NGO-DRIVEN COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH ASIA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION[1]

Ajit Menon*, Praveen Singh*, Sharachchandra Lele*, Suhas Paranjape**, Esha Shah* and K.J. Joy**

Introduction

Community-based development in general and community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in particular have received renewed attention over the last couple of decades in developing countries. Governments across south and south-east Asia, Africa and Latin America have adopted and implemented CBNRM in various ways, viz., through sectoral programmes such as forestry, irrigation or wildlife management, multi-sectoral programmes such as watershed development and rural livelihoods development, and efforts towards political devolution. In this process of 'mainstreaming' community-based development and CBNRM, the role of NGOs is almost ubiquitous. Not only are NGOs themselves implementing CBNRM but many state-driven initiatives are operating through NGOs as well.

The expansion of NGOs in the 1970s and 1980s throughout much of the world was seen as an opportunity for civil society to offer 'alternative' forms of development and as a means to help democratize the state. However, the mushrooming of NGOs thereafter has not only resulted in a significant diversity of NGOs in terms of their type and priorities, but also, some argue, in the content of their alternative discourses of development and their interest in concerns of social justice and structural change being watered down. It is this mainstreaming of NGO-driven development that forms the context of our study of CBNRM.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we discuss the various discourses that had supported the idea CBNRM and the subsequent mainstreaming of CBNRM initiatives. We then briefly examine the critiques of CBNRM and of NGO-led development in general that have emerged and locate our study in this critical literature. In the following section, we outline the questions, methods and normative lens through which this study was conducted. We then go on to provide a brief description of the six cases that we took up for our study and describe their outcomes in terms of livelihood, sustainability, equity and democratic decentralization. Finally, we try to understand these

outcomes keeping in mind the vision of, and strategies employed by the intervening agencies, and how if at all state policies encourage or constrain these initiatives.

The emergence and mainstreaming of CBNRM

While the emergence of community development can be traced back to the immediate post-independence period, it was in the late 1970s and thereafter that a number of CBNRM initiatives emerged in different parts of South Asia. The main reason for the emergence of CBNRM was disillusionment with the developmental state in general and specifically with regard to natural resource management. CBNRM appeared to offer a 'viable' option to the state's management of natural resources. Social movements, such as Chipko in the Himalayas that challenged the authority of the state (Kothari, 1989) emphasized the need for more decentralized decision-making and placed the environment at centre stage. In parts of Orissa in India, village communities managed patches of forests that they were using and that were not being managed well by the Forest Department. Individuals and NGOs, inspired by concerns of environmental conservation, social welfare or leftist thinking organized communities around activities such as irrigation tank rehabilitation, soil conversation, agricultural 'improvement' and tribal development. At the same time, many 'traditional' systems of community management such as van panchayats in the Kumaon region of the Indian Himalayas and farmer-managed canal irrigation systems in north India and Nepal (Kuhls of Himachal Pradesh and Kuhlos of Nepal) were 'rediscovered'.

Discourses in Support of CBNRM

The emergence of CBNRM was supported by a number of academic discourses. Perhaps the most significant of these discourses was the one that highlighted the limits of the post-colonial state vis-à-vis environmental management (Guha, 1989; Gadgil and Guha, 1992; Alvares, 1979; Mishra, 1993; Mukundan, 1988; Nadkarni *et al.*, 1989; Pathak, 1994; Sengupta, 1991; Shankari, 1991; Shiva, 1991).[2] A broader critique pertained to the state, the manner in which development planning works and how the role of local communities is underplayed. Chambers substantial work on 'farmer first' highlighted the manner in which development planning has privileged the voice of the development planner and marginalized the voice and knowledge of local communities. Chambers went on to highlight the importance of participatory techniques such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) as a means by which the local's voice can be articulated (Chambers, 1983; Chambers *et al.*, 1989; Thompson and Scoones, 1994).[3]

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[2] A large literature, particularly in the context of forest management, highlighted the political economy and ideological continuities between the post-colonial and colonial states with regard to centralized systems of management and their intent. The common underlying argument, besides for the critique of centralized management, was the need for local communities to play an important role in environmental management.

[3] This literature has focused more on the modalities of state functioning as opposed to the political and ideological leanings of the state's developmental policies. Moreover, the critique was aimed more at improving the planning process as opposed to highlighting the political economy of the post-colonial state.

Two other discourses that led credence to CBNRM were those of 'traditional knowledge' and the cultural critique of developmental rationalism. In the 1980s especially, a more broad-based critique of modernity and its impact on the environment emerged. The traditional knowledge literature focused primarily on highlighting the environmental soundness and cultural embeddedness of traditional, indigenous or local knowledge systems (Mukundan, 1988; Agarwal and Narain, 1989; Reddy, 1991; Shankari, 1991; Shankari and Shah, 1993).[4] The discourse on 'appropriate technology' and 'small is beautiful' paralleled the discourse on traditional knowledge and highlighted the failure to match technology with local needs. The policy emphasis of the latter discourse emphasized the need to develop innovative technologies that blend local knowledge with modern scientific methods to make them socially, economically and ecologically more viable.

These discourses fitted in well with a wider critique of 'development rationalism' and the manner in which cultural plurality was marginalized. Like the critiques of state planning and centralized natural resource management, the critique of development rationalism highlighted the fact that an over-centralised state ignored local cultures and stymied cultural plurality. The emergence of 'community' and 'community development' especially in the work of social anthropologists has been a way to imagine a wider process of democratic empowerment. Whether it is Gandhian thinking or other ecological philosophies of the 1970s, a communitarian focus assumed a key role in development thinking.

These alternative imaginations of the community were given a significant fillip by common property theorists who challenged Hardin's proposition that the atomistic nature of human behaviour and the indivisibility of the commons would inevitably lead to the 'tragedy of the commons'. This 'collective action' literature highlighted that both in theory and in practice the tragedy was not inevitable. A large case study literature emerged that delineated the existence of both old and new institutional arrangements for community management of forests, tanks, fisheries, pastures etc. This vast literature, in fact, has resulted in a more theoretically grounded literature that has focused on the conditions of collective action (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001; Agrawal, 2001; Baland and Platteau, 1999; Ostrom, 1990;1992; Wade, 1988). The role of the state in much of this literature is assumed to be that of a facilitator.

The discourse and practice of CBNRM, in other words, offered a compelling set of arguments as to why CBNRM is desirable and workable. Whether one believed in giving local communities a greater voice for its own sake or one was interested in using whatever instruments necessary to achieve efficient and sustainable resource management, it seemed that decentralized, community-based management was the way forward. The stage was thus well set to 'mainstream' CBNRM.

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[4] Such systems were envisaged as viable alternative systems to modern systems. Not only were they constructed, managed and maintained by local communities but also did not have the environmentally disastrous impact of modern systems.

Mainstreaming CBNRM

Starting around 1990, governments across South Asia began to pay serious attention to the concept of CBNRM. JFM policy emerged in India in the 1990s, CFM policy in Nepal in 1992 and Social Forestry in Bangladesh in 1994. Simultaneously, in the late 1980s and 1990s, heavily funded programmes emerged for restructuring irrigation policy that included farmer-managed canal irrigation schemes (PIM or IMT) in several countries and some participatory tank modernization programmes in India. Watershed development policy, especially in India, also took a more participatory turn in 1995. In parallel, some governments initiated legislation for the creation of tiers of government below the provincial level, such as the Panchayati Raj and related legislation in India.

While governments were thus adopting (and adapting) the concept of CBNRM into their policies and programmes in various ways, the stream of civil society-driven CBNRM that had emerged in the 1980s continued to expand. Hundreds of initiatives attempted to replicate the early 'successes' of experiments such as Sukhomajri, Ralegaon Siddhi and Pani Panchayat. Their activities included one or more of common land and forest regeneration, water harvesting, irrigation tank rehabilitation, watershed development, agro-forestry and enterprise-based biodiversity conservation. The size and nature of the organization implementing these initiatives varied from grassroots voluntary groups to medium-sized NGOs set up by motivated persons from that area, such as Chakriya Vikas Pranali in Jharkhand or Seva Mandir in Rajasthan, to large professional organisations such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan and Western India, to 'government-owned' NGOs created for specific projects such as KAWAD in Karnataka.

CBNRM therefore is an umbrella term that has taken many different forms in practice. Within South Asia, one may in theory distinguish four forms: (1) traditional systems of resource management; (2) civil society efforts by different kinds of NGOs, (3) state-initiated programmes for sectoral decentralization, and (4) state-implemented efforts at political devolution. However, the last category (political devolution) is yet to be seriously linked to natural resource management (Ramakrishnan *et al.*, 2002). In terms of numbers or area covered, the third form has overwhelmed the others in most countries (with perhaps the exception of Bangladesh), followed by the civil society efforts.

But these categories have limited usefulness as the boundaries are getting progressively blurred with the ubiquitous presence of NGOs. NGOs are not only directly implementing their own integrated rural development programmes (with funds from various sources), but also collaborating extensively with state agencies in implementing components of many of the government-defined sectoral programmes. Even the 're-emergence' of traditional systems of resource management, such as the rejuvenation of traditional irrigation tank systems in Tamil Nadu, is often being promoted by NGOs (and the state). The assumption (often promoted by aid agencies) that NGO involvement ensures community participation and programme success underpins the state's willingness to collaborate with groups that they may have been hitherto antagonistic to,

whereas the NGOs probably believe that collaborating with the state will help them 'scale-up' their impact far beyond earlier solitary efforts. Whatever the reason, it would be fair to say that NGOs have assumed centre-stage in what was supposed to be 'community-based' NRM. A study of CBNRM in south Asia is therefore often willy-nilly a study of NGO-implemented efforts with varying degrees of state or aid agency involvement in their design and support.

