

## Node: Suite Summary<sup>1,2</sup>

### Nepal: Opportunities for NR-based livelihoods

#### Context

Addressing severe poverty in developing countries has been a persistent theme of DFID (Department for International Development) and its programmes since 1995. The 1997 DFID White Paper ‘Eliminating World Poverty: a Challenge for the 21st Century’ was a milestone in raising the issue in the context of sustainable development. DFID’s commitment to poverty reduction was reaffirmed in its 2000 White Paper ‘Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor’, and again in the UK Government’s strong support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Neither the White Papers nor the MDGs pay explicit attention to agriculture and natural resource (NR) management as a means out of poverty. Since 75% of global poverty is rural (approximately 1.9 billion people), the role of NR management is probably being under-represented in its potential contribution to poverty elimination and to meeting the ambitious MDG targets by 2015.

Under its new management post-April 1999, NRSP’s poverty agenda was strengthened and the Goal in each of its production systems re-stated “livelihoods of poor people improved through sustainably enhanced production and productivity of renewable NR systems.” Research in 2000 for NRSP’s “Systems Characterisation” study (PD092, published 2003) identified that a large proportion of marginal farmers in hillsides and mountain environments are poor people. Therefore, it was an especially high priority to disseminate widely the results of NRSP research, both for Nepal and other hillsides target countries (Bolivia, Honduras, Sri Lanka and Uganda), and to draw lessons to date.

#### Research Topics

- Can agricultural development be compatible with NR conservation, while at the same time creating conditions for improvement of livelihoods and reduction of poverty?
- What messages from NRSP’s research on NR management in mountain environments are relevant to meeting goals on reduction of rural poverty?
- How can the complex linkages that research has identified between NR management, livelihoods and poverty best be communicated to multiple targets, and have an influence on pro-poor livelihood policies?

#### Projects

The two projects considered in this Suite brought together NRSP Hillsides researchers in different fora to present, discuss and evaluate their work alongside stakeholders from other organisations, aid donors, farmers and policy-makers (see project links below). Each project led to a high-profile published output, primarily addressed to professional and academic audiences (see project links below).

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<sup>1</sup> This document summarises NRSP’s work in one of its Uptake Promotion Node: suites. For further details and links to project and project documents see <http://www.nrsp.org.uk/6.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> This document presents research funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

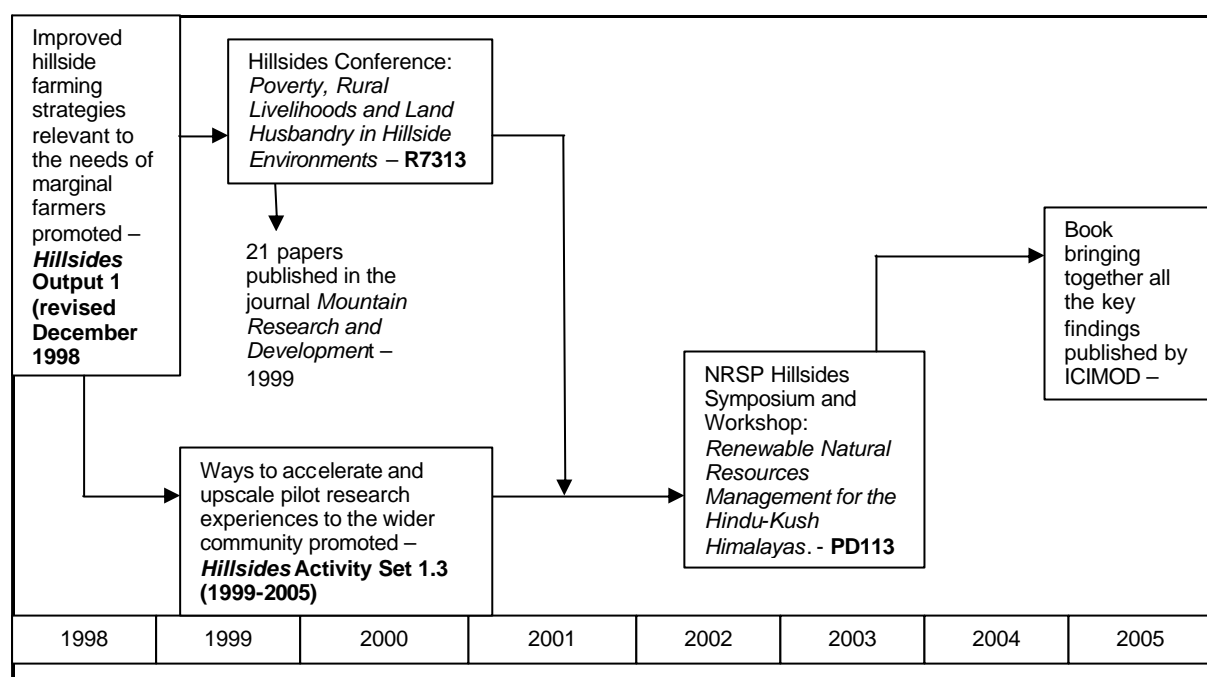
R7313 (1999) was a conference held at Silsoe, England, in January 1999, entitled Poverty, Rural Livelihoods and Land Husbandry in Hillside Environments. This was the culmination of the first phase of NRSP Hillside research addressing the ‘promotion’ aspect of its logical framework output “Improved hillside farming strategies relevant to the needs of marginal farmers developed and promoted”.

