Environment*

Regular burning of wheat, rice and sugarcane residue causes asthmatic and other lungs diseases. In this case rotation of crops is to be changed, as instead of rice more maize, pulses, oil seeds, etc can be raised to reduce the nuisance of burning. The root stubs should be ploughed back into the fields to make the soil more porous and fertile by addition of humus.

Excessive use of insecticides and fertilizer needs to be reduced. This has killed snakes and therefore the rat population is increasing. This aspect is to be kept in view while raising cereal and sugarcane crops, where production of oil seed

crops, pulses, maize, soybean and sunflower is to be increased in agriculture practices.

Small rivers and drains are threatened by addition of sullage and water life like fish, tortoise, frogs, etc. gets destroyed. Hence there should be analysis of effluents before throwing them in rivers. In choes, lakes and village ponds there should be chemical analysis of such effluents and measures are to be adopted to check them and only effluent free water from industries must be allowed to flow in the natural water features.

Fly-ash of thermal plants has become an eyesore for the localities near the plants. Its toxic effect pollutes water and decreases agriculture yields. Fly-ash is to be treated before leaving the chimneys of thermal plants; similarly paper mill effluents need treatment.

Tree cover is on the decrease. Fast growing species like poplar and gulmohar need to be planted more. Evergreen species like Mango, Jamun, Arjun etc. are to be encouraged.

Excessive use of chemical fertilizer on agriculture crops and vegetables is playing havoc with the health of people. Sullage water used in vegetables is creating health problems.

Therefore, interdependent and integrated environmental management is the need of the day, for protection of wildlife, purity of air and water, to prevent deterioration of soil, pollution of sub-soil, water etc. Hence for the health, wealth and happiness of the people good food, pure air, pure drinking water and recreation are very essential. In hills soil erosion is a menace and is also to be controlled in the arid zone where sand dunes are a problem. All these problems are to be addressed collectively to guide communities under the project.

## **16. Maintenance and Protection of Plantations by the Community**

Haryana Community Forestry Project has raised plantations on shamlat/ Panchayat and private lands by involving local communities through the Village Resource Management Committees (VRMC). HCFP has implemented different models to address the need of land resource development. Village land resources are either owned by the community (Panchayat) or by individuals. The project has helped VRMCs develop village common lands, where communities use such land for common purposes, e.g. cultivation for agriculture, grazing (gochar land), village Bani (fuelwood, fodder and shade provider) and other common purposes. Plantation of different tree species has been established on such common land. Village resource management pertaining to plantation under the project includes:

- i. Village Woodlots on Panchayat/Shamlat Land;
- ii. Circular Tree Grooves on Community Land;
- iii. Linear Tree Grooves on Roadsides;
- iv. Sand Dune Fixation Plantations on Private Land;
- v. Farm Forestry Plantations (Multi-species and Poplar);
- vi. Kitchen Garden Homestead Plantation.

As a practice, the project takes care of the plantations on common land for three years and then it becomes the responsibility of the community to protect and maintain their natural resources in an effective and sustainable manner. This maintenance and protection by the community is of utmost importance for both the Haryana Forest Department and the community, as it ultimately increases wood production and increases forest cover.

Under the project the main species being raised are eucalyptus, poplar, kikar, ailanthus, shisham, jand, khair, neem, bhabbar and other grasses etc, for forestry and soil conservation purposes. Fruit plants like nimboo, ber, amla, guava, jamun, mango, bahera, harar etc. are also being promoted. With such variety and multiplicity of species, it is important that the community, through village

institutions like VRMCs, Panchayats and SHGs, comes forward and takes responsibility in maintenance and protection of plantations. To facilitate effective management and protection of plantations by the community, certain points need to be kept in mind, like:

- The area of plantation should be well identified and demarcation between various areas is important for various owners (private, panchayat or government) and should be known to VRMC and the Panchayats for effective maintenance and protection so that roles and responsibilities could be fixed accordingly.
- Panchayats/VRMCs/SHGs must take up responsibilities for protection purposes to check damages like:

1. Fire

In the plantation area, the community needs to be motivated for fire protection measures through voluntary labour to clear fire lines by cutting unwanted weeds, and in case of any fire in the plantation, they need to train the community for protection measures like beating, use of water and sand in addition to informing and seeking support from the local forest officials.

2. Grazing

Grazing must be regulated and grass cutting needs to be encouraged from the plantation areas. It should take care of the equity aspects; especially the poorest and the landless must be given preference in grass cutting.

3. Illicit removal

The community should be motivated to avoid illicit removal of non-timber produce or cutting of young crop by ignorant villagers for fuel and other purposes. This could be regulated through auctions by VRMC/Panchayat, especially in case of seasonal herbs, fruits, fodder, dead/ dry fallen lops of trees, etc.

- In case of termites or diseases, plantations should be put to bio-pesticide treatments that are easily available in the market or could be made locally, including vermi-wash. Villagers can use tobacco solution or neem paste solution or neem cake, which are effective indigenous pest control methods. For fruit plants, which are less in number, in the roots portion farmers can apply solution extract from Aak/ Bakain/ Aksand plants.
- Excessive congestion in the tree crop causes hindrance to proper growth of trees and reduces timber formation. Thus regular thinning and pruning operations to enhance clear bole formulation needs to be taken up, with technical support and guidance of forest officials, for proper growth and timber formation. Such removals will also generate some income for the VRMC/Panchayat. In Village Woodlots, except for eucalyptus and poplar, all other species require sufficient space for crown formation, which is related to bole formation. However, most of tree groves have been planted at places of community use, e.g. ponds, school, cattle ground etc, which usually do not require thinning because care has been taken to plant at wider spacing. VRMC must ensure that these plants are protected from damage by stray cattle and human beings. Linear Tree Grooves planted along village approach roads and paths, canal/water channels can be protected and maintained with the cooperation of local farmers who share their land near these areas.
- For the protection of plantations, VRMC members could fix responsibility for voluntary patrolling and watchers be employed seasonally. In villages where the community visits the area near the plantation regularly, the pressure on plantation is relatively low and detection of offence is easy, social fencing could be implemented. Women SHGs could be involved in protection, in villages where women get benefits from the plantation in the form of firewood or fodder. High value quality grafted fruit plants planted in close vicinity of houses under the Kitchen Garden component are highly susceptible to damage and require frequent post-plantation care in the form of regular irrigation, hoeing/ weeding and use of fungicides for which individual farmers and women could be trained and made responsible.