Locating Our Study

There is already a fairly sizeable literature on CBNRM. As mentioned above, one set of studies focused on highlighting the existence and 'success' of traditional or more recent 'self-initiated' community management efforts. Another (very large) sub-literature examines the 'performance' of state-led programmes such as JFM, CFM and PIM, or state-supported ones such as watershed development. This sub-literature mostly takes the framework of decentralisation as embedded in the programmes as a given and examines success and failure in terms of outcomes (plantation survival, forest regrowth, farm productivity increase, water harvested, credit given, wages earned). Community participation is also assessed, but almost as a separate outcome. Given, however, that one is talking about *CB*-NRM**,** we are interested in broader questions about the *processes* through which the idea of community-based management is constructed and operationalised.

At this broader level, there are three major critiques of the idea of CBNRM and community-based development in general. The first critique is that community-based development is framed in the context of wider hegemonic discourses and practices of development. This critique is grounded in the Foucauldian idea of development as a discursive formation, i.e., practices and perceptions of development are rooted in forms of rationality that allow for a limited form of agency and render 'unthinkable, unsayable and undoable others' (Rossi, 2004). This means that 'alternative' forms of development such as CBNRM could have been and can be constrained by state-centred development and more recently a neo-liberal paradigm of development. Such hegemonic forms of development could limit the extent of devolution to communities, privilege market-based ideologies or make CBNRM a form of what Ferguson has called 'depoliticised' development – all of which could prevent the emergence of new forms of democratization (Ferguson, 1990).

The second critique pertains to the 'community' in CBNRM. The argument goes as follows: (1) communities are often envisaged as communities of shared understanding (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999) and hence internal differentiations are ignored; (2) envisaging communities in this manner results in the privileging and marginalizing of certain voices; (3) the different priorities of the segmented community are not adequately examined, and (4) communities are imagined as 'autonomous' and in opposition to the state and hence simplified claims are made that community-based management is the definitive solution. These shortcomings in the manner in which community is understood could lead to elite capture and the exclusion of socially disenfranchised castes, classes and women from community participation.

While creating idealized notions of community may have been a means of highlighting the need for decentralization and of privileging the community (Li, 1996), subsequent development practice has often remained silent with regard to restructuring social and gender relations in the process of privileging collective action.

Finally, CBNRM has been critiqued for the 'project mode' in which it has been implemented. Mosse (2003) and Baviskar (2004) have highlighted the manner in which targets and achievements often drive the nature of the intervention. There are two dimensions to this – project mode resulting in pressure on staff to deliver desirable outcomes and the selection of particular villages for intervention so as to make outcomes better. Whether or not these constraints are endemic to community-based management requires, as Mosse correctly argues, more ethnographies of development.

These critiques raise some fundamental challenges to the idea and operationalization of CBNRM. They highlight ways in which the process of CBNRM is or could be hampered by both macro-level constraints *vis-à-vis* development, including how development is imagined itself, and the micro-politics of community formation. These critiques are no doubt applicable to programmes that are either entirely implemented or tightly controlled by the state. For instance, Sundar *et al.*'s critique of JFM (Sundar *et al.*, 2001) highlights how the vision of decentralization embedded in the programme has been limited at the outset and how this interacts with the fragmented community at the local level to generate processes of resource management that are fraught with problems. Similar critiques have been made of state-implemented watershed development under the Rajiv Gandhi Watershed Mission in Madhya Pradesh (Baviskar, 2004).

Given that the implementation of CBNRM in south Asia has been dominated by NGO involvement, understanding CBNRM efforts requires taking into consideration the insights from another literature, viz., that on the functioning of NGOs themselves – a literature that applies not necessarily only (but possibly) to CBNRM. For example, Kamat's (2002) study of activists' efforts to undertake developmental work highlights the constraints under which activists work and the manner in which their interventions are shaped by wider macro discourses of development. Weisgrau's (1997) work on NGOs in Rajasthan focuses both on the macro discourses of development and the micro politics of power in highlighting the 'limits' to NGO interventions. Mosse extends this critique to the NGO-driven CBNRM more specifically by narrating manner in which a particular NGO's activities are shaped by the priorities of funding agencies (Mosse, 2003). Fisher's larger review of the literature on NGOs also suggests that many NGOs are engaged in service delivery within the existing model of development rather than imagining and practicing alternative models. Nevertheless, he argues strongly that one should recognise the rich ideological and functional diversity within the category 'NGO' and also the context-specificity of their interventions, and so avoid simple generalizations (Fisher, 1997).

Nonetheless, we believe that these critiques do not foreclose the possibility of CBNRM providing an 'alternative model' of development. First of all, it is not obvious that all practitioners of CBNRM have confined themselves to 'mainstream' ideas of development or are confining themselves within the neo-liberal paradigm of development more recently, blindly rejecting any role for the state or blindly embracing the market. Second, although the existence of fragmented communities may constitute a serious obstacle, devolving some state power downwards could be seen as a first step to building a new local-level politics rather than a 'depoliticised' local management.[5] Finally, at least some of the interventions may have gone beyond the project mode so that they can address issues in a sustained manner. It seems therefore that much could depend upon the context as well as the actors involved in CBNRM. More definitive answers to whether these critiques are generic or not require more detailed enquiries – of which ours is one such attempt.

Our questions and approach

The broad goal of our study was to understand the potential and limits of CBNRM in south Asia and the factors that might be shaping them. We adopted a comparative case study approach, choosing six cases across south Asia and sought to understand the nature of CBNRM initiatives, what they proposed to do, what they actually achieved and what factors broadly shaped the processes adopted and their outcomes. Keeping in mind the issues discussed above, we paid particular attention to whether and how the local context and the macro conditions interacted with the initiatives goals and strategies to limit or enable CBNRM.

Comparing across cases requires a common 'lens' through which one can look at the cases. On the other hand, understanding differences between the vision of CBNRM that each initiative may have begun with is equally important. We sought to strike a balance here by coming up with a 'superset' of normative concerns that cover most CBNRM efforts. These are *livelihood enhancement*, *sustainability*, *equity* and *democratic decentralisation*. Although all CBNRM initiatives might claim allegiance to all these concerns, there are very significant differences in the interpretation of these concepts themselves across initiatives and in the literature in general. We outline below the different nuances or levels that seem to prevail within each umbrella term.

Livelihood enhancement in some cases is restricted to the idea of meeting basic or subsistence needs, which in the natural resource context means needs of fuel, fodder, water and food. For others, it is clear that livelihood enhancement must go beyond meeting subsistence needs to generate a marketable surplus from the natural resource that

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[5] For instance, Seva Mandir describes its own transformation from a group that tried to enable 'people to demand better responses from the state system' to a full-fledged servce-delivery organization to finally a stage where "Failure of development was no longer understood [by us] as simply being the result of dereliction on the part of the state, but now also came to be seen as an indicator that local people and civil society institutions lacked the values and norms consistent with the idea of making society more egalitarian and democratic" (Ballabh, 2004).

enables greater improvements in the quality of life. Finally, some would argue that one cannot or need not insist on livelihoods being natural resource-based and may seek to expand the concept of livelihoods to include those not directly based on land or natural resources (at least for income).

Sustainability is a complicated term and it is used very confusingly. We use it in its ecological connotation and find it useful to distinguish three levels. The most elementary notion is of a one-time regeneration or creation of a resource (such as a water harvesting facility) followed by its continued maintenance. A more common one is that of the management of biological systems such that they continue to yield a constant flow of benefits over time (such as wood produced by a forest), even in the face of environmental variability. The third and broader level of sustainability is sustaining not just the livelihood-generating resource but also the wider ecosystem in which the resource is embedded and the set of tangible and intangible benefits that might accrue to a wider set of stakeholders (such as maintaining biodiversity while also ensuring a continuous flow of wood).

Equity has at least three dimensions: the economic, the ethnic or caste, and the gender dimension. Note that in the NRM context, the issue is not whether complete equity has been achieved, but rather how the benefits (and costs) of certain resource management initiatives may be distributed across these different sections of society, or how certain processes of intervention in natural resource management might empower or disempower certain groups.

Finally, democratic decentralisation is our shorthand for various concepts including participation and empowerment. But clearly it has many nuances or levels. At the simplest, practitioners have in mind 'participation' by individuals, groups or the community as a whole in various stages of programme design, implementation and monitoring. On another front, many may think in terms of devolution of state decision-making power to the local community as a whole. A further refinement would be to think of making use of this devolved power within the community to make it more democratic and holding higher levels bodies accountable as well.

