SECTION 1

SECTION 1
AN INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICT IN COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

1.1 UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

Understanding the many dimensions of conflict is the first step towards managing disputes over forest resources effectively. It is also helpful to explore the lessons learned from past experiences in community-based forest management and to understand where conflict has arisen.

This section considers the different elements of conflict in community-based forest management. It has three objectives:

◆ to provide new and different ways of looking at the conflict that may arise among multiple and diverse groups of forest users;

◆ to introduce important elements of conflict that influence the way it is addressed and managed;

◆ to encourage broader thinking about how conflicts arise in forest resource policy, programmes and projects.

1.2 WHAT IS COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT?

This set of training materials addresses conflict in the context of community-based forest management. Because community-based forest management is a concept that is rapidly evolving and is applied to many contexts, it is important to define the term and its use clearly.

In general, the term "forest management" covers all planning and controls over forest resource use. It may involve a wide variety of stakeholders, for example local resource users, relevant government agencies, NGOs and commercial resource companies (see Box 1.1).

Historically, forest management of public, and sometimes private, land has been an activity of the State and its various agencies, established through constitutions, legislation and regulations that largely reject local claims to forest resources. Professionals and bureaucrats lead these activities, deriving options for use based on economic, scientific and planning criteria. Decision-makers then determine use and management strategies through negotiations with the most influential parties in a wider political arena. The gradual globalization of the world economy has, in many areas, reinforced State claims to forest resources. In such instances, this has further facilitated the exploitation of forests by national and transnational companies, to the disadvantage of local forest users (Poffenberger, 1999).

In this process, management decisions sometimes exclude the involvement of communities that continue to be the users and de facto managers of forest areas and whose livelihoods depend on those resources. Frequently, official planners and managers do not have the mechanisms, skills or resources to take into account the range of local views and interests. Too often, in the past, local stakeholders heard about planning arrangements and new management regulations only after those decisions had begun to affect their lives directly.

Over the past few decades, fundamental perceptions regarding the role, rights and responsibilities of communities in forest management have begun to change. *Community-based* forest management has consciously shifted decision-making away from centralized government or corporate entities towards local authorities and resource-user groups. The objective is to empower communities and resource users who have been marginalized from decision-making, so that they develop and manage their resources.

Diverse forces have supported the move towards community-based forest management, including current global trends of democratization and devolution of authority. These trends are fuelled by growing recognition of:

◆ the limits to existing centralized decision-making systems;

◆ the necessary link between the provision of basic human rights and all sectors of development.

Repeatedly, conflicts resulting from the shortcomings and failures of past forest management experiences have taught this lesson.

The basic premise of community-based natural resource management is that access to relevant knowledge about resource management options combined with more inclusive decision-making processes can contribute to more equitable and more sustainable natural resource management. (Chevalier and Buckles, 1999)

1.1.2 Forests, conflict and human rights

Human rights are the inalienable rights of all human beings. They consist of a certain set of basic or core rights without which people cannot gain access to or enjoy other rights. These rights include:

◆ the right not only to life but to a livelihood;

◆ the right to protection from violence;

◆ the right to safe water, food and shelter;

◆ the right to health and education;

◆ the right for both women and men to have a say in their future (Fisher *et al.,* 2000).

BOX 1.1 WHAT ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Conflicts over forests occur at various levels, involving a variety of different individuals, groups and organizations. They take place at the household, community, national, regional and global levels. They range from conflicts among local men and women over the use of trees, to conflicts among neighbouring communities disputing control over woodland, and to villages, community-based organizations, domestic and multinational businesses, governments, international development agencies and NGOs over the use and management of large forest tracts.

In community forest management the term "stakeholders" is used to define:
◆ all those who possess a stake (or interest) in, or
◆ are affected by management of the natural resource or issue concerned

(Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996).

The term can be applied to individuals, communities, social groups or institutions that represent diverse interests, differing social dynamics and relationships of power and influence surrounding an issue.

The term "stakeholder" can also be applied to subgroups based on focus, level of authority, size and interests. The following are some examples of how this can be applied:
◆ *Within communities:* subgroups are based on gender, age, religion, caste or ethnic affiliation, business size or interests, or social ranking (for example, women, youth, chiefs, forest users, traders).
◆ *Within NGOs:* subgroups are defined by scale of operation, constituency or special interests (for example, national NGOs, international conservation organizations, community-based organizations focusing on local human rights).

◆ *Within governments:* subgroups are based on specific depart-ments, location of service, decision-making roles (for example, local forest guards, forest officers, national planning offices, policy-makers).

In classifying stakeholders, there is a risk of seeing any group or subgroup as overly homogeneous. For example, using labels such as "women" or "community" may hide the diverse and often con-tradictory interests within these groups. For this reason, it is often more useful and accurate to identify stakeholders around an issue, problem or goal.

Section 3.3 will discuss in more detail how to identify and analyse stakeholders in a conflict. Section 9 provides use-ful activities to help develop skills in stakeholder analysis.

