Chapter 5. ORGANISING FOR THE PARTNERSHIP

5.1 Gathering relevant information and tools and promoting social communication

The process will be iterative— as the social actors get involved, they bring about refinements and improvements in defining, understanding, deciding and taking action— but a good beginning positively affects all future outcomes.

The organising phase of the partnership is the realm of the Start-up Team, which prepares and facilitates the work of the relevant social actors. This is a critical moment in the process. On the one hand, the initiators and Start-up Team are usually self-appointed and have thus limited legitimacy to take decisions. On the other, they need to deal with several substantive issues, even if only in a preliminary way. The manner in which they shape the space and style of discussions, the language they use (for instance, what they introduce as "problems", "opportunities", "resources", etc.) and, most of all, their preliminary identification of the territory and resources at stake and of the social actors to participate in the negotiation are the cornerstones of the co-management process. To be sure, the process will be iterative— as the social actors get involved, they bring about refinements and improvements in defining, understanding, deciding and taking action— but a good beginning positively affects all future outcomes.

The members of the Start-up Team are usually well aware of the issues, problems

and opportunities that concern various social actors about a territory, area or set of resources. They have reviewed them during the CM need and feasibility analyses, but they should refrain from discussing technical questions or the best ways to solve problems or respond to opportunities, as this is not their role. In the organising phase of the CM process, the Start-up Team prepares for, and enables, the relevant social actors to do that themselves.

Gathering information and tools

The Start-up Team may begin by gathering and listing available data and information on the "management unit" at stake. This includes historical data and reports (trend data and records of exceptional events are particularly useful), ecological and anthropological studies, maps (including old maps), copies of property and usufruct records, etc. Among such documents, an *ecological analysis* of the territory and natural resources would be particularly useful as it could describe their ecological value, the threats they sustain, the impacts of current activities and the current trends in biological diversity and performance of ecological functions. Even when such an analysis is available, there are benefits to be gained from revisiting it in a participatory way, with the input of local people as well as expert professionals.[1] Other useful studies could deal with specific resources, such as water, mineral ore, or migratory wildlife; with the local economy and its potential in the light of national policies (trends in volume and prices of key agricultural and natural resource outputs, including timber and wildlife products; trends in productive activities, such as tourism; etc.) or with population dynamics, such as reviews of human fertility, mortality, morbidity and migration in the concerned territory. All such analyses should be considered background material on which to ground substantial discussions and not "final statements", as they need to be validated by all management partners in the light of other information and a shared vision of the desired future.

Besides gathering various information and documents, the Start-up Team may prepare a short summary report of the issues at stake, to be offered to the relevant social actors at the beginning of the negotiation process. The report could review the particular NRM context from various perspectives (historical, social, legal, political, institutional) but the Start-up Team should refrain from stating the positions of various parties. If there are controversies, the report may mention them, and simply say what they are about. Preparing such a preliminary report is not always appropriate. It should be avoided when it is likely that the social actors may be intimidated or upset by it.

…the relevant social actors organise themselves by preparing maps, documents and reports and by describing features, uses and entitlements of land and natural resources as seen, known and recognised by them.

Not only the report, but also the maps and other relevant data and information should be made available to all relevant actors, particularly to local communities who may otherwise be deprived of the information they contain. In fact, the Start-up Team may wish to constitute a small reference library at the disposal of all participants in the negotiations. The availability of such information may be a novelty for some social actors, and the Team should be aware that the effective *use* of information needs previous experience and adapting time and is, in itself, an empowering experience.[2] Even more empowering, as a matter of fact, is the *generation* of information. Mapping of ancestral territories, in particular, is a key

1 Long term residents and resource users may be of great help in an ecological analysis. An interesting view of how to identify priorities in biodiversity conservation within a socio-political context is found in Vane-Wright, 1996.

2 Information is rarely, if ever, neutral, and confers power to the holder. For instance, legislation can be selectively enforced by the few who know the details. Market values in the cities, unknown to the producers, may be many times as high as the prices paid for the same product in the countryside. The environment now heralded as "pristine" may have been inhabited for centuries, a fact that conservationists may prefer not to expose. And so on.

instrument currently used by local communities to re-vindicate land and resource rights[3] and to illustrate existing systems of natural resource management (see Box 5.1). The Start-up Team usually begins by gathering existing information and using it to promote social communication, but it can also encourage the generation of *new* information, which the social actors themselves substantiate according to their own knowledge and experience (see Section 5.2). Indeed, a most empowering moment in the preparatory phase is when the social actors organise themselves by preparing maps, documents and reports, and by describing features, uses and entitlements of land and natural resources *as seen, known and recognised by them*.

Box 5.1 **Participatory mapping in the Brazilian Amazon**
(adapted from Viana and Freire, 2001)

A growing number of experiences in land use planning include participatory mapping of community land and resources assisted by NGOs. The Institute of Forest and Agriculture Certification and Management (IMAFLORA), a non-governmental organisation based in Piracicaba (Brazil), has facilitated a number of such initiatives.

The Tapaj□s National Forest is located in Central Amazon, near Santarém, along the Tapaj□s River. 18 riverine communities, including some descendants of last century's *cabano*'s movement, live within the National Forest and have a history of conflicts with IBAMA, the federal agency in charge of managing the forest. From 1995 onwards, these communities have been engaged in a planning process that included the participatory mapping of land and resources. The maps were validated in a public assembly, with the participation of all communities, IBAMA and observers from various institutions. The maps showed that the community ancestral rights extended over an area larger than what had been previously claimed by the communities themselves. Unfortunately, their detailed claims have *not* been recognised by IBAMA, which produced its own maps without local participation. Nevertheless, the community mapping process has been useful, as it helped developing a zoning plan (the Management Plan of the Tapaj□s National Forest), "empowering" local leaders and community members and setting the stage for the creation of a pluralist Board of Directors (*Grupo Gestor*) for the National Forest.

The Municipality of Boa Vista do Ramos, located along the Amazon River near Manaus, comprises 43

[3] See, for instance, Colchester and Erni, 1999, and the examples collected in Section 5.2 later in this Chapter.

communities. In 1998-99 these communities were involved in participatory land use planning exercises that included the selection and training of local "environmental defence agents" in mapping techniques and sustainable development concepts. The Municipality of Boa Vista do Ramos was very interested in the participatory mapping process as a tool for inter-agency planning and as a means to bring rules to land tenure and promote economic development based on sustainable natural resource use. The product of the participatory mapping was made available to all agencies of the municipal government and incorporated into a geographic information system. Atlases have later been developed and used in local schools, in a municipal land tenure programme and to plan for community initiatives.

A key lesson that emerges from these cases is that participatory mapping is an effective method to promote land tenure regularisation, to value local knowledge and to strengthen cultural identity. It was found important that different groups (formal and informal, divided by gender, age, religion and origin) were asked to draw the landscape and the resource uses, that maps were used to discuss a variety of issues (*e.g.*, health, transportation, education) and that great care was taken in the process of "restituting information", through special tools (*cartilhas*) prepared for each particular stakeholder group.

As for biophysical and ecological information, the collection and analysis of social information begins with the work of the Start-up Team but needs to be refined through a discussion of the recognised entitlements and unrecognised claims by the relevant actors themselves. This is a sensitive task, and it must be carried out in a participatory and iterative way. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the assessment of the relative "weight" of different entitlements brings the management partners to distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" actors (and even lesser important ones) who may consequently receive different social recognition and benefits in management. The gathering and validation of the information necessary to assess the relevant entitlements (for instance: "How old is the history of occupation and resource use of a community in an area?"; "Is a particular exploitation permit still valid?"; "Who is paying the opportunity costs of conservation activities?") have major political implications. For equity's sake, the people and groups with a limited capacity to represent and assert themselves should be assisted to organise and gather the necessary information in support of their claims.