- Irrigation is essential to boost growth, especially for short-rotation trees like poplar, ailanthus, bakain and fransh, etc. If water is not available for regular irrigation, a minimum of two irrigations per year is a must; one during April/May, another before winter. The performance of the trees will be better if weeding and hoeing is carried out after the irrigation.
- Emphasis should always be on the use of resources within the village by the most dependent community members and then income from the surplus should go to VRMCs/ Panchayats.
- During the final harvest of the mature village woodlot crop, the sale proceeds should be used as: at least 25% by the VRMC for replanting the area and the rest by the Panchayat for development purposes.

## 17. Funds in VRMC – Sources, Diversification, Use and Sustainability

Through HCFP several village level institutions have been created in the villages. These institutions have, over a period of time have collected some funds. This common fund not only gives credence to the institution but also takes it forward towards development and maintenance of community assets. In the project the VRMCs have collected funds through:

- Membership fee of general house
- Contributions/ donations
- Grants from government and non-government sources
- Resource management fund from HCFP
- Incentive bonus from the project for woodlot survival @ Rs. 300/ha in second year and Rs. 400/ha in the third year, for above or equal to 80% survival
- Incentive bonus from project for farm forestry survival @ Rs. 2 per surviving tree in the second year and Rs. 4 in the third year
- User fees towards use of intermediate products like grass/seeds/fruits/ dead wood/leaves, etc.

Similarly, to enable active and meaningful participation of women, SHGs were facilitated. These SHGs are a collective forum of about 10-20 women who come together to save regularly in a common fund. Once they have some money in their group account, they start inter-loaning on a small rate of interest. These loans initially are for contingency purposes, but later on big loans for initiating income generation activities also start. The sources of SHG fund thus are:

- regular monthly savings
- bank interest
- interest on loans
- fines
- contributions of members from income earned; sometimes group members may decide that SHG members who have initiated some IGA as a result of joining the group must contribute a small portion of her earnings to the common fund

- matching grant from project
- loans from bank
- donations etc.

This common fund is used judiciously and with great caution, as the focus is on maintenance and up-keep of assets in the post project period. It is however important that this fund is not wasted and there is a steady increase and addition to the fund. This is important in context of future planning. To facilitate diversification of funds, VRMCs could also collect money from the community through:

- Sale of forest trees, Bhabbar grass, from the wastelands and Panchayat lands.
- Sale proceeds from fishponds
- Sale proceeds from minor forest products from common lands
- Royalty due to quarrying, use of paths
- Sale of fruit like a Mango, Jamun, Amla, and other materials
- Grants from government and other helping agencies like co-operatives
- Income from community schools
- Funds to be deposited as fixed deposits in banks and only utilized on the maturity of the bond
- Technical practices be carried out for new production
- Grant from government to increase agriculture, horticulture and forestry crops
- Create nursery to supply better quality plants and seeds to the people
- Income from cattle fairs for common fund

The funds thus will continue to get added and provide some stability to the group. However, it is also important that proper mechanisms must also be developed to enhance possibilities for sustainability.

To ensure financial sustainability of the VRMCs, it is important that the funds are used sparingly and cautiously, some such spending areas could be:

- To purchase plants for horticulture and improve seeds
- Development of ponds etc
- To support local income generation activities like vermi-composting, carpet making, pickle making, soap & surf, fruit preservation, etc.
- Conduct exhibitions and fairs to encourage the village community, especially women and unemployed youth
- For maintenance of assets

It is, however, important that proper bye-laws and safeguards are developed by the VRMCs in consultation with the project to prevent misuse of fund. Also it is important to remember that the VRMC fund is just a means to an end, in the sense that it should only be viewed as a means to develop and support activities. By no means should it be viewed solely for spending and finishing the fund. This holds all the more importance if VRMCs need to sustain and exist beyond the project period.

## **18. Link Worker during and post project period**

The Link Worker is a critical link between the project and the community. Each project village has two Link Workers, one male and one female from the same village they are to work with. Their role in the project is to establish a direct interface between the community in which they live and the project. Their appointment is for a period of three years and is part time activity. During the project period, they are given structured and hand on training related to project induction, their roles and responsibilities, participatory assessment, microplanning and microproject formulation, participatory monitoring and evaluation and management of village level institutions.