The concept of human rights did not originate from a single society, philo-sophical perspective, political system, culture or region of the world. However, defining and agreeing on what rights are is a topic of continu-ous debate. Civil and political rights, often called "first-generation rights", reflect a Western traditional view of the rights of the individual in society. Second-generation rights include rights to basic necessities such as food and shelter, and to social services such as health and education.

According to a Western view, human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot be separated, and the full realization of civil and political rights without the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights is thought to be impossible. While not all societies agree on this notion of civil and political rights, most agree that second-generation rights must be realized.

There are a number of declarations and conventions that shape global and national action on human rights. The first common understanding was embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, unani-mously signed by all members of the United Nations (UN).

Declarations and conventions that are particularly relevant to forest and natural resource management include:

◆ Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 1960;

◆ General Assembly Resolution Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources, 1962;

◆ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966;

◆ Proclamation of Teheran, 1968;

◆ Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972;

◆ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966;

◆ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979;

◆ Moscow Declaration: Global Forum on Environment and Development for Human Survival, 1990;

◆ The Hague Recommendation on International Environmental Law, 1991;

◆ Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986;

◆ Declaration of the Hague, 1989;

◆ Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 1992;

◆ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992;

◆ Agenda 21, 1992.

The violation of basic human rights in forest use or management is at the root of many conflicts, particularly when more powerful political or economic forces control the management and use of resources that are needed by communities for survival.

It has been said that if we want peace we must seek justice. To understand what justice means, we need to think of the rights of women, children, prisoners, disabled people and all those who are marginalized. Opponents in a conflict may discover that they are committed to similar principles of peace and justice, but have different priorities or ways of achieving them. A rights agenda can form one basis for building a future together. (Fisher *et al.,* 2000).

1.3 THE MANY FACETS OF CONFLICT

Conflict demands attention. In community-based forest management it erupts:

◆ within and among communities;

◆ between communities and governments;

◆ with other community-based organizations, NGOs, commercial interests and other external players.

Conflict in community forestry is not simply the outcome of centralized decision-making or changes to more decentralized forms of governance. It is an inevitable situation in which people have differently defined interests and goals in the use and management of forest resources. Conflicts commonly arise over disagreements of tenure, access, control and distribution of forest lands or products. Even the smallest, most remote communities gaining access to and managing forests under their own tenure and authority are subject to conflict, requiring their members to address disputes in one way or another. Conflict – whether public or private – is a pervasive aspect of forest use and management.

As it emerges, conflict can change significantly in form and intensity. People working in community forestry need to deal with it, yet it is not always easy to address. On close examination, a conflict can have many layers and change continually. It can involve and affect diverse groups of the community and wider political and economic institutions. Conflict is inherently variable, unstable and complex.

Before acting on conflict, it is useful to consider its basic dimensions. People dealing with conflict need to be aware of the following:

◆ Conflict is rarely just one event or one dispute between two parties.

◆ The origins of a conflict are often complex and multiple. They are embedded in local cultural systems but are also connected to the wider political economy of which communities are a part.

◆ A conflict is often a sequence of cause and effect events that involve people, resources and decisions.

TRAINER'S NOTE # 2

ADDRESSING COMPLEX CONFLICTS

These training materials describe how to dissect and analyse conflict, then suggest how to address specific aspects of conflict in a rational and planned way. In reality, a major part of conflict runs in the opposite direction: it is fuelled by emotion, history and underlying motivations. This can be confusing and frustrating for people who are new to conflict management. *Training activities #1* and *#2* provide an introduction to this subject and to the multiple factors that should be considered in addressing conflict and that hinder the collaboration of stakeholders in forest management.

1.3.1 Conflict as a constructive force

Many consider the term "conflict" to be negative, something that is "bad" and to be avoided. Certainly, the results of conflict can be a major constraint to community organization and cohesiveness. If conflict is ignored and allowed to escalate, it can prevent positive and needed social change and can lead to further resource degradation. Even worse, it can destroy the long-term cooperation and relationships that are necessary for collaborative forest management. This is particularly true in the case of "unbounded" conflict, which occurs when tensions escalate, relationships erode, geographic scope is broad or undefined, or other groups become involved. Unbounded conflicts can have a long-lasting legacy that does not recover in the short term (Lee, 1993).

Despite its negative connotations, conflict is a normal and common part of social and political life. It is pivotal to how we function as a community and how we relate to outside interests and forces. A collaborative approach to forest management recognizes and maintains a healthy respect for the different and often conflicting values and interests of multiple groups.

Conflict can have constructive and positive outcomes, depending on the way people handle it. Conflict can be an important catalytic force for social change (see Box 1.2). It alerts us to:

◆ inequality;

◆ potential loss or unacceptable impacts;

◆ potential obstacles to progress;

◆ the need or desire of the community to assert its rights, interests and priorities.

Conflict throws unclear issues into sharp focus. If dealt with effectively, conflict can help to identify the source of problems and suggest stable and orderly solutions.