Several participatory management initiatives have commissioned substantial background ecological and social research prior to the negotiating phase. For instance, in the Muthurajawela Marsh and Lagoon Area of Sri Lanka, detailed environmental impact assessments of proposed activities, flora and fauna studies, socio-economic assessments of local communities, and other such factors were studied as part of the participatory exercise to develop a management plan for the area.[4] In the case of Mt. Elgon National Park, in Uganda, comprehensive studies on human use of natural resources and their impacts on the ecosystem preceded the negotiation of participatory management agreements between Uganda National Parks and local parishes.[5]

The information base for the CM negotiation process can been strengthened by a growing confidence in community knowledge, moving away from an exclusive dependence on formal and "scientific" information provided by professionals from outside the community or even the country concerned. It is important, however, that such local knowledge is recognised beyond the rhetoric. Some large scale

4 Avanti Jayatilake, personal communication, 1997; see also Decosse and Jayawickrama, 1996.

5 Scott, 1998. The same has been true for other national parks experimenting with co-management processes in Uganda, in particular for the pioneering Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

programmes implemented by state governments and involving impressive multi-million budgets— such as the Eco-development Programme in India or the Parks and People Project in Nepal— affirm that local, community-based knowledge should be respected and utilised, but it is not clear how they actually translate this recognition into practice. The greatest use of local knowledge is usually found in the case of community-initiated or NGO-initiated natural resource management initiatives, for instance among the Kuna peoples of Panama, the Chipko movement in the Indian Himalaya, or the forest protection committees of Rajasthan in western India, all of which are built around traditional knowledge and practices about forests and biodiversity. It is also important that community knowledge is compared and discussed *vis-à-vis* other forms of knowledge. For instance, local knowledge about endangered species appeared to clash in an important way with information collected by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, in Australia. The local Aboriginal peoples were reported to believe that the manatees are sea marsupials ("the small ones are capable of finding refuge in the body of the mother"), and much more numerous than marine scientists found them to be.[6]

Box 5.2 **Examples of People's Biodiversity Registers**
(adapted from Gadgil, 1996; Palmer *et al.*, 1991)

In India, an innovative strategy of documenting local community knowledge and benefiting from its use has been devised during the last decade. Some groups and networks involved in environment, health, agriculture, and traditional science and technology prepared a simple guide/ format called the People's (or Community) Biodiversity Register. With the help of community-based organisations, they tested it in several villages, assisting villagers to record detailed information on their relationship with their biological surroundings, both in text and visual form.

The Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) was asked to assist in spreading the guide/ format widely, including by publishing it in regional languages, and providing the Register a legal status so that it could be used in disputes over intellectual property rights. After the MoEF's lukewarm response, however, some NGOs translated the guide/ format on their own and used various versions of it in several states of India. They agreed with communities never to publish information that is sensitive or that the communities do not want publicised.

In a similar effort, on the other side of the globe, high school students of Costa Rica's Talamanca coast have documented villagers' knowledge about forests and wildlife, as well as indigenous history and knowledge about the environment. In the process, they developed a deeper understanding of their own cultural roots, and an appreciation for the practices of the indigenous BriBri and Cabecar peoples.

Co-management approaches are uniquely suited to promote complementarity between traditional and modern knowledge systems[7], in particular during social communication events and participatory action research. In this light, a particular concern regards the safeguard of the intellectual property rights of local communities. To this aim, models of conduct have been developed and detailed guidelines for researchers working with local communities have recently been published.[8]

6 Graeme Kelleher, personal communication, 1995.
7 On this, see also Chapter 1 of this volume.
8 Laird, 2002.

Social communication

The heart of a co-management process is the negotiation among the representatives of various interest groups on concrete decisions, such as a management plan and one or more complementary initiatives. Negotiations, however, are not meaningful if they happen in an "information vacuum", with only a few people aware and concerned about what is being discussed and what consequences the decisions will entail. On the contrary, the interest groups that participate in the negotiation need to be well informed, knowledgeable and aware of issues and reciprocal concerns— all of which can be achieved by well-designed social communication efforts.

Negotiations are not meaningful if they happen in an "information vacuum", with only a few people aware and concerned about what is being discussed and what consequences the decisions will entail.

But there is more. Successful social communication can help not only to better understand the partners' perspectives and learn from different knowledge bases. They also yield new perspectives, synergistic innovations and innovative breakthroughs.[9] All too often, decisions are taken "based on limited consideration of a limited number of options, or skewed by biases in cognition— limitations in human judgement that are similar to optical illusions".[10] Well-designed communication efforts may not completely eliminate these problems but can reduce them considerably. In the words of Wheatley (1992): "Innovation arises from ongoing circles of exchange, where information is not just accumulated or stored, but created. Knowledge is generated anew from connections that weren't there before."

Box 5.3 **Informal contacts between actors are important!**
(adapted from Lavigne Delville, 2000)

In development and conservation initiatives the communication strategy is rarely taken as seriously as it deserves to be. The external agencies cultivate the illusion of local mechanisms assuring perfect social communication. It is instead part of the responsibility of outside agents to assure that information and dialogue arrive to distant households and are not confined to the individuals holding positions of power and local privilege. The habit of holding only few and formal field meetings with local elite and decision-makers may make an outside agency completely blind with respect to what is really happening. It is instead essential to have "free time" to discuss issues informally, in a direct relationship between a variety of local and non-local actors.

Building upon the work of R□ling (1994) we may see a few key tasks to be accomplished by social communication in natural resource management:

- making things visible (*i.e.*, clarifying and raising awareness on natural and social phenomena);
- fostering policy understanding and acceptance;
- preparing for, and supporting, the negotiation process.

We use here the term "social communication" in the preparatory phase of a co-management process to describe the on-going dialogue and information flow between the Start-up Team and the interest groups, and among the interest groups themselves. This can be prompted by the Start-up Team through a specific event (*e.g.*, a public party, a community meeting, a fair, a travelling theatre piece), but

9 Ram□rez, 1997.
10 Lee, 1993.

needs also to include an on-going component, such as regular meetings or a newsletter and a well identified focal point for information (a bulletin board, a phone number, a designated person) where questions and suggestions can be posted or heard and needs can be reported through time.

While the planning and negotiation process will typically rely on meetings and similar events, the facilitators of CM processes must recognise that there will always be people and groups who remain unwilling or unable to participate in such events. It is therefore advisable to remain aware of the limitations of "meetings", and to design and use additional means of social communication that promote the on-going information and, as much as possible, the inclusion and participation of all relevant social actors.

Box 5.4 **Social communication for co-management**
(adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000)

Communication may be *personal* (one-to-one), *inter-personal* (among a few individuals) and *social* (when it involves groups, such as a local community). Social communication is about providing the conditions for interactive learning and informed decision making in society, *i.e.,* fostering the sharing of information and the discussion of problems, opportunities and alternative options for action. It is a complex undertaking, including a variety of avenues, from personal (one-to-one dialogues) to interpersonal (group meetings) to social (*e.g.,* via the use of mass media such as the radio, TV or Internet).

Interactive learning is crucial for co-management initiatives, as these seek to overcome the logic of top-down expert authority and prescribed behaviour. Whenever there is a gap or a conflict between what is legal (prescribed) and what is legitimate (emerging from social consensus) efforts at merely transferring information, awareness or skills are likely to be in vain. Only interactive learning, built on the direct confrontation and dialogue among different views (thinking, discussing and acting together), can overcome the gap or help in managing the conflict. A few points to consider:

- "Communication occurs when people have something in common." (Fuglesang, 1982). If we wish to communicate with people we need to *understand the language(s) by which they describe their own reality*, including fundamental beliefs, values and concepts (such as time, space, matter).
- Effective communication processes and tools *do not discriminate* against the weaker and less influential in society (*e.g.,* people who do not feel confident enough to attend meetings, who are not literate, who live far from main centres, etc.). In this sense, audiovisual presentations, such as picture stories and community radio programmes or "broad participation events", such as street theatre, may be less discriminatory than the printed media.
- Any information conveyed should be *truthful, fair and reasonably complete*. Information depends on context, and decisions are conditioned by the perception of available alternatives. Fairness in communication is thus a complex phenomenon, depending on completeness of information as much as on strict adherence of information to "facts".
- Any awareness raising initiative (*e.g.,* a travelling theatre piece) should be *respectful of local cultural traits and norms*. Difficult subjects could and should be raised, but cultural features and beliefs should be treated with respect and not made to appear inadequate or ridiculous.
- Any training initiative should be offered with an eye to its social implications. Training a few individuals in crucial new skills for local production systems can originate important power changes and imbalances, and should be done to enhance not only available skills but also *social equity* in the relevant context.
- Most importantly, social communication initiatives should include plenty of occasions for dialogue

and discussion, and the opportunity for everyone to express their own views, to ask questions and to dissent. This, in fact, represents the main difference between social communication and conventional information, education and training initiatives. While in the latter information flows from the sender to the receiver of messages, in the former information flows in all directions and *collective knowledge, awareness and skills are actually generated* as part of that very flow and exchange (*e.g.,* by social dialogue and debate).

In the CM preparatory phase, social communication promotes an open debate and critical understanding of issues, including content questions, such as: "Do we have any problem regarding our natural resources?"; "Are there opportunities we should seize?"; "What could be done about them?". There are also process questions, such as: "What is co-management?"; "Is it needed here?"; "If so, how do we develop it?". In other words, one would need to start with a discussion on existing environment and development problems and opportunities, and move, at a comfortable and unhurried pace, towards what capacities exist to do something about those, and what roles different actors may wish to play.