Introduction to the six case studies

Our primary criterion in choosing the case studies was that the initiative should *prima facie* be considered 'successful' and 'innovative'. We used all available secondary literature to identify cases that might fit this requirement across south Asia. We excluded those efforts that were narrowly focused on one particular sector or part of some sectoral initiative of the government. Within this list of interesting and multi-sectoral initiatives, we tried to ensure diversity in terms of the agro-climatic conditions, the nature of the NGO, and the scale of the initiative. The idea was not to generate any kind of statistically adequate sample, something that would not have been possible within the limits of our resources anyway. Rather, we were hoping to cover the variety of conditions or initiatives in the region to the extent possible, and then adopt a case study approach for the analysis. The ultimate choice was of course influenced by the response from the intervening

organisations' to our request for a study and the feasibility of field work in particular locations.[6] The cases eventually studied were:

1. Yashwant Krishi, Gram Va Panlot Vikas Sanstha's (Yashwant Vikas Sanstha's) watershed work in Hivre Bazaar (HB) village under Adarsh Gaon Yojana (AGY) programme in Ahmednagar district (Maharashtra, India).
2. Tarun Bharat Sangh's (TBS) water harvesting work in Gopalpura village in Alwar district (Rajasthan, India).
3. Utthan's watershed work in Nathugarh village in Bhavnagar district (Gujarat, India).
4. Doodhatoli Lok Vikas Sansthan's (DLVS) work on forestry and water in Paudi Garhwal district (Uttaranchal, India).
5. Gono Chetana's (GC) work in the villages in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna chars in Gaibanda and Jamalpur districts (Bangladesh).
6. Renewable Natural Resource Research Centre's (RNRRC) work in the villages in the Lingmuteychhu (LM) watershed under EPINARM programme in west-central Bhutan.

In the subsequent sections we discuss the variations in the six case studies in terms of the dimensions identified above.

Agro-climatic Context

All the six cases fall in ecologically vulnerable regions. Hivre Bazar, TBS and Utthan fall in the semi-arid region of western India; while the first two fall in the hilly, undulating region, the third falls very close to the coastal region. All these cases fall in the low rainfall region (500-700 mm), and suffer the vagaries of drought 2-3 years in every five year cycle. In all these locations, the major occupation is agriculture, most of which is rainfed or dry. The other two cases—DLVS and Lingmuteychhu—fall in the Himalayan region (temperate/sub-temperate climate) that has witnessed extensive deforestation in the last one century and is now considered one of the most vulnerable locations in south Asia. Terraced agriculture is being practiced in these locations for a very long time now. The last case (Gono Chetona) falls in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna charlands which are the most ecologically vulnerable regions in the sub-continent with constantly changing landscapes. River erosion and floods force the people to adopt a semi-migratory lifestyle. While agriculture and livestock rearing are the main occupations, there is substantial seasonal emigration for wage labour by the adult males.

Socio-economic Situation

Given the regional spread, one would of course expect enormous variations in the social composition across the case study sites. But of relevance here is the significant variation in the level and nature of socio-economic difference within these communities. In Hivre Bazar, the village is dominated by the upper caste Marathas with only 12 SC households in the village. But within the Marathas there are various clans (or *bhavkis*) and the clan loyalties are quite strong. Economically the SCs have no or negligible lands. Moreover,

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[6] For instance, we could not choose cases from Nepal due to ongoing political disturbances there, nor from Pakistan because of our inability to obtain entry permits to that country.

while the rest of the castes have some land, the economic disparity between members of the same *bhavki* is quite high. In the pre-Adarsh Gaon Yojana period, and especially before 1989, the village witnessed many conflicts, sometimes based on clan loyalties. Liquor drinking in the village was also a major problem. The village also experienced adverse effects of drought so much so that drinking water had to be supplied in tankers in the village during summer months, and migration for work was the only livelihood option for even landed households during drought years.

Nathugarh (Utthan), though on paper a single caste (Kanbi Patels) village, has a sizable population of Koli Patels who belong to another village but for all practical purposes live in Nathugarh. The Koli Patels, who are lower than the Kanbi Patels in the caste hierarchy, are landless labourers and provide the crucial labour input to agriculture in the village, but they are not part of any decision making body.[7] Even within the Kanbi Patels there is high economic differentiation- about 40 per cent are small/marginal peasants and another about 16 per cent are landless labourers.

In Gopalpura too, the village is dominated by the people of the Meena tribe, with about 10 households of SCs and two Brahmin households. All the Meena households, with the exception of two, belong to the same family tree. Though the economic differentiation between the Meenas and SCs has been narrowed somewhat since 1975[8], socially the latter are still not part of the village affairs. Another group, the Banjaras, also remain outside the village life for all practical purposes.[9] The traditional decision making body, the *gram sabha*, is dominated by the Meena men. The women in the village continue to remain largely disenfranchised.

Villages in the vicinity of Uphraikhal (where DLVS works) are more homogenous compared to villages in other case studies. There are only two major castes - Brahmins and Rajputs. Scheduled tribes are entirely absent in the district. Although scheduled caste households exist and are discriminated against in certain clear ways, the social distance between them and the upper castes is less than that in the plains. Economically there is not much differentiation in terms of land ownership, although some households have more land because of less sub-division or out migration of family members. In one of the villages that we took up for our study, viz. Dumlot, there were 12 SC households. Though there has been a tradition of community action in these villages, some amount of social discrimination against the SCs still exists, especially in terms of sharing the same source of drinking water. Women's status, though better than that in many other cases (except perhaps Bhutan), is not equal to that of men, particular when it comes to village-level decision-making.

In the Lingmuteychhu watershed (in Bhutan) any heterogeneity in terms of caste/ethnic groupings does not exist except for the fact that Nabchhe is inhabited by

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[7] The Koli Patels and some of the poorer Kanbi Patels were not included in a community domestic water supply scheme which was implemented by the villagers before the watershed intervention of Utthan.
[8] In 1975 the Government of Rajasthan had distributed lands to the landless SC families in the village.
[9] The Banjaras (a wondering tribe) were settled in this village by the government in response to the Bandhua Mukti Andolan (Free Bonded Labour Movement).

people who have migrated from the east, but social and economic disparities based on access to natural resources have existed historically and still remain. This is particularly the case with regard to water rights. Not only are there differences in terms of customary rights between the seven villages but even within villages there are different categories of farmers in terms of their entitlement to water. Women enjoy a relatively high status, but like in Doodhatoli, this seems more in the domestic sphere and is not translated so much yet to the public sphere.

In the char villages of northern Bangladesh there exists huge economic disparities with about 60 per cent of the population being landless or small farmers and just about 3 per cent owning more than 5 acres of land each. Though no social discrimination ostensibly exists in a largely Muslim society, the huge economic divide encourages many exploitative relationships. Moreover, the village membership in the chars is very temporary and social cohesion is low as the entire agro-ecology is in a flux and most ties are clan-based. Religious and socio-cultural norms do not allow too much space and freedom for women within the public sphere or even in household affairs.

Across the six case studies, there are many similarities and a few differences in the socio-economic context. In most cases, the village community is divided on the basis of class, caste and other primordial loyalties. Gender relations remain tilted in favour of the men, although women in the Himalayan communities are somewhat better off. Class distinctions are very sharp in four of the six cases, whereas somewhat less sharp in the two Himalayan communities. Traditional village institutions remain dominated by village elites, although newer elites might be emerging in some cases. More importantly perhaps, the sense of a collective 'village' identity is missing in most of the cases, with Hivre Bazar and the Uphraikhal perhaps being exceptions. What this entails is that any development initiative for the village will disproportionately benefit these elites unless proper safeguards are put in place.

Nature of Intervening Agency

There is significant variation in the nature of the intervening agencies in our sample. We have a grassroots organization working largely in one village (HB), a grassroots group that covers several villages (DLVS), more typical 'professsional' NGOs (GC, TBS, Utthan) and one semi-governmental scientific institution. On careful examination one can find some very distinct differences between these different organizations in terms of the strategies they use, staff composition, sources of financial and other support and ideology.

The NGO in Hivre Bazar was formed by the village leadership to specifically implement AGY, a state government programme. There was a strong belief in the village that any development effort should involve the villagers and that an outside NGO will not be able to provide the necessary leadership. So an NGO was registered by the villagers as one of the rules of AGY was that the programme was to be implemented by an NGO. We therefore categorise this experiment as a community driven/implemented one. Further, one can clearly see aspects of Gandhian philosophy, not only in the design of AGY, but also in the leadership in the village.

DLVS too has a clear Gandhian vision, at least in its emphasis on its volunteers adopting a simple lifestyle and focusing on awareness building more than anything else. It has also campaigned against liquor consumption. It has kept away from donor funds and worked with a very small budget. The organization does not have a paid staff and got its projects implemented with the help of village volunteers and women's groups (*Mahila Mangal Dals*). By refusing to become NGO-ised it has thus avoided the pitfalls of projectisation. It also has a very clear cut and larger vision of environmental sustainability. It essentially is a grassroot level organization and has kept away from networking and advocacy at the policy level.

TBS too has elements of Gandhian philosophy, for instance its vision that villages should be self sufficient and should manage their natural resources themselves reflects it's bent towards Gandhi's idea of 'village republics'. Further, it has employed strategies to spread its vision through methods which can be characterized as Gandhian. But unlike DLVS, TBS has accepted donor money in the past 20 years to build more than two thousand water harvesting structures. Also, it has a large paid staff, though it calls them volunteers. All the staff members are mostly from the local area, and are not professionally trained. In fact, the organization does not employ any civil engineer and has opted for the services of on an untrained person to design the structures, and it proudly claims that he is as good as any professional engineer. On the other hand, it has stayed away from implementing any state programme. The organization has been in the forefront of networking and advocacy at the policy level, especially against the Irrigation Department's attempts to place obstacles in the way of its work.