Primary responsibilities during project include:

- Assist village level project institutions like VRMC, VRMS, SHGs, tree growers associations in their work
- Information dissemination to the villagers in natural resource management
- Participate in micro-planning and micro project formulation and take the lead in follow-up activities
- Assist in facilitating village level meetings and participate in all meetings of village level institutions
- Assist in record maintenance and update
- Assist the community and the project in participatory monitoring and evaluation
- Participate in local training and campaigns of the project
- Keep the project authorities informed and updated of the local situation; and in case of any conflicts also suggest remedial measures

Primary responsibilities during the post-project period include:

- Continue supporting village level project institutions like VRMC, VRMS, SHGs, tree growers associations in their work voluntarily or on remuneration as fixed by the VRMC
- Support the village level institutions in strengthening linkages with forest and other departments for sustainability
- Facilitate linkages with Panchayats, NGOs, banks and other training/ financial institutions
- Motivate community in maintenance of community assets created under the project
- Provide support in record keeping and maintenance
- Organise training with support of line departments and NGOs active in the area
- Continue with the microplanning and implementation activities with the support of block office and DRDA
- Provide support to SHGs in IGAs - marketing and technical guidance

## 19. Microplanning and Microprojects

Microplanning in the context of HCFP means village wide strategic planning for sustainable village resources management by the village community. It focuses on preparing short-term plans for 3-4 years which fit in with the microproject establishment phase of the project. During Participatory Assessment, the community identifies its main resources and problems concerning resource management, while during microplanning the community classifies the problems, attempts to find out their root causes, sets its goals and decides what needs to be done to achieve these goals.

### *Difference between microplan and microproject formulation*

The microplan document lays down the broad goals and objectives for development in a particular sector, whereas microproject is a charter for action for meeting some or all of the objectives with clear cut start and end dates, time and resource budgets, listing of expected outputs, outcomes and impacts through indicators of achievement.

### *Steps in microplanning*

- **Community problem analysis** – the nature, cause and solution of each problem is analysed
- **Community visioning** – here the community looks for possible options for solving these problems
- **Community goal setting** – on the basis of the problems and possible solutions, the community sees its own goals and strategies
- **Community SWOT analysis** – this enables the community to analyse and understand the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.
- **Village resource planning** – this enables preparation of the action plan with focus on forest resource systems
- **Preparation of the microplan document** – the document is prepared in Hindi and then presented before the general house. The document thus prepared follows the following table of contents:

- Problem analysis – general development problems, resource management problems
- Community SWOT analysis - general development problems, resource management problems
- Goal and objective setting. Community option matrix
- Village resource development plan – land resources development plan and general plan for human resource development.
- Annexures include:
  - community SWOT analysis
  - community options matrix
  - time scheduling of resource development plan
  - species wise summary of trees for 5 year plan
  - general plan
  - details of community land for forestry under sand dune fixation model
  - details of community land under village woodlot model
  - details of sites for tree groves
  - list of farmers under sand dune fixation model with details
  - list of farmers under multi-species farm forestry model
  - list of farmers under poplar plantation model
  - list of households willing to go for kitchen garden development
  - list of households interested in IGAs
  - list of households interested in energy saving devices
  - list of farmers willing to go for grass sowing

Once the document is ready, it is shared in the general house with the community and is also endorsed by them. Only then does it gain sanctity and credence. The document then is submitted at the division and circle level for technical inputs and overall analysis of the document. The microplan is now approved and interventions begin as per the document in the village. It is important to remember that it is a public document. Therefore it should be prepared with full

participation of people, should be available with VRMC/SHGs/Panchayat, must reflect the actual ground realities and it should be reviewed from time to time to monitor and ensure proper actualisation.

### *Microproject proposal*

As part of microplan, for each microproject selected there is a proposal comprising its justification, detailed implementation plan, monitoring indicators and monitoring arrangements. Each proposal contains:

- a rational matrix showing the justification of the project, expected positive and negative effects
- a scheduling matrix that included its objectives, activities on the basis of time schedules and responsibilities of stakeholders
- a input matrix that defines resource needs and budget
- a proposal proforma that contains socio-economic information, key development indicators, etc
- list of direct beneficiaries

The process of microproject formulation that begins with conducting a preparation meeting and preparation of the document, then follows a pattern through which the proposal is approved by the community, DFO/DCF and then goes to the circle level. Once the CF approves of it, the project is then stored with signed MJA and then PIU and its MIS is also informed about the same.

The microplan and microproject proposals are critical documents for both the community and the project as they form the basis for taking all the works forward. The time lines and the priorities make it easy for both the community and the project to review from time to time the progress made so far and if any modification is needed. Also it is important that the document remains a living document and should be shared frequently with the general house for greater transparency and accountability of both community, village institutions and the project.

## **20. Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PME)**

Participatory M&E is not a single model or framework of monitoring and evaluation in a project/programme, but a philosophy and ideology having its own set of beliefs and principles; embedded in the principles of adult learning. The involvement of people in the process of M&E enables them to critically examine the programs in order to achieve the desired objectives.

### **Definition**

Participatory monitoring is a continuous process of review and feedback of the activities of any project/group/programme by the project participants themselves.

Participatory Evaluation is assessment and review of any project/group/programme by the project participants themselves at regular intervals like midterm or final or impact.

### **Importance of PME**

- PME is useful as the assessments critique and recommendations concerning the programme are expressed by the people involved in the project.
- It enables the people to understand and accept the findings of M&E, leading to their speedy implementation.
- PME is an important means of building up awareness in the people about themselves, their strengths and limitations.
- Through PME space is created for mutual learning and developing a relationship based on partnership between the implementing agency, donors and the people.

### **Key principles**

PM&E is an educational process based on the premise and belief that each adult has a knowledge base which can be effectively utilised; there is scope for mutual learning that people can take independent as well as collective decisions and actions to change/ transform the reality in which they are living.

- **People centred with a gender and equity focus**

This implies an implicit faith that people can progressively transform their environment with the help of (no domination) an outside agent (facilitator). In essence, participatory processes demand that the people move from being objects to becoming subjects of development projects. Since people also include women, poor, nomads and backward classes, thus among the oppressed, conscious efforts are made to actively and meaningfully include women, landless and dalits in the entire process.

