

## MAKING GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE GROW

Improving Local Governance through Equitable Sustainable Natural Resource Management



**HELVETAS**

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Improving Local Governance through Equitable Sustainable Natural Resource Management

Helvetas publication no. 8 describes the experiences made by Helvetas in participatory natural resource management based on four case studies from projects in Bhutan, Guatemala, Mali and the Dominican Republic. Helvetas' approach is to involve the local population in the sustainable management and benefit sharing of natural resources. Intrinsic aims are the improvement of "grassroots" participation, of gender equity and livelihoods of disadvantaged groups through actual practice within the process.

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Helvetas, Swiss Association for International Cooperation, works towards the elimination of the causes of marginalisation and promotes solidarity with the poor in the South and the East. Its mission is to actively contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of economically and socially disadvantaged people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Currently, Helvetas runs programmes of co-operation in 18 countries. Helvetas was founded in 1955 as the first private Swiss development organisation.

Through such publications, Helvetas contributes to the process of learning through sharing in international co-operation. For more details or comments, please contact:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Making Good Local Governance Grow” is an account of the experiences gained and lessons learned by Helvetas and local partners in the field of participatory and collaborative natural resource management. Based on four case studies from projects in Bhutan, Guatemala, Mali and the Dominican Republic, which have been in operation for four to twelve years, this publication aims at a synthesis of current knowledge. The major changes introduced by the projects are: initiation of participatory and collaborative local decision-making processes, the promotion of mutually reinforcing mechanisms and processes between local level and higher levels for decentralised and improved local governance, increased efforts towards social equity and fair conflict resolution, and diversification of income opportunities locally, based on natural resources. The experiences and lessons learned are set within a growing worldwide understanding of the linkages between developments in local governance and equitable sharing arrangements amongst stakeholders for a range of costs incurred, and benefits derived from the sustainable management of natural resources.

The publication tries to draw conclusions from all four projects which should be sufficiently valid to be successfully applied in other regions. It also highlights some of the key constraints and issues which need to be tackled.

The main conclusions are:

- Local governance can be substantially improved through local participation and collaborative arrangements between stakeholders around the management and use of non private natural resources. There is not only growing public and political interest and concern for sustainable use of natural resources due to their central importance to a range of stakeholders, but also due to the important environmental services they provide to other stakeholders. Natural resource management is therefore a good entry point for promoting and reinforcing good local governance.
- Processes aimed at equitable cost/benefit sharing from sustainable management and use of natural resources pave the way into the broader aspects of good governance, since they require interdisciplinary and integrative approaches, involving government policy and administration, the private sector and civil society. There are strong synergies between good local governance and sustainable and equitable natural resource management and use.
- Some of the key elements for improved local governance and equitable natural resource management and cost/benefit sharing are:
  - empowered local civil society organisations and rural groups;
  - the development of respect by authorities for local populations' needs, rights, traditional knowledge and capacities;
  - decentralised/devolved decision making power and resources to locally elected and administrative structures;
  - the strengthening of capacities amongst the various stakeholders to develop and assume their respective mutually compatible responsibilities;
  - functional service providers who can respond to local concerns and demands;
  - transparency and accountability between concerned stakeholders.
- In order to improve overall governance to achieve significant and lasting results, development practitioners need to concentrate on a critical mass of different but interlinked issues which are of central enough importance to local stakeholders that they are keen to participate and negotiate collaborative arrangements; context-specific choices should be made on the most appropriate combination of interlinked issues.
- Development practitioners should also undertake a careful analysis of the actual and potential capacity of different existing duty bearers and service providers to determine what support may be required to promote the most successful and institutionally sustainable collaborative arrangements with local right holders. In situations of clearly deficient capacities and lack of real interest from duty bearers and service providers for demand based and accountable collaborative arrangements with local right holders, it may be necessary to support the establishment of alternative service providers to stimulate competition for responsive demand based service provision. The justification for promoting such parallel structures should clearly specify why and how they are required, and care must be taken that they do not work against existing structures. There should also be clearly defined assessment steps which enable the adaptation of the strategy according to evolving capabilities of established institutions. Furthermore, opportunities for merging newly promoted institutions with official institutions must be, if possible, foreseeable.
- Some case studies show how collaborative processes, arrangements and agreements occurring at local level can have an influence on the overall improvement of governance frame conditions at higher level.
- One major challenge for the future in all case studies is to foresee and explore ways by which sufficient budgetary and fiscal capacity can be generated or relocated at the appropriate different levels to ensure sustained and growing support to right holders. The demand for support from local right holders will increase, requiring greater locally available and quality service provision. Further, the principle of subsidiarity in decision making power from authorities is conducive to improving local governance, yet this requires that proportionally more resources are available to local government and administrative institutions.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT - A MEANS TO PROMOTE GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE?

Over the last two decades, a participatory and collaborative approach to the management of natural resources has become a popular paradigm amongst development practitioners. Helvetas believes that the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources is an important condition for long-term rural development and for an improvement in rural livelihoods. However, equity and sustainability are more than development goals in their own right - their promotion is also a means for fostering good local governance through the development of good governance principles respectful of rural people's needs and rights - which can only take place with the involvement of civil society and state authorities as well as the private sector in the processes (see figure 1)<sup>1</sup>. In this publication, examples from Helvetas supported projects from different countries are presented and analysed in terms of how far local governance can be improved through multi-stakeholder participatory and collaborative sustainable natural resource management. Good local natural resource governance refers to local people's participation in decisions, responsibilities and management concerning the natural resources they themselves use, and in collaborative arrangements with other stakeholders. The type of partnership may vary, but decision making should abide by the principles of good governance.

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the topic of good governance and different forms of decentralisation, refer to the glossary. Also consult Helvetas (2007a) Best Practice publication No 6: "Sharing Power for Development". It documents Helvetas' contribution to good governance in the Civil Society & State working area and shows ways to influence national policy and legislative reforms.

### 1.2 THE ISSUE OF POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCE DEPLETION

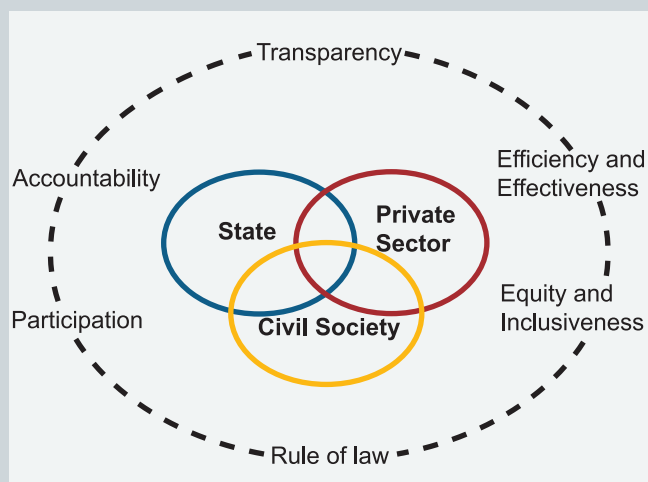
The underlying causes of the human-induced depletion of a range of natural resources<sup>2</sup> are numerous and lie at different levels, but essentially revolve around their increased demand for profit and subsistence from a growing population. Concerning forest resources, they include commercial forest exploitation and clearing for agriculture and overuse in a number of ways for products required by local populations.

It is often argued that rural people overuse, and hence degrade and destroy natural resources because they are poor and have no viable alternative, and that this progressive erosion of natural resources contributes to a worsening of their livelihood conditions. However, on the basis of their detailed understanding of the functioning of their environment, and through appropriate changes in attitude, commitment and local socio-political cohesiveness, some poor populations have sustainably managed their scarce natural resources for centuries (e.g. Diamond, 2006). Hence the potential to reverse resource depletion exists: "When it comes to natural resources, the main questions concern: to whom do these really belong, or to whom should they belong in order to halt their loss and degradation?" (Wily, 2000). The poor are often the landless and marginal farmers/livestock herders, who need to have access to natural resources in order to survive. This is why the rural poor cannot be indifferent to the question of what happens to the forests, soils and water sources on which their livelihoods depend. The related question of how to involve the poor to sustainably manage natural resources, and even

<sup>2</sup> The term "Natural Resource", as used in this publication, excludes non-renewable oil, gas and minerals. We focus on living, organic resources, and particularly forests, but soils and wildlife are included in our general understanding of natural resources. Water (in terms of quality, quantity and distribution) is only considered as a product of the environmental services provided by the natural resources we refer to.

FIGURE 1

Collaboration between the three society sectors according to the principles of good governance (Helvetas, 2007a)



#### GOOD GOVERNANCE CONCEPT

Mechanisms, relationships and institutions through which citizens and interest groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences. In this respect, good governance includes, and transcends, the State. (See Glossary for more details).

## BOX I

### Three Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concerning NRM and rural livelihoods and how these are promoted by natural resource management projects

**MDG 1:** to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger through the conservation of sufficient natural resources that can serve as a safety net in times of hardship, and by generating additional income in rural areas.

**MDG 3:** to promote gender equity and to empower women by integrating them in the management groups and in the decision-making, and by issuing land tenure certificates to women and respecting gender-relevant issues in the utilisation of natural resources.

**MDG 7:** to ensure environmental sustainability by managing natural resources according to management plans that are coherent with the aims of conserving endangered species, ecological services and their natural regeneration capacity.

how to help them overcome their poverty by having greater and more equitable access to these resources, will also have a decisive impact on the future of the environment on which they depend.

For trees and forests to be able to fulfil their role as a local people's resource for subsistence and additional income, the right of access to these needs to be established and permanently guaranteed. Concurrently, to ensure optimum production and sustainability, people's management attitudes and capacities must reflect long term responsibility towards the resource. This in turn is a function of efficiently and equitably run local institutions, supported by appropriate laws and policies, clearly defined property, access and user rights as well as management responsibilities, and by participation-oriented planning and decision making. Development cooperation has the task to support governmental and civil society institutions to promote reforms in favour of social justice, to carry out analyses of the population's needs and capacities, to develop their capacities and to support local networks working towards a sustainable use of and equitable benefit sharing from natural resources.

## 1.3 HELVETAS' APPROACH

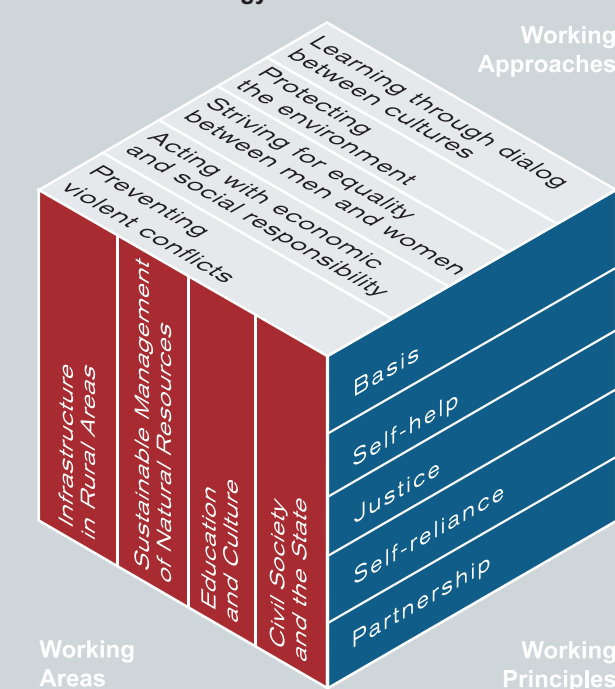
### OVERALL APPROACH AND WORKING AREAS

Helvetas projects are committed to the declaration of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>) and, especially in the natural resource management domain, to the three Goals that have an effect on sustainability and equitable rural livelihoods (see box I). The overriding goal is the improvement of livelihoods of as many rural poor and disadvantaged people as possible in a number of developing countries. Currently, Helvetas is working in 16 partner countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It supports projects that foster the sustainable management of natural resources.

Helvetas follows five Working Approaches (see figure 2): learning through dialogue between cultures, protecting the environment, striving for equality between men and women, acting with economic and social responsibility, preventing conflicts and building peace. Helvetas focuses on the poor and disadvantaged within society, helping them to help themselves, and encourages the principles of justice, self-reliance, subsidiarity and partnership. In this respect, Helvetas works according to a human rights based approach to improved governance (Helvetas 2007a, see also SDC 2004 and 2006), and it applies the "Do-no-Harm" planning and management tool particularly for projects in (potential) conflict areas.

FIGURE 2

#### The Helvetas Strategy Cube



## HELVETAS' APPROACH IN THE NRM WORKING AREA

The main themes in the Helvetas Sustainable Natural Resource Management Working Area (see figure 2) are the improvement of food security and income generation through capacity building in the agriculture and forestry sectors, the provision of extension services, as well as facilitating linkages in product value chains in a way which benefits the disadvantaged.

Helvetas has increasingly learned that there is a strong interdependence between sustainable natural resource management and local governance. Natural resources provide income and sustain rural livelihoods in different ways. They are a source of food and materials, and they provide ecosystem services such as the regulation of water flows and water quality. The attitude and behaviour of local populations (i.e. whether they exploit or sustainably manage their resources) are decisive for the functioning of ecosystems and therefore also for local livelihoods. In many cases, the local community is considered to be the most appropriate institutional level to manage the natural resources from which it derives benefits, due to geographical proximity, local knowledge and potential motivation to ensure long term benefits. However, compromises may have to be made with secondary users or other interest groups when these also depend on the same resources in one way or the other (e.g. water for downstream

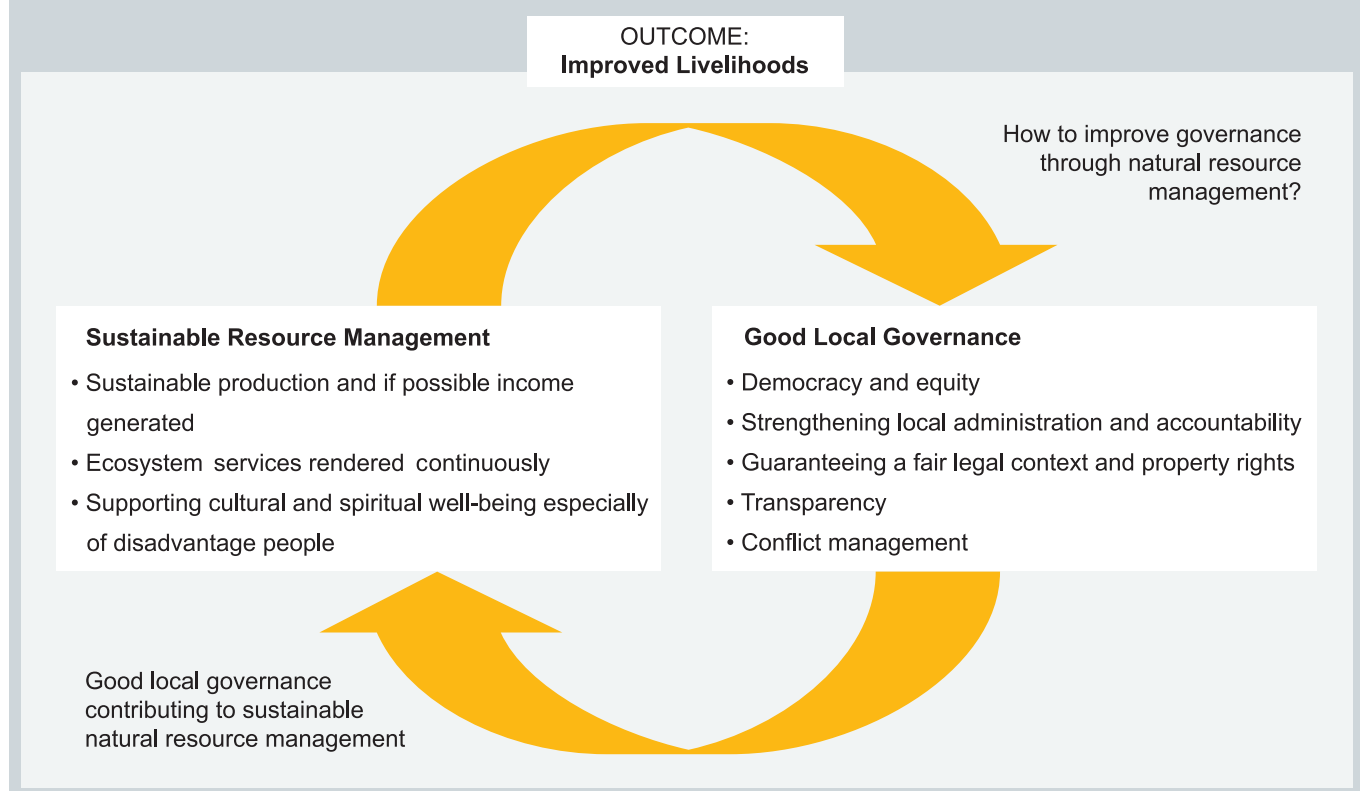
users, seasonal graziers, private industry, and different levels of government concerning their revenue generation). Therefore, the core issue in sustainable resource management with equitable responsibility and benefit sharing has to be good governance amongst the local resource-users, and between these and other beneficiaries supported by the higher executive and legislative levels. But Helvetas' point of view goes further: Helvetas believes that sustainable natural resource management is a very suitable entry point by which to generate improvements in local governance in general, since it implies various societal, economic and political interactions, as well as compromise and negotiation between a whole range of stakeholders at different levels<sup>3</sup>. The aim of this publication is to find out what the key elements are in the interplay between sustainable and equitable natural resource management and local governance, and how improvements can be best achieved (see figure 3).

It is Helvetas' approach to foster sustainable management of natural resources and to improve the capacity of community organisations as well as land tenure and use rights, in order to promote responsibility for natural resources and the application of sustainable management practices amongst local

<sup>3</sup> We state that natural resource management is a very appropriate entry point to promote improvements in local governance, but we are aware that there are other themes that are also appropriate, such as infrastructure, health and education.

FIGURE 3

**The link between good local governance and natural resource management in the frame of improving rural livelihoods**



populations. Right holders (the rural population, grassroots organisations, disadvantaged groups) are empowered to claim their rights (to land use and support delivery services), and for their management capacities to be developed. The capacity of duty bearers (government officials and elected representatives at all levels) to effectively and efficiently respond to right holders' needs is strengthened. This often requires support for changes in duty bearers' attitudes towards rights holders as well as for an effective reorientation in their roles from purely making decisions to providing support and facilitating participatory and collaborative processes at local level. In this publication, the focus will be on governance principles related to non private forestry management, to illustrate how development support to promote these principles in the management of natural resources in general can contribute to improving overall local governance.

The geographical, ecological and societal contexts are first described, followed by the approaches and strategies used, and the results achieved so far are presented. Challenges and learnings are outlined concerning how to improve participatory and collaborative natural resource management and its contribution to better local governance.

Chapter 7 discusses the experiences and lessons learned to date in the four projects. A synthesis is made of the outcomes, problems and limitations of the 4 case studies.