Utthan has earlier been working in the bhal area, the coastal semi-arid region of Saurashtra where salinity ingress in the groundwater is a big problem. Women's groups have been its strength and it has built a network of strong and active women's groups in this region. Its major work has focused on solving the acute drinking water problem in the region. It has been able to develop a technical solution for the drinking water problem that is simple enough for the women to adopt and maintain and at the same is not dependent on external sources of water. It has fiercely advocated the use of these technologies and local water harvesting, and opposed the policy of the state which is geared towards relying on transferring Narmada (river) water across basins and providing piped water to far flung regions at great economic cost. In its work in the villages, the organization and the poor women have had to fight against local vested interests and dominant groups. It has later taken on and implemented many donor and state aided schemes. It is only recently that it has taken up watershed based schemes and Nathugarh was one of the first villages where they took up watershed development work.

Gono Chetona too has been working with rural women in the chars for the last fifteen years, especially with a focus on increasing and improving the livelihood options available to them. Other than this, the organization provides rescue and relief operations during floods. It has since its inception in 1991 been working in the ecologically highly vulnerable areas of river islands (chars), especially with the resource poor households. The organization also emphasizes flood management strategies rather than structural

measures to control floods and erosion, and one of its important activities is to develop the coping mechanisms of the people living in the chars and spread awareness about these strategies through the formation of women's groups. It largely employs local youth to implement its various programmes. The staff, though efficient, is not professionally trained and thus the organization remains basically an implementation agency with little focus on networking and advocacy at the policy level.

Renewable Natural Resource Research Centre, which is implementing the watershed programme in Lingmuteychhu, is a state research agency which has recently got in to participatory research and extension services. All the staff of the centre are natural scientists and less trained to work with people, and in organizing them for participatory NRM though they are increasingly focusing on the social dimension to extension work.

Broad nature of the interventions

The nature of experiment is at least partly determined by the agro-climatic zone and is aimed at coping with the climatic factors. In the semi-arid regions, making water secure and reliable is the primary aim of all the experiments. For instance, TBS started its work in Alwar with rehabilitating old and building new water harvesting structures, locally known as *johads*. This greatly relieved the region of a drought like situation and made agriculture more secure and reliable. Others, viz., HB and Utthan (more so the former) saw a much more comprehensive treatment of the entire micro-watershed to conserve soil and water. To some extent, fuelwood and fodder needs were also addressed in HB in the process of treating the common lands.

Though Lingmuteychhu also is a watershed initiative, the emphasis so far has been more on household livelihood enhancement through improvements in agriculture and animal husbandry, and in some villages on forestry. More recently, watershed-level interventions have been envisaged with the formation of a watershed level committee.

DLVS intervened in various ways as per the need of the hour, initially focusing on reforestation, solar lighting and horticultural experiments, and then getting involved in water harvesting and recharge.

In the case of Gono Chetona the attempt was to introduce experiments which could give some relief to the resource poor population living in erosion and flood affected river islands (*chars*). Experiments like better managed and intensively cultivated kitchen gardens, introduction of new crops and vegetables, cattle farming, bee-keeping and better sanitary habits were all aimed at enhancing the household income and improving the living conditions of the people.

Scale of the Initiatives

The initiatives that we took up for our study vary from a single village initiative to a couple of villages to several tens or even hundreds of villages. HB too was a single village initiative, though Yashvant Vikas Sanstha has gone on to initiate work in few

more villages in the area. In Lingmuteychhu, all the villages falling under a single watershed were included in the programme.

In Gono Chetona 19 villages were selected in two *upazilas* (sub-districts) of two neighbouring districts. Though there are a lot of commonalities in these villages, there are some very distinct differences- some of the villages are more threatened by river erosion while others are relatively stable. The NGO was implementing a donor-aided programme.

Utthan's watershed work in Nathugarh covered a single village and did not involve any other village in the neighbourhood, though it is working in nearby areas too. It implemented a government supported drinking water scheme as well as a watershed programme in the village.

TBS' work is spread over 700 villages in 10 districts of Rajasthan state, but largely in the district of Alwar. It has built more than two thousand water harvesting structures over a period of more than fifteen years. But apart from the fact that it has focused primarily in water harvesting, it also spread itself thin over a large area without concentrating first on a comprehensive treatment of micro-watersheds. Over the years the organization has attracted the attention of donors who have supported its unique work.

DLVS too has spread its work over a large area and tried to engage with a large population through environmental camps and *yatras*. This organization too does not believe in adopting a comprehensive approach of dealing with entire gamut of problems at the village level. It has emphasized on implementing small initiatives in different villages and then projected these successes as models of community action

Impacts of the Interventions

Livelihoods

The main focus of all the initiatives to various degrees, as highlighted above, is on livelihood enhancement. Most, if not all, of the initiatives seem to have resulted in significant livelihood benefits. These have been mainly of three types: (1) improvements in availability of livelihood support resources (fuelwood, fodder, drinking water), (2) increased productivity (including diversification of cropping pattern) in agriculture and allied activities and (3) new sources of livelihood.

In Hivre Bazar, the post-watershed intervention scenario is such that farmers often grow three crops a year. Not only is the kharif *bajra* crop being irrigated but also the rabi *jowar* and the summer vegetable crops. Productivity has increased in dry lands as well due to improvements in soil moisture levels. The revival of *johads* in the case of TBS's work in Gopalpura has led to the proliferation of wheat and increased productivity. In Lingmuteychhu productivity gains have also arisen but more due to the introduction of new varieties both local and high yielding as opposed to increased water availability. In the case of Gono Chetona, DLVS and Lingmuteychhu, improvements have come more by way of diversification of agriculture, for example the promotion of vegetable gardens,

horticultural crops etc. that have marketable potential. Growth of the livestock and dairy economy has also been significant in the case of Hivre Bazar.

There have been other benefits in most of the CBNRM interventions. CBNRM interventions in most cases have also led to new avenues of employment and income generation. For example, in Hivre Bazar, the 'leadership' seemed aware of the possible limitations of watershed development as a sustainable livelihoods strategy and hence focused its efforts on finding ways by which households can supplement their sources of income. Many households have benefited from the Employment Guarantee Scheme. Self-help groups and women's groups have also played an important role. In the cases of Lingmuteychhu, Gono Chetona and Hivre Bazar, these groups have helped generate alternative sources of income. For instance in Lingmuteychhu, solar driers made by SHG members earn them some income. In HB, the BPL SHG members have benefited from the loans provided to them for starting a new enterprise, mostly cattle rearing which has given them an extra income. In the case of the char villages too, Gono Chetona extended loans to the poor to start new non-land based enterprises. Moreover, improved drinking water supply and electricity are examples of qualitative improvements in the standard of living, the former the case in Hivre Bazar and DLVS and the latter in DLVS. Yet notwithstanding these non-land based improvements in livelihood, the bulk of the livelihood enhancement across cases has come due to improvements in agriculture and allied activities.

It is important, however, to assess the extent to which community-based management of resources can be the basis of long-term sustainable livelihoods. This is perhaps even more pertinent in semi-arid ecosystems where the potential of agriculture is naturally constrained. For example, in Hivre Bazar which can be considered a 'successful' case of environmental regeneration, the soil and water conservation measures still does not ensure even one crop during years of drought.[10] Even in the highly vulnerable chars of Bangladesh, the intervention has only been able to make a nominal improvement in the situation of the poor; migration for them remains the primary livelihood option. River erosion in these villages make even the landed vulnerable. While CBNRM is clearly not the reason for such a scenario, it does raise questions as to the possibilities/limits of strategies that are extremely localized. In other words, while CBNRM initiatives are mostly village-based, livelihood enhancement might well require supra-village level initiatives. At present, these seem to be minimal.

Sustainability

The gains on the ecological sustainability front have been much more mixed. The Hivre Bazar initiative is no doubt at one end of the scale in terms of the ecological regeneration-livelihood continuum (in terms of outcome). Not only has there been significant

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[10] One is not arguing that watershed development should ensure protection against all droughts. Hivre Bazar is still better off than other surrounding villages during drought years. Further, the productivity gains in normal years are enough to offset the losses during drought years; one only needs to store food stocks in good years. Grain banks as a measure of decentralized food stock institutions have been tried in many places (Lobo and Kochendorfer-Lucius, 1995) as a measure to tide over bad years at the village level.

regeneration of the water table within the village, but mechanisms are in place so as to ensure that in the future that groundwater is not again over-exploited. The main mechanisms have been the initiative to ban borewells and the regulation of cropping pattern and of course the other bans on felling of trees and free grazing. Villagers appear to accept these principles, and hence there has been no need to create institutions in particular to oversee the enforcement of these rules. Moreover, the panchayat samiti seems to function in a democratic manner as an authority to manage village affairs. So there was no need to form a new institution. In the case of DLVS too, we see clear examples of community regulation (of regenerated forests and grasslands/fallows). However, in the other case studies, the long-term sustainability of the interventions is more doubtful. This is so because the focus has been mostly on regeneration of resources, and less on regulating the use of regenerated resources. This is so both in the case of TBS and Utthan.

In household-based interventions such as Lingmuteychhu and Gono Chetona, the ecological component has been much less explicit though in the latter there have been efforts to promote organic farming. Further, in the case of Gono Chetona, the focus is on spreading awareness about *flood management* techniques and not on *flood control* through structural measures, and this clearly reflects the long term sustainability concerns of the organization. In the case of Lingmuteychhu, the promotion of certain new varieties might in fact increase fertilizer intensive forms of agriculture.