- **Creation and appropriation of people's knowledge**

This is based on the premise that people possess knowledge, which they have been utilising for their daily struggle and survival. Participatory processes strengthen the forces of legitimising people's knowledge and enable them to appropriate their own knowledge and that produced by the dominant forces of development for their own use.

- **Raising critical thinking and capacity building**

Participatory processes necessitate that the people analyse their reality/ environment through critical consciousness raising, sharpen their analytical abilities and enable them to build their capacity to make their own decisions and take future action.

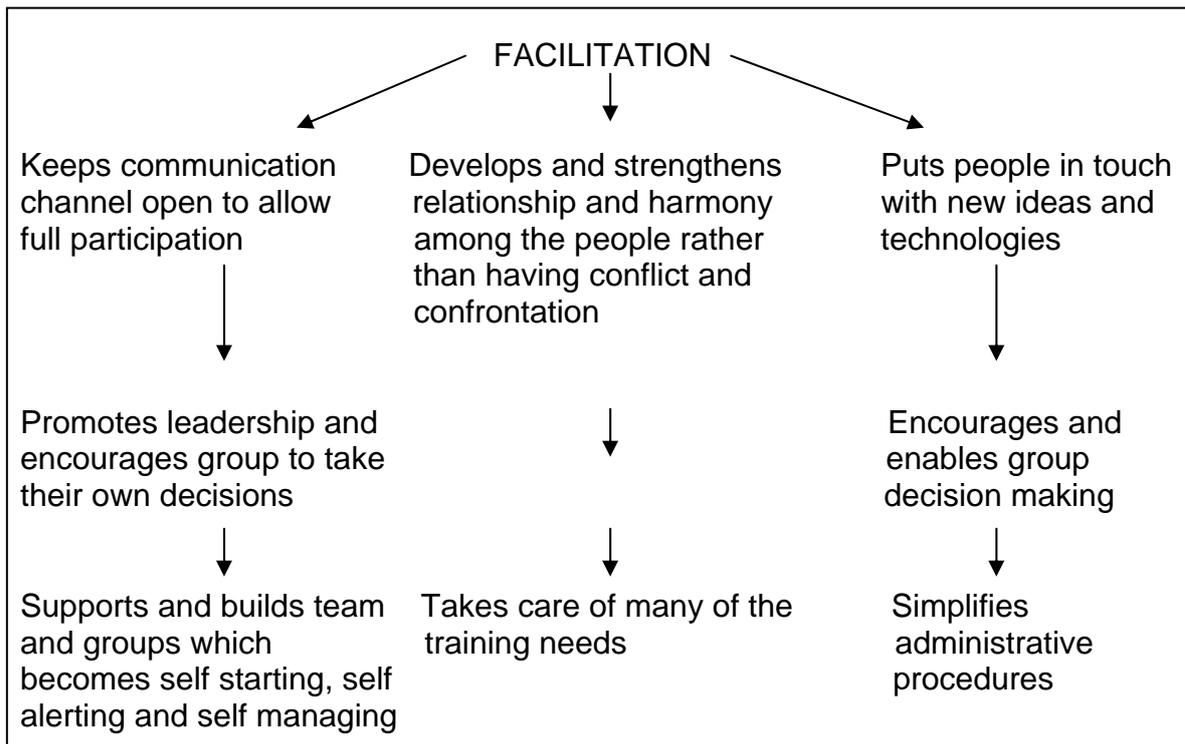
- **Reflective and action oriented**

Stress is laid on people sharing their past experiences in a group and help them to analyse these. This process of reflection equips the people to take concrete action to transform their existing situation. Stress is laid on people initiating action rather than their merely responding to a situation.

- **Focus on organising and group building**

The emphasis is on collective analysis, reflection and action. Hence stress is laid on building and strengthening the group. The process of group building requires the prevalence of a suitable environment, in which there is scope for participation and learning of each individual.

- **Facilitation**



*\*Source: Taking Hold of Rural Life, FAO, pg 60.*

- **Long term as opposed to short term**

In social development there is greater emphasis on the process rather than the outcome. Very often the effects or changes take place as a result of the influence of these processes and are only visible in the long run, as there are various forces – social, political and economic – affecting the lives of the people who have been oppressed through centuries. This demands continuous efforts, the results of which can only be seen over a longer time frame.

- **Autonomy as opposed to control**

Participatory processes emphasise the role of the facilitator who is more of a guide, promoting leadership to the group, enabling its smooth functioning without portraying a dominating image. All the members of the group are equal participants and possess equal power and authority while making important decisions. This aspect of critically analysing the action undertaken leaves adequate room for autonomy in changing the decisions previously taken, providing scope for initiating constructive activities in the future.

- **Structural as opposed to physical understanding**

The raising of critical consciousness enables the people to carry out an in-depth analysis of the existing reality, leading to identifying the root causes and factors responsible for their oppression. This demands a rejection of the existing reality. This process unfolds into identifying the root causes and factors responsible for their oppression, leading to future actions, which challenges the dominant structures and existing power relationships.

### **Gender perspective in PME**

In order to effectively carry out PME from a gender perspective it is essential that:

- the project be well planned from the beginning with a clear set of objectives along with a set of verifiable indicators, but the entire process of negotiation be carried out in consultation with men as well as women.
- it may be necessary to carry out this activity separately with men and women, as it may not be possible to work with them together.
- adequate information is made available about the roles and responsibilities and the resources available to both separately. The information has to be then disaggregated by gender, caste and class depending on the context of work area. It is very important to disaggregate the data on the basis of gender, otherwise data may be distorted towards the men in the communities and hence be similarly reflected in projects by ignoring women or treating both the sexes as a homogenous group (as men), leading to false assessments about the projects and the manner in which they operate.
- gender sensitisation or awareness is promoted among the entire project team and they should also understand the importance of participation of women, to obtain gender specific data. There are several barriers to women's participation which are mainly cultural in nature, like purdah (veil), lack of time, heavy workload, low confidence level and low self-image, fear of unfamiliarity with the jargons (terms used) and attitude of men in the group. These should be considered and understood.