Conflict is an intense experience in communication and interaction with transformative potential. For marginal groups seeking to redress injustices or extreme inequities in resource distribution, conflict is an inherent feature of their struggle for change. (Buckles and Rusnak, 1999)

Conflict can be a creative, constructive force in the community if we develop the skills to analyse and use it in a peaceful and participatory manner.

BOX 1.2 **CONFLICT AS A CATALYST FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

Despite many years of talking to local government about its interests in maintaining forest access, the members of a community of traditional forest dwellers found that they were continually ignored and their grievances not taken seriously. Out of frustration and concern about future livelihoods, they became involved in an intense situation of open conflict requiring political lobbying and civil disobedience. When they initially became involved in the process, they aimed only to gain more political leverage and recognition so that they would be allowed to participate in forest planning activities. In fact, through their involvement in the conflict they developed a range of new skills that increased their capacity to participate more effectively. To be successful in lobby-

ing they learned how to organize themselves better, communicate through the media, work with outside organizations and gain access to information. All of these skills were invaluable ingredients in preparing them to participate better in a collective process.

1.3.2 Potential, emerging and manifest conflict

Sometimes we need to address a conflict before it starts to affect how people act or make decisions. At this stage, conflict is simply a *potential* threat; it lies latent, or hidden, in the fabric of the community or in the community's relations with others. Tensions may build even when people deny that any conflict exists.

In other forms, conflict is *emerging,* becoming increasingly obvious as time goes on. It may begin as a small problem but then starts to grow. It can emerge gradually and steadily, or develop rapidly because of a few significant events. As differences increase and intensify, conflict becomes *manifest*, a full-blown public issue that cannot be avoided. In Box 1.3, a time line depicts some of the events that led to the splitting of an inter-village forest management committee. This example depicts the various stages of conflict. Consider how the committee could have responded proactively in the latent stages to mitigate further conflict.

BOX 1.3 **TIME LINE OF ESCALATING CONFLICT**

Event	Stage of conflict
◆ A local forest management committee composed of representatives from five villages elects to initiate forest management practices over a large area of shared forest. A series of meetings begin to review current and proposed forest practices. Three of the villages dominate participation in the meeting over the other two. ◆ After the first month of meetings, representatives from the two villages that are not actively included in the discussions start to resent the process. They do not feel that they have had an opportunity to express views that are different from those of the other villages.	**LATENT**
◆ At the end of the second month, representatives from one of the marginalized villages stop attending the meetings, excusing themselves because of other work. ◆ The three dominant villages continue to pursue their own interests in meetings and ignore the decreasing participation of the other representatives. ◆ The village representatives who have stopped participating in meetings begin to meet informally with other village members.	**EMERGING**

◆ A meeting is called between the two dissenting villages. They express dissatisfaction with the decision-making process and with not being listened to. A letter of complaint is written to the committee.

◆ The committee ignores the letter and pushes ahead with the need to confirm new management guidelines. Representatives from the marginalized villages walk out of the meeting. On returning to their villages, they tell their village members that the committee does not respect their membership. Both villages formally withdraw all cooperation with the management committee until it meets their demands to be treated fairly.

MANIFEST

These stages in the development of conflict will affect considerations of priorities and the timing of any interventions that may be required to manage the situation. For example, it is often better to accept the cost of investing time and resources now, in order to address potential issues as they are detected, rather than to wait for something to happen. Anticipation of conflict and early intervention are usually more effective than very expensive and time-consuming intervention later on. "Later" may mean "too late".

TRAINER'S NOTE # 3

REMEMBER TO LOOK FOR CONFLICT THAT YOU CANNOT SEE

The source of a conflict may lie somewhere behind the conflict that is currently holding your attention. That is, the immediate issue being addressed may hide a deeper and quite different conflict. For example, people may obstruct effective and equitable resource use activities in order to strike a blow in a completely different conflict concerning other issues or people.

These are conflicts that you cannot see, but that are already actively causing problems. You may have to manage the underlying conflict before finding a solution for the issues that you are addressing on the surface.

1.3.3 Geographic, social and political scales of conflict

Environmental conflicts can link large geographic areas. Conflicts may extend over a large geographic area, as activities in one location affect the integrity of resources elsewhere. Ecosystem interrelationships over a landscape can link people in a common issue, even when they are geographically dispersed. A simple but common example of this is forest felling in the headwaters of a catchment area. This activity increases river siltation and leads to diminished water quality for villages hundreds of kilometres downstream.

There can be a diversity of conflicts in a small geographic area. A range of conflicts may exist within a relatively small geographic area, as multiple characteristics of human society interact with historical, regulatory or ecological parameters. For example, when there are ethnic, cultural and social differences among local resource-user groups, the type of resource conflicts may vary significantly within one watershed (Hirsch, Phanvilay and Tubtim, 1999).