Chapter 8 then presents conclusions of the lessons learned in the four case studies.

## 1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLICATION

Chapter 2 provides a conceptual framework to participatory and collaborative approaches to natural resource management.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 describe concepts and approaches used by Helvetas and its partners in natural resource management in projects in four different countries from three continents: Bhutan, Guatemala, Mali and the Dominican Republic. The case studies were chosen because: i) they all aim at improving local governance through natural resource management, combining increased benefit for the local population and protection of the natural resource production capacity; ii) they clearly show the interactions between local resource users (civil society) and government authorities, and iii) the resource management groups are nuclei of evolving civil society institutions. They are also examples of conflict-sensitive collaboration.

- The Participatory Forest Management Project (PFMP) in Bhutan fosters good local governance and democracy in a traditionally feudal society. The Community Forest Management Groups initiated with support from the project are starting to play an important role as nuclei for local democratization.
- The ProBosques project in Guatemala strengthens the capacities of the municipalities to manage their natural resources in collaboration with communities and stresses the importance of local knowledge in resource management.
- In Mali, the Prévention et Gestion de Conflits (PREGES-CO) project focuses on mitigation and resolution of natural resource-based conflicts between resident farmers and migrant herders.
- The Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano (CAD) project in the Dominican Republic built up networks between civil society, municipalities and state institutions in order to sustainably manage natural resources.

## 2 WHAT KIND OF PARTICIPATION FOR EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT?

People's welfare is now justifiably at the centre of development cooperation's attention. Natural resource and biodiversity conservation and management by state administrations has largely failed because local people's necessary reliance on these resources for their livelihoods was often not effectively taken into account. Further, the responsibility and commitment which local populations may have earlier had for their sustainable management has eroded over time, as the state has taken over resource ownership and responsibility for its management. With the necessary shift to respecting the fundamental rights of people's self determination and their welfare (human rights based approach), and with the realisation that sustainable management can be best achieved by those who most depend on natural resources, the emphasis in development cooperation has evolved, promoting sustainable management of natural resources by local communities for improving their food security and income generation capacity.

As a consequence, appropriate strategies for effective participatory sustainable resource management have become an issue of prime importance and have led to important insights into the theme of governance. A number of recent reviews of experiences in promoting local people's interest in and commitment to sustainable natural management show that to be successful, while there are a number of constraints, the strategies necessitate that local people are actively involved in the planning, responsibility and decision-making for the management of the resources; further, their long term access and use rights must be guaranteed and benefits shared equitably amongst them and with other stakeholders (e.g. Capistrano and Colfer, 2005; Intercooperation 2007a and 2007b; ICI-MOD, 2007; Larson, 2005; Larson and Ribot, 2004; Mayers and Vermeulen, 2002; Ribot, 2005; Swiss Forestry Journal 2006).

But the aim of such strategies can go beyond sustainable and equitable use of natural resources: "The transfer of rights over resources is important for turning participation into citizenship. Forestry's inclusive focus, linking global to the national and local; the high levels of income and other benefits it can generate; its potential local fiscal base; the centrality of issues of tenure and collective rights; and its importance in rural livelihoods, all reinforce the linkages between Good Governance, public accountability and poverty alleviation." (Brown et al., 2002). The delegation of management and use rights to the local population addresses various aspects of good governance, such as bottom-up decision-making, decentralisation (see glossary) and accountability, respect towards minorities and the disadvantaged, ownership or guaranteed access to land, equitable benefit sharing and poverty relief. This delegation "goes hand in hand with the transfer of rights, responsibilities and financial means for natural resource management

to governments, people, communities and user groups at the local level and is legitimized and strengthened by government recognition" (Intercooperation, 2007b). That said, it has to be stressed that the promotion of participatory natural resource management as referred to in this publication is a strategy for developing overall participation and "decentralisation" (decentralisation is a catch-all term for processes of state reform and refers to different kinds of transfer of political and/or fiscal and/or administrative decision making powers and responsibilities from central government to regional and/or local levels - Helvetas, 2007a - and see glossary).

Sustainable natural resource management is not the same as environmental conservation in its traditional sense. It is the sustainable use of means of human subsistence, and biodiversity conservation is a desirable consequence. Thus, appropriately managed forests and cultivated areas can be valuable buffer zones around conservation areas and, at the same time, sustain the human population. These areas can also serve as biological corridors between areas which are more strictly protected, allowing genetic exchange amongst animal and plant populations. Nevertheless, conflicts often arise between local people's needs and biological conservation needs.

### LOCAL PARTICIPATION - RHETORIC, THEORY AND REALITY

"Local participation is a meaningless term on its own. Does it mean that civil society is consulted from time to time, or that citizens are empowered to make those decisions themselves?" (Wily, 2000). The reality concerning the kind of participation of local populations existing in most Helvetas supported projects lies currently somewhere between the two: local people may participate intensely in the elaboration of management plans, and their interests influence the outcome of the management plan. Final decisions, and particularly approvals, are made by either government administrative authorities or by locally elected government; in the latter case greater accountability can ideally be expected.

Participation is considered to be an essential principle of good local governance. However, for the local population to be interested to effectively participate in the long term, a number of other mutually dependent and reinforcing principles of good governance are also important, such as accountability, the rule of law, transparency, equity and inclusiveness as well as efficiency and effectiveness. Effective participation can only develop in a society which acknowledges basic values such as equal rights and opportunities for all human beings and adheres to democratic principles in political decision-making. Further, a society which is based on negotiation and "checks and balances" between different stakeholders is more likely to develop laws that are fair and to apply these laws in case of violation.

Helvetas supported projects are committed to the concept of conflict sensitivity and apply the planning and management tool of “Do-no-Harm”, meaning that, in situations of conflict with a serious escalation potential, they have to take account of conflict causes and parties involved and ensure that project interventions and impacts do not contribute to aggravating conflicts. This principle applies to all Helvetas working approaches. Although none of the described Helvetas natural resource management projects are located in a currently open conflict area, at least two of the four case studies (Mali and Guatemala) have considerable potential for violent conflict, and the Do-no-Harm tool (see glossary) has therefore an important role for preventing further conflict in the context of promoting participation.

### 3 CASE STUDY BHUTAN – THE PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT PROJECT

**Forestry as a means of contributing to democratisation processes and livelihood improvements**

#### 3.1 CONTEXT

Bhutan is a sparsely populated Himalayan country, extending from the low subtropical broad-leaf forests near the Indian border at 100 masl to the 7500 masl peaks of the eastern Himalayas. Buddhism is the main religion, with Hindu minorities of Nepalese origin in the South.

#### LIVELIHOODS AND FORESTS

Forests cover about 73% (i.e. approximately 28'000 km<sup>2</sup>) of the total land area, an unusually high proportion for a mountainous developing country. About 70% of the total population of 672'000 are in rural areas (2005 census) and live mostly on subsistence. A third of the population, and mainly in the rural areas, lives below the national poverty level (USD 1/ capita/day) (Helvetas, 2007b). Development efforts are challenged by scattered populations, difficult terrain and a fragile ecosystem. Less than 8% of the total land area is arable and forests are an essential component of subsistence livelihoods providing timber and firewood as well as food, grazing and fodder for livestock and nutrients for agricultural soils. Non-wood forest resources are also very rich in Bhutan, providing

FIGURE 4

#### Map of Bhutan with protected areas (yellow)

Biological corridors connect all protected areas. The project communities are spread over the whole country.



medicines, dyes, oil seeds, nuts, incense, vegetables, fruit, bamboo, spices and mushrooms; some of these, e.g. bamboo and a few high cash value products, are harvested for cash income and exported. While the ratio of overall forest area to population is highly favourable (4.2 ha/capita), the area available for use by the rural communities is substantially smaller due to lack of physical or institutional access.

## BIODIVERSITY

Bhutan is one of about 200 global hotspots of biodiversity, counting 165 species of mammals (amongst them: Bengal tiger, Snow leopard, Asian elephant, Indian rhino, Himalayan black bear and Takin), 770 species of birds, an estimated 300-600 medicinal plants species of traditional and economic value, as well as 400 orchid species. The natural richness of the country is well protected, with 35.5 % of total forest area under protection (in National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries and their connecting biological corridors - Royal Government of Bhutan - RGoB, 2008a). Bhutan's unique and well protected biodiversity, combined with its rich cultural heritage, earns foreign currency from carefully targeted upper market tourism.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALISATION

The Kingdom of Bhutan is currently going through a process of re-organising its governmental and political structures. The monarchy has decided to devolve power to an elected parliament and to devolve the administrative and political power structures. In March 2008, the country conducted its first national parliamentary elections and became a constitutional monarchy. The vision for the future contained in "Bhutan 2020" emphasises that, under its objective on governance, "development must take account of the devolution of new powers and responsibilities to the Dzongkhag (District) and Geog (Sub district) levels" (RGoB, 2008a).

## DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FOREST SECTOR

Prior to the nationalisation of forests under the Forest Act of 1969, traditional forest management practices existed over forests which were often owned by feudal elites as well as used according to traditional rights by communities. The customary mechanisms of forest management included village

.....  
**Forests around villages can be developed into Community Forests**  
 .....



## BOX II

### Key information Bhutan (October 2008)

**Area of Community Managed Forests:** 126 km<sup>2</sup>. Expectation: 440 km<sup>2</sup> by 2013; long term, 2'380 Km<sup>2</sup>.

**Number of communities (villages) involved:** 100; Households: 5'139. Expectation: over 400 communities and 15'000 households by 2012).

**Administrative structure:** sub-district development councils are the lowest administrative unit. They are elected by the local population. Elected district authorities have the final say about resource management. The district's centrally appointed administrator decides concerning the application for community managed forest, and its management plan is approved at Forest Department central level. The CF extension staff is responsible to the district administrator.

**People profiting from the project:** approx 25'500 so far.

**Project phases:** 1st phase 2002-2007, 2nd phase 2007-2012.

**Main partners:** Helvetas, Social Forestry Division, Department of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture.

**Main donors:** SDC, Royal Government of Bhutan.

**Costs 2006:** CHF 800,000, total Swiss assistance 2007-2012: 3.23 Mio.

forest guards, village forest watchers and seasonal closure of access to forests (Tshering, 2008). The forest was nationalised in the belief that State protection and management would enable a rational and sustainable use of the resource for the national good. Pressure on forest was particularly mounting in the low altitude South with the influx of new settlements for increasing agricultural production. The combination of nationalization without a sufficiently developed forest service to provide for national and local needs in forest products led to forest degradation around the villages, since the abolishment of the traditional ownership and use rights of local communities and feudal elites resulted in a reduced feeling of responsibility for sustainable management in these "open access" forests. Over the years, rural communities have had to go increasingly farther from their settlements to gather timber and other forest products, thereby also substantially increasing transportation costs. Yet much of the forests are still largely intact. As a consequence, Bhutan embarked on a long process of change in terms of how to promote sustainable forest and natural resource management, for whose benefit, and in terms of role and responsibility distribution between State and civil society stakeholders. The strategy was initiated by His Majesty the King in 1979 with a decree stating that the country should retain a forest cover of at least 60% and demanding that their sustainable management and use rights be devolved to local communities. But the strategy was translated into the more traditional "social forestry" approach, used by many countries at the time, whereby communities were encouraged to plant trees on payment. The approach started changing following the 1995 Forest and Nature Conservation Act which, under the chapter on "Community Forestry", finally recognised the traditional and cultural rights of local people to access and

use forest resources according to management and use rights set out in an approved management plan. The first community forestry initiatives were started on a pilot basis in 1997, and the formal hand over to local community forestry groups started gradually in 2002 (RGoB, 2008b).

About 10% of the forests are part of State Forest Management Units which fulfil the domestic commercial timber demand, and small volumes are exported. Areas for logging are clearly stipulated and volumes for annual harvesting strictly defined. The remaining approximately 50 % of the forest area (excluding the area under protection) are Government Reserved Forests without official management plans. They are used for the so-called "rural timber supply" which provides the rural population with timber for house construction, firewood and a wide range of non-wood forest products. The population has however to apply through a lengthy process for this supply which is provided at subsidised rates. Under this supply scheme, their commitment to sustainable and wise harvesting is not optimal given that they are not involved in any decision making concerning the forests' short or long term management. The subsidy leads also some timber to find its way on the commercial market. It is from this Government Reserved Forest category that Community Forest Management has been and will be further developed, with management and use rights over up to 2.5 ha of forest (if available around the community) per rural household for timber and fuelwood, and over a greater area where the focus is on non wood forest products. It is expected that community forests could entirely cover rural communities' forest product demand in the future as well as provide for income generation through the sale of forest products.

The overall development prospects are promising since some important conditions for sustainable development are already met with the high level of the government and population's awareness of environmental and development issues and the high commitment of the political culture and strong tradition of community contribution to infrastructural development (Linder and Cavin, 2003). At the national level, the watershed protection function of forests is highly important to the livelihoods for water supply and irrigation, and not least due to Bhutan's export of hydroelectricity to India, currently contributing 24% of its GDP and expected to become the country's single biggest contributor to the economy (RGoB, 2008a).

### HELVETAS' LONG DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT EXPERIENCE IN BHUTAN

Helvetas has 32 years of experience of development cooperation in Bhutan in a number of sectors. It has been supporting, under mandates from SDC and with its own resources, a number of projects in the rural, natural resources and agricultural sectors (improved management of State Forest Management Units, agriculture and forest research, agricultural and natural resources training for extension workers, development of the Natural Resources Extension Programme, support for rural self-help initiatives and strengthening of farmer associations and agricultural cooperatives, training in farm business and rural development support services, suspension bridge building); in education (establishment of teacher training colleges and improvement of teacher education); training to the National Finance Service staff and more recently improvements of the financial management of decentralised government units (Helvetas 2007c).

It is in this context that the Helvetas managed Participatory Forest Management Project (PFMP) was initiated, the overall goal of Swiss assistance in the Bhutan forest sector since mid 2002 being "to contribute to the improvement of rural livelihoods and of the natural environment by empowering local communities and strengthening their capacity to manage forest resources on a sustainable basis". Support has therefore been reoriented in the Forest Sector to strengthen the efforts of the RGoB towards devolved participatory forest management.

### 3.2 THE AIM - COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST REMOTE FORESTS

One of the main goals of RGoB's forest policy is the establishment of a system of devolved and adequately managed Community Forests that meet local demands for timber and forest produce and that generate additional income, protect watersheds and provide ecological services – all goals being based on the principle of sustainability.

It took ten years of intensive work and collaboration by Helvetas, other donor/implementation agencies and the Forest Sector to demonstrate that community forestry (CF) can really work, and to alleviate fears of a reticent Forest Service that it would lead to further forest degradation, before the policy could be translated into law (Government Forest Rules 2003 enshrining the 1995 Act) that gives local communities the legal right to access and manage local forest resources. However, unfortunately, instead of giving a stable framework, the rules went through a period of permanent revision, because of the continued perceived threat of the giving-away of responsibilities to communities. Initially, it was still perceived that the building of know-how at community level should concentrate on encouraging community based restoration of degraded forest to serve conservation and protection needs of the national forest resource (Aeberhart Consulting, 2005). Within this period, a few Community Forestry Management Groups (CFMGs) were nevertheless established with the support of Helvetas and other donor supported projects, but the management plans were valid for only 5 years and had to be approved at central level. The revised Forest and Nature Conservation Rules of 2006 however, paved the way for communities to also assume the right to access and manage productive forest.

It was foreseen that PFMP could play an important role in the further development of national and local democratisation processes, since it aims to foster democracy and other important elements of good local governance in the development of community based management of a resource which has the potential for substantial sustainable income generation.

The project was planned in 2 phases. During phase 1 (2002-2007), key forest areas for support were identified, guidelines for sustainable forest management produced in close cooperation with other forestry projects, and capacities built up for resource management at all levels (from the local civil society up to the regional administrative level). Phase 1 covered initially 7 districts, and then extended to 16 districts. By the end of this phase (and including the period from 1995 to 2002) a total of 46 CF Management Plans (CFMPs) had been approved and responsibility for management handed over to the communities (approximately half under PFMP support and half under other projects' support).

Phase 2 (starting in 2007), covering the whole country, aims to strengthen the recently established Social Forestry Division (SFD) directly under the Director General of Department of Forests. Its role is to have a capable forest extension service, which can facilitate participatory bottom-up processes, with staff that are politically accountable to the local population through the elected sub-district development councils, are administratively accountable to appointed district administrators and technically accountable to SFD. SFD's function is to foster local communities' involvement in decision-making concerning resource management and use; it has a crucial role and influence on the development of a democratic civil society through the high potential of CF in a society which is only just getting used to democracy and self-determination. Helvetas supports the SFD in elaborating management guidelines and training material and in the training of forest extension staff. In the field, district and sub-district forest extension agents work together with the CFMGs.

While community forests are situated on government-owned forest land, the exclusive management and utilisation rights are handed over to the local community, usually for a period of 10 years, with the possibility to extend the duration. The objective is to promote sustainable forest management by handing over to the community the responsibility over "their" forest resources. Economic aspects of local development (income generation, saving schemes and marketing) are stressed, and lessons learned documented.

Expected results are: all 20 districts have fully functional and well-staffed forestry services and management groups, and issues of equity (including gender) are taken into account. It is planned to focus on increasing the economic benefits which CFMGs obtain from the forests they manage. A total of over 400 CFs are expected to be established by the end of Phase 2 (in 2012), covering about 15'000 households and 440 km<sup>2</sup>. In the long term about 20% of the Government Reserved Forest (about 2'400 km<sup>2</sup>) has the potential to become community forests under the existing guidelines of 2.5 ha of community forest per household.

### 3.3 RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2006 programme review (Oberholzer and Dorji, 2006) concluded that very positive results had been achieved. The following benefits resulting from community forestry were emphasised by the local people:

- Strengthening of CFMGs as legal entities with by-laws and the possibility to open bank-accounts;
- CF is not only a beneficial strategy/policy for forestry, but also a forum to discuss how to improve rural income, local political processes and social events;
- Communities patrol against illegal activities.

A detailed Community Forestry Manual has been developed, tested in the field, and finally adopted by the Department of Forests in 2004. It provides advice and tools for the main steps in establishing community forests: initiation of CF, application process, group formation, group functioning (equitable decision making, rights and duties, account keeping), management planning, review and approval, implementation and monitoring. Overall, capacity building and technical back-stopping have been of much help in strengthening the local administration authorities to promote CF development.