- the staff is trained on how to work with women; train the women in functional literacy, management, public speaking etc.; finding appropriate time when women are free to attend the activities; having exclusive meetings for women; being more creative and imaginative about the methodologies used for example using PRA techniques that promote their expression.

Thus the methodology for including a gender perspective in PME entails talking and listening to men and women, followed by deriving a thorough understanding about the roles and responsibilities, position and rights of women in the community and household, division of labour and the opportunities and constraints faced by women in fulfilling them. It is crucial that at every stage among the actors the viewpoint of both men and women be given separate weightage, along with working out specific roles and responsibilities to be carried out by each of the actors involved at the various levels along with an action plan for promoting women's participation.

## **21. Decision-Making**

Decision-making is a process through which individuals or group members reach an agreement related to a particular issue or topic. Some decision-making processes within VRMC can take place in one or more of the following manners:

### **The plop**

A decision is suggested by one individual to which there is no response, and the decision is adopted, 'Plopping' usually occurs in a newly formed VRMC, where a number of members have equal status, or when one member is overly aggressive.

### **Self-authorized**

A decision is made by an individual (may be an office bearer) who assumes authority. The others find it easier/ convenient to accept the decision than to reject it. The essential difference between this and the 'plop' is that the 'plop' is not tendered with authority but gets adopted by default, whereas here the decision is tendered with the assumption that it will be adopted.

### **Pairing**

A decision is made by two individuals joining forces, one floats the idea, the other seconds it and the decision is made on behalf of the group.

### **Minority group**

The decision is made by the clique and the rest accept it.

### **Vote**

The decision depends upon the number of people adhering to it. Vote may be taken by a show of hands or even by ballot.

## Consensus

This is essentially a minimum consent by all. It is important to differentiate between true and a false consensus. When faced with the question ‘Does anyone disagree?’ many that do not agree show apparent support.

True consensus, where everyone is in full agreement is the kind of decision making that the VRMC must adopt. Here the members of VRMC feel that:

- (i) *they have had the opportunity to put forth their views and influence the decision;*
- (ii) *it was a good and open discussion;*
- (iii) *they are prepared to act on the decision taken.*

## **22. Conflict Resolution**

### **Definition of conflict**

Conflict is inevitable in the life of any group like the VRMC. When members with different experiences, attitudes and expectations come together in a group, differences are bound to arise. These differences are sometimes suppressed and not openly discussed. Sometimes, the emotions behind the differences in the two parties make the expression of conflict quite intense and visible. They occur when individuals or the collective are threatened by disagreements, inequities and competition.

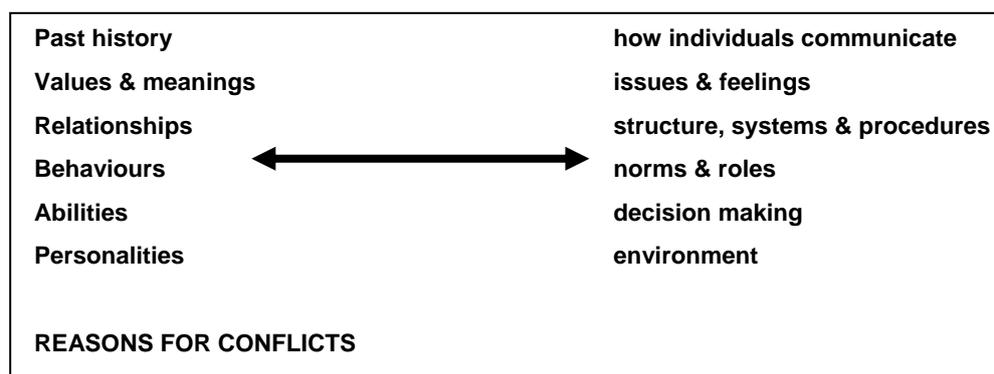
### **Reasons for/ kinds of conflicts**

Conflicts are complex processes. Every conflict has people, processes and problems. Each influences and is influenced by the other. Conflicts involve a history of relationships and personalities and usually follow a pattern that intensifies, eases and spreads. Every conflict has contents, issues and reasons. There are primarily three kinds of conflicts:

- Conflicts within oneself (intra-personal conflicts)
- Conflicts between two persons (inter-personal conflicts)  
Members bring different perceptions, values and knowledge. The greater the differences among members of a group, the more will be the conflicts. For example, women and men in a group can differ on certain issues.
- Conflicts due to value-differences  
Values are the core of any individual, things one believes in. If there are differences in belief, then it becomes difficult to resolve conflicts. The most important thing that can be done in these situations is to understand the real causes for differences.
- Conflicts over land and resource ownership
- Conflicts over distribution of work and benefits
- Conflicts due to lack of representation in village committees or other decision making forums

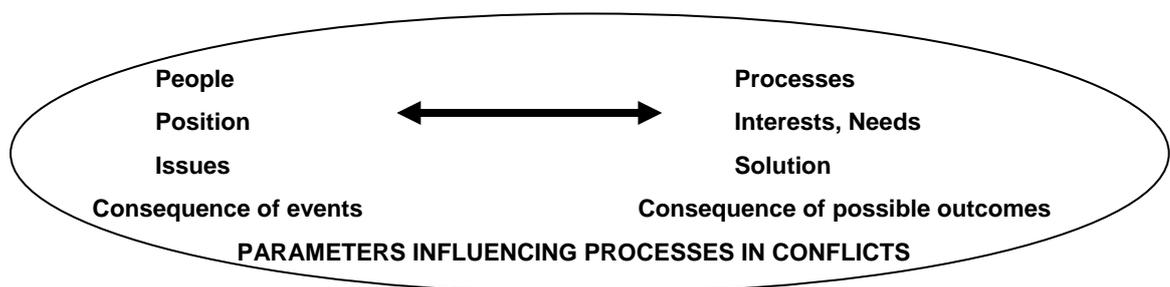
- Conflicts caused on account of ambiguity or lack of clarity on aspects governing systems
- Conflicts due to ideological, religious and political differences.