Conflicts move both horizontally and vertically. Owing to its geographic scale, an issue of conflict may easily extend horizontally and cross through various political and administrative jurisdictions, involving local authorities, provincial and national government agencies and other countries. Local conflicts may also extend vertically to the national and global levels, not based on geography but on the special political relevance of the issue. For example, local disputes that rapidly escalate and involve distant groups may be centred on:

◆ a species that is globally endangered;

◆ a forest area of a particular type;

◆ indigenous rights;

◆ other human rights issues.

Similarly, local conflicts may result from broader policy and legal frameworks. Such local conflicts can be linked to stakeholders within various organizations and in different positions of power, who actively influence the development of these policies.

As can be seen from these scenarios, a conflict in forest management can, and usually does, involve multiple groups and subgroups of stakeholders. The design of a conflict management process should ensure that new stakeholder groups are identified at all stages, as the understanding and dynamics of the conflict change. This provides access to groups that had previously been excluded.

Multiple stakeholders can represent high degrees of cultural diversity. They can also have significantly unequal relationships in terms of their power to influence the issues that affect them. This is often a result of wide differences in access to information about resource use and alternative management systems. Clashing groups can have strong interests in

the same issue, but have different ideas on how to act on those interests. Such factors make the concept of stakeholders a complex and dynamic one, but a necessary factor in the management of conflict.

Section 3 discusses at length the identification and analysis of stakeholders in a conflict. This forms an important part of understanding conflict and is central to both building collaboration in forest management and initiating a process of conflict management.

Determining the geographic and political boundaries of a conflict and the relevant stakeholders can be a challenging task. Decisions that are made about the scale and level at which to define and manage a conflict will affect the selection of an appropriate process and solutions. Interventions to manage conflict must use an appropriate scale of planning and resources to address the issues effectively. Identifying opportunities for partnerships with other organizations or agencies, in order to intervene at the required scale, may be part of the conflict management strategy.

1.3.4 Differentiating between conflict within a community and with outsiders

An important consideration in examining a conflict related to scale is to determine whether the differences occur *within* a community, organization or group, or between a local group and *outside* interests.

Local communities are not homogeneous, but composed of various subgroups of stakeholders. The differing interests or access to information of these subgroups often give rise to conflicts about landownership, boundaries and traditional authority within a local community. Conflicts also arise between the stakeholders of a local community and outside groups, such as logging companies, government, NGOs and nearby villages.

There are large differences between these two contexts, and these have an important influence on how conflict management is approached.

Conflict within a local community or group

These conflicts are among friends and neighbours, among and within kin-ship groups, among neighbouring landowners or resource users, or between landowner and migrant (see Box 1.4). They occur among people who have established social relationships, often when there is an existing level of trust. They erupt within personal relationships and groups that are cooperating to achieve a shared goal. Conflicts can generate consider-able emotions among the disputants, affecting their ability to interact with one another.

People who live together have a shared interest in maintaining peaceful and productive relationships with others who live nearby. They also have many options for taking action on a particular conflict because the exist-ing network of relationships can be used to find a solution. However, even when such options exist, conflicts can undermine social relations and sometimes escalate into violence. Because relationships within a commu-nity are so intertwined, it may be necessary in some instances to bring in an outside facilitator who does not have a personal stake in the conflict.

Conflict between local and outside groups

Conflicts between local groups and outside organizations can have very different basic parameters (see Box 1.5). Because social networks are not as strong in these conflicts and interests are less likely to overlap, the range of options for an entirely locally based solution can be significantly reduced. It may therefore become necessary to seek conflict management assistance from a third party outside the conflict.

Outside groups have their own reasons for wanting to use or manage resources. Depending on the type and objectives of the outside group, it may not want to protect specific local interests in those resources. Such external groups pursue their own agendas and look to advance their own priorities. For some NGOs or government agencies, the agenda may include helping the local community; for others, it may not.

BOX 1.4 **CONFLICTS WITHIN A COMMUNITY**

Conflict within a community is often characterized by:

◆ personal relationships among key individuals, including the possibility of entrenched animosity among families and individuals;

◆ shared histories;

◆ emotional forces;

◆ arguments about who can validly claim to have an interest in a given resource;

◆ social and cultural definitions of authority and power;

◆ the presence of "invisible conflict";

◆ the influence of local politics and economic relations;

◆ connections to wider political or economic institutions.

For example, a new community institution is formed to oversee forest protection and management. Conflicts emerge over:

◆ recognition of traditional authority;

◆ benefit sharing;

◆ membership;

◆ household representation;

◆ family size and work contribution to the community institution;

◆ individuals' daily dependence on the resources, and their relative power and influence within the larger community group;

◆ more powerful groups in the community trying to control the new community institution for their personal interests;

◆ lack of transparency in meeting procedures;

◆ lack of consensus in decision-making by community institutions.

In some cases, subgroups may form to express their differences in opinion regarding what is good management. Family feuds are brought into the community institution, hindering effective decision-making. Politicization and the formation of rival factions may further divide the community.