### FORESTS HANDED OVER TO COMMUNITIES

By October 2008, forest management responsibility and use rights had officially been devolved with approved plans to 100 communities covering an area of 126.9 km<sup>2</sup> of forests and involving 5'139 rural households in 20 districts, and many more are under preparation. While only 46 CFMPs had been approved between 1995 and mid 2007, a further 54 have since then been established, showing not only that the demand for hand over is growing, but also that the positive response and capacity of the stakeholders in decision making positions are also growing. The communities prefer to obtain forest products from their officially handed over community forests since they do not have to pay tax and the process is much easier under an approved CFMP than under the "rural timber supply" system from non handed over Government Reserved Forests. While previously the emphasis was on handing over only degraded forests, a number of productive forests are now being handed over under CF, further encouraging communities to apply for forest hand over. The results of years of preparatory work are finally leading to very encouraging results.

### EXAMPLES OF IMPROVED LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The formation of CFMGs has increased the capacity of the communities to participate in the decentralisation and devolution process since the concerned communities now have a way to voice their concerns in local decision-making processes in forestry matters as well as in matters which impact on or are impacted by their forests. For example, in Mongar District, the community forest contributes to the water supply of the main town, and negotiation by the CFMG convinced the town's authorities to pay for the protection of its water source. Although an agreement was reached to that effect, it could not so far be implemented because the process of political and administrative decentralisation and devolution has not yet been implemented across sectors. At least, this example shows that it could be possible in time to capitalise on ecological services rendered through sustainably managed community forests, since an agreement has already been reached in principle. Another example: in Dramatse, the village CFMG established in 1996 stopped the construction of a local road in 2007, claiming that it was damaging their community forest; they will allow construction to resume only when the District administrator guarantees minimum damage to the group's trees (Bhutan Observer, 2007).

Overall aspects of equity are increasingly being taken into account, but in terms of gender equity the 2006 programme review (Oberholzer and Dorji, 2006) outlined that there were still substantial shortcomings since rural women are largely illiterate. While women are included in group discussions concerning the management of community forests, a case study of 3 CFMGs found that on average 20% of CF executive committee members were women (Namgay and Sonam, 2006). On the basis of a review 30 Community Forestry Management Plans (CFMPs) and the detailed case study, the authors concluded that while there is a gender imbalance in both CF membership and CF executive committees, and in one CFMG that the elite are benefiting more from the handed over forest, the general perception of both men and women is that the current institutional structures and processes are fair and that those involved are making decisions for the benefit of all in the community. While equal representation on executive committees would be important, there are practical constraints to its achievement.

In some cases the poorest sections of the communities have access to a bigger share of forest product distribution or forest work income (Themphel and Lhendup, 2007). While several

community forests established earlier have to recover before being able to generate additional income, some of the recently established community forests which include productive forests are already on the point of providing substantial additional benefits. By September 2007, over US\$ 12'000 has been accumulated in saving accounts of 24 CFMGs. In late 2007, two CFMGs were expected to sell US\$ 5'300 and close to 4'000 respectively of timber excess to their own community needs. Forest-based enterprise development training has shown that a number of user CFMGs have the capacity to sustainably harvest non-wood forest products with over US\$ 50 per household earnings from harvesting the product, and a further US\$ 20 to 40 net profit per household from the CFMG forest based enterprise (Temphel and Beukeboom, 2007).

The CFMGs directly contribute to the development of democracy by practically adhering to democratic principles within their own groups (e.g. by election of their leaders, by conflict resolution, and by creating and ensuring transparency), and to strengthen civil society (by addressing issues of minorities, gender and poverty). The CFMGs of the PFMP were the first official/formal democratic institutions in Bhutan – a country which previously has only been used to autocracy.

### Community members and their timber harvest



Many CFMGs have already started taking further initiatives and extended their activities beyond forestry to local vegetable production, to analysing markets and marketing of non-timber forest produce; they have also begun lobbying at the district government level for other developments such as easier access to their villages through construction of roads and suspension bridges – a truly democratic process! The groups also organise exchange visits in order to learn from each other, thus strategies and ideas spread between communities.

On the administrative level of the programme, forest extension service staff (paid through the Social Forestry Division) has been trained to increase their capacity to further develop and speed-up the community forestry programme. Courses for forestry staff on community forestry management planning, practical silviculture, equitable group formation processes, conflict management and facilitation, and on the application of geographical information and global positioning systems relevant to community level processes are being held. Exchange visits and workshops including both forestry staff as well as members of the management groups increase the overall knowledge and give the latter a chance to raise issues and contribute to possible solutions.

Conflicts arising from the use of natural resources are mediated by forest extension staff, and compromises are discussed in order to reach consensus between all stakeholders; when necessary, facilitating support is provided by sub-district development councils. There has been concern that it may be difficult to achieve community consensus with equitable rights and responsibilities particularly in areas of southern Bhutan where multi-ethnic communities exist and now include poor families from northern ethnic groups which have been resettled. However, a recent case study of 3 such community forestry groups has shown that appropriate group identification and formation processes, followed by efforts by the community to work towards a common goal of sustainable management and utilisation of forest resources, equitable social capital has generally developed well (cohesiveness of people in their society including relationships built on trust, reciprocity and exchanges between individuals enhancing cooperation); on the basis of these case studies, the different ethnic groups are fairly evenly represented on CFMG committees (Temphel and Lhendup, 2007). The case study however also highlighted that once a CFMG has been formed and has applied for forest hand over, if there are delays in the official approval of their management plan, the group can lose cohesiveness, committee members being blamed for inactivity.

### 3.4 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The trainings for SFD will have to be continued to ensure that the whole forest extension service is trained and have the appropriate skills and attitude, and new training courses will have to be designed on key topics and on second generation issues as they arise (e.g. enterprise development, prod-

uct development and market analysis, formation of regional CFMG associations). In the current context, the forest extension service is still the main promoter of the process which should ideally become a self promoted snow balling of CFMG development. It is however expected that with the first CFMGs earning income from timber and non wood forest product sales, the demand by other communities for forest hand over is expected to snowball substantially overcoming their previous interest in Government subsidy for timber supply from Government Reserved Forests. The next few years will show if indeed the situation will reverse with communities demanding an increasing rate of forest hand over.

As the human capacity (education, training) of the participating communities is still limited, and the demand for support for the growing number of new CFMGs will increase, there is an immense need for staff capacity building to ensure rapid new CFMG formation and CFMP approval, as well as back-stopping and support to CFMGs concerning expected second generation issues. The current shortage of extension staff already sometimes leads to slow responses to problems in field implementation. Where CFMG formation processes are not rapidly followed up with the official hand over certificate from the Department of Forest, momentum and trust by community members can rapidly be lost. Delays in management plan approvals may occur with increasing CFMG formation, since it is at central level that CFMPs are currently approved. A solution will have to be found to this crucial bottleneck, for instance by devolving approval to district level. The project will therefore need to attract more training course participants, and the Government budget be aligned to increase the number of forest extension staff.

Most of the existing community forests are not yet utilized to their full potential, and the income generated by forestry could potentially be higher. The previous prevalence of a strongly conservation-focused mentality in the Department of Forests is however evolving fast as trust is developing in communities' capacity to responsibly manage their handed over forests. Further, many of the initial community forests were in a degraded condition and are now in a recovery phase. The community forests established later are in better ecological condition, and since a few CFMGs are starting to sell excess timber, it is expected that the conservative attitude prevailing also amongst many CFMGs communities will quickly be overcome. However, in some areas (e.g. due to lower productivity on harsher sites and/or at higher altitude), the current upper ceiling of 2.5 ha allocation per household is believed to be inadequate to fulfil household requirements and to create income opportunities through the sale of timber; some forestry staff are already suggesting that the recommended ceiling should be raised to 5 ha per household (Wangchuk, 2008).

The project has shown that it could be possible to market ecological services. This is an important finding for the further development of natural resource management-based programmes. To sustainably use forests entails abstaining from obtaining the full potential short term profits from forest ex-

exploitation. Payments rendered for ecological services would add value to sustainably used resources and compensate the communities for not going for purely short term economic profit.

The PFMP is exemplary also when it comes to providing immediate benefit. The possibility for community groups to open bank accounts and to save money is a strong argument in favour of the project's approach.

The recent introduction of fundamental democratic and decentralisation/devolution processes in Bhutan should also in time help to smooth out difficulties which CFMGs have found in previous years over the sometimes conflicting officially recognised rights within the Forest sector and non existent rights in other forest related resources: water, sale of timber, export of forest products. The process has shown that patience and perseverance over a long time has been necessary to translate the rhetoric of the 1979 Royal Decree into CF management and utilisation effectively really getting going only by about 2005.

Finally, a potentially important problem may arise in southern Bhutan since a considerable number of the Nepali ethnic minority has taken temporary refuge in Nepal. The Forest and Nature Conservation Rules (2006) stipulate that "all individuals and households with traditional claim to forest produce from the community Forest area shall be provided full opportunity to join the CFMG". As seen above, poor northern ethnic group households have been resettled in these areas and are now integrated in local mixed ethnic group CFMGs. The question remains concerning the traditional rights over forests of Nepali ethnic group households who may wish to return to their original home in Southern Bhutan.

## 4 CASE STUDY GUATEMALA - THE PROBOSQUES PROJECT

### Capacity building of Municipal Staff and other Local Stakeholders for Natural Resource Management

#### 4.1 CONTEXT

The project ProBosques is situated in the mountainous Western Highlands of Guatemala, one of the poorest areas of Latin America, at altitudes ranging from 1500-3900masl. It supports activities in 10 municipalities of the Department of Quetzaltenango and 3 municipalities in the Department of San Marcos<sup>4</sup>. Western Guatemala is the most densely populated region of Central America, and there is strong population pressure on natural resources. In deforested areas, the dusty volcanic soils of the steep slopes are prone to severe erosion and landslides, while the remaining forests are important for biodiversity and water resource and slope conservation as well as for the provision of fire wood and timber.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Quetzaltenango: Municipalities of Quetzaltenango, San Martin, Zunil, Cantel, San Juan Ostuncalco, Concepción Chiquirichapa, San Carlos Sija, San Mateo, Palestina de los Altos and Olintepec; Department of San Marcos: Municipalities of San Pedro Sacatepéquez, San Marcos and Sibinal.

FIGURE 5

Map of Guatemala with project area (yellow circle)



### Community members being trained in preventing forest fires



### SOCIO-ECONOMIC-POLITICAL CONTEXT AND FORESTS IN THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS

About 50% of the population works in the agricultural sector, and 60% lives below poverty level. People depend on the cultivation of annual and perennial crops (e.g. coffee), and since more than 95% of farms are below subsistence size, they depend also on forests for fuel wood, fodder and edible forest products; the forests also provide additional small scale income from timber and non-wood forest products. The share of total forest area under public ownership is between 10-66% (under community, municipality or State ownership), although exact and reliable figures are unavailable since no cadastral survey exists for the area, and land ownership is not always clear. 60% of the population (urban and rural) are indigenous Maya (ethnic Quiché, Mam, Cakchiquel, Queqchi and others), whose mother tongue is not Spanish but one of the Maya languages.

Ever since colonial times, successive agrarian policies have led to confrontation between indigenous populations and government, as their land rights were eroded and transferred to

municipalities which in turn passed user rights or titles to large coffee producers. Indigenous populations' poverty rates exceed 93%, and today 70% of the land is concentrated in 8% of rural properties (Elias and Wittman, 2005). During the 36 years of civil war, the indigenous populations were considered by the military regime as supporters of the communist guerrilla, and hence suffered severe discrimination and persecution; the Guatemalan State used its army to create a group of well-known allies at local level such as the Patrulleros de Autodefensa Civil (civil self-defence patrols). The aftermath of this crisis is that indigenous and rural Guatemalans are still marginalised in every respect, from the point of view of income, education and land ownership. Most of the indigenous people therefore live below subsistence levels and transfer traditional resource management knowledge from one generation to the next. Women are traditionally excluded from decision making processes and little space is given to their participation in political processes.

### FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY

The area mainly contains coniferous forests of the Central American hotspot of biodiversity. Typical wildlife species of the Guatemalan tropical highland rain forests are the Quetzal (national bird symbol) and the Puma. Nearly 70% of Guatemala's vascular plants are endemic ([www.wri.org](http://www.wri.org)), the most famous example being the Pinabete or Guatemalan fir (*Abies guatemalensis*) which occurs in the municipalities covered by the project. However, large areas of the original forest area have disappeared, and the relict areas consist of younger trees or primary forests with mature trees having almost all been logged.

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALISATION

The decentralisation process in post-war Guatemala emerged from the peace accords in 1996. The framework for decentralisation was strongly motivated by donors' conditionality to fund the legislative reform process (Helvetas, 2007a). New laws were introduced in 2002 providing an institutional framework for direct civil participation in local governance: the Municipal Development Councils (COMUDE) and Community Development Councils (COCODE), both being politically consultative entities. The COCODE is composed of locally elected community representatives, who initiate, facilitate, coordinate and implement community development plans which are presented to the COMUDE for fund allocation. The COMUDE is the intermediate level of government headed by a popularly elected local mayor, and comprises representatives of public organisations and invited civil organisations (including representatives of indigenous communities and women's organisations), as well as members of the municipal elected councils and two representatives of each COCODE. Women are however severely underrepresented and there is no established quota for them. The COMUDE is responsible for municipal development planning and budgeting, and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of municipal de-

velopment plans. Government levels above the COMUDE are the Departmental Council of Development (CODEDE) and at regional level the Regional Council of Urban and Rural Development (CODEUR). The latter obtains funds from the central government and allocates them (only approximately 10 % of the total national budget) to municipalities in a negotiation process on the basis of municipal plans. Since more recently, municipalities also obtain a percentage of the value added tax for peace (IVA-Paz), which generally amounts to more than the budget obtained from central government. Lastly they receive 50% of the 10% tax levied by the Instituto Nacional de Bosques (INAB) on the value of cut timber - which so far is a very small proportion of municipal income. These revenues are however meagre in relation to the needs of municipalities which remain highly dependent on central government fund transfers resulting still in their limited overall power (Ferroukhi and Echeverria, 2003).

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FOREST SECTOR: PROGRESS AT COMMUNITY AND MUNICIPALITY LEVEL

The 1996 peace accords commit the State to the recognition of traditional and communal land rights for indigenous communities under the ILO convention 169. However, legal battles over land rights continue to the present day. There is generally a strong link between poverty and environmental degradation in Guatemala. While a number of publications have claimed that traditional local communities have been committed to wise use of what they still perceive as their com-

munal forests (e.g. Elias and Whittman, 2005), recent studies in the project area show that while some communities have preserved their communal forests very well, others have deforested them almost totally (Leissing, 2008). The community specific interest in and commitment to wise use of their natural resources depends on a range of different factors, such as the existence of key community members interested in conservation, unity and consensus between community members, and the existence of alternatives for generating income. Women are particularly concerned about forest degradation because of their dependence on fire wood for cooking, but are little involved in decision making processes.

Traditionally, village internal customs included local "forest guards" (local people appointed by their communities) and village leaders (honorary rotating positions) to police forest areas against infractions, oversee communal plantings, regulate harvests and maintain common lands for multiple community use. Hence a key challenge has been to merge these local traditions with the emerging national policy of decentralising administration and management to COMUDEs and COCODEs. Forest management and administration have been differentiated between community and municipal entities depending upon local history, customary rights and circumstances (Elias and Whittman, 2005). In 1997, the Law on Protected Areas was introduced emphasising also the requirement for decentralised and participatory decision making processes for the management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation; however, the need to also include specifically women in participation was not mentioned.

#### BOX III

##### Key information Guatemala (October 2008)

**Area of sustainably used resources:** achievement in the project area: 15'000 ha

**Number of municipalities:** 13

**Administrative structure:** The smallest administrative units are the communities with elected decision-makers. Decisions concerning resource management are made at the level of the municipality, whose mayor is popularly elected

**People profiting directly from project:** estimated 106'000

**Project phases:** (see footnote 6 for details)

Phase 1: 1997–1999; phase 2: 2000–2002; phase 3: 2003–2004; phase 4: 2004–2009; phase 5: 2005–2008, with extension planned to 2010.

**Main partners:** Helvetas, municipalities with regional and local councils (COMUDE/COCODE), Instituto Nacional de Bosques (INAB), Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CONAP), Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería Alimentación (MAGA).

**Main donors (over time):** SDC, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Guatemala Government and Helvetas.

**Costs 2006 (CHF):** Helvetas Fr. 304'000; Guatemalan Gvt. (incl. grants from other donors) Fr. 37,000; Municipalities Fr. 227,000; GEF Fr. 222,000

## Presentation and discussion of proposal for a forest management plan and the zonification of forest



### 4.2 THE AIM - MANAGING WHAT IS LEFT OF GUATEMALA'S HIGHLAND FORESTS

Helvetas has project management experience in Guatemala since 1972, with emphasis changing over time in line with evolving general development approaches and the specific conflict situation of Guatemala. It has gained solid experience in various fields of agriculture and agroforestry development on private lands, on the strengthening of social organisations, promotion of community based rural drinking water schemes, health education, followed by emphasis on conflict resolution and providing grass roots bases for peace building during the civil war. With the 1996 peace accords providing traditional and communal land rights to indigenous communities which was further reinforced by the ILO Convention 169, and with the growing interest in sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation of the unique habitats of Guatemala's Western Highlands, Helvetas seized the opportunity to launch the ProBosques project (ProBosques del Altiplano Occidental de Guatemala).

The project started in 1997 with support of SDC and Helvetas (SDC being the main donor). The project today is implemented by Helvetas and is mainly funded by Global Environmental Facility (GEF), relying also on institutional support from the Instituto Nacional de Bosques (INAB) and the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CONAP) (both funded by the central government). The project aims are: 1) to strengthen the capacity of municipalities for sustainable forest management, forest/biodiversity conservation and to conserve watersheds, with the active participation and strengthened capacities of the local population, including women, through Municipal Co-administration Comities (CMC) which are accountable to the communities; and 2) to consolidate the Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas' (National Council of Protected Areas) efforts to strengthen a functional regional network for forest management and conservation through the creation of a system of interconnected protected areas with buffer zones. When an area is declared a protected area the National Council of Protected Areas becomes involved, as it is this institution which controls and suggests activities in protected areas (Helvetas, 2005). The project works at both local level and national level because decentralisation is a process that has just begun and decision making and control is still substantially in the hands of national institutions.

Justification for the project is seen in the dependence of the rural poor on the decreasing natural resources as well as in the possibility to increase rural income to benefit both women and men through both sustainable resource use and management in non protected areas and through income generating potential from environmental services and ecotourism in protected areas.

ProBosques is designed around various Guatemalan municipalities along the volcanic chain extending along the Pacific coast. The project approach differs from municipality to municipality, e.g. in the municipality of Quetzaltenango where it is more forestry-focused, and in the municipality of San Pedro Sacatepequez where the efforts concentrate on conservation and buffer zone management of the Regional Park<sup>5</sup>. However, all project sites<sup>6</sup> have in common that they give high importance to protection of drinking water sources, the interest in water being a key reason for the local population to cooperate with the project.