It is useful to have a good "name" for the co-management process being promoted and a good description (words, images, definition of problems, etc.) of the ecological and social issues to be tackled. Those are an important visit card for the Start-up Team and need to be culturally valid and broadly understood and accepted in the context at stake, even if they may last only a limited time (any good process ends up developing, though dialogue and discussions, its own and unique "accepted common language"). The Start-up Team may wish to test and adopt some terms or phrase in the local language, which would hopefully be perceived as meaningful, appealing and inspiring (*e.g.*, "Let's manage the forest together!", "Solidarity between people and the land", "Save our wetlands!", "The Parliament of the Silver River", "People and the Sea", "Designing our life",[11] etc.). The local name of the CM process is usually important for local acceptance and success. The terms and phrases should not be trite or resemble party slogans; on the contrary, they should convey the spirit of non-partisan collaboration, solidarity, working together for the common good. It is also important to avoid "picking a good name" from the top of the head of a few professionals. Instead, the name should ideally evolve in informal conversations with members of local communities and various relevant social actors. Possible problems and inadequacies with the translation of the names and descriptions in various local languages should also be given careful consideration.

…the "name" of the CM process should ideally evolve in informal conversations with members of local communities and various relevant social actors….

[11] The latter "Desegnando la vida" was utilised in the Paute community (Ecuador), described in Box 4.2.

Box 5.5 **First and most important step: accompanying a new perception of problems, actors, resources and opportunities within the local communities**
(adapted from Garreau, 2002)

The Andapa valley, in Madagascar, comprises a plain delimited by the mountain ranges of Marojejy and Anjanaharibe-Sud, covered by high and low altitude forests of great biodiversity value. The valley, excellent for growing rice, started being inhabited at the beginning of the XX century, after some colons established there the cultivation of vanilla beans. The fertile land and the opportunities provided by the production of vanilla, and later also coffee and rice, attracted thousands of poor peoples from the surrounding regions. The enormous growth of the resident population went hand in hand with uncontrolled deforestation. In the last forty years, the local population tripled and many continued to use slash and burn practices (*tavy)* to grow pluvial rice. The relative proportion between forest and people passed from 1 hectare per person to 1 hectare per 10 persons. Local land prices soared.

A ten-year integrated conservation and development project started being implemented in 1993 by WWF around the protected areas of Marojejy et Anjanaharibe-Sud. The project begun by controlling access to the protected areas, carrying out some "environmental education" and diffusing alternative production techniques (irrigated rice *versus* the *tavy*, houses made of bricks rather than wood, beekeeping rather than collection of wild honey). In 1996, however, a new law on the devolution of resource management rights to local communities (the so-called GELOSE law) allowed to change the approach and to offer a new and better chance to the local communities and the local environment.

The project understood that what local communities lacked the most was information on their own situation. It thus invited local peoples and, later on, local authorities, to re-read their own history and to examine their future in the light of the conditions of their natural resources— their *common patrimony*. This created new ties among the families and communities that were discovering similarities of problems across the region, and strengthened the local identity, which had been precarious given the various ethnic and geographic origins of most residents. As part of social communication initiatives, information was conveyed on the new GELOSE law, which foresaw the possibility of assigning to the local communities the management responsibility for their own forests, to give them security of tenure over the cultivated land and to acquire specific management capacities. As the new opportunities got understood, the communities started changing their perspective of the situation and the project could also change its own role.

Initially the project was a main partner of the state in controlling infraction to the rules that excluded people from the protected areas, it diffused new technologies and promoted rural credit… all with the type of patron-client relationships that this implies. After the broad change of attitude, however, the communities started seeing the betterment of their lives as depending on the management conditions of their environment, for which they could now be in charge. Change became *their own* priority and they began demanding help to organise and learn how to use their resources in more effective and sustainable ways. The project could then adopt a new role, providing advice and acting as intermediary between the communities and the government.

One of the early objectives of social communication is to inform the public at large about the relevance of management concepts and practices for the local context. But people should be more than "informed". They should appropriate for themselves what management is all about, and transform it as they see fit. In other words, social communication initiatives should be much more open and dialogue-oriented than conventional information or education initiatives. They should not merely aim at "passing a message about an issue" but at promoting its critical understanding and appropriation in society. In line with this, the most

important result sought by a genuine co-management initiative is not for people to behave in tune with what some experts— including the experts in the Start-up Team— believe is right for them, but for people to think, find agreements and act together on their own accord.

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One aspect of the politics of information is that information moves among the dominant sectors of society, or between them and the less privileged, but rarely it is allowed to flow among the less privileged themselves. In fact, lack of information and lack of control over the means and avenues of information is one of the ways by which marginalisation is created and maintained. And even when information passes from one local community to another, it is often mediated by outsiders (government agents, NGOs, commercial media houses, etc.). Simultaneous to this is the fact that the traditional means of communication amongst rural communities across regions (*e.g.*, pilgrimages, local traders, wandering minstrels and jostlers) are disappearing, with the commercial aspects of such contacts becoming dominant over the informal exchanges they used to represent and convey.

Fortunately, some participatory natural resource management initiatives have themselves revived people-to-people contacts. Communities are encouraged to visit other communities where innovative resource management initiatives are going on, and other are supported to do so by NGOs or, more rarely, by government agencies. In Columbia, horizontal *campesino* to *campesino* (farmer to farmer) communication has enormous potential, especially in matters such as protection or revival of native seed diversity.[12] Traditional healers have also been supported to meet and exchange their knowledge and skills as a way to promote the survival of their unique bio-cultural heritage.[13] Indigenous peoples in many parts of the world, and in particular in South and North America, are coming together more and more frequently to learn from each other and to jointly respond to challenges from outsiders. In India, the time-honoured tradition of pilgrimage (*yatras*) is also being revived. In 1995, a major such journey of communication and exploration involved tens of local community representatives, conservationists, officials and academics who travelled for thousands of kilometres through eighteen national parks and sanctuaries, initiating dialogues with communities and government officials along the way, examining local problems and raising awareness of possible solutions.[14]

In many participatory management initiatives people-to-people contacts are being revived.

Such contacts and communication are also a powerful way of keeping the oral tradition alive. In the past, intra- and inter-generational communication was largely oral, and this continues to be the case with many indigenous and rural communities. The written form cannot possibly convey the richness, depth, and lasting impression of the oral form. Leopold Sedar Senghor, ex-president of Senegal, urged anthropologists to tape and photograph what the shamans, street performers, and old people of Africa had to tell and show; he said that they were "the final keepers of a long human history, entrusted only to their voices… and when they die, it will be as if for you, for your civilisation, all the libraries were to be burned". Much of those "unwritten books" contain precious resource management information and, as documentation always reduces and misrepresents to some extent, community-to-community contacts are necessary to keep that oral tradition alive.

12 Ram□rez, 1998.
13 Zuluaga and Diaz, 1999; Zuluaga, 2000.
14 Kothari, 1995.

A great diversity of tools and techniques can be used in social communication efforts, from informal face-to-face dialogues to global electronic conferences where most participants never physically meet. No one tool is likely to be appropriate for all occasions, even within the same socio-cultural and ecological setting. Community meetings, posters, maps, drawings, poetry, debates, films and photos, radio, the print media, street theatre and other folk media… the tools are as diverse as the situations in which they have to be employed, and should be adapted to them. In Cameroon, a conservation and development initiative supported by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) in a tropical forest environment organised a series of visits to local communities, mostly inhabited by illiterate people. Their communication efforts centred on the use of particular tool— a paper canvas of about 2.5 meter width, with a series of drawings in a specific sequence. The images were exposed one after the other during the community meetings and a facilitator helped the people to reflect on their environment, discuss on the trends they perceived about it, identify possible solutions, identify the need for a facilitated dialogue/ negotiation among all the interested actors and brainstorm about who could do what (*e.g.*, who could play a facilitator role among contrasting needs and concerns). These meetings were very useful for people to understand that the project staff was a "distinct actor" with respect to the government or the park conservation staff, and could play a role as mediator among various actors and concerns.[15]

…until the local people accepted the carriers of information, the invitation to dialogue fell on deaf ears. The carrier was the message!

In Congo Brazzaville, a similar project encountered tremendous local opposition until a person of local tribal affiliation understood the issue at stake and agreed to visit the local communities and initiate a series of open discussions.[16] In that case, until the local people accepted the carriers of information, the invitation to dialogue fell on deaf ears. The carrier *was* the message! Again in the Congo, some cassette tapes were prepared containing both music and information about conservation and development issues. The cassettes were sold at market places and distributed among the drivers of the *taxi-brousse* (the only means of local transportation), where people could listen to them and possibly start discussing options while sharing a ride….

Songs, drama, dance, storytelling, and other cultural forms are used to great effect all over South America. These moments of social communication are not separated from normal life but merged with it. Traditional forms of mutually supporting labour, such as the *minga* of the Andean region, are energised by songs and special foods, and followed by a gathering where people eat, drink and celebrate

15 Karin Augustat, personal communication, 1999; and Augustat, 1999.
16 Chatelain *et al.*, 2004.

together. In Ecuador, federations of local communities built a major irrigation system, planted a million trees, and carried out soil conservation measures on slopes, through such a system.[17] In this sense, informal social communication activities such as joint mapping and surveying of the natural resources to be managed, involving a variety of social actors (and especially the ones not formally recognised!) can help develop confidence and trust on the Start-up Team. Dialogues, mutual learning exercises and the participation in common events are some of the most useful tools in this respect.