In many cases, the outside group may feel justified by policy mandates, scientific technical expertise, resource extraction concessions or other legal and ideological bases for taking control of resources. External interests may have political power behind their interests (whether these be justified or not). In some cases, the outcome can be the marginalization of communities and local resource users. This has been an all too common experience for many local forest-dependent communities that have had their traditional livelihoods prohibited or restricted in top-down decisions by agencies for economic development or conservation purposes.

Of course, the issue can be far more obvious, for example, when outside agencies and groups override local concerns and interests by using intimidation, power and politics. Sometimes communities' responses to such actions are small-scale, individual acts of civil disobedience, such as wilfully violating rules or deliberately sabotaging activities. Not surprisingly, in many places, such responses have been treated by outside authorities as "policing problems" rather than indications of conflict. But local responses can also be more organized and larger-scale, including protests, boycotts or appeals to the government to offer official support to conflict management activities. The stark end-point of this facet of conflict can be war and violence.

BOX 1.5 **CONFLICT BETWEEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND OUTSIDE GROUPS**

Conflict with outside groups is often characterized by:

◆ widely divergent world views;

◆ distinctly separate sets of goals and intentions among parties to the conflict;

◆ a greater reliance on formal processes, such as legal systems and government decisions;

◆ a reduced number of options for resolving conflict due to lack of social relationships and a smaller chance that interests overlap;

◆ clear economic interests of different parties in the conflict;

◆ the strong influence of the dominant forces of politics and power operating in the wider society.

For example, when management objectives for a forest area give priority to conservation values over other local uses of forest products, conflicts emerge over:

◆ policy and planning processes that exclude local forest-dependent communities;

◆ boundaries for forest closure and buffer zones that do not blend with traditional subsistence areas and that disrupt local harvesting patterns;

◆ the selection of one village over others to provide local representation on a co-management committee with government;

◆ local fears of loss of cultural identity, which emerge as access rights to symbolic forest sites are denied;

◆ an NGO's provision of financial assistance to one village (as a model of forest protection) over another.

Commonly, the underlying reason for conflict is the inadequate participation of local groups in collaborative management. Such situations become more complex when two or three villages share the same forest patch and have separate community institutions to manage the area.

1.3.5 Balancing resolution and management

These training materials focus on *managing conflicts* rather than on *resolving* them. Ideally, one should work towards a resolution of each conflict. However, providing ultimate resolutions to conflicts is not an easy matter. Sometimes a conflict over forest resources may be entangled in complex and longstanding animosity among community members, families and various other social groups. The task of sorting out such deeply embedded relationships in order to achieve an ultimate resolution of all conflicts of interest may be impossible.

At the other end of the spectrum, some local conflicts may be tied to wider social, economic and political processes. Their resolution may require sweeping reforms at the national or even the global level, such as:

◆ formal recognition of indigenous land rights;

◆ land reform;

◆ devolution of authority;

◆ reduction or curtailment of certain economic development activities;

◆ improved governance and accountability of institutions and decision-makers.

Such broader policy issues and their implementation are beyond the scope of the approaches and activities covered by these materials.

The case studies in Section 8 provide examples of different conflict management strategies such as:

◆ holding frequent and regular management committee meetings at which stakeholders have time to air grievances (Case study 1, Haryana, India);

◆ negotiations of interests among communities, facilitated by the Community Forest User Group (Case study 2, Dhungeshori, Nepal);

◆ use of traditional leaders and elders as mediators following customary management methods for handling internal conflicts (Case study 3, Chiang Mai Highlands, Thailand).

Section 4.2 will discuss these and other strategies in more detail.

TRAINER'S NOTE # 4

RESOLVING VERSUS MANAGING CONFLICT

In theory, in order to resolve conflicts fully, the underlying tensions among conflicting parties must be removed. It can be useful in training to discuss whether this is always desirable or possible in forest management. Some practitioners argue that a certain level of conflict is a positive part of social change, and so it may not be healthy to eliminate conflict through resolution. Rather, we should manage the conflict so that it does not become destructive or violent (Buckles and Rusnak, 1999).

In addition, resolution may not be possible in a community forestry situation in which conflict involves many stakeholders and has many social, political, economic and cultural layers. Collaborative strategies to manage the conflict may be achievable and effective, but resolution, if it requires "an end to incompatibilities", may not occur (Daniels and Walker, 1999).

1.4 LOCATING CONFLICT IN COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

In order to help those who are learning about conflict in community-based forest management to think more concretely about situations that lead to conflict, it is useful to ask them to reflect on their own experiences. Where do conflicts arise?

Although the dimensions and intensity may vary, on the surface most forest conflicts centre around securing access to needed land or forest resources of a certain quality or quantity. Resource users and managers commonly cite disagreements over:

◆ tenure and use rights;

◆ harvest regulations;

◆ competition with other users for a limited resource;

◆ unsustainable use;

◆ unfair distribution of benefits.