<sup>5</sup> A Regional Park is a rural development area with core zones for environmental protection and transition (or buffer-) zones for sustainable development of cultural landscapes. Regional Parks can be defined differently depending on the country. Only UNESCO-approved Regional Parks (Biosphere Reserves) belong to a consistently defined worldwide category.

<sup>6</sup> 1st phase (1997-1999): activities in Quetzaltenango, Zunil, Cantel and San Martín Sacatepequez Municipalities (Quetzaltenango Department); external donor: SDC  
2nd phase (2000-2002): consolidation of activities in the same 4 Municipalities; external donor: SDC  
3rd phase (2003-2004): consolidation of activities in the same 4 Municipalities and phasing out; external donor: SDC  
4th phase (2004-2009): new activities initiated in 5 new municipalities: San Pedro Sacatepequez, San Marcos, Sibinal (San Marcos Department), and San Juan Ostuncalco and Concepción Chiquirichapa (Quetzaltenango Department). External donor: GEF.  
5th phase: (2005-2008): activities initiated in 4 new municipalities: San Mateo, San Carlos Sija, Olintepéque and Palestina de los altos (Quetzaltenango Department). Helvetas funded, and will continue 2 more years till 2010.

ProBosques is part of a greater conservation effort all over Central America, the "Volcanoes and Highlands" subdivision of the Biological Corridor of Mesoamerica, one of the world's largest protection initiatives (supported by IUCN, UNEP and WWF). The Regional Parks planned and established in the frame of the project, have only national protection status, consisting of core areas for biodiversity protection and buffer zones for sustainable management. Additional sustainably used municipal forests are planned as corridors between protected areas. Incentives for reforestation as compensation payments are provided by governmental organisations for areas under protection or whose intensity of use is reduced (Programa de Incentivos Forestales, PINFOR), as a means of income substitution and as a motivation to start sustainable management practices. Access to these incentives from the National Forest Institute (INAB) is comparatively easy and can be obtained by Communities submitting a management plan for approval. The Communities represent various groups of interest, municipal officials, and traditional village authorities, including COCODEs. The Municipal Co-administration Committees (CMC) and the COCODEs are the space in which locals can participate in the decision-making in forest management.

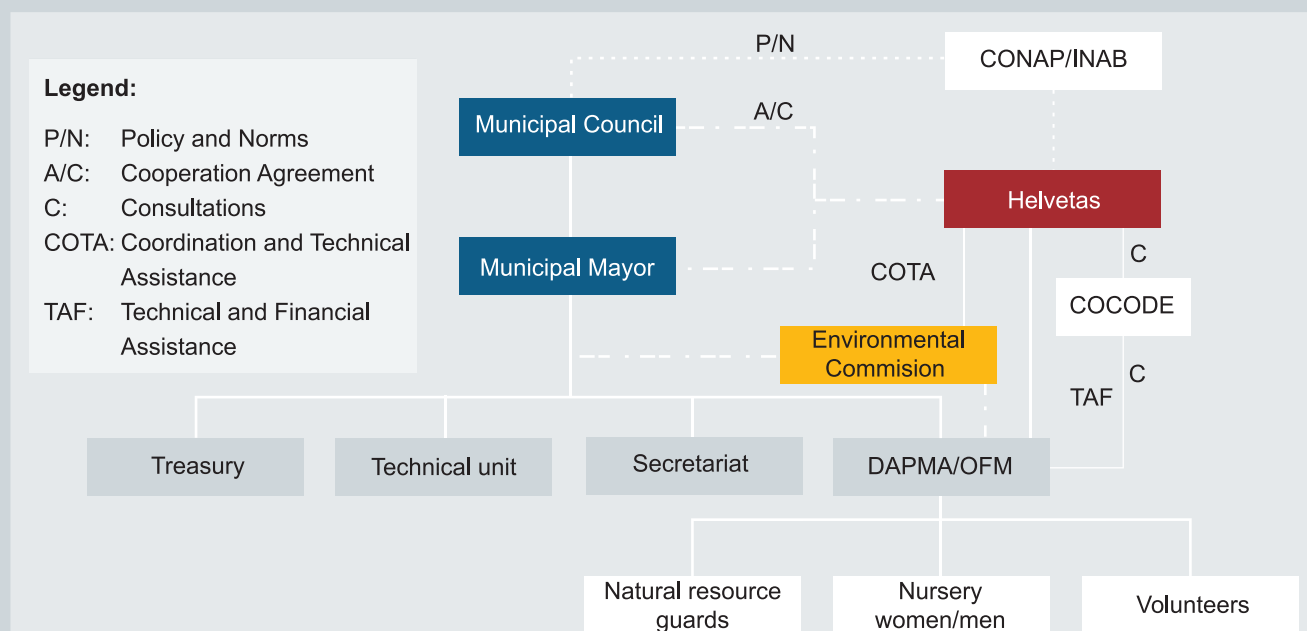
The municipal offices in charge of providing the technical assistance necessary to promote sustainable management are the so called Departments of Protected Areas and Environment (DAPMAs), in other cases the Municipal Forest Offices (OFM).

Helvetas assumes the role of adviser and facilitator in the processes at different levels: political (municipalities), technical (technicians of OFM/DAPMAs), communities (COMUDE, COCODE and CMC) and national governmental (INAB and CONAP).

Project activities are varied: capacity and skill development with DAPMAs/OFMs and CMCs on forest development, planning and management; design and allocation of incentive schemes for reforestation; monitoring; efficient fire prevention; conflict resolution; gender sensitisation; an increasing emphasis on environmental education in schools; further, support is provided for testing and demonstrating improved and sustainable agricultural technologies. These are supported by a manual developed for sustainable resource management. In public debates and consultations, the National Council for Protected Areas, the Municipal Council and user groups (Communities) discuss relevant topics and try to resolve conflicts of interest between stakeholders through the DAPMAs/OFMs. The latter are the municipal offices created with the support of Helvetas - ProBosques and are technical and administrative units (see figure 6). They are staffed by a forest technician and forest guards, who are paid by the municipalities, and protect the municipal forest and the declared protected area. These offices, as part of the municipal government, ensure that the decisions made by municipal authorities concerning protected areas and the forest management plans are implemented. These two entities are only concerned with

FIGURE 6

## Organisational chart of partners in project implementation



forests owned by municipalities or which have been declared as protected areas. Decisions concerning community land are taken by the COCODEs and Auxiliaturas<sup>7</sup> in some cases, as well as by municipal authorities in other cases.

The CMCs are consultative units, a gathering of Community leaders (mostly members of the Communities' COCODEs), meant to promote the project's aims, discuss relevant issues and undertake public consultations concerning the project. Opinions of the CMCs may be taken into account by the municipal authorities, the OFMs or the DAPMAs. Members of the CMCs also act as volunteer local Community facilitators.

The Helvetas "Do-no-Harm" planning and management tool (see glossary) plays an important role in the project context to ensure that the project promoted activities lead to no further marginalisation of the rural population and include a better representation of women, and to the definition of access rights to the forest areas for the Communities living around and depending on the resources of the protected areas.

### 4.3 RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The municipalities and some Communities have substantially developed their social, technical and managerial skills to manage natural resources: they have the required human resources as well as competent local Community facilitators who are able to motivate and train new community members in the field of natural resource management. The 2007 mid term evaluation noted that the feeling of responsibility for natural resources is developing decisively, and that knowledge of sustainable management practices is increasing at all levels (ProBosques, 2008). The successful innovations and activities promoted by ProBosques as well as its achievements have also been reported by independent reviews (e.g. Ferroukhi and Echeverria, 2002), and more generally for the Western Highlands by Larson et al. (2008).

### MUNICIPAL FORESTS / REGIONAL PARKS

A total of approximately 15'000 ha of forests are under sustainable management in the 13 project supported municipalities, and forest cover has also increased within Municipal Regional Parks (PRMs) and in their adjacent areas through reforestation. Improved knowledge, management and empowerment has also led to the establishment of a learning network amongst stakeholders and interest groups. The participation of women in consultation processes has slightly improved. The communities and stakeholders are organised in groups of interest and are able to participate in and contribute to municipal decision-making concerning the management of PRMs.

<sup>7</sup> Auxiliaturas are communal authorities designated by the mayor; they have an executive function.

In the case of San Pedro Sacatepéquez (11 years of project support), citizens have formed an interest and political pressure group, the Mesa Municipal de Diálogo del Agua y Medio Ambiente. The group consists of about 50 members and is a social forum that observes the authorities' activities with regard to natural resources, to supplement the municipality's official administration, and to sensitise the population on environmental issues. At the same time the Mesa is a result of ProBosques' and other NGOs' activities, and is a facilitator for further development, including specific activities to encourage women's participation.

The degree to which the local population accepts and endorses the PRMs depends to some extent on the proximity of the PRMs to their community. In communities which are at a certain distance from the PRMs, the public opinion on the PRM is very positive since they perceive the benefits of water source and soil/slope protection and the improved natural environment in which they appreciate being able to relax. However, the public opinion amongst the communities that border with the PRMs is less positive: the designation of the area as protected, including a much stronger control, limits as compared to previous times their free access to the forest to satisfy their needs. Results show that it takes time to develop the trust and collaborative mechanisms between different levels of stakeholders. The project has led to increased involvement of women in consultative and decision making processes and to increased interest amongst young women and men in the school population. ProBosques Quetzaltenango (11 years of implementation) has achieved substantial advances in the participation and commitment of civil society, as shown by the close collaboration between Municipal Authorities, community interest groups and commissions. There is nevertheless also resistance from some communities in buffer zones around protected areas, since they are directly concerned with the restrictions in the protected areas and they have not yet developed alternative income sources.

The Municipal councils have shown commitment to the project's objectives since their financial contributions have been higher than expected in the project-municipality bilateral agreements. Nine PRMs have been established by the municipalities with the support of ProBosques, showing that the strategy is successful for formalising the relation between the project, the municipalities and the local communities for functional local multi-stakeholder institutional development. Civil society is strengthened due to the improved functioning of the local administration, partly due to the increasing capacity to render the latter accountable, to the more supportive legal context, as well as due to awareness-raising and trust-building activities.

## COMMUNITY FORESTS

Some of the communal forests which are managed by the COCODEs and Auxiliaturas of the owning communities are also sustainably managed according to traditional rules. In these forests, the right to use forest products is restricted

to community members, who often have free access to fuel wood, fodder and medicinal plants; however, local authorities have started to collect a harvesting fee in some villages. If members need timber and want to fell a tree, they require permission from the Auxiliatura or in some cases of the forest commission in the community which evaluates the applicant's needs; if permission is granted, the applicant has to pay 10 quetzales (about 1 Euro) and is obliged to plant 10 new trees. The extraction of fire wood has to be authorised and a fee has sometimes to be paid.

The interest and commitment in communities to develop management plans for sustainable use of their community forests is often positively correlated with a high population to forest area ratio and stimulated by interest in the remaining forest itself or for its positive impact on watershed protection (reduced landslide risks and water source protection which are of value to both forest dependent communities and to outside beneficiaries within and outside the municipalities) (ProBosques, 2008). Generally, short-term benefits which local people mention as being already obtained since project initiation are overall sustainable use of natural resources, better access to fire wood, less forest fires, and increased water quality and supply. There are indicators showing that illegal extraction of forest products has decreased. In general the extraction of any material of the forest is under better control.

## BIODIVERSITY

As far as biodiversity conservation is concerned, the project is unable to categorically state that the status of species and biodiversity has improved. However, in terms of plant species, the likelihood is strong that it has improved, and for animal species, incidental reporting suggests that the situation has at least not worsened; populations of Wild Turkey, Quetzal, and Pinabete in the area appear to be stable. There is however little interest from the population for biodiversity conservation as such. Nevertheless, the advanced participatory planning for developing ecotourism facilities is drawing a lot of interest from the local population.

## WATER SECURITY AND PROTECTION FROM NATURAL DISASTERS

Due to the increasingly serious water supply problems and the developing awareness of the link between improved water supply and forest and soil/slope conservation, an increasing proportion of people are supportive of environmental protection and sustainable management. The catastrophic events (landslides, flooding) caused by Hurricanes Mitch and Stan also contributed to the general awareness for improved protection and management.

## INCOME GENERATION AND LIVELIHOODS

Income opportunities have been created by reforestation and conservation incentives; the potential from market-oriented production has not yet been realised. The mid term per-

spective is that sustainable harvesting will increase leading to higher local incomes. In the mid term, benefits may also accrue to communities from the development of ecotourism which is being promoted in the regional parks created with the project's support, and especially for women through sales of handicrafts and their involvement as tour guides and in the provision of lodging and food. Further, small "projects" planned by ProBosques in the buffer zones of the protected areas, such as capacity building in various sectors (e.g. in agriculture, livestock husbandry, forest management, etc.) are also anticipated to improve livelihoods.

## INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT AND SCALING UP OPPORTUNITIES

Before the project started, no concrete development had been achieved and experiences made at municipal level concerning the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The only experience which existed in Guatemala was in the protected area in the Department of Petén. With ProBosques, the focus of the National Protected Area Council moved also to other national Departments.

One of the institutions initiated by the project and now promoted by the National Forest Institute is the municipal forest offices (OFM) or departments of protected areas and environment (DAPMA) in the municipalities.

A third impact has been the development of consultation mechanisms applied in the process of the declaration of a protected area. With the involvement of local people in the consultation process, this leads to a more inclusive approach in terms of indigenous rights, gender and civil society in general. It is increasingly accepted at national level that forest management has to be regulated and control mechanisms established through negotiation between the different stakeholders concerned.

Finally, the fact that in 2006, municipalities contributed 29% of the project costs (and 5% by national government agencies, 28% by GEF and 38% by Helvetas), and at a level above project expectations, is a strong indicator of the local commitment to the objectives and strategies promoted by the project.

## 4.4 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### JUDICIAL SITUATION

The cooperation with private land owners is still a difficult issue. The possibilities to interfere with private forest management are modest, since issues concerning private property are mostly dealt with by national authorities. However, public-private cooperation in the management of natural resources would often be necessary, since natural processes (such as erosion, forest fires and hydrological regimes) transcend land ownership boundaries. In some areas, conflicts still remain over forest ownership between Communities and Municipali-

ties. It can be expected that once the issue of ownership and the new cadastral survey is settled, these would be substantially reduced.

### PERSONNEL

There is still a shortage of technical capacity and knowledge amongst municipal forestry staff. This is partly due to limited financial resources for staff salaries and equipment, but also to the short in-service times of most employees. They are often young forestry students who see their employment as temporary, resulting in sometimes low commitment and with the added risk of uncertain continuity. The recent mid-term evaluation noted that a number of possible remedial measures should be looked into, such as: performance linked financial incentives by the project or the municipalities; gradually replacing technicians with local people who may not have a necessarily high level of schooling but who have a good understanding and knowledge of forest management, are rooted in and respected by their communities and have communication/facilitating skills for their discussions at the level of interactions between Municipal authorities, COCODEs and OFMs; sharing of technicians between municipalities (Probosques, 2008).

### FINANCES AND ECONOMY

Forest management is still financially unsustainable, because forestry revenues cannot yet cover the annual expenditures for staff payments, management and vehicles. However, municipal forests are not yet utilised to their full sustainable potential, as a conservative initial management approach is preferred by most stakeholders. It is anticipated that with growing experience, and with improving productivity, stakeholders will gradually agree to higher levels of sustainable harvesting, resulting in higher incomes for example through the sale of timber. The project staff is well aware that the project is not yet economically sustainable. It is believed that with time and increasing lobbying from Municipalities at higher levels for more funds, with the justification of proven positive results and long term economically positive investment, central government may slowly realize the need for providing more development funds directly through municipalities. The potential for hydroelectric development exists and it is foreseen that negotiations between some Municipalities and Communities will soon take place to determine compensation mechanisms to the latter for their involvement in appropriate watershed protection.

### POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Internal power struggles, corruption and nepotism are deeply rooted and cannot be erased from one day to the next. The success of the project approach strongly depends on a favourable and stable political climate, which under current conditions is still not guaranteed. The project's success still depends too heavily on the municipal mayors' and other municipal staff's support. One of the major risks is changes in the political structure of Municipal councils with new elec-

tions. This risk is however slowly being diminished with their increasing accountability to civil society.

Civil society does not support the project activities in all its aims. Some sections of the population are distrustful and think that the project will constrain their access to the forest area. The process of empowering the local population will take a long time, and particularly for women who do not yet have much space in most decision making instances. To obtain the desired results will necessitate that the population perceives that it can have an influence to improve the functioning of State institutions at different levels, as well as that it can obtain direct or indirect compensatory benefits for their investments in conservation. The project is well aware of the needs for further strengthening the empowerment component at local level, combined with facilitating dialogue with other stakeholders, respecting the Do-no-Harm planning and management tool and the lengthy process of promoting gender equity at different levels of interventions.

On balance however, the strategy of merging and integrating local traditional forest management practices into municipal planning and development, through collaborative efforts involving the range of different stakeholders, has turned out to be positive. Several challenges however still remain to ensure that local people's rights and needs, with special attention to those of women, are incorporated in Municipal development plans and that the COMUDE structures represent the interests of civil society as a whole. Given that some communities have parts of their traditional forest in other Municipalities, and that improved forest management in one Municipality provides services to other Municipalities (e.g. improved water quality and flow), the development of inter-Municipality cooperation will become increasingly important.

## 5 CASE STUDY MALI – THE PREGESCO PROJECT

### How to mitigate conflicts by collaborative management of natural resources

#### 5.1 CONTEXT

Mali, one of the world's poorest countries, but also a model-state of decentralisation and democratisation, is a land-locked country in the interior of Northwest Africa. Its landscapes are dominated by the Saharan desert in the North and the savannahs of the Niger estuary in the South. The Sahel, the semi-arid tropical savannah eco-region in Africa, which forms the transition between the Sahara to the north and the more fertile region to the south, covers about a third of the country. It is a thorn-bush savannah of sparse drought-adapted vegetation, the typical feature being the irregular precipitation regime making agriculture production very difficult and hazardous.

#### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Despite its frequent droughts, the Sahel has rather favourable climatic conditions compared to the humid, Tse-Tse plagued South and the blazing heat of the desert. It is a "crossroad of peoples", where the nomadic (ethnically Berber or Arab) Moor and Tuareg transhumant herders follow the routes north in the rainy season (from Djoumara up to Mauritania). During

FIGURE 7

Map of Mali with the project area (yellow ellipse) in the Sahel zone



### Herder providing water to his cattle



the dry season, some set up camps in cultivated fields, in which case the farmer benefits from the manure left by their livestock, but most transhumant herders move back south in search of fodder and new water points. The areas where transhumant herders stay, the duration of their stay and their itinerary are largely dictated by the availability and quality of water and grazing. Their movements are basically determined by the grazing requirements of their livestock and the location of water. The resident agro-pastoral farmers of the (ethnically African) Bambara (80% of the Malian population) depend directly on agriculture and livestock husbandry to sustain their livelihoods, and the majority harvest tree products (from gallery forests and scattered groups of acacia), using them in a variety of ways: as a source of fuel, food and traditional medicines, as fodder, bedding and fertilizer in agricultural production, and as a source of revenue (Ogier et al., 2001).