5.2 Engaging the partners in participatory action research

Quite naturally, social communication events may merge into participatory action research, *i.e.*, specific inquiries by which local and outside actors join forces to understand the current situation and respond to its problems and opportunities. Conventional research on natural resource management is an activity carried out by experts (usually outside experts), which involves local actors only as informants or labour. Local people are asked to provide information, but are not let to elaborate on the context or meaning of such information, and even less allowed to shape questions, define problems or test solutions. This is unfortunate, as local people are depository of knowledge and insights critical for management decisions. As a concrete example, most natural resource management projects do not have provisions for historical research (including oral history of local communities). A Navajo teacher eloquently brings out the importance of such an understanding:

"Ethnic history is like a bow and arrow. The farther back you pull the bowstring, the farther the arrow flies. The same is true with historical vision: the farther back you look, the farther you can see into the future. If you pull the bowstring back only a little, the arrow only goes forward a short way. The same with history. If you only look back a short distance, your vision into the future is equally short."

Participatory action research[18] (PAR) is based on the involvement of local and non-local partners in a joint learning process. It has an orientation towards the felt needs of local people and institutions and locally-generated initiatives. It values and respects local history and institutional memory. And it has a focus on action, rather than on the collection of mere data and information. The results of research are meant to feed directly into planning and concrete activities and a minimum time gap is expected between data collection, analysis and feed-back. Last but not least, PAR exhibits a strong focus on process, with an equal concern for both final results and the process that leads to them, a built-in communication strategy and the redefinition of the role of non-local professionals, evaluated not so much for "what they know" but for "how useful they are" to local people and communities.

[17] Kleymeyer, 1996.
[18] Fals Borda and Rahman, 1991; Barton *et al.*, 1997; Castellanet and Jordan, 2002; CGIR, 2003.

Participatory action research (PAR) has a focus on action, rather than on the collection of mere data and information; its results are meant to feed directly into planning and concrete activities….

Collaborative management efforts throughout the world have involved a variety of social actors in both baseline research and analysis, often generating a synergy between traditional and modern knowledge and tools (*e.g.,* between visual tools such as maps, pictures, films and diagrams, and oral tools, such as open meetings, traditional media and rural radio). For instance, people of eastern Panama, threatened by logging, ranching, and a proposed highway, combined community-generated maps with government maps, aerial photographs, and the Global Positioning System (GPS) to show the extent of local natural resource use. When used in lobbying and campaigns, their composite maps proved extremely effective in convincing the government of the need for rethinking development in the area.[19] In Indonesia, WWF helped villagers with similar mapping exercises, used to ascertain, clearly and factually, the customary rights of local communities in the territories declared part of Kayan Mentarang National Park. This was an essential step towards developing fairer zoning plans based on customary regulations (*adat*) and a legal co-management structure for the park.[20] In Bolivia, the people of Tiwanaku joined efforts with external scientists to understand the local irrigation problems and ended up reviving ancient farm beds and interlacing canals.[21] Such a revival of local, traditional knowledge for water harvesting, used in conjunction with modern engineering science, has been happening also in some parts of India, with remarkable results.[22] The methods and tools of participatory action research are usually close to the community livelihood experience and thus generally effective and well accepted. A telling example are the "family portraits",[23] which examine and describe in detail the production systems and copying strategies of typical families in a given context. Another example is the focus group discussion of stakeholders rights, responsibilities and revenues *vis-à-vis* the resources.[24]

Box 5.6 **Participatory land and resource mapping as an empowering, capacity building process**
(adapted from Poole, 1997)

A number of methods for land use and occupancy studies evolved in the 1970s in the Canadian north, amidst the Inuit organisations in Arctic Quebec (Nunavik) and the Northwest Territories (Nunavut). These included the development of local maps (with supporting text) resulting from community-based research involving interviews with elders and expert hunters and fishers. Each interview led to a personal or family "map biography". Using traditional cartographical methods, these maps were then assembled to produce a comprehensive geographic statement about areas and resources traditionally used. These, in turn, were first used to negotiate land settlements, and later to develop resource inventories, management plans, environmental impact studies, etc.

The Ye'kuana communities of Venezuela have been inspired by the Inuit experience, and received the support of Canadian and other organisations to replicate it in their own environment. In fact, they adopted participatory mapping as a strategy to both demonstrate evidence of historical occupancy and evidence of capacity to manage resources. The process began in the early 1990s and was based on an ingenious demarcation method, adapted to their immense and densely forested environment. The com-

19 Lynch and Talbott, 1995.
20 Eghenter and Labo, 2003.
21 Kleymeyer, 1996.
22 CSE, 1997.
23 Bocoum *et al.*, 2003.
24 Tache and Irwin, 2003.

munity members cut trails from the villages to strategic entry points to the Ye'kuana territory. Once they reached those points, they marked them by opening up circles of 20 or more 30 m. diameter, which could be visible from above. Intervening boundary markers were either rivers or straight lines. The work was accomplished by several teams, each comprising thirty men and women, which covered agreed border segments in about 2 months each. A light aircraft was then used to locate the circles and geo-code their positions with a GPS system. In Ottawa, 3 versions of the resulting map were subsequently produced: 3,000 copies of the basic map for distribution to each Ye'kuana, several glossy enlargements for national officials, and about fifty work maps with all place names deleted save those of the communities.

In a subsequent phase, the work maps were used by the communities to assign Ye'kuana names to streams and places and identify their traditional resources and the places that are special for spiritual reasons. This kind of mapping is about what people do as much as what they know. The Ye'kuana affirm that knowledge in the form of named places and resources indicates regular use of the land which is tantamount to ownership. This employs an argument that has been used elsewhere in its reverse mode: to deny indigenous ownership of resources. When used by mining interests during the Nunavut negotiations, this argument held that Inuit do not qualify for land ownership on the grounds that they lack the technical capacity to identify the presence of mineral resources, or to mine them: they couldn't own them because they couldn't know them. The mineral companies would qualify for ownership by virtue of their capacity both to know where minerals are and to exploit these resources. Following this, the Grand Council of the Crees demonstrated the importance of using the land and being able to prove that use in their case against a major hydro project. The Cree disputed the claim that the land to be flooded was unoccupied by showing heavily documented evidence of their intensive and extensive land-based activities.

The Ye'kuana were made aware of this and communities planned to maintain the boundary circles they had created, for instance by establishing a camp and garden nearby. This demarcation strategy, to show evidence of use at strategic entry points by cutting a *manga,* was also used by the Awa, in the early 1980s, in demarcating the Awa Ethnic Forest Reserve in Ecuador. The final phase of the mapping project foresees the development of a long-term environmental protection and sustainable plan, designed to feature in negotiations as evidence of the local capacity to manage such a large territory. Elements of the plan and map include issues of conservation, inventories, domestication of plant varieties, location of protected habitats and renewable energy resources, potential new village/ camp sites and location and control of tourism.

Conscious of having to defend a territory that amounts to 10,000 ha. per person, the Ye'kuana are taking steps to convince both the public and officialdom that they are best qualified to look after it. When a project coordinator, Simeon Jimenez, had his seven minutes on Venezuelan national television, he used them to reassure viewers about Ye'kuana intentions. He referred to pressure from intrusions of *garimpeiro* (gold-miners from Brazil), he cited incursions of Colombian narco-guerrillas across the Orinoco and proposed that the public think of the Ye'kuana as guardians of the national forest patrimony, acting on their behalf. Their strategy is around the proposition that they are the people best qualified, by tradition, knowledge, intentions and capacity, to look after their traditional territory.

In summary, the expanded interests and activities precipitated by the initial demarcation phase served two purposes: to reinforce the Ye'kuana case for legal recognition of their lands and to address present social and economic issues confronting the communities. Quite apart from mapping, the project is being used as a medium for exploring new ways to utilise the traditional resource base. These are seen to have survival value and would probably continue even if the Ye'kuana case for their land was eventually to fail. In fact, the maps are useful, but equally useful is the way that the mapping process has provided opportunities for communities and individuals to become directly engaged in generating the case for their land, to a depth that would not be possible if their case was conducted by proxy, and to

gradually assume command of the process. In addition, the local technical capacities generated went beyond expectations and, as the mapping proceeded, community members took advantage of new contacts and information sources to pursue various lines of inquiry and development of local interest, such as the possibility of mini-hydro and solar fruit dryers, a pilot project in ecotourism and other ways to address the local economic opportunities and social problems.