1.4.1 Key questions in identifying existing or potential conflict

Underlying issues frequently result from the way community-based forest management is organized and from the inadequacies of a particular collaborative planning and management process. The following paragraphs provide a series of broad yet essential questions related to these structures and processes. These questions provide:

◆ a guide for identifying where conflict may arise in forest management;

◆ a checklist to use when initiating or supporting programmes intended to strengthen more sustainable community use and management.

Have we adequately identified and involved the stakeholders?

Failing to identify and involve the full spectrum of stakeholders limits understanding of these groups' diverse needs and priorities (see Box 1.6). It also ignores local and indigenous knowledge of the management setting.

◆ What happens when these diverse interests are not taken into account in decision-making?

◆ How are the different stakeholders participating: are people merely providing labour or information, are they sanctioning predetermined objectives or are they actively engaged in problem solving and direction setting? How may these differences in level and extent of participation result in conflict?

◆ How can different levels of participation affect stakeholder negotiations, the reaching of consensus on needed agreements or the transparency of the process? How can participation affect agenda setting?

◆ What impacts will participation have on the understanding, agreement and overall compliance of stakeholders to programme or policy objectives?

◆ How will management policies or regulations that fail to take into account local forest resource rights and practices affect the community institutions that currently or historically govern resource use?

BOX 1.6 **CONFLICTS ARISING FROM DIFFICULTIES IN IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS**

A conservation warden negotiated an agreement so that two local communities could have seasonal access for their livestock to water sources within a national park. The agreement specified who received access, the number of cattle allowed and the responsibilities of community members.

Over time, outsiders migrated into the community in order to gain access to the water sources, and residents listed in the agreement brought in cattle belonging to other communities. In addition, some community members and park staff allowed people who were not part of the agreement to use the corridor for access to grazing areas.

Conflicts arose at different levels. Households that upheld the agreement resented those who broke it. Park officials committed to the project's success were pitted against park officials who colluded with local community members to break the rules. The stakeholder groups – community and park officials – changed over time as interests and concerns within the groups divided.

The difficulty of defining and the failure to re-examine the stakeholder groups over time, coupled with the inability of park officials to regulate resource access, contributed to the failure of this innovative project.

How do we respond to an incomplete information base?

Imperfect information will always be part of the environment in which people involved in forest use and management work. The adequacy, nature and ownership of information are issues at all levels of planning and management (see Box 1.7). So what is an appropriate response?

◆ Do we tap into and build on existing local knowledge systems?

◆ Do we develop mutually understandable systems of learning, particularly when confronting diverse levels of education and training?

◆ Do we proceed with many unknowns and assumptions?

◆ What implicit assumptions are being made about the causes and effects of conflicts and resource problems? What assumptions are we making about what are and are not acceptable resource uses, effective management practices and viable or desirable livelihoods?

◆ What are the consequences when weaknesses in these assumptions surface and activities fail?

◆ Do the methods that we use to gather information invite active participation by the stakeholders? (For example, are we using participatory action research, public input meetings, surveys, focus groups, etc., and how does this affect the usefulness of the information base?)

◆ How do we combine scientific and indigenous knowledge or information?

◆ Who will interpret or validate the data, and how will that affect the analysis and management recommendations?

How do we share information?

Effective sharing of information on policies, laws, procedures and objectives can enhance the success of programmes and reduce conflicts. The availability of information also affects how information is presented.

◆ What happens when adequate information is not provided?

◆ Has the information been prepared with the end users (forest communities) in mind?

◆ Is it accessible and comprehensible for this audience?

BOX 1.7 **INADEQUATE INFORMATION SHARING LEADING TO CONFLICT**

Villagers destroyed a water piping system because they believed it would reduce the water flow to their community. This destruction occurred despite the fact that hydrological studies indicated that the system would pose no threat to the water supply. The planners and project staff did not effectively communicate this information to the local community.

How narrow or broad are our focus and scale?

Many programmes and projects are designed with a relatively narrow focus, both geographically and conceptually. Interventions that concentrate on a specific site or sector often ignore the wider policy, economic and legal frameworks that influence the achievement of their objectives (see Box 1.8).

◆ How does focus affect the ability to anticipate conflicts in the medium to long term?