The purpose of R7313 was to consolidate individual outputs from the Hillside portfolio of projects at a conference that included international scientists and development professionals. It was anticipated that this would lead to improved networking and identification of future research priorities. About 100 people participated in the conference, 18 invited papers were presented and a further 15 on posters. Two consecutive special issues of the journal Mountain Research and Development (Volume 19, Nos 3 and 4) published the conference proceedings (containing 21 papers with 48 authors that had been peer reviewed during the conference).

PD113 (2002-3) was a joint project between NRSP and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development’s (ICIMOD) People and Resource Dynamics in Mountain Watersheds Programme (PARDYP). It consisted of three parts:

1. A symposium in Kathmandu, (February 2003), entitled Renewable Natural Resources Management for the Hindu-Kush Himalayas. The purpose of the symposium was to provide a platform for public dissemination of research outputs to a wide variety of stakeholders, including donors, administrators and scientists. 22 papers were presented organised into five thematic sections:
  - Initiatives for renewable NR management for the Hindu-Kush Himalaya (HKH) (PARDYP & NRSP).
  - People and resource dynamics programme (PARDYP).
  - Approaches to viable land, soil and water management for the HKH (NRSP).
  - Analytical tools for soil and land resource management (NRSP).
  - Scaling-up research to the wider community (NRSP).
2. A research workshop in Pokhara, (March 2003), entitled Natural Resources Management for Mountain Communities. The workshop was primarily for researchers and some farmers to examine the evidence and set a new agenda for pro-poor livelihoods in mountains through NR management. With five lead papers to guide the discussions, the workshop was primarily conducted in working groups. The meeting included a field trip into the Middle Hills of Nepal, meeting local stakeholders and seeing the challenges at first hand.
3. A book published in 2005 by ICIMOD bringing together the main contents of the symposium and workshop, plus two chapters reflecting on the lessons and outcomes. The book presented experiences and distilled the learning on how to make renewable NR management research more effective for the societies and physical environments of steep hill lands.

## Project links within Nepal Suite 3: 1998 – 2005



## Outputs

### Findings

R7313 identified five key cross-cutting questions, the answers to which should improve the utility and effectiveness of future hillside farming research:

1. How can sustainable rural livelihood approaches in research be promoted?
  - Institutional decentralisation.
  - Improve understanding of rural livelihoods, of non-NR issues (e.g. migration), of resource access; and their influences on livelihood.
  - Improve project management skills and programme level monitoring (by indicator)
2. How can promotion, dissemination and uptake of research outputs be encouraged?
  - Define and identify: uptake promotion terms, outputs, users, uptake pathways and pro-poor pathways.
  - Pay attention to other issues e.g., language, project responsibilities.
3. How may impact through development interventions and support services be ensured?
  - Define impact changes and time-scale.
  - Understand why impact is important and who is responsible for it.
  - Identify factors that contribute to impact.
4. How can stakeholder collaboration be fostered?
  - Identify reasons for collaboration.
  - Use a variety of methods to engage stakeholders.
5. How can biophysical knowledge and technologies be incorporated and scaled-up into the poverty agenda?