The conflicts arising between the tribes on the use of natural resources have a complex background. In the 1950's, an unusually wet decade, combined with the improvement of agricultural techniques resulting from the subsequent Green Revolution, led to an expansion of agriculture and thus, of farmer settlements in the North. Population pressure, resource scarcity, and the return of droughts (and thus severe water shortage) led to serious conflicts and sometimes blood-

shed between nomadic herders, whose access to their traditional migration routes and waterholes was being curtailed, and farmers struggling to earn a living in the semi-desert and to defend their fields against the nomads' herds.

The conflicts intensify in periods of drought and sporadic migratory plagues (locusts, quelea) which, combined with the lack of alternative sources of income and population growth, strongly increase pressure on natural resources. People are highly dependent on natural resources, and too many live in an ecosystem hardly able to provide enough resources for subsistence. Old trade relations between the nomads and the farmers (based on the exchange of meat, milk and cheese as well as manuring for agricultural crops such as millet, sorghum, groundnut and maize) are disturbed by the conflicts over water and living space.

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE, DECENTRALISATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Although decentralisation has been enshrined in the constitution in 1960 following independence, it is only in 1999 that the process was concretely initiated following a number of changes in the constitution in 1992, and in relevant Laws in

### Local farmer watering her crops



1993 (determining the conditions of self-administration of the communes) and 1995 (determining the status of public servants). With these legal frameworks, the way for the first democratic elections at municipal (commune), district (cercle) and regional levels in 1999 was paved. The municipalities (which are subdivided in “Villages” in the case of rural municipalities and into “Quartiers” in urban municipalities) elect their councils which in turn elect their mayors. The districts are supervised by a prefect appointed by central government to ensure that the municipal activities follow government legislation and to authorise the release of central government funds for municipal development plans. The financial authority ceded from central government to municipalities includes the authority over local tax collection. Municipalities use their fiscal autonomy to generate more than 85% of their budgets from local tax revenues. However, central budget transfers are irregular, there are still unclear definitions and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of elected municipal councilors and de-concentrated ministerial services at district level, and insufficient inclusion of marginalised groups in political decision making processes. The municipal elections in 1999 and 2004 and regional elections in 2002 and 2007 have however shown a generalised shift in power relations between traditional chieftains and a more broad based representation, including that of women, though inevitably leading to conflicts (Helvetas, 2007a).

Although there is a multiplicity of laws relating to natural resource management policies in Mali, many (such as the Pastoral Charter or the Agricultural Framework Legislation) are not yet in force. Some are contradictory, and there are no rules determining how the different laws should be coordinated. These problems are unlikely to diminish noticeably in the near future, given the frequent restructuring of the various Ministries. Customary law continues to play an important role at the local level. Furthermore, responsibility for natural resource management has still not been transferred from the central State to the municipalities, and there is little information on the topic available at the municipal level.

### HELVETAS' INVOLVEMENT IN MALI

Helvetas has been working in Mali since 1977, focal topics being:

- Institutional and private sector development in the fields of water supply and sanitation;
- Support to agricultural initiatives for improved production and marketing of tropical fruit;
- Promotion of organic cotton production and fair trade;
- Support to decentralisation/democratisation processes by strengthening local councils, the promotion of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the strengthening of local economies;
- Support to local councils in their efforts to improve basic education;
- Support for local initiatives to fight against the practice of female genital mutilation;
- Conflict prevention and management.

Since 2003, Helvetas Mali is implementing the project "PRE-GESCO – Conflict Prevention and Management in the Kayes Region".

## 5.2 PROBLEMS, AIMS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE SPECIFIC AREA

Since 1988, Helvetas Mali is implementing projects in the three districts of the Kayes Region in support of the population, centred on the improvement of access to water through the rehabilitation and modification of water sites, of agricultural production or product processing and of cattle-breeding. With the project PREGESCO, Helvetas continues this support by particularly taking into consideration the evolution of the relations between (settled) farmers and (transhumant and semi-nomadic) herders concerning the utilisation of agrosylvo-pastoral areas. One of the main project approaches is based on the "Do-No-Harm" planning and management tool. (See box V and Glossary).

### PROJECT AREA SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

The Kayes Region is a zone of mixed farming where transhumance from the north to the south and back has existed for hundreds of years. This transhumance dominated the socio-economic life of the sedentary communities who had traditionally established a mutually beneficial relationship with the transhumant herders. The rare cases of conflicts were managed through traditional mechanisms.

More recently, due to the rainfall deficit, the increase in livestock, human populations and therefore pressure on land, the early drying up of the water points and the constant lowering of ground water tables, the cohabitation between farmers and transhumant herders has become a source of tension, sometimes even leading to bloody confrontations. From the point of view of the herders, areas set aside for grazing have become very limited on their migration routes due to the encroachment of farmland into the Sahel. From the point of view of the farm-

### BOX IV

#### Key information Mali (October 2008)

**Project region:** 3 districts of the Kayes Region: Nioro du Sahel: 7 municipalities; Diéma: 6 municipalities; Kita: 7 municipalities

**Project phases:** 1st phase 2003-2004, 2nd phase 2005-2007, 3rd phase 2008-2010

**Main international partners:** Helvetas, SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation), AEN (Church of Norway), Diakonia

**Main local partners:** ADISSAH (Association pour le Développement Intégré dans la Savane et le Sahel), BACR (Bureau d'Appui et Conseils aux Collectivités Rurales) and CEPAP (Centre de Promotion Agro-pastoral)

**Main donors:** Helvetas, SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency)

**Costs 2008 (CHF):** 1'400'000 (SIDA and Helvetas)

## BOX V

### Some important characteristics of the “Do-no-Harm” approach in the project

- The project focuses on the causes of conflicts (use of natural resources), which are at the same time the main connecting factors between the conflicting parties.
- All parties involved benefit from conflict resolution support.
- The role of the civil society is strengthened.
- Minorities can voice their interests.

ers, damage by livestock is intolerable especially in drought years. In this new and more severe environmental situation, the capacities of traditional mechanisms to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts are no longer sufficient to restore social cohesion.

Within the framework of the decentralisation process, the effective adoption and implementation of the law concerning the regulation of the access to and control over agro-sylvo-pastoral areas, as well as the transfer of competences to the municipalities concerning the management of natural resources, offer a new institutional environment that allows the establishment of new conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. The recent legal framework on governance and decentralisation has also paved the way for a far greater involvement of the local population in running their affairs, including through the conflict mitigation groups whose role is recognised in the decentralisation process. These groups are composed of representatives of the villages, farmers' organisations and transhumant groups. However, two of the main constraints are that local actors are not aware of the legislation (which anyway frequently ignores local realities) and that the elected and administrative authorities at municipal, district and regional level are even less aware of the competences that have been transferred to them through the decentralisation process.

One of the major challenges in conflict prevention and management is the promotion of dialogue processes between the local actors concerning the access to and the use of natural resources.

## PROJECT AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

The process of democratic governance implies a broad participation of the vulnerable population, women and men, through the intervention of CSOs. PREGESCO's main goal is therefore to contribute to the reinforcement of civil society in order to improve local democratic governance with regard to sustainable natural resource management/development and equity. The project objective is to contribute to the reinforcement of local governance concerning conflict prevention and management related to the access to and the control over agro-sylvo-pastoral areas.

During the first project phases, support was given to the local actors (representatives of farmers organisations, transhumant populations/herders, NGOs and CSOs) to develop and implement conflict prevention and reduction mechanisms concerning the agro-sylvo-pastoral areas (through the establishment of mitigation groups). The current phase concentrates on the accompaniment of the institutionalisation of the local mechanisms of conflict prevention and management through the mitigation groups on the issues of access and control in the agro-sylvo-pastoral areas, and especially concerning pasture land and water.

To reinforce the local capacities for the development of peace and good democratic local governance, the project:

- supports the process of organisational strengthening and interlinking between different stakeholders (mitigation groups) at the national, regional and local level;
- reinforces the control/negotiating capacities of the actors and mitigation groups concerned with conflicts;
- improves, by supporting local initiatives, the conditions of access to and control over agro-sylvo-pastoral areas for the different users.

To achieve these goals, the project supports activities on 5 different themes: reinforcement of the local actors, reinforcement of the mitigation groups, communication/information, accompanying measures, advocacy and lobbying.

## 5.3 RESULTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS

### LEARNED

Good local governance is necessary in order to avoid exclusion and marginalisation of the weakest members of society, to provide for equal opportunities to all and to guarantee a sufficient degree of equity in the redistribution of income within communities. It supposes a high level of representativity of civil society in terms of decision making, the democratic election of its representatives and transparent decision making mechanisms concerning the management of collective resources. Furthermore, it is especially important to have a strong civil society which is able to play effectively its roles as

an advocate for representing interests of its constituencies, in service delivery in different sectors, as a partner with local government in development planning, and as a motor for citizen control and “watchdog” over government.

Decentralisation has led to an increased respect of local needs and to a better representation of the civil society concerned in decision-making processes, creating the conditions for more sustainable and lasting development. The mitigation groups which constituted the entry door for the project were favourably accepted by the various users of the natural resources. Beyond the conflict prevention and management activities, the members of the mitigation groups take part in discussions on communal development regarding the efficiency and sustainability of the management of the natural resources on which communities depend.

The technical trainings for the mitigation groups and other information shared/provided have increased the capacity of the different actors to internalise the needs for and approaches to rational and concerted management of the natural resources, gender equity and respectful and fruitful social interaction. Their new knowledge and awareness of the importance of their roles in the development of their villages and surrounding areas (which include transhumant groups) are increasingly evident during meetings, where they express their points of view and participate actively in decision-making processes.

More than 77% of the conflicts concerning natural resources can now be solved satisfactorily at local level, thereby avoiding time consuming and expensive legal procedures. This therefore decreases the conflicts’ potential for escalation and fosters peaceful relationships between different stakeholder groups. The populations now use less money for the resolution of their conflicts and are less inclined to corruption. A recent survey in two communities revealed that the sum of approximately USD 100’000.-, which would formerly have been used to bribe the administration and judiciary are instead used to construct schools and health centres. This experience shows that even if the municipalities do have sparse financial resources, their more constructive use can stimulate a real endogenous development and introduce a new consciousness of the importance of civic control over public activities.

In spite of the successes experienced with the strengthening of the mitigation groups and with the advances made through capacity building, a number of challenges remain:

- the management of trans-boundary conflicts;
- the access to drinking water for nomads’ camping areas remains an urgent issue and still constitutes one of the main sources for tensions and conflicts;
- the need to strengthen the capacities of the municipal authorities concerning the competences which have been transferred to their level in the decentralisation process;
- the reinforcement of the female leadership to allow women to play a stronger role within the processes of communal development and of conflict prevention and management.

## 6. CASE STUDY DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - THE CAD-BAHORUCO PROJECT

### NGO led multi-stakeholder cooperation in the management of a Biosphere Reserve

#### 6.1 CONTEXT

Helvetas was instrumental in setting up in 1993 the Consorcio Ambiental Dominicano (CAD), a multi-partner NGO, to promote sustainable land use and improve livelihoods in different rural areas of the Dominican Republic. For the last phase of Helvetas’ involvement with CAD, a new project was established in 2003 in the Bahoruco Range in the Southwest of the Dominican Republic. The hilly landscape is covered with dry forest, but the eastern slopes facing the moist trade winds have lush vegetation and allow for the cultivation of palm and banana trees. The mountain range is shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as are some of the water resources.

#### BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

The Bahoruco mountain range is the only Biosphere Reserve in the Dominican Republic and was included in UNESCO’s MAB-programme in 2002. The reserve consists of three pro-

FIGURE 8

Map of the Dominican Republic with the project area (yellow circle) and protected areas (in red)



### Lush tropical vegetation on hills facing the trade winds



tected areas: the Jaraqua National Park in the very South, known for its high endemism and coastal biodiversity (e.g. Flamingo, Manatee, Crocodile, iguanas and turtles), and the Batoruco and Enriquillo National Parks. All three Parks contain strictly protected conservation areas within a larger area of transition and buffer zones planned to be sustainably managed by the local population. While the reserve has a high biodiversity and conservation value, it also has substantial potential for development and the spread of agricultural land is threatening the borders of the core protected areas.

### LAND USE AND TENURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND LIVELIHOODS

There is a high incidence of rural poverty. The main agricultural crops in the hills to the north are coffee, cassava, yam, sugar cane, cacao and maize. Cassava and yam have the advantage that they can be harvested up to three times a year and thus generate more regular yields and income (especially important since the fall in coffee price) but - like most crops under intensive cultivation - have the disadvantage that they severely impoverish the soils, forcing farmers to shift cultivation areas.

Predominant land tenure schemes play an important role in the unsustainability of agricultural systems and in natural resource degradation in general. Most of the owners of private land do not live in the mountains; communities have come to be inhabited by Haitian immigrants through agreements whereby the Dominican landowners allow them to till the land and live in unoccupied dwellings. Most of the land located in fragile and critical ecosystems close to and within the biosphere reserve is State owned. Farmers have not developed a feeling of long term responsibility for the land they cultivate. Their short term interests have lead to increased erosion, loss of cropland fertility and to increased incidence of poverty. Shifting cultivation, based on extensive forest fires, and overgrazing threaten biodiversity conservation objectives and the sustainability of agricultural production. Both these factors have contributed to accelerated deforestation and resource degradation; since the 1970s, 80% of the original vegetation has been seriously degraded.

Small cities are located at the bottom of several important forested watersheds, which provide their water supply. The water flow regime has been seriously affected by environmental degradation in the upper slopes of the watersheds, resulting in substantial water shortages during the dry season and severe flooding in densely inhabited lower lands during the rainy season.

Forest fires due to slash and burn



Local farmer picking coffee in a traditional agroforestry system



## BOX VI

### Key information Dominican Republic

**Area of sustainably used resources:** 44.5 km<sup>2</sup>

**Number of communities:** 25

**Number of municipalities:** 3

**Administrative structure:** The municipalities are the lowest administrative unit, headed by an elected mayor. The higher unit is the province, with a governor appointed by the President. At the municipality level, the environmental law requires the creation of a municipality environmental management unit.

**People profiting from project:** estimated 4'000

**Project phase:** only 1 phase: 2003-2006; previous 4 phases in other areas

**Main partners:** Helvetas, Grupo Jaragua, Fundación Progreso, CASTA

**Main donors:** Helvetas, CIM, CANARI, SEMARN, CEMEX, Dominican Government

**Costs 2006:** CHF 77,000

## POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At national level, conservation and environmental issues were not yet a policy priority by the early 1990s, and there was no lead institution on environmental matters with established regulatory and management remits. In the 1990s, while several decrees and laws were passed concerning the conservation of biodiversity and of natural resources, these focused on specific and restricted aspects without an overall and coherent vision of the issues. Further, their implementation were relegated to numerous government administrations, each executing activities independently with little inter-institution cooperation. The municipalities are expected by law to have a management environmental unit.

### HELVETAS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND WITH CAD

Helvetas started working in the Dominican Republic in 1986 in a number of sectors. Faced with weak government implementation agencies showing little inter-institutional cooperation, Helvetas launched the Programa de Conservación Ambiental (PA) in 1993 (with SDC funding and in collaboration and co-funding with the German Development Service (DED)). The PA national partners included three government agencies and four NGOs. Its main objective was to establish a sound information system base on natural resource and biodiversity trends in the implementation areas of the partner organisations, and to offer technical management alternatives adapted to the livelihoods of different rural areas. The improved management models included support for the development of eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, soil and water conservation, agroforests, co-management and co-protection of protected

areas, with the participation of local communities. The PA was composed of representatives of all partners, decisions being taken on a consensus basis. The PA was coordinated by Helvetas, which was also responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) of the various partner projects and activities. From the very beginning of phase 1, Helvetas' aim had been to seek ways for the PA to develop in an institutionally sustainable way with national partners gradually taking over its management and financing independently, with increased diversification of funding sources. At the end of the 1st phase (1998), it was decided that the institutional collaboration basis existed for converting the PA into CAD. CAD was registered as an NGO under Dominican Republic legislation.

In phases 2 to 4, with the technical, managerial and facilitating support of Helvetas, the national partners gradually increased their commitment to CAD, assuming increasing responsibilities and leadership, and developing their respective capacities. Other organisations which conformed to the required conditions joined the Consortium. CAD's mission was to be involved at the meso level, developing relations with 3 levels: national government, the private sector and other similar NGOs. The aim was to promote multiplication effects of lessons learned at field level by the various partner organisations. The transversal strategies defined that for each development activity supported by CAD, the following principles should be adhered to:

- **Co-management** between government institutions, NGOs and the community with emphasis on strengthening the capacities for sustainable natural resource use.

- **Participation of the local population** from the moment of activity conception, with equitable decision making, the aim being for the local populations to identify themselves as the owners of development activities.
- **Sustainable development** to be aimed at in the planning and implementation steps of each activity, including in the concept of sustainability and the maintenance of the capacity and integrity of natural and productive systems ensuring human wellbeing.
- **Facilitation of lobbying.** This was orientated towards technical cooperation agencies, donors and the national government, generally to influence the development of more supportive frame conditions in the environmental sector.
- **Gender focus.** The active participation and empowerment of women to be promoted to encourage equitable participation, decision making and benefit sharing in various fields.
- **Cooperation with Haiti.** This principle applied specifically to issues related to conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in areas which covered both countries.
- **Inter-institutional cooperation.** This was essential since CAD's development depended on its relations with other organisations. Inter-institutional efforts aimed at uniting capacities, resources and activities, in order to reach common objectives. This required seeking the most efficient synergies between partner organisations, considering their respective specialisations and capacities, and to obtain their commitment for implementing activities of common interest, as well as being transparent in their mode of cooperation.

CAD financed the administrative and operational costs of the partner organisations but not their organisational structure and fixed costs. CAD also contracted the most suitable organisations to develop the capacity of facilitators and technicians to improve the capacities of each service providing partner institution.

## 6.2 AIMS - DEVELOPMENT OF STAKEHOLDER

### NETWORKS TO COMBINE BIODIVERSITY

### CONSERVATION WITH SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

The Batoruco Range project started in 2003. Helvetas advised CAD in the implementation of the project, based on their long standing partnership and experience with similar development and conservation issues and challenges in different parts of the Dominican Republic. For this last phase of Helvetas support to CAD, it was decided that CAD should spread its geographical area to include a project in the Sierra Batoruco, due to its high development potential, high biodiversity value and serious environmental problems. At the same time the area lacked attention from other development projects.