Conflicts are dynamic processes, where every action or non-action of the other side becomes suspect. Individuals become increasingly rigid in how they see the problem.



### **Conflict resolution is a process**

Since conflicts do not go away, each conflict resolution also feeds into the next conflict in a group. It is, therefore, useful to see conflicts as a series of differences in a group, each having some link to the next. How the group deals with conflicts affects the manner of its functioning.



Conflict management becomes very important in any kind of differences, more so in community development focused groups. In this context conflict management primarily entails:

- Transformation of conflicts brought about by project interventions and
- Managing social, traditional and cultural differences

The process here focuses on becoming aware of a conflict, diagnosing its nature and applying appropriate techniques to diffuse tension, enable the group to differentiate between core and secondary conflicts and to resolve conflicts. Usually, it is best to resolve conflicts on interpersonal basis, but sometimes third party support is needed. Third party support is needed when:

- the core conflict is complicated by a strong emotional element
- conflicting parties are passionately promoting their interests
- one group is unable to confront the other group
- when both parties are unwilling to open up and discuss
- when individuals/ groups are not taking initiative to solve the conflict
- when one or more groups are being adversely affected

Conflict resolution and management is a very complex process and the group has to resort to various ways to deal with them. Some such possible ways are:

<i>Avoiding</i>	:	Withdraw from conflict situation, leaving it to chance.
<i>Smoothing</i>	:	Generally cover up the differences and claim that things are fine.
<i>Bargaining</i>	:	Negotiate to arrive at a compromise, bargain for gains by both parties
<i>Facing</i>	:	Push a party to accept the decision made by some leader
<i>Problem solving</i>	:	Confront the differences and resolve them on a collaborative basis

Each of these ways has advantages and disadvantages. However, the choice will differ from situation to situation and group to group. Important to bear in mind is that the issue should not be shoved under the carpet, but needs to be seen from all perspectives and any decision to solve the conflict must be at a truth level and based on priorities that are most important at that particular point of time and also will not adversely affect the long-term goals and objectives.

## **23. Leadership**

Leadership involves focusing the efforts of the people towards a common goal and to enable them to work together as one. In general one individual is designated as the leader. This individual needs to be chosen from among the group members. In a small group the leadership function is not static, but is performed by different members on a rotational basis. Thus one member may provide leadership with respect to achieving the goal, while a different individual may be providing leadership in maintaining the group as a group. These roles can also switch and change.

### **Leadership Styles**

#### ***The Autocratic Leader***

One who imposes with very little concern for the members' needs, opinions and preferences. Such a leader has great concern for accomplishing the task, but little or no concern for the members.

#### ***The Laissez-faire Leader***

One who has little or no concern for the task at hand, but is concerned about the people, letting them act according to their own wishes.

#### ***The Democratic Leader***

One who is equally concerned with the task and the people. In the ultimate democratic tradition the leadership function is shared between members of the group.

It is important to understand that the same individual in different circumstances, and/or with different groups, behaves differently.

### **Influences on leadership style**

- Within the leader

Is the leader convinced about sharing authority? Does s/he have confidence and trust in the rest of the group? Sense of security? What is her/his value system? This will affect the leadership style chosen.

- Within the group

Are members willing to take responsibility? Mature? Interested? How cohesive is the group? Can they act together? What is the degree and level of involvement? Is there a sense of autonomy or of dependence? These will influence the leadership pattern in the group.

- Within the situation

How much time pressure is there? Is there a crisis? What is the nature of the problem the group is working on? What is the intrinsic nature of the organisation within which the group exists? What is the overall environment?

In almost all real-life situations, groups have a designated leader. In a participatory model like the VRMC, the ideal is to reach a state of democratic leadership; but then to practice such a leadership style from the very beginning of group life can have negative results. Trust needs to be built; the members need to become serious, mature and committed. These conditions cannot be assumed. The leader must possess certain skills to take on the responsibility to lead. Some such skills are:

- Ability to communicate effectively
- Team building and facilitation
- Flexibility and innovation
- Win-win negotiation
- Broad vision and outlook
- Risk taking

In the absence of these skills the leader becomes ineffective and the followers/ members of the group feel lost and directionless.

Thus, the leader must assume greater responsibility to be open, equal and accountable, humble, sensitive and committed. S/he must enable the group to identify and analyse issues of vital concern to the group, and as the group grows, share his/ her leadership with other members.

### **Some roles and responsibilities of a leader**

- (i) raise the members awareness and motivation,
- (ii) increase the readiness of members to accept responsibility,
- (iii) develop group work and group morale,
- (iv) convince the group that they can affect change,
- (v) further individual members' needs for growth and development

### **Checklist for observing leadership process**

1. Which members are high on influence? That is, when they talk, do others listen?
2. Which members are low on influence?
3. Do you see rivalry in the group? Is there a struggle for leadership?
4. Who are the members trying to assume leadership? Do they rely on coercion, expertise, formal authority, personal qualities?
5. How is the designated leader behaving? Is s/he autocratic, democratic or laissez- faire?
6. How are people reacting to the leadership?