- Obtain scaling-up results at the plot/field scale and use modelling and quantification.
- Identify the role of biophysical research in the agenda for poverty elimination, especially the reduction of risk of production failure with new systems

PD113 drew its findings from a review of the considerable number of case studies undertaken both by NRSP and by PARDYP, and from discussions and analysis to draw out the generic lessons from the large body of research presented and reviewed. The main findings were:

- Community involvement is essential in the design, planning and monitoring of research. A strong poverty focus must be employed.
- Even research projects with an explicit poverty focus find it difficult in practice to involve poor households.
- The use of innovative participatory methods should be encouraged (e.g. Participatory Technology Development, (PTD)). Methods must be farmer-focused and farmer-centred.
- Local people's informal experiments should be factored into all research.
- Involving local communities in the development of local NR management bye-laws has worked well in Uganda.
- The rural poor rely disproportionately on common property resources; yet they also face major impediments to access such resources.
- Local professionals, such as agricultural extension personnel, are crucial front-line workers who must be involved in the research and its uptake.
- Research requires suitable tools for measurement, analysis and making recommendations. Tools do exist and much research is strong on data procurement, but research is less strong on the application of analytical techniques.
- NR research achieves greater impact on pro-poor livelihoods if researchers themselves are committed to and understand learning, self-monitoring and communication.
- Research findings must reach the end-user – e.g. local professionals and policy-makers – and not just be fed back into the research system.
- Dissemination strategies must be planned at an early stage, mindful of the various audiences and target groups.

### *Research messages*

On agricultural development and NR conservation:

- The most important reason for aiming to achieve impact in NR management research is to increase the well-being of the poor.
- The key issues identified in R7313 (see Findings above) should all be addressed in the planning of NR research with a poverty focus.
- The analysis derived from PD113 concludes with the important message that increasing the impact of research work is vital, and must be a first strategic priority in any new research.
- Agricultural development in mountain environments is essential for livelihoods support and poverty reduction.

On research relevant to reduction of rural poverty:

- To reach the rural poor that rely disproportionately on common property resources, their impediments to accessing such resources must be addressed.
- Stakeholder collaboration, using workshops, field visits and conferences, is essential to foster trust, cooperation and acceptance by the rural poor.
- Broad-based livelihood studies should be a starting point to determine priorities; households should be categorised according to need and wealth; the role of livestock should be included in hillsides research; and research collaboration and dissemination should be integral to project design.
- Technical issues, especially on analysis of information on NR and livelihoods, need substantial strengthening.

On communicating complex research findings to target groups:

- It is vital to make research results comprehensible to all stakeholders. Deliberate efforts are needed to increase the representation of poor farmers on stakeholder committees.
- Multiple pathways for dissemination, scaling-up and uptake should be identified at an early stage, varying in scale and target group.
- Greater impact on pro-poor livelihoods is achievable with researchers who are committed to and understand learning, self-monitoring and communication.

#### *Key research products*

- Ellis-Jones, J., Mason, T. & Keatinge, D. 1999. Poverty, rural livelihoods and land husbandry in hillside environments. Proceedings of a Conference held at Silsoe, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom, 6-8 January 1999. Special Issues – parts 1 and 2. Mountain Research and Development Volume 19, No.3, pp.171-278; No. 4, pp.282-363. (R7313).
- Stocking, M., Helleman, H. & White, R. (eds.) 2005. Renewable natural resources management for mountain communities. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu. 314pp. (PD113).

#### **Impacts**

This Suite brought together a wide range of stakeholders who were interested and/or engaged in NR management with a pro-poor livelihood focus. These included, foremost, some 105 scientists and professionals involved in research at national and international levels. In addition, at least 100 other persons (farmers, aid donors, administrators, policy-makers) have been directly involved in the two projects and have gained insights and understandings on NR management in hillside environments which can be applied in their daily work.

The impact of the published outputs from the Suite is difficult to gauge. The journal Mountain Research and Development in which R7313 conference proceedings were published is itself of limited impact (Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Web of Knowledge portal – JIF=0.383) but is accessed by The International Mountain Society (IMS), the United Nations University, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, ICIMOD, FAO and WWF-International and individual conference papers have been cited up to 20 times (Google-scholar). The output of PD113 was only published in 2005 with 3,000 copies printed and distributed through ICIMOD's and NRSP's networks. Citation data are not yet available.

### **Further work**

Involvement of the poor in research to benefit them is extremely difficult and further work is needed on how to better facilitate their participation. Because engagement with the poor is necessarily a long process, any such work should be programmatic rather than project-based, explicitly addressing the challenge from the start. New methods, tools and ways of working need to be developed to keep the initial enthusiasm of both researchers and local people alive. Further work on taking these new methods and tools forward needs to be incorporated into DFID's 'Research into Use' programme, which is currently being commissioned. The new programme will need to be mindful of the nuances in messages and of the difficulty of reaching the very poor with research outputs.

This Suite has reached many professionals and scientists, but the lifetime of NRSP was too short to allow an evaluation of its impacts on policy and practice. Follow-up tracking and monitoring studies would be useful to identify whether or not the research messages have been successfully integrated. Monitoring should measure the impact and effects on poor people's livelihoods.