The project's aim was to create and strengthen networks between civil society and local State authorities in order to sustainably manage natural resources within the newly established Biosphere Reserve. The Helvetas/CAD project was the first action implemented in the Biosphere Reserve framework, contributing to the requirements of MAB. The project aimed at sustainable management of the natural resources of the Batoruco Range. It was seen as a pilot project, further testing the institutional consolidation of CAD, with emphasis on its management, organisational and controlling capabilities. A major change was also the emphasis on decentralising operational activities and involving local authorities together with local NGOs and beneficiaries in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities.

The following activities were carried out in order to foster improved local governance:

- Inter-institutional strengthening and coordination between the main government actors in the area: SEA (State Secretariat for Agriculture) and SEMARN (Secretariat for the Environment and Natural Resources), and encouragement for more concrete dialogue with municipalities and local farmer groups and associations. This included also collaboration with Haitian institutions.
- Strengthening the technical, organisational and institutional capacity of the local farmers through their groups and associations.
- Strengthening the capacity of municipalities to collaborate with and demand support from government agencies working in the area.
- A competitive fund was created to support both productive (small private enterprise) and social initiatives.

### 6.3 RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

With a focus on promoting participatory forest management, the project contributed to the establishment of Municipal Environmental Management Units in the municipalities of Paraiso, Enriquillo, Polo, and La Cienaga, in close collaboration with the State institutions present in the area (SEA and SEMARN). As concrete results of this initiative, municipal forums were held with the participation of grass-roots organisations in order to manage river use, solid waste disposal and cattle grazing. These activities also encouraged municipalities to improve coordination between themselves and with state institutions at local level in order to foster conservation and sustainable development efforts in the region. Through the strengthening of grass roots organisations and NGO networks at community level and with their increasing involvement in decision-making processes, the project has contributed to the development of democratic structures. Further, transparency has improved thanks to an independent multi-stakeholder committee that evaluates funding requests and reports the selection procedure and results to the public.

In the project area, there has been a reduction of slash-and-burn agriculture through the successful application of an alternative agricultural production strategy which integrated the farmers of the mountains into the development process and, above all, the Haitian immigrants who generally enter the land illegally. Mixed crop production systems which combine perennial crops such as fruit trees (citrus and avocado) with short-cycle crops (such as cassava, corn and beans), combined with the use of soil and water conservation methods, reduced erosion and the loss of soil fertility. One result of these activities was the formation of the Local Network for Sustainable Agriculture, which is locally managed by farmers who have been trained to be community extension workers; they organise weekly cooperative labour groups.

Logging in the key watershed areas has been reduced thereby also reducing the amount of water flowing into superficial water bodies. The formation and functioning of local committees to protect the aquifers (water quality and quantity) in communities in which important water resources are found, guarantees the controlled use of those resources, particularly when water for human consumption is concerned. Conservation of endemic species such as *Magnolia hamorii*, an endangered species, has begun with the involvement of local people in its reproduction and replanting in its natural habitat.

The promotion and canalisation of incentives for income generation, through the competitive fund system, resulted in diversification of income generating opportunities regardless of gender. The fund supported small initiatives of local grass-roots groups. The emphasis was given to productive initiatives which value local products and to support their commercialisation (sustainable crop and animal production, harvesting, storage, processing and marketing). Other supported activities included local handicraft production, setting up of non-traditional micro-businesses such as ecotourism

and beekeeping for sale of honey. Through these activities, women have increasingly participated, their self esteem has been strengthened and their contribution in decision making has significantly increased. The project supported 54 micro-businesses, 14 of which were managed by women.

In general, the project has increased the level of organisation and inter-institutional coordination in the Bahoruco Range and has awakened an interest amongst the farmers to participate. They have noticed that it is possible to change their situation if they organize themselves. This high degree of participation was also responsible for a marked absence of conflicts (Bader, 2006a; Bader 2006b).

One important element contributing to the successful results was the favourable institutional framework in this project whereby the Secretariat of the Environment assisted in the establishment of participative forums which led to the creation of the Municipal Environmental Units.

### 6.4 CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND RISKS

Most of the land is state-owned or owned by private outsiders. The people living in the area work the land, but do not have titles and therefore cannot really claim ownership. It is therefore an ongoing and substantial challenge to motivate them to invest in more sustainable ways of managing the land; further, it takes time for robust and sustainable multi-stakeholder institutional cooperation mechanisms to be developed.

The curtailment of Helvetas involvement in supporting CAD after only 5 years of CAD's involvement in the area, with a range of new institutional challenges and partners will be a test to Helvetas' original vision of helping a consortium of State and non government organisations to establish itself as a sustainable and well functioning service provider. It would still require external financial support to continue strengthening the local people's and municipalities' capabilities to manage their resources sustainably while improving the local people's living conditions. The question remains whether the retreat of the external donor will provide sufficient incentives for local people and municipalities to generate the financial resources which they need to continue improving the productive capacity of the land.

## 7 DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses Helvetas' approach to promoting equitable natural resource management and benefit sharing in the four case studies presented, and the key elements of their interplay in the linkages with improving local governance outlined in Figure 3 (section 1.3). The analysis refers both to right holders (rural people) and local duty bearers (the local administration and elected bodies). It must however be emphasised that the distinction between right holders and duty bearers is not always clear and can be quite blurred - 3 examples: a municipality may be a duty bearer, but its councillors and mayor are also right holders within the local civil society; a municipality may be granted powers and duties by higher government levels, and/or according to national law, but if it is not provided with the resources by higher levels to assume these duties it cannot function as a duty bearer and is a frustrated right holder; community forestry group committee members are duty bearers to group membership but right holders as group members. The analysis also looks at the effects of the interplay at local level on the national policy and legal framework, as well as at the institutional sustainability of Helvetas' intervention strategies.

### 7.1 HELVETAS' APPROACH IN THE FOUR CASE STUDIES AND THE NATIONAL/RURAL CONTEXTS

#### Initial involvement and approaches, and national contexts

It must be highlighted that in none of the 4 case studies, "improving local governance through equitable sustainable natural resource management" was either the or even an initial objective of Helvetas' involvement in the natural resource sector in the countries or areas concerned. The initial aims were all centred on various aspects of improved natural resource management with very different types of target groups as managers or partners according to evolving institutional contexts.

- In **Bhutan**, support given by Helvetas in the forestry sector was for a long time primarily aimed at improving the technical and institutional capacity of the Forest Service to manage nationalised forests, although it also supported different types of projects involving rural families (e.g. agriculture, education). The country's forest area to population ratio is very high and the rural population is relatively better off than in the other three countries. A democratic structure of government has only just been established at local and national levels. Helvetas overall involvement in Bhutan: 32 years; in the specific case study project: 7 years.
- In **Guatemala**, in the midst of a protracted civil war largely opposing undemocratic and military governments, Helvetas centred its support to large sectors of the poor and often

indigenous rural population in a number of fields: agricultural improvement on private lands, strengthening of social organisations, community based health and drinking water schemes and providing grass roots bases for peace building. Rural poverty levels are high and natural resources degrading severely. Helvetas overall involvement in Guatemala: 36 years; in the specific case study project: 12 years.

- In **Mali**, the emphasis was in a number of productive (agriculture) and service sectors (water supply) and since the late nineties on decentralisation and democratic processes to which it contributed substantially through various forms of support, partnerships and collaboration with local CSOs and local to national government structures (Helvetas 2007a). The natural resource, agricultural and therefore rural livelihood situation has severely deteriorated in the last decade due to successive droughts resulting sometimes in severe conflict between settled agriculturalists and semi-nomadic or nomadic herders due to competition for the same resources (water and land). Helvetas also implemented activities aimed at conflict prevention and management. Helvetas overall involvement in Mali: 31 years; in the specific case study project: 6 years.
- In the **Dominican Republic**, Helvetas initially worked in a number of sectors with different local and national partners. Faced with uncoordinated and weak government institutions, and in a context of increased rural poverty and a degrading natural resource base, it initiated in 1986 a multi-partnership led environmental conservation programme with some national government agencies and NGOs. This multi-partnership programme aimed at testing and promoting improved agricultural technologies adapted to livelihoods in different rural areas of the country. This is the only case study in which co-management and protection of the non private natural resource base (biodiversity, forestry, watershed management) was specifically aimed at with participation of the local communities. Overall Helvetas involvement in the Dominican Republic: 21 years; in the specific case study project: 4 years.

## HELVETAS' APPROACHES IN EVOLVING DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS

Since improving local governance was not a primary aim of the four Helvetas supported projects, the discussion therefore concentrates on answering the initial question of the publication (Section 1.1) "Natural resource management – a means to promote good local governance?" within the context of how national policy and institutional frameworks as well as Helvetas approaches have evolved. The short answer is that in each case study the search for ways to improve natural resource management in a manner which benefits local populations has been a means to promoting good local governance. However, a number of conditions and principles affect the extent to which both natural resource management and local governance are effectively improved to the benefit of rural populations.

Over the years of Helvetas' involvement in the four countries and specific areas, the national institutional contexts have changed and pressure on natural resources has increased; the latter have to a greater (Guatemala, Mali, Dominican Republic) or lesser (Bhutan) extent become further degraded and rural poverty has increased as a result. To varying degrees, and partly due to donor and Helvetas support, several forms of decentralisation and democratisation have developed. On the basis of changing development paradigms (e.g. livelihood approach, human rights based approach) and lessons learned, Helvetas' development principles, capacities, approaches and strategies have also evolved. Helvetas' basic approach to what is now aimed at in the context of natural resources as defined in this publication (i.e. the equitable and sustainable improvement of rural people's livelihoods through

better management of their surrounding natural resources, and particularly forests) has been to:

- Empower the right holders (the rural population) to formulate, claim and obtain their rights to manage and use their surrounding natural resources in a way which will contribute to a dignified and sustainable existence in the long term; and to identify, formulate and demand the type of support and services to be delivered by the concerned duty bearers. This has necessitated the development or reinforcement of equitable local civil society institutions;
- Support attitude change and capacity building amongst duty bearers (elected and administrative local bodies) in order to ensure that the appropriate support and services to right holders will be increasingly delivered efficiently, effectively and equitably;
- Promote the development of clearly defined policies and legislation which enable mutually beneficial participatory and collaborative arrangements between right holders and local duty bearers; this has necessitated that a number of rights and responsibilities be devolved to local people, their communities, their elected local representatives and local government administration, and that their respective roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and in a way which promotes their mutual accountability, reinforcement and collaboration (see figure 9);
- Foresee and encourage the development of a local private sector which respects equitable benefit sharing arrangements with right holders and duty bearers.

FIGURE 9

### Helvetas' approach to the improvement of local governance

Demand and provision of services would include technical advice and support, planning, administration, budgeting, etc.

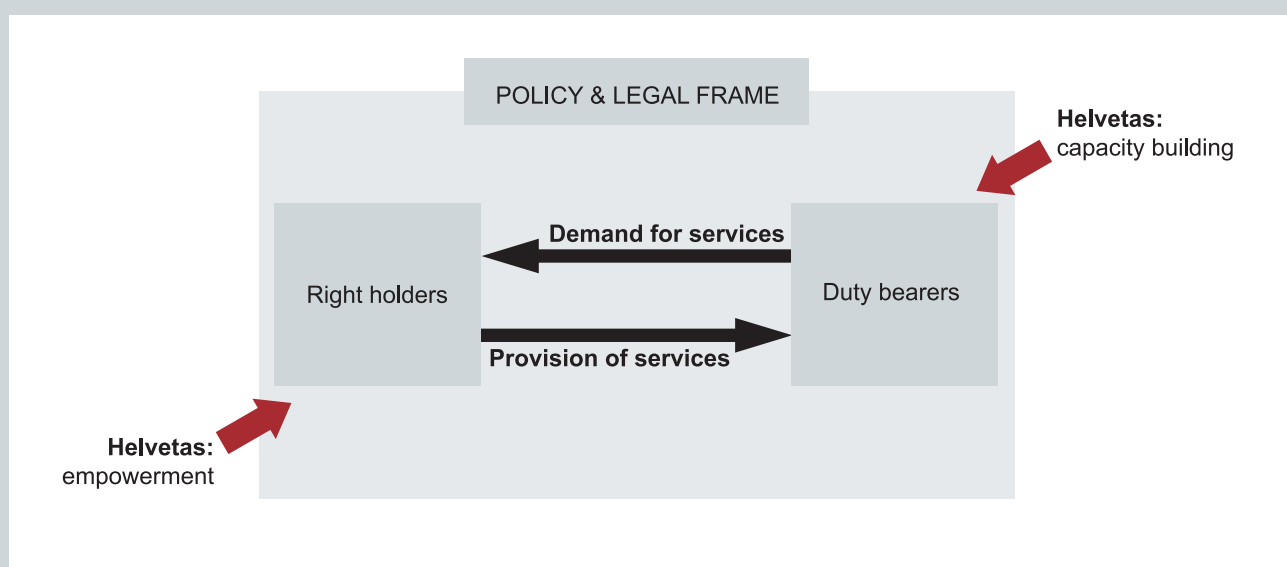


Figure 10 illustrates the positive feed back processes between sustainable resource management for equitably improved livelihoods and improved local governance. The processes necessitate that rights and efficient and effective services, as needed and requested by an empowered rural population, are provided by the legislative framework and by an appropriate mix of public and private sector institutions which respect the principle of subsidiarity. This is aimed to be achieved through multi-stakeholder participatory and collaborative resource management processes and arrangements.

In a good local governance situation, sustainable and equitable natural resource management can be achieved by adhering to locally developed management plans and multi-stakeholder agreements, and through social rather than police control, when these incorporate the traditions and rightful interests of local people (including those of minorities and other disadvantaged groups) (see figure 10, box at the bottom left). Natural resources which are managed in such a way are more likely to generate sustainable income (in a way which is also equitable), and to continuously render ecological services which may also be of importance to stakeholders outside the area under management.

The following four aspects of participatory and collaborative natural resource management are the “pillars” which underpin the improvement of local governance (see figure 10, box at the top right).

- **Participation** in making decisions concerning natural resource management and equitable use is a fundamental precondition for sustainable rural development. A change process to which local people contribute is more strongly rooted in society and has a better chance of success than one which is imposed. Participation is understood by Helvetas as a process through which all stakeholders are encouraged to voice their interest, that decisions are made on the basis of consensus rather than by majority vote, and that all stakeholders are involved in the planning, execution, monitoring and control of activities. Since a wide range of the population depends on natural resources in one way or the other as direct or indirect beneficiaries (the latter more so through forest environmental services), the search for ways to improve management is well suited to address local needs and concerns. In the case studies presented, the search for solutions to water resource related issues (all case studies), community subsistence benefits and income generation from forest products (Bhutan, Guatemala, Dominican Republic), and the development or reinforcement of democratic structures in local management groups (all case studies) are important bases through which overall local governance can be and is largely being improved. Further, demands for improved local governance are contributing to improved governance at meso and national level (Bhutan, Guatemala, Mali).

**FIGURE 10**

**How sustainable natural resource management and good local governance are interlinked**

**OUTCOME:**  
**Improved Livelihoods**

Participation, awareness,  
raising and empowerment  
respecting local culture  
traditions and knowledge,  
collaboration

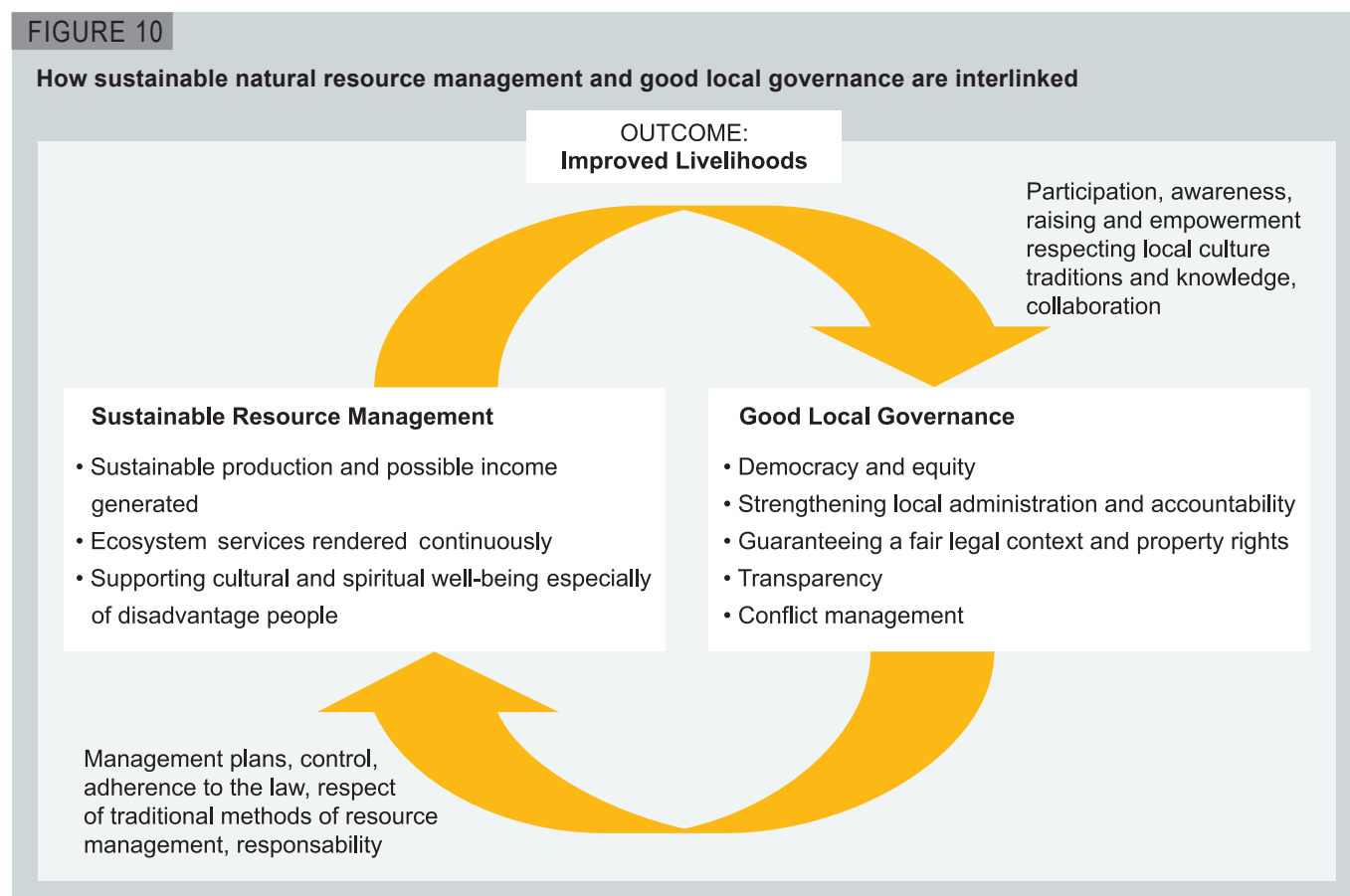
**Sustainable Resource Management**

- Sustainable production and possible income generated
- Ecosystem services rendered continuously
- Supporting cultural and spiritual well-being especially of disadvantage people

**Good Local Governance**

- Democracy and equity
- Strengthening local administration and accountability
- Guaranteeing a fair legal context and property rights
- Transparency
- Conflict management

Management plans, control,  
adherence to the law, respect  
of traditional methods of resource  
management, responsibility



- Management of natural resources is also an entry point for **awareness-raising and empowerment** through experience-based learning. The more all stakeholders are aware not only of ecological processes but also of their importance for different interest groups, the more they can negotiate, compromise and decide on the basis of mutual understanding and concrete information, thereby providing a stronger and more coherent basis for the sustainable use of natural resources.
- **Respecting local culture, traditions and knowledge** in the process of improving natural resource management arrangements is more than a philanthropic ideal. Many traditional natural resource use strategies, developed and modified over past generations, are sustainable. In Bhutan, the rural population had been using forest resources wisely for generations, and the nationalisation of forests was an important factor contributing to their degradation. In Guatemala, the Maya knew how to live from the forests without damaging this essential means of subsistence, but colonisation, inappropriate policies and legislation, the absence of respect for traditional resource ownership and rights, as well as overpopulation led to increased pressure on natural resources. This does not imply that new strategies and modern (scientific) knowledge should not be applied – rather that they should be combined with traditional strategies and knowledge which are appropriate in the current local ecological, socio-economic and political contexts.
- Effective participation of an empowered local population leads to increased overall **collaboration**, since the concerned stakeholders (primary and secondary beneficiaries, legislative and executive bodies, service providers) become aware of each other's needs, interests, capacities and responsibilities, and have to cooperate if they want to reach their mutually negotiated objectives. Collaboration increases sustainability because it can only be achieved through negotiation and compromise which respects different interests, thus leading to stronger societal foundations for the introduced changes.