Thus, leadership plays an important role in the group management process in any development project. Strong and viable institutions are critical for participatory projects to successfully complete their project cycle and for sustainability of the institutions. To facilitate this, the leadership must focus on:

- Democratic and transparent decision making
- Accountability to members
- Equitable sharing of costs and benefits
- Fair and sensitive conflict resolution.

## **24. Gender and its Approaches in HCFP**

GENDER is an analytical tool used to examine the relationship between the sexes and understand the sexual division of labour, Both these aspects are socially constructed or produced as a result of socialisation. The roles that women play in any given society are socially determined and their situation is reflected through the legislation, religious norms, economic status, cultural values; in the country, the community and the household.

The development process has had an adverse effect (indirect or direct) on the status and position of women in each of these areas - productive, reproductive, and social community. There is a wide gap between the highly unrecognised economic (productive) participation of women and their low political and social power and control over decision-making. Dominant development strategies and models most often have taken into consideration the need of the most vocal and politically active as their starting point, leaving no space for the disadvantaged group and classes.

Development is a process that should ideally aim at involving all the members of society to the same extent according to their individual needs. It is an evident fact that any social development programme/activity undertaken has a direct or indirect impact on the status and position of women in the respective community. Through the experience of the UN Decade of Women (1976-85) there is a consensus among the development workers and policy makers that women occupy a secondary status and position in society. But there is no common understanding regarding the causes of women's subordinate position and approach or strategy of development to be adopted to enhance their status.

### **Definition**

Gender is defined in terms of the roles and responsibilities of men and women in a given society. These roles and responsibilities are defined within the socio-cultural milieu in which an individual is living. Gender is not a static phenomenon, but changes over time.

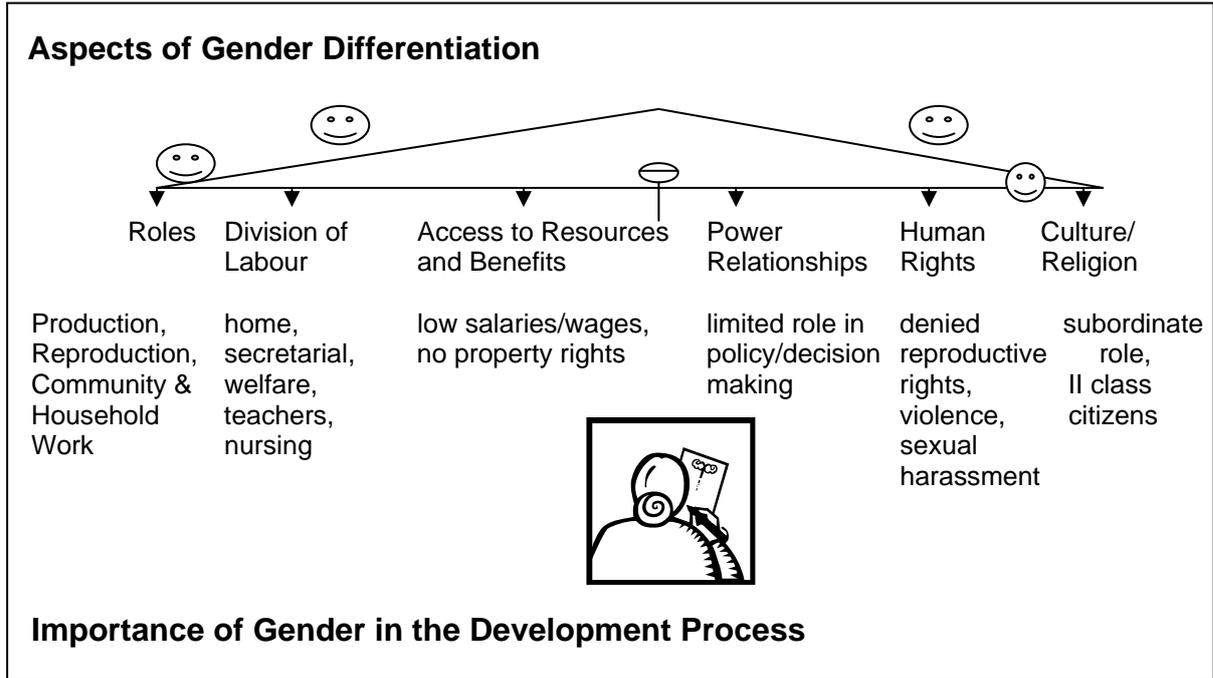
## Approaches

There are primarily two approaches to gender - **Women in Development (WID)** & **Gender and Development (GAD)**. **WID** believes that there is a need for special programmes for women to ensure their development, it is a *women only* approach (ICDS, Mahila Mandals are examples of WID). **GAD** on the other hand goes beyond WID and attempts to integrate women in the mainstream of the development process. It focuses on women as a part of the whole and is essentially concerned with the inter-relationships between men and women (IRDP/SGSY/ 33% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Act and HCFP are examples of GAD).

