

# Preface

The conservation, use and sustainable management of watershed resources in order to meet the demands of growing populations has been a high priority for many countries over the past several decades. Particularly during the 1990s, integrated watershed management through people's participation has become widely accepted as a promising approach for conserving water, land and biodiversity, enhancing local livelihoods, improving the economy of upland inhabitants and people living in downstream areas, and ensuring sound sustainable natural resources management overall.

On the occasion of the International Year of Mountains, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and its partners undertook a large-scale assessment and global review of the current status and future trends of integrated and participatory watershed management. The overall objectives were to promote the exchange and dissemination of experiences in implementing watershed management projects in the decade from 1990 to 2000 and to identify the paradigm, approach and methods for a new generation of watershed management programmes and projects.

Experts from four continents contributed to the assessment, which yielded four regional workshops held in Nairobi (Kenya), Kathmandu (Nepal), Arequipa (Peru) and Megève (France) and an international conference in Porto Cervo (Sardinia, Italy). Workshop and conference findings are presented in detail in five volumes of proceedings, published in the FAO-FORC Watershed Management and Sustainable Mountain Development Working Papers series. Also implemented in the context of this review, and published in the same Working Paper Series, are two national case studies, for Nepal and Burundi, and two regional case studies, for the Mediterranean and Latin America.

This resource book represents a summary and critical analysis of the rich discussions and vast material that emerged during the review, as well as the review's findings and recommendations. It presents the state of the art in watershed management approaches and practical experiences, and proposes new ideas and approaches for future projects and programmes. The ideas and recommendations presented in this resource book are certainly not the final truth, but reflect the provisional outcome of work in progress. The resource book should promote further reflection and creative thinking about watershed management, and should give food for thought for the development of future watershed management projects and programmes.

The review of watershed management experiences and the resulting documents and recommendations are an important contribution to the implementation of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, the follow-up to the International Years of Mountains (2002) and Freshwater (2003), the promotion of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. For FAO, over the next few years, the results of the review and the approaches presented in this resource book will be the basis for developing, in a collaborative manner, new projects and programmes on different continents in order to test, validate and implement the new approaches to watershed management.



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