## 7.2 ANALYSIS OF THE LINKAGES BETWEEN IMPROVED NRM AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

We now analyse the extent to which the projects have been able to promote an improvement in local governance through participatory and collaborative natural resource management. The analysis concentrates on equitable natural resource management and benefit sharing arrangements in the four case studies presented, and the key elements linked to improving local governance outlined in Figure 10.

### BHUTAN

While a democratic legislative and executive system was only introduced at national and local level in early 2008, the Par-

ticipatory Forest Management Project had been promoting democratic principles amongst traditional forest using communities, and in accordance to national policy in the forestry sector, since a number of years. The empowerment and capacity building of local communities had already been underway under the project through the younger generation of forest service staff specifically trained for community forestry promotion in anticipation of policy and legislative change which would provide exclusive forest management and utilisation rights to traditional forest using communities (forest land remaining under State ownership). The handing over of management and use rights to communities was initially very slow due to reticence from some senior forest staff who had been trained for State forest management, and to the initial government interest to restrict forest hand over to degraded areas for replanting and regeneration, which was not particularly attractive to communities.

However, the combination of the institutionalisation of democracy at national and local level, with a change to senior forest service staff supportive of community forestry and of handing over also productive forest, has resulted in a very rapid increase since 2007 in the number of forests officially handed over to community groups under approved and collaboratively and equitably negotiated management plans. The approved plans guarantee management and utilisation rights over forest products to the communities according to the agreed plan which defines sustainable harvesting levels and equitable decision making and benefit sharing amongst community members. Gender considerations are taken into account and initial results show that women do participate to some extent in decision making and that their specific needs are taken care of.

These plans are initially discussed with and need approval from locally elected and administrative bodies, thus promoting democracy and strengthening local administration and political accountability. Due to the relatively large area of handed over forest area per household, rural communities are confident that they will obtain sustainable and equitably distributed benefits from such an arrangement, including some income generation; indications are that harvesting levels may so far be conservative. Forest products in excess to group subsistence needs can be sold, and forest product processing industries are being established by small local community groups. Some groups have already invested forest income into other community development activities. The plans necessitate that group accounts are kept by the elected group committees and available to the group members for scrutiny thereby promoting transparency and accountability within the groups.

Under sustainable management, these handed over forests will continue to render ecosystem services, which in Bhutan's case predominantly imply soil and water resource conservation. In some cases, discussions are already underway for local township authorities to pay forest management groups for appropriate water flow and quality origi-

nating from their forest. One major problem which remains unresolved concerns communities which live in national parks where in some cases they incur substantial crop damage and livestock losses from wildlife; this is one aspect where conflict management will be required between local needs and national biodiversity conservation priorities; potential avenues to resolving such conflicts exist since Bhutan derives considerable income from upper market ecotourism.

**Future prospects.** The number of CFMGs is still small (100 nationally, but with a substantial increase more recently, an expected 400 to be established by 2012, and a total of 1'500 to 2'000 CFMGs for forest land destined nationally in the long term for community forestry. The demand from communities for new CFMPs is likely to grow fast now that they see that existing CFMPs provide substantial benefits. Existing CFMPs may require adjusting in light of experiences made (there are suggestions that the maximum allocation of 2,5 ha per household should in places be increased to 5 ha). Further, a number of second generation issues are already anticipated which will require intensive support to established groups: inter CFMG collaboration for improving forest product marketing and processing to obtain economies of scale and better prices (particularly for the export market of Non Wood Forest Products); more intensive forest management to derive optimum yet sustainable benefits, requiring better technical information than actually available. These challenges lead to the clear necessity for a substantial increase in service provision, so far provided by forest staff paid by the government. The project correctly anticipates the need for substantial further support for finding solutions to these issues; the questions related to the long term financial and institutional sustainability of support services will also have to be tackled, such as the development of fiscal revenue derived from the sale of forest products and an attribution of value to forest services. These would have to be apportioned between CFMGs and local, district and national government.

## GUATEMALA

The situation of ProBosques is far more complex to unravel; it is therefore more difficult to attribute linkages between the key elements of Figure 10. In the project area, poverty levels are high, natural resources and agricultural land insufficient to sustain the livelihoods of the majority of the population. The region is the most densely populated area of Central America. 70% of private land is concentrated in 8% of the properties. There has been a long standing and severe conflict over property rights between mainly indigenous people and government (which is partly unresolved as yet since the cadastral survey has not yet covered this part of Guatemala), as well as lack of respect by the authorities for the spiritual well being of the largely indigenous population. ProBosques has managed to show considerable positive results through years of perseverance of support to develop the capacity of municipal government and administration to respond to communities rightful demands for access to manage and obtain benefits from their traditional forest resources. This has been made

largely possible due to strong donor pressure to condition development support to Guatemala on national government decentralising some powers and some budget allocation to local municipalities, as well as on legislative reform providing for civil participation in local governance processes, including the democratic election of municipal mayors. ProBosques has concurrently supported local communities to develop their capacity to negotiate with municipal governments and to render them accountable. It has empowered local communities to take their rightful responsibility to participate on municipal councils. It has also instigated a number of platforms for discussion, consultation and collaboration between communities and municipal governments.

The forest resources had almost disappeared close to human settlements. The steep and degraded slopes are highly prone to erosion resulting in reduced water quality and to increased irregularity in water flows. The value of forests is therefore high in terms of forest products for communities living close by, and high for more distant communities and urban settlements for its water regime protection function. The substantial hydroelectric development potential (and requirement) is jeopardised by the disturbed water regimes. Hence the potential ecosystem service value of degraded forest is high. The second high ecosystem service value is that substantial parts the Western Highlands are also a hotspot of forest biodiversity for which there has been international and national interest to protect. Legislative changes have resulted in forest management and administration in non protected areas to be under community or municipal entities depending on local history and customary rights. However, this is a source of conflict in areas where some communities and municipal entities do not agree on the attribution of access rights and management responsibilities.

ProBosques has successfully managed to develop the technical and managerial capacity of a number of municipalities which are responsible for and finance a technical municipal forest office, as well as of a number of communities to protect, replant (under national government subsidy) and sustainably manage their municipal and community forests. It necessitates several years of effort to reach such results in any one area. Municipalities, to a substantial degree accountable to communities, have invested more than expected in forest development and protection, despite their meagre budgets, and are often sensitive to the need to preserve and improve the ecosystems functions of the forest, particularly for the actual and potential value of water. Forest restoration and replanting is financed by central government according to municipality approved plans. Some communities see forest regeneration as a means of obtaining some income. Communities are aware that in areas where forest has regenerated and water regimes improved, they derive some benefits, and this is particularly the case amongst women.

A number of authors believe that the decentralisation of forest authority to municipalities has had, or has the potential to have a negative impact on at least some local communities.

Central government has delegated the responsibility for forest control and development to municipalities without providing them sufficient resources to fully assume their responsibility in a way which respects local communities' needs. Further, communal forests are being subjected to a number of pressures emanating from internal and external factors (biodiversity conservation, mining, hydroelectric and other infrastructure projects) (e.g. Larson et al. 2008). Some municipal leaders may see interest in these possibilities which may go against local communities if the latter are only to bear the costs of protection without clear alternatives or compensation in return (usually the costs being higher for the poorest families and women who gather fuelwood). The value of ecosystem services should clearly be negotiated in a transparent way, with compensation to those who protect forest services functions. If the equitable benefits from ecotourism do not accrue to concerned local communities who have placed expectation on this potential, their commitment to forest protection and faith in their elected bodies is likely to be severely affected.

ProBosques has by all accounts (including by independent reviews) achieved remarkable results given the very complex nature of the interplay in the linkages between efforts to manage equitably natural resources and to improve local governance. Various modalities of community-municipality, inter-community and inter-municipality cooperation have been tested, recognised as positive and endorsed officially. ProBosques has also, as a result, been of positive influence on some policy and institutional developments at national level.

**Future prospects.** Numerous and complex challenges lie ahead, which will require continued knowledgeable and sensitive facilitating support, in the search for further and consolidated improved local governance in support of equitable sustainable natural resource management.

## MALI

PREGESCO works under conditions of severe competition by different poor rural stakeholders (settled farmers and semi-nomadic herders) for access to ever scarcer and degraded natural resources. Traditionally, a largely mutually beneficial relationship existed between agriculturalists and livestock herders, because of the previously more favourable climatic conditions and lower human population. With the return of droughts and other pressures on the resources and the environment, it is inevitable that the livelihood support systems are at, or rather often beyond, breaking point from ecological, farming system and social organisation perspectives. Livestock herders have lost traditional grazing lands and water in the north as farmers moved in during the wetter 1950s, with less sustainable agricultural technologies, and therefore resulting in more negative impact on agricultural production. Farmers understandably want to protect the land they cultivate and the scarce water resources for their needs. This has often resulted in serious conflict, sometimes leading to bloodshed and/or to time consuming and expensive legal procedures. Democratic elections from municipal level upwards

exist and fiscal authority and autonomy have been largely decentralised to municipalities. However, the respective roles and responsibilities of municipal authorities and de-concentrated ministerial services at district level are still unclear. Importantly, responsibility for natural resource management has still not been transferred to municipalities. The various laws related to natural resource management are often contradictory, frequently ignore local realities, and some have not yet come into force, such as the Pastoral Charter and Agricultural Framework legislation which are of particular relevance as guiding framework conditions for the issues at stake in the project area.

PREGESCO's main support has therefore been based largely on the Do-no-Harm planning and management tool to strengthen the capacity of all concerned local stakeholders (CSOs, NGOs, representatives of farmer and herder groups) and municipalities to develop and institutionalise, through local mitigation groups, equitable and inclusive conflict prevention mechanisms adapted to local contexts: negotiation, consensual, and transparent decision making and collaborative control over agro-pastoral and water resource access on the basis of equitable rights and benefit sharing. The project has facilitated linkages between mitigation groups in different areas to develop coherent management and control mechanisms for semi-nomadic populations who rely on resources covering supra municipal levels. The results are encouraging in that close to 80% of conflicts can now be resolved at local level resulting in substantial savings in corruption or legal fees which are sometimes used for community service development projects (health, education). More equitable and transparent decisions are made; greater guarantee of equitable access to natural resources is achieved; the capacity and interest of municipalities to contribute to problem solving and to plan development activities in a more coherent, relevant, transparent and accountable way is increased. PREGESCO also promotes advocacy and lobbying at higher government levels on the basis of lessons learned to contribute to policy and legislative changes.

**Future prospects.** Despite improvements in local governance and substantially reduced conflicts, the capacity for the natural resource base to contribute sustainably to increased income and natural ecosystem services (water) is still severely limited.

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The CAD-Bahoruco project was only implemented for 4 years. However, over the previous 10 years the institutional arrangement of the consortium (CAD) made up of several national NGOs and government agencies had been successfully tested in other regions of the Dominican Republic, and CAD was registered as an NGO in its own right. Helvetas' choice of this form of new institutional arrangement for implementing rural development projects was chosen on the basis of its previous poor experience with a number of government agency partners, whose implementation capacity was weak and who

showed little interest in the inter-agency collaboration required for a range of rural development issues. CAD's working principles had already been to promote multi-stakeholder arrangements for strengthening co-management of natural resources and based on local populations being involved from the moment of activity conception, with equitable decision making, the aim being that they would identify themselves as the owners of development activities. Other key principles included: sustainable development; facilitation and lobbying for more supportive frame conditions in the environmental sector; gender balanced development; inter-institutional cooperation. CAD was aimed at being an organisation working essentially at the meso level supporting local CBOs, NGOs, and municipalities.

For the last phase of Helvetas support to CAD, the Bahoruco range was chosen for a new project, on the basis that the mountainous area had a high and internationally recognised biodiversity value, severe environmental and agricultural land degradation, shifting cultivation, and a high incidence of absentee land owners whose land was often cultivated by illegal Haitian immigrants. There is high interest from downstream populations and cities for upstream watershed conservation due to increasing incidences of landslides and flooding in the rainy season and drying up of water sources in the dry season, and interest locally for better water quality. It was seen as a pilot project further testing the institutional consolidation of CAD, with emphasis on its management, organisational and controlling capabilities, while decentralising operational activities to a multi-partnership of farmer groups and associations, local NGOs, Municipalities and local representatives of the State Secretariat for Agriculture and the Secretariat for the Environment and Natural Resources.

The project managed in a short time to facilitate various forms of multi-partnership arrangements and agreements based on equitably negotiated decisions between various right holder categories and duty bearers (line agency representatives and municipalities) and other service providers to undertake a number of land management improvements (agriculture, sustainable forest management and protection, aquifer protection). 54 micro-businesses (25 % run by women) have been established with the support of a competitive grant system, and based on sales of local produce aimed at value addition of local agricultural products or products dependent on sustainable forest management (e.g. honey, handicrafts). Democratic principles concerning decisions on how to improve overall natural resource sustainability (agricultural production, forest and watershed protection) were substantially and convincingly increased, including for illegal immigrants (Haitian facilitators were even employed) who had no formal rights and for tenant Dominican farmers who had limited land rights. This could be achieved because, even though the institutional framework at national level was not actively supportive and often lacked coherence, the proposals for activities negotiated by farmers groups with the municipalities and the line agencies working in the field were then endorsed by the municipalities. The project contributed to the establishment of

Municipal Environmental Units in close collaboration with local entities of the 2 national agency institutions working in the area. The Municipal forums, which included representatives of the various local stakeholders mentioned above, achieved improved management of river use, solid waste disposal, soil and water conservation, and of agricultural and forest lands. The high degree of equitable multi-stakeholder collaboration resulted in greater involvement of women in decision making and a marked absence of conflicts. Although not specifically mentioned, one can assume that the local line agency representatives will have provided feedback to their superiors at national level concerning the benefits of such an approach and strategy, and that the representatives of involved municipalities will also have shared their experience with municipalities in surrounding areas.

Accountability and transparency were improved since respective roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group were established consensually through negotiation, and also since an independent multi-stakeholder committee was established to evaluate activity funding requests, and reports, selection procedures and results were made public.

**Future prospects.** Helvetas' support to the project has terminated. Whether the processes which have been initiated in the area, will continue (with or without CAD support), remains an important and open question. If CAD support has also stopped because of curtailment of Helvetas support, then it is legitimate to question whether it was responsible towards local stakeholders to initiate such a pilot project at all, without ensuring that a number of processes could be consolidated, and that some important as yet untackled issues be taken up. There is high expectation amongst the local population that ecotourism based on biodiversity conservation in the protected reserve will provide additional income. Given that ecotourism often attracts external business interests, there are strong risks that without continued support for equitable and consensual decisions amongst local stakeholders on equitable benefit sharing from ecotourism, local stakeholders will lose out, conflicts may arise and the trust which has built up amongst them may be eroded. The other major issue of increased local costs of protection of resources with benefits of ecosystem services (water quality and quantity) accruing to downstream users, would also need to be tackled. Finally, since there is little analysis of fiscal revenue at different government levels and of budget allocation by different national or external sources, it is not possible to state whether the project was also aiming at greater local financial capacity for sustaining development. Nevertheless this would be an important issue for the future.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the main conclusions from the analysis of the case studies presented. It points out Helvetas' competence in promoting improvements in governance through participatory natural resource management and reveals which aspects of the approach are working well and where the future challenges lie.

### 8.1 EXPERIENCE FROM THE FOUR CASE STUDIES

Experience shows that the promotion of equitable, participatory and collaborative natural resource management is a good local entry point into the complex field of improving local governance, especially because it requires an interdisciplinary and integrative approach. It is just this complexity, with its focus on common-property resources on which a range of stakeholders depend for their livelihoods, that makes natural resource management an all-embracing strategic means through which improvements in local governance can be achieved and demonstrated, and recognised as beneficial by the local population.

In this learning-by-doing process the evolving local natural resource management groups and their collaborative agreements with other stakeholders can serve as the basis of an evolving civil society. If certain key principles are adhered to, such as inclusiveness in decision making and equitable benefit and cost sharing (including issues concerning gender and disadvantaged groups), it can give a positive example of democratic, transparent and accountable governance. One may safely assume that when a community is able to sustainably manage and equitably derive benefits from its natural resources, particularly when the resources are scarce and thereby need the development of consensually agreed management and utilisation rules, it is also capable of meeting other difficult development challenges.

Sustainable participatory and collaborative natural resource management and good local governance mutually reinforce each other, since coherent and mutually supportive strategies are needed to achieve both. The greater the pressure on resources, the more stakeholders rely on the same resources (e.g. Mali), the more official and unofficial institutional rules, regulations, practices and attitudes are unsupportive or counterproductive to community participation and collaboration in decision making and equitable benefit sharing, the greater the challenge to make good governance grow through sustainable natural resource management (e.g. Mali and Guatemala). The case of the Dominican Republic shows that in a situation of a national institutional vacuum at local level, it is easier for good governance to be established at local level through mutually reinforcing strategies by local communities and democratically elected local bodies, who together aim to develop sustainable beneficial natural resource management. The Bhutan case study shows clearly that with coherent

and supportive national policy and legislation for community forestry development, supported by committed and qualified technicians and facilitators, the scaling up or spread of community forestry and associated improvements in local governance can be very rapid.