The other dimension of sustainability is that of scale. Most of our case studies have been village-based in terms of their interventions even if they, as in the case of Lingmuteychhu, cover a full watershed. Even when the scale is higher than the village level, the intervention is not comprehensive or the focus is not on all the possible sectors. But the state of resources within these villages is clearly affected by development outside these villages. It is not at all clear, however, to what extent supra-village considerations are part of particular interventions. In the case of Lingmuteychhu, a watershed committee has been set up, but whether or not they will address the concern of customary water rights which are unsustainable remains to be seen. Even in Hivre Bazar, which is in one sense ideally situated at the upstream edge of the catchment area and hence not affected by any other village upstream, groundwater levels could be affected in the long run by the sinking of borewells in neighbouring villages. The leadership appears to be aware of this and is trying to promote similar watershed interventions elsewhere. In the case of TBS's intervention in Gopalpura, a somewhat different scenario exists with villagers concerned about the protection of their own forests, but at the cost of the neighbouring Reserve Forest.

On the whole, it appears that the gains on the ecological sustainability dimension have been limited, with only HB and DLVS standing out in their having enforced resource use regulations. In other cases, one-time resource regeneration has taken place, but regulatory mechanisms have not been institutionalized or the method of productivity enhancement has been through increasing external resource use. DLVS has gone one step further by addressing wider environmental concerns, an aspect which is conspicuously missing elsewhere.

Equity

Concerns of distributive equity do not appear to have been at the mainstay of any of these interventions. As many of the CBNRM interventions were watershed-based, it appears as if the landed have been the main beneficiaries if not the main targets. For example, in Hivre Bazar, the rejuvenation of the watershed and the significant increase in water availability has naturally benefited the landed Maratha castes the most. So too the case in Utthan's intervention where the Kanbi Patels (landed) have benefited from check dams and well recharge. In the case of TBS's initiative in Gopalpura, the revived *johads* were on private lands once again benefiting the landed the most.

Having said that, in some of the initiatives the marginalized have been targeted more directly. For example, Gono Chetona's work in the charlands has targeted the poor households and significantly improved the incomes of the landless through activities such as cattle rearing, intensive cultivation of vegetable gardens, introduction of new and marketable varieties of fruit trees and vegetable crops. In the Lingmuteychhu watershed, the question of equity has been addressed more in terms of inter-village equity where the dry village of Nabchhe has been the recipient of a number of interventions including piggeries and the promotion of fruit trees. In Hivre Bazar, the promotion of the dairy industry has benefited the landless (though not only the landless of course). Moreover, the 'poor' and landless were given loans to start new enterprises. Informally, water sharing has also been promoted so that those who cannot afford open wells still are able to avail of water. Where the programmes are targeted at individual farms or households, such as Lingmuteychhu or GC, the effects are somewhat more equitable, with GC specifically focusing on the needs of poorer households.

However, social relations have to a large extent remained untouched in most of the experiments and the example of earlier experiments such as Pani Panchayats or Sukhomajri where concerns of redistribution were more explicit not followed. Even in the case of Lingmuteychhu, until now there has been no effort to address (or attempt to change) customary water rights that limit the rights of the socially and economically marginalized.

It is not easy to separate out caste inequities in the Indian cases, because in many cases economic inequities are strongly correlated with caste anyway. However, one sees that the initiatives do not address questions of caste head-on, and in the process caste-based discrimination may get reproduced. For instance, in DLVS' work, traditional drinking water sources were rejuvenated using the labour of all households, but access to these sources continued to be on caste lines. Further, some of the project implementers, for example TBS and DLVS, have been more concerned with 'empowering' the community *vis-à-vis* the state as opposed to addressing questions of intra-community equity.

In most cases, concerns of gender equity have not been very explicit to the intervention (except for Gono Chetona's intervention where the organization works with

mainly the women) other than for the establishment of self-help groups. In other words, gender concerns have been problematized largely in terms of providing possible alternative forms of employment to women. For example, in Lingmuteychhu watershed, the women's SHGs in Limbukha have started marketing solar driers meant to dry meat, a possible source of revenue if the idea is taken to. In Hivre Bazar, the women members of the BPL SHG have availed of loans to buy goats. It is unclear, however, to what extent these SHGs are sustainable. Many women in Hivre Bazar complained that they were not able to make their contributions over the last couple of years due to drought. Moreover, the long term vision of SHGs acting as a platform for employment diversification has not really occurred because women are mostly busy with agricultural work and hence do not have spare time. What SHGs have achieved, at least nominally, is provide women with a platform from which they *might be* increasingly able to play a more important role in the matters of the village. In practice, however, this does not seem to have happened. For example, in the case of DLVS, where most of the work was handled by the mahila mangal dals (women's groups), much of the decision making remained in the hand of the male villagers. So too the case in Lingmuteychhu despite the fact that women appear to play a much more active role in the public domain.

In some cases, it appears as if women's work has in fact increased due to ecological rejuvenation. In most watershed experiments (TBS, Utthan and Hivre Bazar), the work burden has increased with the intensification of agricultural activity – with no consequent improvement in their social status. In the case of TBS, the ban on tree felling has imposed a further burden on women who have to travel longer distances to collect fuelwood.

Democratic Decentralisation

We have examined the question at three levels: have people participated, have the communities as a whole gained greater control over the management of the natural resources they use (or increased their capacity to hold state/NGO accountable), and has there been an internal democratization of the process of community decision-making about these resources.

Explicit to CBNRM, across experiments, is the need for 'communities' to have a much more important role to play in the management of local natural resources. In all the six cases, the project implementers have involved the 'collective' community not only for instrumental reasons, but also because they believe the community has a right to decide its own future. The manner in which this has happened, however, has varied significantly. In some cases, such as in Lingmuteychhu and Utthan, more formal participatory rural appraisal exercises took place in which communities articulated what types of livelihood interventions they desired. On the other hand, in some cases such as Hivre Bazar, discussions with the community have either taken place at gram sabha meetings or informally at the village chowks (square). It is also the case, at least in some of the interventions, that participation of the community is not a one time process but a continuous one.

Clearly the 'space' for community participation is constrained in a number of different ways. First, there is a fine line between people making choices about what they want project implementers to do and the range of possibilities given to them by project implementers. For example, in the case of Lingmuteychhu, the nature of the RNR RC's interventions in the watershed is largely dictated by their 'technical expertise'. Second, who participates and who does not is determined by the project design and the strategy adopted by the PIA. In the case of TBS, their focus on *johad* revival limits the space of people's participation largely to that particular activity and to those whom it affects. Similarly, as many of the interventions are related to watershed development, there is an implicit bias towards participation of the landed. In the case of Lingmuteychhu, 'participants' in household based activities were mostly those who volunteered to undertake particular activities such as adopting new varieties of crops etc. In the case of Gona Chetona's intervention, many (non-beneficiary) villagers appeared unaware of the NGOs work.[11]

In terms of decentralization, the gains seem surprisingly limited. Although HB, largely due to the visionary leadership of its sarpanch, managed to extract maximum benefits from the state AGY programme and also attract funds from programmes, there is no sign that this has gotten institutionalized; in fact, the AGY programme has collapsed and the state is back to implementing more routine (i.e., bureaucratically controlled) watershed development programmes. DLVS's efforts made no dent in the level of community control; in fact, existing community institutions such as Van Panchayats have continued to be eroded by increased state interference and that too in spite of Uttaranchal being created in response to grassroots agitations for autonomy for the hills. In TBS, in spite of its strident anti-state rhetoric, it has not managed to increase the voice of villagers in resource management significantly, while Utthan does not seem to have gone into this aspect at all in Nathugarh. Similarly, decentralization was simply not on GC's agenda. Finally, the question of accountability does not seem to have been extended to the NGOs themselves.

In terms of internal democratization, the achievements are even more limited. Again, HB is a bit of an exception, because they have a functioning gram sabha and gram panchayat. DLVS had the opportunity of such democratization, but failed to link its Mahila Mangal Dals with the actual resource use and developmental decision making. Elsewhere, internal democratization has not been on the agenda, even though the need for it is fairly obvious, as in the case of Gopalpura (TBS), In Nathugarh (Utthan) while all the men of the Kanbi Patel caste (including the landless and economically weak) were co-opted in the decision-making process, the women remained excluded.

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[11] Considering that the project was supposed to be a model experiment, and the non-beneficiaries were supposed to take up the learnings from the programme on their own, there have been no serious attempts for the propagation of the learnings.

Understanding NGO-driven CBNRM

It would be fair to say, at least in the context of our six case studies, that the nature of 'alternative' development delivered by NGOs remains somewhat problematic. While there is no doubt that there have been livelihood benefits to all of the interventions, achievements in terms of sustainability, equity and democratic decentralization have been less forthcoming though there are significant variations across the cases.

In what follows below in this section, therefore, is an elaboration upon a number of factors that have shaped the nature of NGO-driven development in our case studies and the manner in which they have shaped the outcomes discussed above. In particular, we explore how the NGO's vision, its strategy (or nature of intervention shaped by the question of community formation), the centrality of community formation and state policy are critical to how CBNRM works in practice. While these four factors very much overlap and no doubt influence each other independent of each other they offer some clues as to the way particular interventions work.

Visions

That NGO-driven CBNRM offers more room for 'innovative' forms of development was one of the reasons that proponents of NGO-driven development espoused its cause. Not only were questions of democratic decentralization very much central to the discourses of NGOs who contrasted CBNRM with state-led development but environmental conservation found acceptance amongst groups that were previously concerned only about poverty alleviation or rural development. Also, there was some evidence to suggest that concerns of distributive equity were part of the vision of some NGOs. In that sense, CBNRM and NGO-driven CBNRM appeared to be multi-dimensional in nature. However, as we have already highlighted, in practice the major achievements appear to be in livelihood enhancement and significant doubts remain with regard to concerns of distributive equity and democratic decentralization especially.