◆ Do we have the ability to consider events, policies and economic trends more broadly or to anticipate external threats?
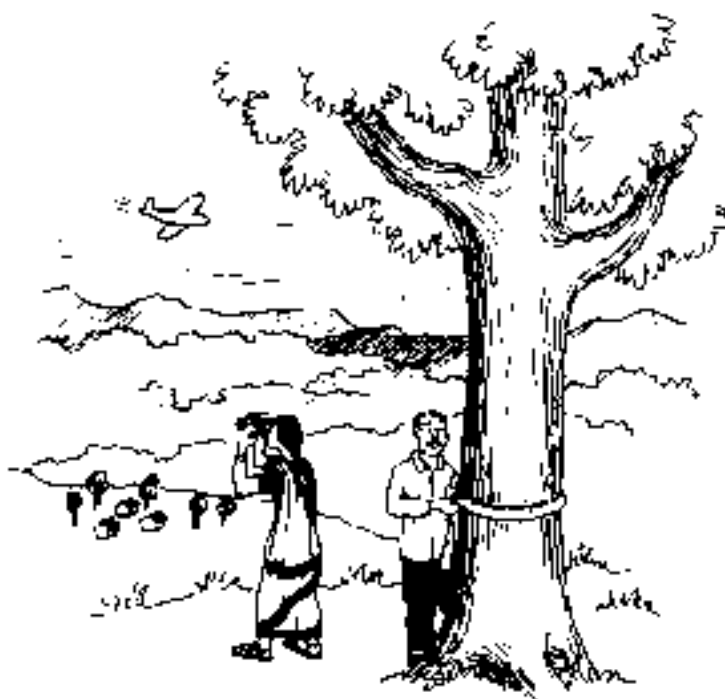
BOX 1.8 **CONFLICT BETWEEN INCOMPATIBLE LOCAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

A conservation organization assisted indigenous forest dwellers to establish and develop appropriate non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for sale in overseas markets. Considerable resources were invested over a six-year period to train local people in the procurement, testing and processing of new products and to establish markets. This activity aimed at helping to maintain the area's high biodiversity values and protecting local culture. During the six-year period, there was little communication with the government about the activity. Government officials were located in the capital, did not visit this remote rural area and had shown little previous interest in alternative small-scale enterprises.

In the final year of the project, the conservation organization and local villagers were informed that a major mining operation was being planned over half of their customary forest area. The government development authority had endorsed mining as a primary means to increase export earnings in the national development plan. It fully endorsed the operation and had been working to secure the mining operation over the previous years. When the organization was notified about the government's intent, a major conflict followed.

How well do we coordinate bodies of law, policy and legal procedures?

Most countries are characterized by legal pluralism – the operation of different bodies of formal and informal laws and legal procedures within the same socio-political space (see Box 1.9). Such institutions may be rooted in the nation State, religion, ethnic group, local custom, international agreements or other entities.

◆ To what extent do these bodies of law overlap?

◆ How complementary, competitive or contradictory are they?

◆ What conflicts emerge because there is a lack of harmony and coordination among these different legal orders?

To what extent is planning coordinated?

Despite growing recognition of the need for integrated approaches to natural resource management, many government and other agencies still rely on sectoral approaches with limited mechanisms for cross-sectoral planning and coordination.

◆ What conflicts arise when there are overlapping and competing planning objectives and activities among agencies?

◆ How can we coordinate objectives better?

BOX 1.9 **CONFLICTS FROM DIFFERING LEGAL ORDERS**

An international development agency provided support to rehabilitate and improve a traditional hand-dug well, controlled by a single local clan. The agency insisted that landowners sign legally binding documents to ensure that the improved well was for use by all community members. However, the landholding clan dissuaded others from using it by invoking customary law.

What about the existing institutional capacity?

Too often, insufficient attention and support are provided to building the institutional capacity of government, NGOs and community-based organizations that are essential to sustainable forest management (see Box 1.10). Organizations not only face financial constraints to staff and equipment, they also often lack skills in organizational planning, management and financial accountability.

◆ How is a key local organization's lack of capacity going to influence conflicts with other stakeholders?

◆ To what degree will inadequate capacity among community groups, such as local management committees, make them vulnerable to more powerful and established organizations?


BOX 1.10 **CONFLICTS ARISING FROM POOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

As a result of a new national government decentralization policy, the Ministry of Environment created a Local Watershed Management Council for a city that depended on the rural upland watershed area for its potable water supply. This council was responsible for creating, implementing and enforcing a watershed management plan for the entire area. It consisted of representatives from a diverse set of urban and rural stakeholder groups in order to ensure that a range of interests in watershed management were incorporated into the final management plan. While the Ministry provided the council with additional funding to hire land-use planning experts, most of the council members did not have experience of developing watershed management strategies. The council also did not have a skilled facilitator to handle the difficult task of balancing the diverse interests of urban and rural groups. After only a few meetings, the representatives from the rural stakeholder groups walked out of the process in anger, stating that their interests were being ignored in favour of urban concerns and the difficult-to-understand opinions of the specialists.

How adequate are our monitoring and evaluation?

Programmes and projects are often designed without clearly defined monitoring and evaluation components. Without sufficient monitoring, stakeholders may not assess progress accurately or recognize and identify changing situations (see Box 1.11).

◆ How do gathering feedback and monitoring affect the ability to anticipate and respond to conflict?

◆ How will a failure to recognize and promote achievements and important lessons about processes affect the influence of organizations, programmes and projects in the wider arena?

◆ Why is communicating achievements important for maintaining stakeholder support and building needed alliances and constituencies?