Importantly, the process promoted new inter-community relations, drawing together communities that had remained out of contact for over thirty years and renewing their solidarity. This is reflected in the composition of the project maps. Although communities accepted local responsibilities for demarcation, and agreed amongst themselves the border between different community territories, there was no placing of community boundaries on any of the project maps. This collective approach implies an obligation to ensure contributions from all communities. The process also promoted some local strategy to protect traditional knowledge. Tactics ranged from the "just don't tell anyone" method to community-based mechanisms for gathering and consolidating knowledge and advising individuals on how to recognise and treat overtures from bio-prospectors. The methods require a high degree of local cohesion, access to external information and means to disseminate local information. The Ye'kuana have also started a systematic collection of local plant uses and are gathering the information needed to identify and anticipate bio-prospectors. Ultimately, they are developing a way of conserving traditional ecological knowledge in the most effective way possible: by using it.

Several villagers in Maharashtra (India) have initiated "study circles" (*abhyas gats*) on various subjects (*e.g.,* forest-based rights), in which interested people come together to discuss and invite outside experts to participate— but only on an equal level.[25] These initiatives help in keeping the people well-informed and aid in participatory research on matters of importance to the village. In the villages of Mendha-Lekha and Saigata these events brought powerfully to light the long-term damages of commercial exploitation of forests— even when seen in the light of the immediate economic gains of forest exploitation. Through similar interactions the villagers have been able to solve complicated issues such as conflicts involving illegal extraction of resources and encroachments (while forest officials are still struggling with such issues in near-by areas). In Jardhargaon village, information from both within and outside, garnered by the Save the Seeds Movement (*beej bachao andolan*) and the forest protection committee *(van suraksha samiti)* was crucial in initiating the switch back to traditional seeds and agro-practices.

Unfortunately the local open discussion of basic information on natural resource management is still more the exception than the rule throughout India. Too often, people are not even aware of developmental or other schemes and plans envisaged for their areas. Ideally, government officials and outside experts would bring in the larger perspectives not so easily perceived by the villagers given their limited experiences and access to outside information. In turn, they could learn from the detailed site-specific information that only the local people have. Together, local people and outsiders could make the best of their combined knowledge and skills.[26]

The essential outcome of the preparatory phase in co-management processes are well-informed actors, willing to engage themselves, assume an active role in management and negotiate a fair share of the related benefits and responsibilities. For this, the members of the Start-up Team may wish to organise specific meetings with the identified parties, or at least with the "primary stakeholders" among

25 Neema Pathak, personal communication, 1998; Hiralal and Tare, 2001; http://www.freedominfo.org/case/mkss/mkss.htm
26 Pathak and Gour-Broome, 2001.

them. The members of the Team who feel most trusted by the relevant people meet with individuals deemed to be representatives of each of the parties and discuss with them the possibility of their participation in a co-management process. This is not a straightforward task. Even when social communication initiatives have aroused their attention, the parties may not be clear about their management interests, concerns and capacities and/ or not be internally organised to promote them[27]. At times, even getting together to discuss issues is a controversial matter, and the Start-up Team has to devise special mechanisms to ensure that a group is allowed to contribute. In Pakistan, for instance, women in rural areas are rarely allowed to meet with people from outside their village, and basically never with men from outside their families. The staff of a FAO project devised an interesting way to overcome this restriction and assign to local women their role as "separate actors" in natural resource management. They had local women and men discussing together a variety of issues by partitioning a room with a curtain and asking people of different gender to take place in separate compartments.[28] People were thus in no direct contact but could express their views and hear one another.

…even when social communication initiatives have aroused their attention, the "relevant actors" may not be clear about their management interests, concerns and capacities and/ or not be internally organised to promote them….

Whenever possible, a useful setting for an initial contact between the Start-up Team and one of the "relevant actors" is a joint visit to the NRM unit(s) at stake. On the spot, issues and problems can be discussed with the help of participatory appraisal exercises such as transect walks, interviews with spontaneous groups and key informants, land use mapping, historical mapping, etc. In these, a basic aim of the Start-up Team may be to elicit views on the major problems the people would like to solve, and the major opportunities they would like to see exploited. These views should be later refined and possibly brought into the negotiation process.

Interestingly, these field visits may be important to dispel incorrect beliefs prior to the negotiation meetings, as it happened some years ago in Albania. During the designation process for a Ramsar site, a few prominent academics representing national conservation NGOs kept lobbying the authorities and consultants for a very strict, no hunting and no local use management regime because of what they described to be a "huge recent rise in the population of the settlements around the site". They stated that many people were moving into the area from northern Albania and that this was going to cause an unsustainable destructive pressure on the lagoon. As evidence, they showed pictures of new houses being built in the settlements around the lagoon. And yet, during a participatory public consultation exercise, immigration and emigration mobility maps were drawn by the residents of those settlements and it emerged that in 11 out of the 12 villages around the site immigration had actually been decreasing in the last decade, and the new houses were being built by and for local residents only. This was confirmed by further analyses and took the wind out of the sails of the conservation lobbyists. A more appropriate and relaxed conservation regime, including limited hunting zones, emerged in the final management plan. Without the participatory consultation and the mapping exercise, there would probably have been a complete hunting ban imposed on the whole area and the management plan of the Ramsar site would have been deeply unpopular and likely ineffective.[29]

Care should be taken to ensure that the views of the individuals preliminarily identified by the Start-up Team as possible representative of one of the parties are not automatically interpreted as the "views of that party" on problems and oppor-

[27] Some authors suggest that *intra-group processes* are just as critical and *inter-group negotiations*. In other words, negotiation within organisations is bound to influence negotiations between organisations (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993).

[28] Marilee Kane, personal communication, 1999.

[29] Andrew Inglis, personal communication, 2000.

… [the social actors] need to decide for themselves if and on what grounds *they wish to claim any management entitlement… and to clarify what* type *of entitlement they claim.*

tunities. The next step should, in fact, be meetings and discussions with more people expected to share the same interests and concerns of the ones initially contacted. In other words, if early contacts were held with a fisherman leader, the later meetings may be held with various fishermen associations. If they were held with a forester or a park ranger only, the later meetings may be with staff from various government agencies. If they were held with a traditional chief or the local teacher, the later meetings may include the community at large. In such larger gatherings and in informal consultations, the NRM issues and problems identified thus far can be introduced and discussed, and thereby validated, made more specific, or entirely re-interpreted. The goal of these meetings is for the relevant social actors to identify and clarify their own NRM interests, concerns and capacities, as well as to decide for themselves if and *on what grounds* they wish to claim any management entitlement (examples of such grounds were described in chapter 2 as the "roots of entitlements"). In addition, they may also clarify what *type* of entitlement they claim. For instance, are they interested in drafting and approving a management plan, including setting up resource use regulations and zoning? Are they interested in taking-on management jobs? In drafting policy changes on the basis of the management results? Or simply in achieving the legalisation of some forms of access to, and use of, natural resources?

The separate meetings in the organising phase offer an occasion for the Start-up Team to deepen and refine the preliminary situation analysis and stakeholder analysis with the help of the social actors themselves. Each one actor, in fact, can be asked to discuss about *other* actors, and about their relative rights and responsibilities to participate in managing the territory, area or natural resources at stake. This can be prompted by some simple questions, such as the ones of Checklist 5.1.

Checklist 5.1 **Questions and ranking exercises to engage the relevant social actors in the CM process (including a participative/ iterative stakeholder analysis)**

Questions for each "relevant actor"

- Do you care about [name X, the specific territory, area or natural resources at stake]?
- Why? What does it represent for you? Why is it important?
- Do you have any specific worry about what is happening or may happen to X?
- Who is managing X?
- Are you at all involved?
- Do you have any special knowledge or capacity to manage X?
- Should you be involved in managing it?
- If yes, would you wish to take an advisory role? A decision-making role? An executive role?
- Would you wish to have a share in the benefits deriving from the natural resources?
- If you wish to take on a management role and receive NRM benefits, do you believe you are entitled to it? If yes, *why* (on what grounds)?
- In light of the above, what management responsibilities are you ready to take on?
- Besides yourselves, who are the main social actors (*e.g.,* agencies, groups, entities, individuals) who

can contribute to and should receive benefits from the management of X?

- Why, in your view, are they entitled? On what grounds?
- What do they have to offer? Specifically, could they contribute to developing the situation analysis, taking decisions, advising decision makers, planning, implementing activities, monitoring and reviewing results or to any other useful activity?
- What management responsibilities could be confided to them?
- What benefits should they receive in compensation for what they would offer?
- If some management decisions need to be taken, who among all the actors you identified should sit in a "committee" in charge of taking decisions?
- Who should be advising that committee?
- Who should take part in implementing the decisions?

Ranking exercises (comparing the various actors, including the respondent)

- Between actors A and B, who is "more entitled" to take management decisions?
- Why?
- Between actors A and B, who is "more entitled" to assume management responsibilities?
- Why?
- Between actors A and B, who is more "more entitled" to receive benefits from the territory or natural resources?
- Why?