## Scenario to understand the Gender difference

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- ❑ *perform 2/3 of the world's **work**.*
- ❑ *earn 1/10 of the world's **income**.*
- ❑ *are 2/3 of the world's **illiterate** (Nepal 35%, Sudan 27%, Afghanistan 32%, India 38%).*
- ❑ *own less than 1/100 of the world's **property**.*
- ❑ *have longer **working hours** than men (workplace + household/social chores + reproductive work), but their work does not get recognised in terms of productive value/output.*
- ❑ *tend to live longer than men but in developing countries are put to high mortality rates due to neglect of their **health or nutrition**. Their greatest health risk is childbirth. Maternal mortality rates in developing countries are 15 times higher than in the industrial countries.*
- ❑ *form the majority of people working in **home based production**.*
- ❑ *own and operate **firms** that are **smaller** and are located close to women's homes.*
- ❑ ***Poor sex ratio** - 756 females/1000 males.*
- ❑ *Family Planning - 33% tubectomy & 13% vasectomy.*
- ❑ *Primary education - 40% **girl-child dropout** by class V.*



- Along with men, involvement of women will ensure better utilization of natural resources;
- They use their knowledge to make rational economic and technical choices at micro-level appropriate to their marginal environment;
- Benefits of the processes get distributed more equitably not only within the family, but also in the society as a whole;
- Channelising resources through women means improving the Quality of Life of the entire family and community.

### Gender Analysis

It refers to a systematic way of looking at the different impacts of development on women and men. It requires separating data by sex, and understanding how labour is divided and valued. Gender analysis under HCFP is done at different stages of the development process; one must always ask how a particular activity, decision or plan will affect men differently from women.



HCFP is an integrated and inter-sectoral village development intervention. It is based on following basic principles:

- development and management of natural resources;
- people centred approach;
- natural resource conservation – labour contribution, check on grazing and wood felling;
- creation of village resource management fund through contributions;
- maintaining equity and gender balance;
- promoting appropriate technologies based on traditional knowledge systems and capacities.

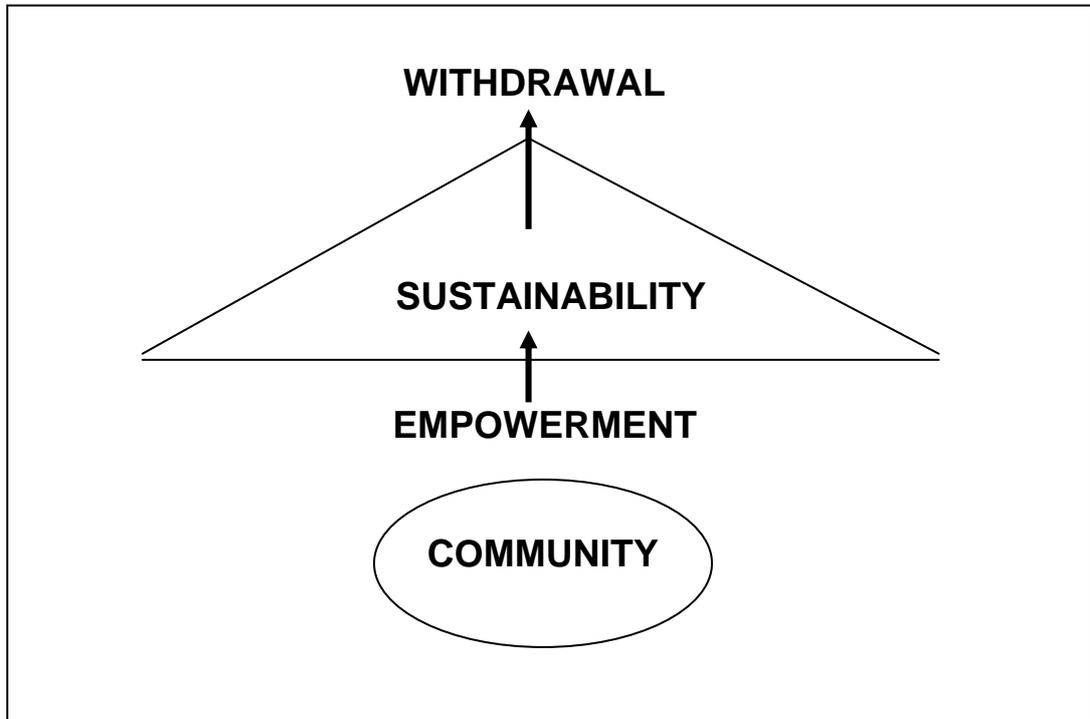
The project intervention incorporates multiple activities like water-harvesting, soil conservation, afforestation, silviculture, pasture land development, promoting rural livelihoods both farm and non-farm, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, etc.

The population in project areas is mostly rural based. Here the economy revolves around women in the villages, because men frequently go out in search of employment. Thus it is all the more critical to focus the development programmes involving women.

The community forestry project is an ideal to actively and meaningfully integrate women in its interventions. The components and activities under this project suit both men and women. Land, forests and water are the basics of life, these are closely related to women. It focuses on the condition of women in their material state, i.e. whether they have improved their access to drinking water, education, health, biomass, credit, wages etc. Among these, the opportunities to earn and have control over the income are critical areas for involvement of women in community forestry projects. Usually these women organise themselves into small Self-Help Groups (SHGs), where they save a fixed amount and use the collective fund thus created out of their income and savings for meeting their consumption and production needs. The revolving fund is also used for initiating and sustaining viable rural livelihoods.

The men usually remain with Village Resource Management Committees in HCFP, where they manage its activities, collect money through membership, manage HCFP microprojects like plantations, create and maintain community structures like village ponds, water harvesting dams, etc. However, gender roles are now changing and women are also playing an active role in the VRMC and its executive.

Gender and HCFP thus differentiates and demarcates the roles and responsibilities of both men and women. Usually issues involving greater amount of money, construction and maintenance of community structures, marketing and other such power wielding activities fall in men's purview. Issues of drinking water, fodder, agriculture, animal husbandry, household chores, children, family etc. are the women areas. However, efforts have been made under the project to integrate women through promoting energy saving improved chulhas, nurseries have been handed over to SHG groups and women are being motivated to take up IGAs and take the path of becoming entrepreneurs.



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