◆ What conflicts might emerge if the programme's positive management impacts are not shared?
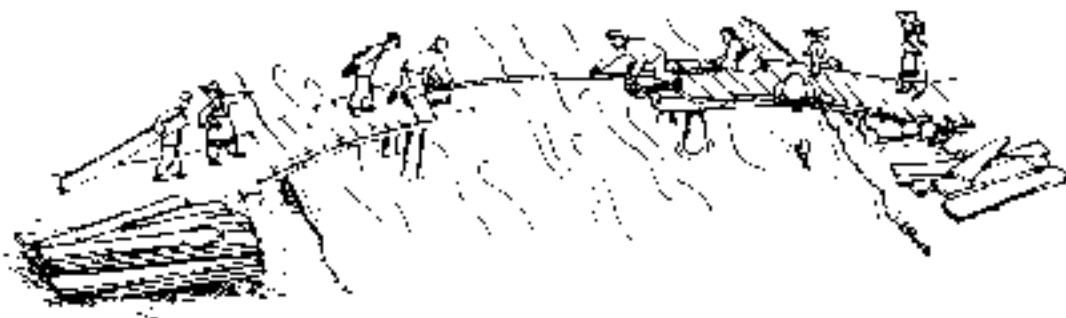
BOX 1.11 **CONFLICTS FROM INADEQUATE MONITORING**

For more than ten years, three villages were caught in sometimes violent conflict over competing claims to a patch of forest land. After several months of trying to convene the various factions, a forest conservation NGO finally convinced them to come to the table to manage the conflict. The people of the three villages were tired of the fighting and were prepared to negotiate, as long as the

final agreement addressed their needs and interests. The NGO began to facilitate the process, but did not first work with the stakeholders to define a clear set of realistic objectives and criteria by which to mark progress. The NGO also failed to highlight small but significant agreements that the three villages had made early in the process. As a result, most of the villagers quit the process after the first four meetings, frustrated that a final solution had not been found.

1.5 SECTION SUMMARY

Section 1 has introduced situations of conflict and some of the considerations in managing conflict in community-based forest management. Sections 2 to 5 will examine most of these concepts, including analysing the causes of conflict, stakeholders and geographic scale; the use of different strategies for managing conflict; and the need to manage conflict in forest management.

The concepts presented in Section 1 will be useful to trainers who are introducing conflict. The following paragraphs give a brief summary of these important considerations. To support the introduction and the discussion of the concepts, trainers are also provided with training activities (Section 9).

Community-based forest management is part of the evolving art of forest management. While there is an appreciation of the interests of multiple parties, in community-based forest management there are conscious aims to ensure that the benefits of forestry are enjoyed by local forest-dependent communities and to strengthen those communities' role in management. This trend is the result of past findings that policy and programmes to manage forests sustainably will not succeed – and often result in conflict – if local communities do not participate in their planning and implementation.

Conflict itself is neither negative nor positive. Conflicts of interest, values and perspectives among forest users are a normal part of society. The outcomes of conflict may be constructive if disputing groups can manage their differences. It is critical to understand that stakeholders in forest planning and management have different views and need effective tools to address these differences.

Conflicts are often complex. Often conflicts over forest use have multiple causes and long histories. They have various stages of development, and may be extensive in terms of geographic, social and political scale. Identifying the various contributing factors to a conflict, understanding how the situation has changed over time and being able to set boundaries are crucial first steps in managing a conflict.

Conflicts over forest use commonly affect a wide range of individuals, groups and subgroups. This fact encourages a pluralistic and collaborative approach to both a forest management intervention and the addressing of conflict. It underlines the need to develop a conflict management process that involves key stakeholders at the outset. Reviewing who these stakeholders are as the dynamics and understanding of the conflict change is equally critical.

Conflict management requires addressing differences among stakeholders. Stakeholders can be very diverse in terms of their cultural backgrounds, political and social power and influence, education, access to information, available time and incomes. The managers of conflict must identify these differences and find ways to make the interactions among groups more equitable. A conflict management process must ensure that marginalized groups can express their interests and influence planning and management. Conflict management strategies will often require parallel processes of capacity building to support full participation.

Seeking to manage conflict may be a more realistic response than seeking to achieve resolution. There are many difficulties in resolving a conflict fully, and these are affected greatly by the complexity and extent of the conflict, underlying emotions, history and other contributing factors. The focus should therefore be on using the range of conflict management strategies that are most appropriate to the situation and stakeholders involved. Establishing mechanisms within management systems for addressing differences and grievances among stakeholders is essential.

Conflict can arise from most parts of the process of community-based forest management. Section 1 provided a set of questions to help stimulate thinking about conflict in community forestry. Conflict managers should ask these essential questions as they design, implement and evaluate field projects, programmes or policy interventions in community forestry. Neglecting to consider these elements can easily lead to new or worsened conflicts. Many other questions will undoubtedly arise as the process progresses. Section 2 discusses how these issues are addressed in forest planning and management.

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