These discussions will provide an overview of the main NRM stakes in the specific context, and inform the Start-up Team of controversies likely to surface during the negotiation phase. On the basis of both the collected perceptions of the relevant actors and the legally recognised claims in the territory at stake, the Start-up Team can draw a preliminary broad picture of who are the "primary" actors, the ones that must be engaged in the subsequent management negotiation. Ultimately, their total number is also a consideration. Too many social actors would complicate and slow down the process. Too few may end up leaving out key players.[30] It should be clear, however, *where and how* the groups and individuals who believe to be "legitimate actors" can claim such a status and argue their case on the basis of explicit "grounds".

Not all societies or groups within a society recognise *all* management claims from *all* social actors. They may recognise some but not others. They may recognise claims only in combinations with others (*e.g.,* dependency for survival + long-term relationship with the resources + uses based on traditional knowledge). Some social actors may recognise their respective claims, but other actors may deny them. In some cases, the participatory stakeholder analysis does not present any problem. In others, it may trigger latent conflicts. For some parties the recognition of *any* claim of other social actors poses an insurmountable obstacle. For instance, a set of natural resources may be sacred to a traditional community and considered by them non-negotiable. Or a government agency may go by the books and not be willing to recognise any interest or concern besides its own government mandate. Or some conservation NGOs may chose civil disobedience

No one will be compelled to relinquish authority or renounce acquired rights, but all can profit from solutions that are satisfactory or acceptable to everyone.

[30] Ostrom, 1997.

rather than accepting government decisions that affect the survival of a given species. If this is the case, the Start-up Team may need to dedicate much energy to open up a social debate on the basic principles and advantages of co-management. Among those, it may stress that all relevant actors are expected to both contribute and benefit from resource management and that agreements can be developed in an "experimental" way, according to adaptive management principles. No one will be compelled to relinquish authority or renounce acquired rights, but all can profit from solutions that are satisfactory and acceptable to everyone.

Even before the relevant actors meet, the Start-up Team may be confronted by a variety of old and new natural resource conflicts. The analysis of such conflicts is quite relevant in view of future management agreements and the Start-up Team may wish to engage in it with the active participation of social actors themselves. Care must be taken not to rekindle or exacerbate controversies but simply to clarify issues.[31]

5.3 Assisting local communities to organise

Community organising to manage natural resources is a natural occurrence, at the heart of human livelihoods in all cultures. Today, however, new actors, from state agencies to private entrepreneurs and corporations, have taken centre stage for it. Policies and practices that subtract authority and responsibilities from local communities have been promoted now for several centuries— from the enclosure of the commons to the imposition of "development" initiatives on a huge scale, from colonial systems to disruptive agricultural advice and related credits, from school curricula that devalue local customs to the daily brainwashing of advertisements. All this may explain why so many communities, today, are less than well organised to manage their natural resources and may need new efforts or even external support to re-gain the necessary capabilities. To be sure, all social actors to be involved in co-management processes need to organise for it. But local communities are likely to be the ones most in need of re-empowering themselves for the task.

Kothari (2000) reports that several Indian villages gained new social respect and became politically stronger by organising around the restoration and sound management of their natural resources. Jardhargaon is a typical village in the Himalayan foothills of Tehri Garhwal district, Uttar Pradesh. About twenty years ago, faced with serious shortages of fuel, fodder and water, residents took charge of the protection and management of the slopes above their village. Today, their regenerated forests are providing them with their basic needs. These forests now harbour significant wildlife and biodiversity, and professional botanists have shown them to be amongst the most diverse in this region. Jardhargaon's farmers are also getting increasingly disillusioned about the short-term lures of chemical-

[31] A number of ideas and options for action to deal with conflicts will be discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.4. A special case, which needs particular attention, is the one of traditional and indigenous communities, discussed in Section 4.4 of Chapter 4.

intensive farming, and are switching back to some traditional practices and reviving their traditional seed diversity. Some of them, through traditional journeys on foots (*padayatras)* to the remote villages of their region, have collected several hundred varieties of seeds lost elsewhere (up to 250 varieties of rice, 170 varieties of beans, and many others). The village is also maintaining its own equitable system of irrigation, with specific individuals (*koolwalas)* appointed by the residents to look over the traditional water sharing patterns, ensure that no-one misuses or over-uses the water and maintain the channels in good operating conditions. Jardhargaon has also fought off attempts by outside forces to start mining on some of its slopes.

Similarly, Mendha is a small Gond tribal village in Gadchiroli district (Maharashtra). The early interaction with government officials has meant for them only exploitation and extortion. The forests in the vicinity of the village were taken over and access to villagers was restricted while the government was extracting commercial timber, gave permission to the paper industry to harvest bamboo and awarded contracts to outsiders to gather non-wood forest produce. In the 1970s, Mendha's villagers participated in the massive and successful tribal movement against the Bhopalpatnam-Ichhampalli dams, which would have submerged their homes and forests. Subsequently, with the help of a local NGO called Vrikshamitra, the villagers organised under the motto *Dilli Bambai hamari sarkar, hamare gaon mein ham hein sarkar* ("our representatives form the government in Delhi and Bombay, but we *are* the government in our village"). They formed a Village Forest Protection Committee to manage the surrounding forests, and forced a stop to commercial destructive practices by both locals and outsiders (including the government and the local paper mill). Since then, the village has explored various avenues for generating employment, and has ensured year-round jobs for all residents. Today the village assembly (*gram sabha*) is so strong that no programme, with or without government backing, can be implemented without being first discussed and approved by the villagers… Biogas production, fishing, irrigated agriculture, sustainable forest production and handicrafts are common activities. Indeed, the study circles initiatives described earlier in this chapter produced, in Mendha, remarkable results.

*Today, the village assembly (*gram sabha*) is so strong that no programme, with or without government backing, can be implemented without being first discussed and approved by the villagers…*

Box 5.7 **Community organising: a powerful NRM tool in Mongolia**
(adapted from Schmidt *et al.*, 2002)

From unmemorable times, Mongolia's nomadic herders have been the managers of the natural resources at the basis of their livelihoods— the very resources upon which the country's economy still depends today. Their traditional practices were based on common property of pasture and mobility as a key management strategy. Those, however, have been altered over the decades of centrally-planned economy and during more recent socio-economic changes, resulting in unsustainable practices (increased numbers of herding households, changes in herd structure, lack of proper grassland management, indiscriminate cutting of shrubs and trees for fuel wood). These practices, as well as changes in climate, appear to be at the roots of the current processes of land degradation and desertification throughout the country. To face both ecological and economic problems, some Mongolian communities in the Gobi and the Altai Tavan Bogd areas, bordering China, are re-organising themselves. They formed *Nukhurluls* (support groups) attempting to combine the benefits of both traditional and modern learning. In the *Nukhurluls*, for instance, the community initiatives are typically led by young couples (in fact, mostly young women) but in the background remains the support of the community elders, who keep sharing their wisdom and knowledge rooted in community history and traditional resource management practices. Unlike with previous socialist collectives, the new community organisations and initiatives are all on a voluntary basis. Their current thrust is to increase the community capacities, diversify its sources of livelihood, add value to its products and assert its natural resource rights. As right holders, they can negotiate and agree with other stakeholders on rules and mechanisms for the management of natural resources and protected areas.

Some external technical cooperation agencies have played an important role in this, facilitating the analysis of problems and opportunities within the communities, promoting an exchange of experience among them, supporting linkages between communities and private and public sector organisations and civil society as a whole, and fostering consensus as the basis of co-management decisions. Different local co-management models are now emerging. Park facilities, such as visitor centres, are co-managed. Local communities assign member families to patrol certain valleys, and "Volunteer Rangers" are authorised by the park. The vigilance of local communities who have a strong sense of stewardship over local resources helps to control poaching and illegal trade, for example of falcons. Tourism decisions and related income are shared between park authorities and local communities. Importantly, self-organizing of community groups is occurring also in the absence of project support and contracts for transferring natural resource rights to local communities are currently being discussed between governors and community organisations in several districts. Those concern medicinal plants, wildlife and community-based tourism.

A working group including representatives of local governments, communities, research organisations and policy makers has also been established to develop appropriate concepts for community-based natural resource management in the whole of Mongolia. The group is examining issues of transfer of resource rights and management responsibility to local community institutions, long-term custodianship, ecological and economic viability of resource uses, capacity building of organisations, and developing policies in support of all of the above. The *Nukhurluls*, strong of the experience of several years of work, are taking community organizing into a new era by forming district-wide associations and exploring legal and structural aspects of establishing an overall apex institution. This genuine grassroots organizing is playing an increasingly important role in rural development and sustainable natural resource management in Mongolia.