Much of this has to do with the visions of the implementing agencies which differ of course across the case studies. As we have discussed earlier, while DLVS, TBS and Hivre Bazar share a broad Gandhian ideology, the other three PIAs have no explicit ideology - though it could be said that Utthan and Gono Chetona have a more explicit focus on the marginalized. These differences are at least partly responsible for the differences in emphasis amongst the IAs.

As we highlighted above, while all the implementing agencies focused on livelihood enhancement, there were significant differences in how such livelihood enhancement was envisaged. Though DLVS, HB and TBS all believe in improving the self-sufficiency and self reliance of the villages, there are differences in how this could be achieved. In the case of DLVS, the environmental regeneration is an end in itself, and there is also awareness that self-sufficiency could be achieved also by limiting ones needs. Hence the focus is only on meeting the subsistence needs (of fuel, fodder and drinking water) of the people. On the other hand, in HB we see that there is a ban on growing commercial crops and excessive use of water; there is a clear understanding of the limits set by the agro-ecological settings and to not repeat the mistakes that are

witnessed in other watershed experiments in semi-arid regions. But there was an attempt also to satisfy more than the subsistence needs of the households by generating agricultural surplus. The experiment has also tried to promote non-agricultural activities like dairy farming, both to offset the pressure/dependence on agriculture and to give an alternative source of income for the landless. In TBS too, the attempt was to fulfill subsistence needs of the people by making agriculture secure from the vagaries of nature, by harvesting water. But unlike in HB, there have been no attempts to build on the positive livelihood gains by providing alternate sources of livelihood. In all the above three cases the focus was more on livelihood enhancement primarily through regeneration of environmental resources. But the difference between HB and the other two is that while the former is trying to build on the positive gains by thinking in terms of marketing and processing of agricultural and dairy produce from the village to increase incomes, the latter have largely ignored this. The common thread that binds these three initiatives is the concern for sustainable resource use, though this concern varies between the three.

In the case of Utthan too, the attempt has been towards seeking a more secure livelihood through harvesting of water and treatment of the watershed. But here the focus was on one-time implementation of water conservation measures, and some discussion on maintenance of the structures erected during the programme (which as our study shows, is not happening). There has been almost no attempt to regulate the newly generated resource. Short term livelihood gains get primacy here.

This is not to say that the other two initiatives (Lingmutechhu and Gono Chetona) have not undertaken work with regard to environmental regeneration but rather that the focus is more on livelihood enhancement through promotion of income generating activities (both land and non-land based). The RNRRC in Bhutan were open about the fact that this was their first exposure to watershed development and hence concerns of sustainability especially were not very explicit to the intervention; instead they focused on the urgent livelihood needs of the people in different villages. In Gono Chetona's case too, the programme aimed at fulfilling the livelihood needs of the poor who have minimum resources.[12] But the focus here was only on the poor, so naturally all the experiments were aimed at maximizing gains (through eco-friendly methods) from the vegetable gardens; we do not see similar attempts to encourage organic farming in other agricultural lands.

There is significant silence and/or lack of critical interrogation *vis-à-vis* concerns of equity amongst some of the implementing agencies. Most of the implementing agencies have been primarily concerned with poverty alleviation at best and not so much with relative poverty or the structural determinants of inequity. This is the case because equity concerns are simply not explicit to the implementing agencies' vision. Hence TBS, for example, is silent on the significant caste inequalities that exist in Gopalapura. Further, TBS's policy of not comprehensively treating the micro-watershed creates inequalities in terms of access to regenerated water. Similarly, in the case of Utthan's

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[12] It should be noted that the environmental concern is reflected in this strategy which emphasizes on flood coping mechanisms rather than flood control.

work in Nathugarh, the NGO has not been able to address the 'exclusion' of the Koli Patels from development processes (though it tried to bring them on board).[13] In Lingmuteychhu, the RNRRC is aware of unequal water rights between villages but as yet has not grappled with them although a watershed-level committee has been established.[14] In the case of Hivre Bazar, whereas attempts have been made to improve the lot of Dalits and the landless to some extent, there has been no attempt to articulate a vision that addresses the huge land inequalities that exist. Gono Chetona's work most explicitly focuses on the marginalized, but again no attempt has been made by the NGO to address the issue of land capturing by the elites (which maybe be the root cause of the problem). While it might be too much to expect that a particular NGO can address concerns of structural inequality, even at the level of ideology or vision such concerns remain absent. This is disturbing considering some of the earlier experiments in the 1980s dealt with this issue head-on, and were to some extent successful too.[15]

Why equity appears to have received such little attention requires a more nuanced look at some of the implementing agencies' visions. In the case of Hivre Bazar, TBS and DLVS, the broad-based vision is that of 'community' revival – perhaps because of the Gandhian influence. This is most notably the case in Hivre Bazar where a main aim was to create the 'ideal' village so that villagers could pride themselves on this. TBS's emphasis was slightly different, namely on reviving traditional 'community' controlled water harvesting structures and espousing the value of traditional knowledge. In the case of DLVS, the underlying philosophy was that of self reliance and self-governing communities and interventions were once again aimed at fostering that idea. The relative silence with regard to issues of equity is also related to choices made in terms of interventions and the 'collective' dimension required for them to succeed, something that can also mean that equity is underplayed. For example, do watershed-based interventions implicitly constrain the implementing agencies from addressing equity concerns? The answer to this question is in the affirmative considering that collective action required in these experiments is expected mostly from the landed. The poor are involved only when a regulatory mechanism has to be set in place, which in most watershed experiments is not seen (because of lack of sustainability concerns). Moreover, interventions where the intention is to benefit agriculture, either through treatment of common lands or changing agricultural strategies (or both), largely benefits the landed. Though the poor benefit from increased agricultural activities through increase in employment opportunities, the relative economic distance between the poor and rich increases. There is some indication that the IA's who have focused more on household level interventions have been able to pay more attention to equity concerns – although as in the case of Lingmuteychhu this is not always intentional.

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[13] The concern of equity is otherwise very central in Utthan's work in its drinking water and sanitation programme.
[14] The RNR RC scientists admit that they are uncomfortable dealing with social issues; their expertise remains confined to agricultural extension work at best.
[15] Some of these experiments include Ralegaon Siddhi (Anon, n.d.; Antia and Kadekodi, n.d.; Gunjal and Deshmukh, 1998), Sukhomajri (Chopra *et al.*, 1988; Seckler and Joshi, 1981; SPWD, 1984), Upper Andhi Khola Irrigation Scheme (van Etten *et al.*, 2002), Pani Panchayat (Deshpande and Jyotishni, 2002; Pangare and Lokur, 1996) and Bangladesh (Wood *et al.*, 1990).

What about gender equity? We have already illustrated above some of the negative equity implications in terms of increased workload placed on women due to forest protection or increased agricultural productivity. In some cases, the implementing agencies have anticipated such developments and attempted to address these concerns and other related ones. For example, DLVS has in some cases helped in reforestation in areas close to the villages so lessen the time and burden of collection of fodder and fuelwood. In Hivre Bazar, in-built mechanisms were put in place to address the possible negative impacts of protecting the catchment area. Women, being the main gatherers of fuelwood, would potentially have to travel longer distances for collection – hence the decision to keep part of the catchment area open for limited collection and grazing. However, in other cases the main focus has been on promoting alternative forms of employment/income generation and much less on addressing concerns of social status or participation. At best, SHGs are envisaged as means by which women participate more but that too mostly within the purview of the SHGs. For example, even in the case of DLVS's work, where most of the work was envisaged to be handled by mahila mangal dals, it was not part of the NGO's vision to transfer decision making to these dals. Only in the case of Gono Chetona's intervention do we see that women have been put in the forefront. The NGOs vision, and hence its emphasis, is on improving the economic status of women from resource poor households. But in this case too we see that the attempt is to improve the status of women through economic gains, rather than by challenging the religious and social structures which creates gender inequalities in rural Bangladesh.

The manner in which democratic decentralization has been envisaged is very much linked to the above mentioned limits. As highlighted at the outset, democratic decentralization is a shorthand of sorts for a cluster of possibly independent concerns including 'participation', devolution and democratization. On paper, CBNRM is meant to increase the participation of the local community. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the main vision of all the IAs has been to involve the 'community' in developmental activities. This has invariably involved a number of steps ranging from different forms of participatory rural appraisal to elicit the concerns of the community to involvement in different activities or interventions including in some cases highlighting the importance of *shramdaan* (voluntary labour).

How important 'participation' in the planning process has been to the IAs has, however, varied significantly between cases. In almost all the cases, the IA first spent time soliciting opinions from villagers and/or highlighting to them the need to participate more actively in environmental regeneration/livelihood enhancement measures and then getting them involved in particular activities. The village/panchayat leadership in Hivre Bazar envisaged regular participation of villagers in both formal (gram sabha) and informal gatherings. In the other cases, interaction with villagers appears less frequent. In the case of Gopalpura, the village elders advised TBS staff about how reviving water harvesting structures was the best way to do samaj seva (social service) at a time when TBS was focusing on its literacy campaigns. But here the participation is limited to only those who are directly benefiting from a structure. In Nathugarh, Utthan conducted a PRA exercise with the villagers (only the Kanbi Patel men) to get their opinion on how to implement the watershed programme and where to build water harvesting structures. In

the char villages in Bangladesh, the project design was formulated without consulting the people. Despite these opinion seeking exercises by the IAs (or the absence of it) the basket of choices open to villagers is often constrained by the options given to them by the IAs, something that is mediated either by the IAs' 'expertise'[16] or by the very nature of the intervention.