Through their strong and validated field experience over long periods of time, all projects have contributed to greater or lesser extents to national policy development in ways which have led to at least some, if not substantial improvements in the framework conditions for enabling improved local governance. Participation in only one sector (such as NRM, health care, infrastructure) and relying on only one strategy in terms of institutional partners will usually not be sufficient to achieve lasting societal changes. In the four countries of the case studies, Helvetas had already gained substantial development experience in a number of rural sectors and with a number of different partners. This helped Helvetas to identify strategically appropriate types of implementation partners, who had the potential for developing the necessary capacities and suitable attitudes, and with the right timing in strategic choices (Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Bhutan). Development practitioners need to apply a "critical mass" of mutually supportive strategies and issues in order to reach an overall and lasting impact on the governance situation. Depending on the country and project context, the required critical mass threshold will vary and has to be assessed according to a range of carefully selected indicators. Several promising combinations of strategies and issues are conceivable, as for example the combination of participatory natural resource management with vocational training, community development planning, health care, or rural infrastructure.

### 8.2 PROGRESS SO FAR

Progress has been made in all projects on various key elements of good local governance, and largely through support for either local populations improving natural resource management (Bhutan, Dominican Republic) and/or through substantial support for conflict resolution between different interest groups competing for the same resources (Guatemala, Mali). Progress on the following key elements of good local governance and sustainable resource management referred to in Figure 10 can be confirmed.

#### GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- **Democracy and equity.** Overall improvement in Bhutan and the Dominican Republic; substantial improvements in Mali but the issue of equitable access to water and lands remains a problem; substantial improvements in Guatemala although gender issues have not been sufficiently addressed, and some communities, and particularly women and the poorest, have seen access to their traditional forest and grazing resources curtailed by external institutional factors (the establishment of municipal forests and biodiversity conservation areas).

- **Local government / administration.** In all cases, the capacity and commitment of local government has improved. Local communities and civil society organisations have entered into collaborative arrangements with them over natural resource management on the basis of their increasingly positive support and involvement to find locally adapted institutional solutions. Their accountability is recorded as having improved in Mali, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, whereas in Bhutan this is not perceived as an important issue. The capacity of the local administration and government services to support local communities in improving natural resource management has greatly improved in Bhutan, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic as they are either accountable to or closely collaborate with local government.
- **Legal context and property rights.** The legal context and access rights to forest resources have dramatically improved in Bhutan. In Guatemala (e.g. lack of cadastral survey) and particularly in Mali, contradictory legislations are still in force and some are unsuited to local realities; property and access rights are still disputed. In the Dominican Republic, property and formal access rights are non-existent for many Haitian farmers who are generally illegal immigrants. But in all three cases, the projects have facilitated processes which have led to locally elaborated rules and regulations over management and access rights in co-ordination with locally elected governments.
- **Transparency.** Transparency has improved very substantially in all project areas, both within and between communities and between these and local government and administration. This is not surprising given that transparency goes hand in hand with trust building, both being necessary for the achievements according to the key elements of improved local governance mentioned above.
- **Conflict management.** So far there has been little need for substantial conflict management in Bhutan; where some conflict has arisen locally in the context of community forestry it has been solved with the support of forest extension staff and locally elected representatives. In Mali, one of the main objectives of the project has been to support the development of locally negotiated and agreed solutions to severe conflict between agriculturalist and transhumant livestock herders, with the support and endorsement by municipalities; the outcome of these processes and arrangements is very encouraging: close to 80% of such conflicts are now settled locally. In Guatemala, substantial conflict reduction has also been achieved through arrangements elaborated locally between communities and municipalities. So far no open conflict seems to prevail in the Dominican case study.

## SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- **Sustainable income.** Sustainable income generation from community forest resources has started in Bhutan, and the potential is considerable in many areas. Little income generation has so far resulted in Guatemala from forest resources since the main issues revolve around regenerating degraded forests; as stated above, some communities and particularly women incur higher costs than previously to satisfy their daily firewood needs, due to restrictions on collection in regenerating areas, in protected municipal forests and in biodiversity conservation areas. In Mali, no improvements in income generation are reported. However, the project facilitated conflict management arrangements have resulted in a substantial reduction of expenditure for legal procedures and bribes. In the Dominican Republic, while no figures are available, improved agricultural production with higher value crops and the project supported establishment of a number of locally managed micro-enterprises would indicate that sustainable income has increased at least for some of the population, including women. In both the Dominican Republic and Guatemala high hopes are pinned by the local population on income which they hope to obtain from the development of ecotourism associated with the protected biodiversity conservation areas.
- **Ecosystem services.** Apart from fertility transfer from community lands through litter collection or manure application on agricultural land, which is of importance in all case studies, the main issue currently concerns water in Guatemala, Mali and the Dominican Republic, and to a lesser extent Bhutan. In both Guatemala and the Dominican Republic the project areas are in the upper watersheds of rivers which flow to areas which are densely populated. The downstream beneficiaries have increasingly suffered from severe floods in the rainy season and water shortages during the dry season, due to degradation in the upper slopes. While in both project areas some improvements in water flow and quality are reported, which are also appreciated by the local communities (due to reduced soil erosion and landslides), the scale of the problem is immense, as is the potential for further improvements (on which partly depends the establishment of hydroelectric schemes in Guatemala).

As a result of the progress achieved on the above key elements, it can be stated that livelihoods have substantially improved in the CFMGs established in Bhutan (except perhaps for those within national parks), and at least amongst a proportion of the farmers and women in the Dominican Republic. In Mali, livelihoods appear not to have improved, except that conflicts have been reduced and legal and corruption expenditure thereby substantially diminished. In Guatemala, there have been improvements in livelihoods in some areas and in others a worsening situation (which may be temporary until forests regenerate). The potential for future livelihood improvements in Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Bhutan currently exists on the basis of payments for ecosystem services rendered to downstream populations and industries, and of ecotourism.

## 8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE

### CHALLENGES

A number of key recommendations and challenges emerge from the descriptions, analyses and lessons learned from the four project case studies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Long term project support, based on field realities and trust building with a range of partners from local to meso level, is of essence. Appropriate and coherent contributions to policy development can only be made on the basis of continued involvement in field realities and understanding their complex ecological, social and power relationships, as well as on their developments.
- As the case studies clearly show in terms of the range of institutional and partnership arrangements for project implementation, it can be stated that there is no one best arrangement applicable or most appropriate to all situations. Against current mainstream thinking, the case of the Dominican Republic clearly shows how successful and necessary it was for Helvetas to be instrumental in setting up a new multi-partnership NGO given the existing institutional context of the country at the time. The long term sustainability of such an approach can only be assessed in the future.
- A more systematic application of gender, wealth and ethnic disaggregated Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation tools is necessary to understand better the evolving processes and the impact of project interventions on these processes. This is not only important for Helvetas' institutional learning and for improving its intervention strategies to guarantee the application of its working principles and approaches (figure 2), but also so that policy contribution within the donor community and with national governments is based on sound arguments and facts.
- Greater involvement of the private sector in collaborative arrangements is necessary in contexts where they have a current impact, or are likely to have a future impact (negative or positive) on governance and the outcome of natural resources management arrangements for cost and benefit sharing (Figure 1).

### FUTURE CHALLENGES

- A major issue which is already of local people's concern, and which will intensify, is the issue of compensation arrangements for environmental services provided to outsiders by the resources managed by local people.
- There is no or little interest from local communities in areas set aside for biodiversity conservation. Indeed they largely incur costs from these externally imposed restrictions. As

with the above issue, ways must be found to ensure that local communities get a fair share of the value of biodiversity conservation.

- Where the interest and possibilities for sustainable resource management are high (e.g. Bhutan) and the local demand for scaling up is substantial, a number of issues will emerge such as the human and budgetary resources required for further scaling up at the same time as addressing demands for support to solve second generation issues in already established local management groups.
- The question of how to achieve maximum or optimum local value addition on locally harvested forest products will become a major issue in some intervention; this will require the development of new capabilities and partnership arrangements.
- The issue of appropriate apportionment of fiscal revenue and budgets between different government levels and in support of greater financial independence at municipality level will need careful attention, so that the municipalities can effectively respond to legitimate community demands and assume their responsibilities.
- Helvetas is well aware of these important challenges. It is committed to support its partners in finding the most appropriate approaches and solutions to these challenges in the context of locally and nationally specific conditions.

## GLOSSARY

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Out of the plethora of existing definitions, two of them shall be given here.

Helvetas (Helvetas, 2007a) defines civil society as the space between the state and individual citizens where the latter can develop autonomous, organised and collective activities. Civil society comprises all formal and informal private non-profit organisations which are self initiated and regulated and have voluntary membership (interest groups, associations and service agencies with aims of public benefit, coalitions, unions, cooperatives, political parties, etc.). A distinction can be made between:

- Community Based Organisations (CBOs), which are membership organisations, from the grassroots level to apex entities, and which pursue the goal of improved living conditions for their own members.
- Associations, such as environmental and human rights groups ("civic/advocacy" associations or service-delivering organisations, and very often development NGOs), pursue broader objectives for the "common good". Some of these can take on an important role as intermediaries between membership organisations and donors and/or the government.

The London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society (London School of Economics, 2008) defines civil society as the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil society often comprises organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

## DECENTRALISATION

Improving governance often goes hand in hand with decentralisation, ceding administrative responsibilities (and to varying degrees, powers) to a local level. Decentralisation is understood as a process of state reform. It refers to the transfer of political and/or fiscal and/or administrative decision-making powers and responsibilities from central government to regional and/or local levels. Based on the governmental priorities, various forms and degrees of decentralisation can be distinguished (Helvetas, 2007a):

- Political decentralisation: It aims at improving the active participation of the population in political decision-making processes. Hence, locally elected authorities are accountable to the electorate and represent their interests in political decision-making processes.
- Administrative decentralisation: Responsibilities to fulfil state duties are distributed to lower governmental authorities. These include planning, operational management and in part also the financing of infrastructures and services. Three main forms of administrative decentralisation can be distinguished:
  - De-concentration refers to the redistribution of decision-making competence and responsibility to intermediate or local units of the central government. It represents the weakest form of decentralisation.
  - Delegation is a stronger form of administrative decentralisation and refers to the redistribution of decision-making competence and operational responsibility to authorities which maintain a certain degree of independence from the central government and yet have to report to it.
  - Devolution is the strongest form of administrative decentralisation. It transfers powers for decision-making, finances and management from the central administration to independent local governments, usually referring to municipalities with locally elected bodies and clearly defined territorial responsibilities.
- Fiscal decentralisation: the responsibility and competence to acquire and use financial and other resources are distributed to lower elected government authorities.

## DO-NO-HARM

The Do-no-Harm concept is a conflict-sensitive development planning and management tool that focuses on development aid's interactions with conflict settings. It tries to avoid possible misuse of financial and material assistance as well as the involuntary intensification of conflicts. It analyses effects of development cooperation assistance concerning combatants, distribution of assistance, politico-societal legitimacy, implicit ethical messages, and direct and indirect overall effects on a society in conflict.

## EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment means the support to, and mobilisation of human resources of the marginalised parts of the population (such as women, indigenous people, ethnic minorities). Empowerment is a process and a goal and is characterised by the support given to minorities to claim their rights in order to help them shape their own future and to be adequately represented and involved in the decision-making processes.

## GOVERNANCE

Governance can be described as the totality of institutions, rules and traditions that steer, rule and regulate the processes within a social or political system, such as a state, a community or an organisation. Governance refers to the ways and institutions through which individual citizens and groups can express their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences.

Over the last decades, the concept of governance has been increasingly used to understand and influence the relations between different actors and not only those of the state as the dominant ones. Thus, as a process, governance operates in an organisation of any size: from a community or a small grass root organisation, to small or medium enterprises, local and national governments, multinational companies, international organisations, and up to international collaborative attempts at governing global issues such as climate change.

To characterize a given governance system, four main criteria are helpful:

- Rules and values (including social frame conditions, laws and regulations, as well as property, access and user rights)
- Power (distribution, relations, decision making area of influence)
- Structure and organisation (including roles and responsibilities)
- Processes (including the implementation of laws and regulations, agreements and conventions, and the interaction between different stakeholders, as well as the actual functioning of the organisation)

## GOOD GOVERNANCE

The term 'good governance' generally refers to the collaboration and division of roles between the state, civil society and the private sector, which are characterised by the principles of participation, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, effectiveness, equity and non-discrimination.

Good governance involves the public sector orienting its work towards citizens' concerns in a transparent and accountable way, the private sector acting with social responsibility, and citizens being able and motivated to participate in and contribute to public decision making.

Good governance implies a clear benefit to society as a whole. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard and taken into account in decision making over the allocation of resources.

## GOOD NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE

Good natural resource governance refers to local people's participation in managing the natural resources that they themselves use, in a sustainable manner and in partnership with other stakeholders (government departments, NGOs, the private sector, etc.). The type of partnership entailed may vary but should be equitable, transparent and based on mutual accountability.

Legislation for good natural resource governance requires that procedures are clear, transparent, and as simple as possible. This contrasts with the realities in many situations where (intentionally or unintentionally) local people are disadvantaged by the existing procedures established for resource management.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| ADISSAH  | Association pour le Développement Intégré dans la Savanne et le Sahel |
| AEN      | Aide de l'Eglise Norvégienne  |
| BARC     | Bureau d'Appui et Conseils aux Collectivités Rurales                  |
| CAD      | Consortio Ambiental Dominicano  |
| CANARI   | The Caribbean Natural Resource Institute                              |
| CBO(s)   | Community Based Organisation(s)                                       |
| CEPAP    | Centre de Promotion Agro-Pastoral                                     |
| CF       | Community Forestry  |
| CFMG(s)  | Community Forestry Management Group(s)                                |
| CFMP(s)  | Community Forestry Management Plan(s)                                 |
| CIM      | Centrum für Internationale Migration und Entwicklung                  |
| CMC(s)   | Comité Municipal de Co-administración                                 |
| COCAFE   | Consejo Dominicano del Café   |
| COCODE   | Consejo Comunal de Desarrollo   |
| CODEDE   | Consejo Departamental de Desarrollo                                   |
| CODEUR   | Consejo Regional de Desarrollo Urbano y Rural                         |
| COMUDE   | Consejo Municipal de Desarrollo                                       |
| CONAP    | Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas                                  |
| CSO      | Civil Society Organisation  |
| DAPMA    | Departamento de Áreas Protegidas y Medio Ambiente                     |
| DED      | German Development Service  |
| Diakonia | Christian development organization based in Sweden                    |
| GDP      | Gross Domestic Product  |
| GEF      | Global Environmental Facility   |
| GobDom   | Gobierno Dominicano   |

|          |  |        |  |
|----------|--|--------|--|
| IAD      | Instituto Agrario Dominicano   | UNEP   | United Nations Environment Programme                             |
| ILO      | International Labour Organisation  | UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| INAB     | Instituto Nacional de Bosques  | WWF    | World Wide Fund for Nature                                       |
| IUCN     | International Union for Conservation of Nature   |        |  |
| MAB      | Man and Biosphere Programme (by UNESCO)  |        |  |
| MAGA     | Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación  |        |  |
| masl     | meters above sea level   |        |  |
| MDGs     | Millennium Development Goals   |        |  |
| NGO      | Non-Governmental Organisation  |        |  |
| NRM      | Natural Resource Management  |        |  |
| OFM      | Oficina Forestal Municipal   |        |  |
| PA       | Programa de Conservación Ambiental   |        |  |
| PFMP     | Participatory Forest Management Project  |        |  |
| PINFOR   | Programa de Incentivos Forestales  |        |  |
| PME      | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation  |        |  |
| PREGESCO | Programme de Prévention et Gestion de Conflits liés à l'accès et au contrôle des ressources naturelles |        |  |
| PRM      | Parques Regionales Municipales   |        |  |
| RGoB     | Royal Government of Bhutan   |        |  |
| SDC      | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation   |        |  |
| SEA      | Secretaría de Estado de Agricultura  |        |  |
| SEMARN   | Secretaría de Estado de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales  |        |  |
| SFD      | Social Forestry Division   |        |  |
| vSIDA    | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency   |        |  |
| SNV      | Netherlands Development Organisation   |        |  |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme   |        |  |



## EARLIER PUBLICATIONS

### Publication No. 1

“25 Steps to safe water and sanitation”, May 2000.

This publication describes the successful “community orientated stepwise approach”, developed by Helvetas in Nepal in an integrated project which includes the contraction of drinking water and sanitation facilities as well as the introduction of better hygienic practices.

### Publication No. 2

“10 key stages towards effective participatory curriculum development”, December 2001.

This publication describes a methodology to improve the quality of education and training through participatory approach. The information builds on the experiences of Helvetas in the Social Forestry Support Programme in Vietnam and other Helvetas-supported projects in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Lesotho and Kyrgyzstan.

### Publication No. 3

“Clients First! A Rapid Market Appraisal Tool Kit”, June 2004.

Clients First! Provides the theoretical background and experiences from various Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) events. RMA is a participatory approach to explore demand and market opportunities. The publication describes the method using practical examples of agricultural products and sums up the RMA lessons learnt in the two Helvetas partner countries Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam.

### Publication No. 4

“You pay for what you get. From budget financing to result based payments”, August 2005.

Four case studies, from ex-Soviet Union, Asia and Africa, show how development projects can be financed through payments for the results instead of through funding inputs. The publication describes practical examples, analyses successes, and points out critical issues and suggests preconditions for the transfer of lessons learnt to other contexts. The nature of services, their quantity, quality and price are at the centre of the interest rather than micromanagement issues.

### Publication No. 5

“Trail bridge building in the Himalayas. Enhanced access, improved livelihoods”, May 2007.

This publication describes experiences of Helvetas’ involvement in trail bridge building in Nepal and Bhutan. Experiences and learnings gained after four decades of Helvetas’ involvement and financial contribution of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are being successfully replicated in west Asia and Africa.

### Publication No. 6

“Sharing power for development. Experiences in local governance and decentralization”, June 2007.

This publication describes means by which Helvetas and its partners have contributed to decentralisation processes and local governance in five selected partner countries: the Philippines, Cameroon, Mali, Vietnam and Guatemala. All decentralisation approaches used by Helvetas have in common the fostering of collaboration between the three society sectors, the state, civil society and the private sector, as well as the provision of support to decentralisation and local governance through concrete projects.

### Publication No. 7

“Measuring Education’s Path to Prosperity. Tracer Studies for Vocational Education and Training Programmes – a Practical Tool Kit”, February 2009.

The purpose of this publication is to provide an instrument on how to conduct tracer studies for those interested in evaluating their Vocational Education and Training (VET) interventions. Tracer studies provide information on the relevance and effectiveness of VET programmes which prepare learners to enter into the world of work. This tool kit consists of a manual, four questionnaires and an analysis program (available in English, French and Spanish).



**HELVETAS**

Together for a better world

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