Unfortunately, the experience of Jardhargaon and Medha, the Mongolian communities described in Box 5.7 or the Iranian nomads described in the Case Example 1.3 in Chapter 1, are the exception rather than the rule in much of the rural areas

of the world. Local communities, groups of natural resource users, and especially disadvantaged groups such as women or ethnic and religious minorities, are rarely capable of defending their interests and concerns with competence and forcefulness through avenues and systems too often defined and controlled by outsiders. To be sure, however, if they wish to participate effectively in negotiation processes, they *need* to do so. In other words, they need to "organise themselves." What does it mean? Three main components of a generic organising process (not necessarily in the given order) may be particularly important and will be discussed here:

- *acquiring specific capacities* (*e.g.*, to attend meetings, to negotiate, to be recognised as a legal entity, to survey natural resources, to monitor biological diversity, etc.);
- *developing an internal agreement* on their own values, interests and concerns about the territory or natural resources at stake; and
- *appointing a representative* to convey such "internal agreement" to the negotiation forum.

In all these components, some external support may play an important role, and the Start-up Team is well placed to assist in the process. To begin with, however, it is important to respect the cultural differences at play. "Organising" is a different concept for different peoples and situations (see Box 5.8) and particularly so when done through traditional procedures (*e.g.*, via extensive rounds of community consultations). In the mid-nineties, an IUCN-supported project in East Africa learned this at its own cost. It assumed that the presence of two local Maasai in the round of discussions leading to an agreement over the Ngorongoro management plan was equivalent to the participation and consent of their whole community. It was not! A wave of protests followed the approval of the plan, which was in fact rejected by the Maasai communities. More than the specific content of the plan, the Maasai protested about the lack of respect during the negotiations. The specific requirements (*e.g.*, time and communication support) needed to gain their collective consensus and approval had not even been foreseen, let alone provided.

"Organising" is a different concept for different peoples and situations.

Of course, if indigenous peoples have reservations about the ways of other social actors, other social actors have reservations about the ways of indigenous peoples. In this sense, questions and dilemmas sometimes arise regarding democratic procedures and the respect of human rights (gender equity, age equity) within different cultural settings. In some societies "… people do not have opinions because… it would be offensive towards village elders if they had."[32] These dilemmas are sensitive and should be approached in a case-by-case manner.

Box 5.8 **Organising of the Maya, between tradition and modernity**
(adapted from Gramajo, 1997)

The current local organisation and representation mechanisms in the rural Altiplano of Guatemala are fairly complex. They include: the Communal Sessions (*i.e.,*village-level discussion and decision-making forum); the Council of Elders (whose decisions on regional and natural resource issues uphold the cultural integrity of the community and are final); the Community Leaders (including Mayan professionals from diverse sectors); the Auxiliary Municipality (which bridges community interests with state institu-

[32] Engberg-Pedersen, 1995.

tions, holds significant responsibility in natural resource issues, and is highly accountable to the locals); and the Local Protection Committees, dedicated to conservation. In the Communal Sessions, community officials are elected, projects are approved and conflicts are resolved. No one in the community makes individual decisions on issues that are within the competence of the Communal Sessions. The resistance of the Maya K'iché has been one of principle and integrity, validated by experience. Gradually, Totonicap□n is consciously reaffirming its autonomy and proven ancestral practices.

Acquiring specific capacities

We understand the term "capacities" as to encompass the attitudes, knowledge, skills, resources and social recognition that allow a social actor to take part meaningfully in the CM process. This covers an ample variety of issues and themes, from the trivial to the lofty. If a group lacks the resources to travel to a meeting, or lacks a good translation of the discussions into its own language, it would do it little good to have been identified as a "legitimate actor" or to possess unique local knowledge of the natural resources at stake. Vice versa, if the group does not master the basic conditions for conservation of the natural resources, no amount of rhetorical skills in meetings will compensate for the fallacies of their misunderstanding.

"Capacity" encompasses different kinds of attitudes, knowledge, skills, institutional settings and resources [all of which] allows a social actor to take part meaningfully in the CM process.

In general, external support can help, but "local motivation", an attitude that cannot be provided from outside, appears to be an essential condition for success. A good example of this is provided by the village of Som Thom, in Cambodia, which responded in an exceptional way to the opportunity of a local UNDP initiative. The village demonstrated great willingness and motivation to develop a management plan for the village forest, developed the plan and was soon thereafter granted forest management rights. In contrast, other villages in the same province of Ratanakiri demonstrated far less motivation and failed to acquire similar rights. Likely, the motivation of Som Thom was a function of community solidarity and the willingness to act together, while most other villages had adopted more individualistic livelihoods approaches, perceived by them as "more modern". Som Thom could also benefit from the energy and activism of a powerful local leader. Interestingly, a difference in attitude (motivation and willingness to act) proved essential for both effective NRM and the acquisition of NR rights.[33]

A variety of social actors, including governmental agencies, benefit from or even require support to build their capacity towards more participatory forms of natural resource management. This may comprise changes in their structure, organisational culture, attitudes, skills and work programmes. In Nepal, bold pronouncements of "handing over forests to village user groups", with forest officials working as extension agents rather than control and command agents, remained for a long time mere statements on paper. The agency staff needed re-orientation towards understanding people's needs and rights, appreciating their knowledge and practices, and grasping the social complexities of community rules.[34] A thorough analysis in the conflict-ridden Rajaji National Park, in northern India, realised a similar type of shortcoming and tackled it directly with capacity-building programmes for agency staff.[35] In Australia, when the Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority looked for key actors with whom to discuss the management plan of the park, they found that conservation groups had already formed their umbrella organisations but the tourist operators had not. The Authority called for a major

33 McCaul, 2000.
34 Chhetri and Pandey, 1992.
35 Rathore, 1997.

conference of tourist operators and supported them to form an association.[36]

Regarding the capacities of local communities, many NRM projects have specific initiatives developed as part of their field operations. In Sri Lanka, for instance, a project supported the development of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) for natural resource management and development purposes. Soon, however, it recognised that the CBOs were not entirely able to carry on their agreed tasks. Specific initiatives were then set up to train the members of the CBOs to gain a more in depth understanding of environmental phenomena, to collect relevant information, to keep systematic records and books, to write proposals and reports, to handle their own field projects, and so on.[37]

Box 5.9 **What makes an organisation capable of participating in co-management? The answer of CANARI**
(adapted from Krishnarayan *et al.,* 2002)

From its experience in capacity-building for participatory natural resource management in the insular Caribbean, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) developed a framework for understanding and assessing organisational capacities. The framework includes the following elements:

- *World view*: a coherent frame of reference that the organisation or group uses to interpret the environment in which it operates and define its place within it. This includes a vision and mission for the organisation, providing a rationale for all other aspects of capacity;
- *Culture*: a way of doing things that enables the organisation or group to achieve its objectives, and believe it can be effective and have an impact;
- *Structure*: a clear definition of roles, functions, lines of communication and mechanisms for accountability;
- *Adaptive strategies*: practices and policies that enable an organisation to adapt and respond to changes in its operating environment;
- *Skills*: needed knowledge, abilities and competencies;
- *Material resources*: needed technology, finance and equipment;
- *Linkages*: an ability to develop and manage relationships with individuals, groups and organisations in pursuit of the organisation vision and mission.

In the experience of CANARI it is the collective sum of these elements that constitutes *capacity* and that can be rather simply assessed to determine the extent to which the organisation is able to participate meaningfully in management processes and institutions.

Several conservation programmes limit their capacity-building role to "environmental education", often interpreted as "teaching" people about the value of the environment and natural resources around them. This is a limited and limiting interpretation. Understanding the broad ecological picture of one's own environment is indeed important, but equally so is the awareness of the various forces at play (including markets, policies and laws), and the rebuilding, where it has been lost, of the ability to value and manage natural resources on one's own terms. Some "capacity-building" initiatives have taken this path. In Iran, local Baluch and Kurd communities have been assisted to evaluate the problems and

[36] Graeme Kelleher, personal communication, 1995.
[37] Jayatilake *et al.*, 1998.

The first "capacity" they were supported to develop was the capacity to think collectively and develop an internal consensus on what needed to be done. After that, the communities identified their "capacity needs" as they arose….

opportunities of their environment on the basis of their traditional knowledge and skills, decide what they can do and implement what they have decided.[38] The first "capacity" they were supported to develop was thus the capacity to think collectively and develop an internal consensus on what needed to be done. After that, the communities identified their "capacity needs" as they arose (for instance the need to control a few pest species without chemical pesticides, the need to keep clear and detailed financial accountings, the need to develop a project proposal). Because the capacity needs had been identified by them, they had a strong motivation to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills. They asked for what they needed and the supporting NGO responded positively.

As the Start-up Team assists the social actors to organise, it may face a variety of requests for assistance. Certain types of assistance are generally non problematic for the promoters of a co-management process (*e.g.*, financing meetings to select a representative, or travel costs to allow the representative to participate in the negotiations). Other types, however (*e.g.*, supporting the establishment and legal recognition of a new association), imply more continuous and onerous commitments and may take on a political connotation that not all Start-up Teams are ready to embrace.