There is also a certain degree of instrumentality attached to IA's idea of participation during the implementation process- soliciting participation in order to deliver outcomes and to complete the project in time. In the case of Gono Chetona community's involvement was sought only to ensure a better acceptability of the experiments promoted in the programme by the beneficiaries.[17] In both the Gono Chetona and Lingmuteychhu cases the selection of beneficiary households was greatly influenced by willingness to participate. Community contribution (*shramdaan*) has become one of the important tools to ensure participation and a way to instill a sense of belongingness of the beneficiaries to the works that were done to ensure the continued maintenance of structures.

Democraticization as a goal is not something that is pursued very vigorously by most of the NGOs. This follows from the fact that the IAs have for the most part not paid adequate attention to the segmented nature of the community. What follows is that institutions created by the IAs have been dominated by the dominant sections of the village and do not reflect the aspirations of the resource poor sections. But there are differences again between different IAs. While in Hivre Bazar the leadership has encouraged and made special efforts to involve the entire village in all the activities, other NGOs have not been so energetic in creating democratic institutions. For instance, the gram sabha promoted by TBS in Gopalpura is dominated by the Meena men, and has no place for the participation of dalits and women. MMDs promoted by DLVS continue to remain the main labour pool for any work done by the NGO, while the decision making is done by the men. Moreover, the organization remains blind to the existing social norms and customs which exclude the dalits from a number of village spaces. Though Utthan tried to co-opt the Koli Patels in the various committees, these efforts were not commensurate with the strength of historically entrenched caste and class divides. Hence 'community' participation as envisaged often is exclusionary.

Implicit in the vision of all the IAs is the need for greater decentralization to the community. However, in most cases what the IAs suggests by decentralization is not greater powers being bestowed on democratically-elected local bodies but rather a focus on 'depoliticized' community groups such as user groups or SHGs. In fact, like much of NGO-driven CBNRM there appears to be little engagement with existing panchayati raj institutions and politics more generally. In fact, the 'overly-politicized' local bodies are often deemed to be the problem which perhaps explains the fact that most of the IAs have

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16 For instance, in Lingmuteychhu choice of experiments is very much determined by the expertise of the RNRRC.

[17] But Gono Chetona has been quite flexible and open in incorporating the villagers' ideas during the implementation of the project.

also not attempted to strengthen the powers given to local bodies. The Bhutanese case, of course, is different with CBNRM being a policy promoted by the state. Hence, the RNRRC sees its role as that of a catalyst in terms of improving the capabilities of local bodies and line departments to address natural resource management concerns. The line departments nonetheless remain powerful. Thus although the new *chatrims* (laws) promoted by the state give additional powers to the *geog* (block) and *dzongkhag* (district), substantial powers remain with the departments and the RNRRC does not focus specifically on lobbying for more powers. The Hivre Bazar case is different as the panchayat samiti and gram sabha were in control of the affairs, including during the implementation phase of AGY. The panchayat samiti and the sarpanch have built on the work done during the AGY in the latter phase, and used the funds from both AGY and funds that come through other state schemes.[18] It does not seem to be, however, the vision (or strategy) of any of the IAs to either work closely with the elected bodies except perhaps in Lingmuteychhu or to lobby for more devolution (in practice) to these bodies. This appears to be a major limit not only in terms of the vision of decentralization but also the scope of NGO-driven CBNRM to be part of a bigger movement towards devolution.

Strategic Interventions and Community Formation
The visions of IAs are not independent of choices that need to be made with regard to strategy (or interventions) and vice versa of course. Strategies moreover are affected by not only the agro-climatic context in which interventions take place but consequently the constraints it places on the manner in which community involvement is envisaged. In this section, we explore the linkages between strategies and community formation more closely, and try to analyse the outcomes described in an earlier section.

The first kind of activity (or strategy) important to IAs is generally termed in NGO parlance as 'entry point activity', namely raising awareness and convincing people of the importance of being part of the initiative. There are three dimensions to this: (1) how the NGOs go about mobilizing members of the community, (2) how the idea of community is addressed and (3) who amongst the community gets involved. A number of different (innovative) methods were used by the different implementing agencies to involve people, ranging from the more conventional participatory rural appraisal techniques in Lingmuteychhu (RNRRC) watershed and Nathugarh (Utthan) to baseline surveys in the charlands (Gono Chetona) to environmental awareness camps and discussions (DLVS) and *yatras* (TBS). In addition to such methods, some of the IAs participated in religious activities like construction or repair of places of worship (DLVS). In the case of Hivre Bazar, the 'leadership' had already established a positive image among a large section of the village population before the beginning of the watershed programme. Since the NGO was formed by the villagers themselves, and the leadership was already getting the villagers involved in various activities (like improving

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[18] Both Popatrao (the sarpanch) and Anna Hazare are strong votaries of devolution, but in their view the gram sabha, and not the sarpanch or the panchayat samiti, should be the institution were decisions should be taken. In fact, Popatrao is part of one committee constituted by the Maharashtra government to advice on ways to strengthen the functional jurisdiction of panchayat bodies.

the village school, building a temple and *akhara*) to revive the community feeling, they did not have to do any 'entry point activity'. Instead, the gram sabha was called and details of the programme discussed.

In different ways, the form these entry level activities take shape affect the manner of the larger initiative. For example, a common criticism of PRA techniques is that they privilege the voice of certain actors over others (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). In the case of Utthan's work in Nathugarh, it appears as if the voice of the landless remained largely unheard. Similar is the case with TBS, which elicited the opinion of the dominant caste (the Meenas) who were the ultimate beneficiaries of the NGO's work in Gopalpura. In other cases, the 'problem' was less perhaps with the methods used to elicit opinions from local people but more in terms of what followed. In the case of RNR RC's work, it could be argued that most members of the community were part of the PRA exercises. But subsequently, most of the RNR RC's 'extension' activities were targeted at people who were willing to get involved. In many cases related to adopting new varieties this meant that farmers who were willing to take risks were more likely to be the beneficiaries. This explains partly at least why equity concerns could not be very directly privileged. The Gono Chetona experience was similar. Although ostensibly the most deprived were targeted, in practice it seems as if the NGO made the decisions.

In some cases, strategies were intrinsically tied to the idea of community and the need for community formation. The most notable example of this is that of Hivre Bazar. According to Popat Rao Pawar, the sarpanch, the main problem confronting the village of Hivre Bazar prior to his arrival was factionalism and in-fighting due to amongst other things social problems such as alcoholism. Hence, from the outset his attention was to overcome these social problems through the various bans imposed in the village and to generate a collective feeling of pride in Hivre Bazar. However, the flip side of the coin is that the notions of collective pride can militate against more targeted strategies that attempt to address structural inequalities. In Hivre Bazar, while the watershed programme clearly benefited the landed, attempts were also made to specially target the poor households by helping them get loans and other benefits. In the case of Gopalpura, the focus has been more on 'traditional' resources of the community. The irony there, however, is that *johads* were mostly on private lands and hence their revival benefited only a subset of the community.

What is also noticeable is that IAs have focused mostly on win-win situations deliberately, partly to do with their visions and partly because of questions of community formation and the need for collective action. Collective institutions appear to have been mostly those of a 'productive' nature where all the members benefit, i.e win-win situations and where non-members are not adversely affected. The SHGs are an example of this in most of our case studies. Even in the case of watershed management, one could argue that treatment of the catchment area is beneficial to all (excluding the landless) in the long run as it will lead to better water availability. But here too one needs to involve the neighbouring villages so that the benefits are not offset by the latter. In the case of Nathugarh for instance, a big landlord from the neighbouring village has broken the water harvesting structures as these were adversely affecting his land. While the farmers of the

neighbouring village were involved in discussions, they were not treated as part of the programme and not included in the institutional structure. So the problem cropped up because there was lack of mutual commitment, even though mutual consent was taken before the construction of the structure. Moreover, household level interventions, even if they are targeted at the poor, do not have an 'adverse' impact on those who do not benefit though they can result in non-beneficiaries derailing experiments as happened in the village of Limbukha in the upper reaches of Lingmuteychhu watershed.

At one level this is understandable. CBNRM, after all, is different than conventional NRM because it is supposed to be community-based and hence concerns of long-term sustainability are rooted in the idea of collective action. However, one could argue that questions of equity also impact upon the likelihood of initiatives having concerns about sustainability. For example, in watershed experiments, the protection of the catchment area especially during the initial period of treatment is more likely to affect smaller and marginal farmers who do not have alternative sources from which to graze cattle or collect fuelwood. In Hivre Bazar, regulations were flexible enough to keep a certain part of the catchment area open for these purposes. However, in many of the experiments, similar concerns do not seem to have been addressed. One could argue, for example, that the inter and intra-village issue of water sharing is central to the success of watershed-based interventions in Lingmuteychhu. But this is not very clear. As much of the IAs' interventions are on private land or are household based, it might be the case that initiatives can be 'sustainable' without addressing major concerns of inequity given the socio-economic and cultural context in which interventions are made. IAs seem reluctant to venture into these concerns.

'Professionalism' or 'expertise' also plays some part in determining the outcome of interventions. The problem often is that the IA itself has particular types of expertise or that its staff are not themselves adequately acquainted with the 'technical' or 'socio-economic' knowledge required. The case of RNRRC in Bhutan is a case in point. Researchers at RNRRC are mostly sectoral experts in forestry, water, horticulture etc. and have not been exposed to watershed development at all – being the first experiment of its kind in Bhutan. Moreover, the staff themselves admitted that they were becoming social scientists on the job. DLVS, in fact, believes strongly in not getting NGO-ised, i.e. becoming a 'professional' organization with paid staff and infrastructure. While there is an inherent logic to such a philosophy, namely not to be driven by funds and funding agencies, there is a possibility (not an inevitability) that interventions are not adequately scrutinized in terms of their technicalities. For example, it was unclear as to the benefits of the digging of *jal talais* (small water harvesting structures) in Jandriya Malla largely due to the lack of clarity with regard to the quantum of recharge from pits of that particular size.

One of the most important strategies is in terms of constituting community institutions to implement the experiment and also to regulate the use of the regenerated resources. The institutions formed by the NGOs not only reflect their concerns/visions but also explains the outcomes. For instance, the gram sabha promoted by TBS reflects the organisation's vision of reviving traditional village institutions and to hand over the

management responsibilities of the natural resources to them. But these institutions have also excluded the marginalized sections of the village from NRM. In the case of DTLVS too the concerns were very similar, and thus mahila mangal dals (MMD) were formed. But it did not go the full distance of giving the MMDs decision-making powers in the NGO's programmes, nor of engaging with other existing institutions such as Van Panchayats or Gram Panchayats. Like in the case of TBS, in Nathugarh too Utthan formed an institution (watershed committee) whose membership effectively was restricted to the Kanbi Patels. Though the landless people of the Kanbi Patel caste were part of the programme, the large sections of the Koli Patel labourers did not find any representation.[19] Clearly the nature of the experiment influenced this decision to include those with land in the watershed, which in this case was one village. The women of the village and the landless Koli Patels found no place. In Hivre Bazar the village leadership were successful in enlisting the involvement of all sections of the village not only during the implementation phase of AGY, but also post-AGY. Institutions like watershed committee[20] and sub-watershed committees, milk co-operative were formed, and the village witnesses quite an informal kind of decision making process.

In experiments where households are targeted, the role of collective action or decision making is limited. In the char villages of Bangladesh, beneficiaries were chosen from a compact block in each village, but the focus of the experiment was to target individual households. In each of the nineteen villages women's groups were formed, and the fortnightly meetings of the groups were used to raise awareness and teach the women about the various components of the programme. Some of the women who were given training in better agricultural practices, cattle rearing, poultry farming and other experiments used these meeting to teach the other members. In Lingmuteychhu too, the meetings were meant to discuss the various components of the programme. In short, these meetings are used primarily as training and teaching exercise. Clearly in both these interventions the aim of the IA was to select a group of beneficiaries who would carry out the experiments on their farms for others to see, and later replicate. Hence, collective action at the larger level (village or watershed) was not needed and never envisaged at least at the outset.

State Policy

NGO-driven CBNRM is very much located in a context in which state policy also operates and is constrained to act within its bounds. In addition to the discourses that might limit the visions of NGOs, the degree to which state policy and actions place constraints on NGO-driven experiments is also an important factor. The manner in which state policy operates in a specific context may differ and in certain instances may even be contradictory to the general thrust of state policy itself. The case studies show the influence of state policy is multi-faceted and often contradictory in nature.

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[19] Since, the Koli Patels are not officially part of the village, they are simply not considered villagers by anyone, including themselves; they remain uninvolved in the village affairs. They have clearly welcomed the watershed treatment as they too benefit indirectly from the increased productivity

[20] The panchayat samiti doubled up as the watershed committee in Hivre Bazar.

In all of our case studies, including Lingmuteychhu where RNRRC operates more like a GNGO, the NGO has of necessity to function within the boundaries set by state policy. Firstly, this means that existing laws pertaining to natural resources potentially confine the scope of NGOs to create the space for communities to manage resources. For example in Lingmuteychhu, most of the forests are owned by the state. Community forestry would, therefore, have to be approved by state departments. In other cases, the impact of state activity in adjacent areas could itself become a constraining factor. For example, in DLVS, 'traditional' van panchayats are being undermined by the spread of the state's joint forest management programmes as well as the introduction of new bureaucratic rules both of which have the potential of making positive aspects of initiatives like DLVS irrelevant. In the case of TBS, the NGO initially faced opposition from the Rajasthan Irrigation Department in respect of undertaking water harvesting on their own. Later, when TBS participated in the government aided programme PAWDI and TBS was entrusted with the software component it received little support.

Conversely, however, when it comes to creating space for structural changes NGO reluctance to disturb the status quo leaves it often to the state to intervene in favour of equity. Our study shows that while CBRNM programmes in general and NGO-driven CBNRM in particular bring about some positive changes, it is left to the state to create the space for structural change. For instance, in Gopalpura it was because of the state intervention that the dalits got land allotted in their name and later were in a position to get benefits from whatever developmental intervention of any NGO or the state. In Bangladesh, while Gono Chetona has focused on improving the livelihood of the poorest sections of the chars, it is the state and its agencies that can help the poor by weakening the influence of the local elites who capture all the common lands. Having said this in other cases the NGO's reluctance to or inability to conceptualise practical ways to favourably disturb the status quo is matched by the state's own reluctance to effect any structural change and instead confine itself to welfarist measures.

Sometimes state policy itself seems to create some amount of space for CBNRM. In Bhutan, CBNRM is being promoted by the state itself. The Adarsh Gaon Yojana (under which the main work in Hivre Bazar has taken place) in Maharashtra is a government programme that recognized the innovativeness of the Ralegaon Siddhi experiment and sought to scale it up. The leadership in Hivre Bazar has made innovative use of this latitude, and the state has refrained from undue interference. However, it should also be remembered that in case of Hivre Bazar, it had a favoured status, and AGY in other villages has failed, as much through the lack of innovative vision and acceptance of the dominant state discourse on the part of the NGOs. So even while the state may be willing or even enthusiastic to showcase successful cases in CBNRM where NGOs are involved along with the state it may not hold in the general case. The space provided by the state may not be adequate to bring about positive outcomes in terms of equitable and participatory NRM.

Concluding Remarks

 We began our exploration of CBNRM in South Asia by examining the emergence of the idea of CBNRM and its approximately two decade-old trajectory in this region. Apart from critiques of the implementation of various programmes, the really interesting critiques highlight the inherent limits to the idea of CBNRM itself and to the idea that NGOs can provide the lead in innovating and piloting this idea into practice. In order to understand the potential and limits of CBNRM in practice in this region, we therefore chose to examine in some detail six efforts that were *prima facie* seen as relatively successful and innovative. Given that the dominant mode of CBNRM implementation today in this region is one of NGO implementation, we included 3 large NGO led efforts, one community-led effort, one grassroots organization effort, and one effort implemented by a state-supported scientific organization. We examined the gains from the efforts along the dimensions of livelihood enhancement, sustainability, equity and democratic decentralization, dimensions that we believe reflect the superset of concerns that underpin CBNRM. We then attempted to understand the pattern of gains (and shortfalls) as arising from a combination of the vision of the implementers, the constraints imposed by the context, and the role played by the state.

We found that these CBNRM efforts have generally made significant contributions to livelihood enhancement, but, contrary to the aim of CBNRM, have made only limited gains in terms of collective action for sustainable and equitable access to benefits and continuing resource use, and in terms of democratic decentralization. The explanations for limited gains are multiple and inter-linked.

Firstly, regardless of what they want to do, the implementers have to confront the socio-ecological reality of the region, which almost always is that of fragmented communities (or communities in flux) with unequal dependence on and access to land and other natural resources and with great gender imbalances. Second, visions themselves seem to often be limited. This coupled with the constraints of particular strategies and possible impediments of state policy provides a broad explanation as to why in practice NGO-driven CBNRM has not perhaps met its goal of providing 'alternative' forms of development. What is more disturbing, however, is the general absence of the recognition of the importance of and the will to explore practical ways to bring about equitable resource transfer or benefit-sharing and the consequent innovations in this respect that are evident in the pioneering CBNRM efforts such as Sukhomajri or Pani Panchayat. Coupled with a similar absence on part of the state, we have then a discourse in which equitable resource transfer or benefit-sharing remains at best rhetoric ranging from limited visions to the constraints of strategies implemented to possible impediments due to the constraints imposed by the state.

All of this suggests that the role of NGOs in CBNRM needs to be re-examined. First, and perhaps least controversially, is the fact even the 'successes' or 'innovativeness' has an extremely limited coverage. It is one thing that large NGOs (donors) are increasingly funding state-led CBNRM initiatives, but quite another to expect NGOs to play an expansive role in terms of the geographical coverage of CBNRM. In that sense, the role of NGOs can at best be complimentary to the state or

provide innovative experiments that the state can learn from but certainly not act as a substitute for it. Moreover, as most of our case studies illustrate, NGOs do not act in an 'autonomous space' but in an environment where state policies have left their imprint. It is, therefore, necessary to engage with the state in a much more purposeful way.

The wider question is of course of 'depoliticized' development. The view, often held by many NGOs, is that of a corrupt, overly politicized state apparatus. That might in fact be the case in many south Asian countries. Yet, there is a difference between wanting the state to reform and wishing it away. Moreover, in some South Asian countries, there are institutions of democratic decentralisation already in place and relatively significant packages of devolution. One of the problems confronting these institutions of course is the lack of wherewithal to seriously address natural resource management concerns. Can not 'innovative' ideas that might emerge within the gamut of NGO-initiated CBNRM be more closely linked with wider initiatives of democratic decentralisation?

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