The Start-up Team should keep in mind that support may be needed for *all* actors to understand what co-management is and entails. In this sense, orientation sessions, time for questions and answers and exchange visits to sites where CM is already in operation are extremely valuable. As participatory management initiatives become more common throughout the world, local expertise is developed, recognised and better utilised. This is especially true for the countries of the South, where field-based networking, exchange of experience and mutual support amongst actors involved in co-management initiatives have proven powerful avenues for building local capacities and achieving environmental and social results (see Box 5.10). A relatively costly but powerful option is to organise exchange visits between communities, at least one of whom has taken interesting and possibly unusual action for natural resource management. This has proven enormously effective not only to increase the knowledge of the relevant communities, but also to improve their attitudes.[39] As a matter of fact, local/ national and regional networks have scaled up impressively the capacity of civil society to affect their broader social context and, in particular, to influence national policy for the management of natural resources.[40]

38 This was part of a UNICEF-supported project implemented by the NGO CENESTA.
39 Chatelain *et al.*, 2004.
40 Konaté, 2003.

Box 5.10 **Collective Learning on Collaborative Management of Natural Resources in the Congo Basin**
(adapted and updated from Nguinguiri, 2000)

Since the 1980s, several countries of the Congo Basin have experimented with co-management (CM) approaches towards the sustainable management of their natural resources. Their main challenge has been "how to do it?". GTZ, the IUCN Regional Office for Central Africa and the IUCN/ CEESP Collaborative Management Working Group have been working together to provide answers to the question. Since 1998, they supported a partnership among relevant field initiatives in the region, which called themselves Learning Sites (*sites d'apprentissage*). Ten such sites agreed to become involved in a joint process of "learning by doing".

At the beginning of the initiative, the personnel from the Learning Sites were not enthusiastic. They just saw a further demand of time and efforts placed upon them. Through time, however, they realised that they were acquiring a variety of capacities (information, skills, tools and methods, new ideas and various forms of specific support) that helped them clarify their work strategy and improve their performance. After the first meeting of the network of Learning Sites and the first technical assistance missions, the perception of the members in the network became overwhelming positive. After the first two years, the participants in the initiative *demanded* its continuation. After the completion of the fourth year, they promoted further joint initiatives, this time focusing on basic training for natural resource management and involving all key professional schools in the region.

Regular meetings among social actors from the Learning Sites have been the key steps in the group learning process. Each meeting was dedicated to a specific CM topic, such as "negotiation processes", "conflict management", "monitoring and evaluation", "social communication", etc. A typical meeting started with the Sites presenting their experiences on the specific topic, followed by group discussion to identify common problems and explore possible solutions. The presence of resource persons helped to fill the gaps and illustrate relevant methods and tools. The meetings usually included a field visit and some joint planning sessions, through which the participants acted as consultants for each other. Through these regular meetings, a relatively stable network of CM practitioners developed a common language to discuss co-management issues and a "regional vision" of what CM entails— a vision re-discussed and pursued in practice in each Learning Site.

The achievements of the initiative include:

- better understanding of key process steps of CM;
- better and more widespread knowledge about it (also through the diffusion of dedicated publications);
- broadly improved attitudes (more confidence of practitioners in the CM process, enhanced mutual trust and willingness to dialogue among local stakeholders, aroused interest among key actors and institutions in the region);
- greatly enhanced skills among the members in the network (for instance in terms of stakeholder analysis, social communication, facilitation of negotiation, participatory evaluation); and
- concrete field results, such as effective negotiation processes, multi-party agreements and new pluralist management organisations.

It is highly desirable that similar initiatives are repeated in the future, hopefully with improvements deriving from the lessons learned in the Congo Basin. For instance, while the Congo Basin network was nearly exclusively constituted of project staff and government officials, it would have been more effective to include more representatives of local actors, and especially of local communities.

In summary, "capacity-building" initiatives in co-management processes can support social actors to:

- understand what co-management entails and how a social actor can organise to participate;
- master knowledge and information about the natural resources at stake, including knowledge of existing environmental problems, needs, constraints and opportunities (comprising the costs and benefits of various management options), and assess relevant change;[41]
- become a socially recognised (legitimate) actor (this may imply taking on a legal identity);
- deal effectively with agenda of meetings, records, accountings, financial reports, proposals, etc.;
- communicate clearly with other social actors, listen to them with an open and respectful attitude and think afresh, including about new management options on the basis of various points of view;
- participate in preparatory and NRM negotiation meetings through covering the costs of travel and accommodation.

Two last considerations. First, the capacity building process is inevitably time-consuming and effective results may take years to unfold, a fact that clashes against the shorter time spans of usual "projects". Second, while external support is often important to stimulate new capacities and action, care should be taken that such support, for instance to attend meetings and training sessions, does not become an "end in itself". Too many meetings are attended by people interested only in the payment of honoraria and generous "*per-diems*" offered by international organisations eager to show that people "participate" in their initiatives.[42] In some cases, such people may be nevertheless exposed to debates and new knowledge, and benefit despite their lack of care. More often, however, the meetings whose participants are not specifically motivated to attend are shallow and ineffective. In the long run they may even prove counterproductive, as they "take the space" that could be productively occupied by other types of discussion platforms and organisations.

Developing an internal agreement on their own values, interests and concerns about the territory or natural resources at stake

…a social actor may speak at times with one voice but, at other times, may need to split into different points of view.…

A social actor has a "place" at a negotiation table insofar as it presents the coherent point of view of a cohesive unit or group. In Chapter 4 we discussed an exception to this rule, *i.e.,* the so-called "multi-cultural character" of stakeholders (meaning that a social actor may speak at times with one voice but, at other times, may need to split into different points of view). In general, however, any social actor willing to participate in a negotiation table needs to form its opinion on the values, interests and concerns to take forward and on the desired outcomes of items in the agenda of the negotiation. For this, it needs to organise internally, with mechanisms to exchange ideas and arrive at a common position. Ideally, this will be a *consensus* position, implying a well-informed constituency and, as necessary, a rich internal debate. More commonly, this will be a *majority* or an *expert* position, with one form or another of voting or expressing a preference. Traditional decision-making systems may rely on either of the above. For instance,

41 On this, see especially Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this Chapter.
42 The World Bank has often been singled out in this respect.

the internal organising of the Maya K'iché in Guatemala relies heavily on collective consensus, indirectly informed by the ancestral values preserved by the community elders (see Box 5.8). The Anishinabe Ojibwa in Canada, on the other hand, keep their elders in direct and full control of decisions on the use of natural resources.[43] Traditional communities in Laos value both community consensus and leadership experience (see Box 5.11).

Box 5.11 **Community internal consensus on fishing rules *prior* to the co-management workshop found essential in Lao PDR**
(adapted from Baird, 1999)

In Khong district, in the southern province of Lao PDR (see Box 3.11), the communities interested in the aquatic resources of the Mekong usually learn about the possibility of setting up a co-management scheme from neighbouring villages, friends and relatives, or from government officials. If their leaders are in agreement, they write a short letter to their district authorities, who later come to visit and assist in the process of developing a co-management plan. The communities are never pressured into establishing management regulations. They are only assisted upon request.

The process begins with the village and its leaders asking for the relevant government permission. During the time in which the permission is being sought, extension workers remain in contact with the community and provide information and advice on the process to come. They also collect information on what village leaders expect to achieve and encourage them to consult with their community.

The leaders call their fellow villagers to meetings and explain the kinds of regulations previously established by other villages in Khong and how the implementation and enforcement of those regulations have worked out. On the basis of those experiences, they then draft a list of regulations that the community can agree to respect. Such advance discussions are important, because villagers feel more comfortable if the regulations are discussed and debated within the community before any outsider is involved. The villagers need ample time to carefully consider the implications of establishing particular rules. In this sense, co-management is not as much about regulations being established as it is about the communication and collaboration process through which such regulations are *identified and agreed upon*. Usually about a month or more is allowed after the extension workers visit a village before a formal co-management workshop is organised in a community.

Unfortunately it is not uncommon that the position of a "social actor" is determined not by a well informed internal consensus but by the opinion of one or more persons in power within the group. In some cases, the opinions expressed in the name of the group may even be contrary to its best interests (see Box 5.12).

Box 5.12 **The elusive nature of the "fishing sector" in Galapagos**
(adapted from Heylings and Bravo, 2001)

The Special Law of Galapagos stipulates that artisan fishermen are to be represented in the Management Board of the reserve. In turn, all individual *bona-fide* fishermen need to be "organised", *i.e.*, registered as a Cooperative. After the promulgation of the Law, a moratorium was established for the registration of new fishermen, with the intention of identifying and legitimising the existing members of the sector, together with their entitlements to the resource. This was to strengthen their sense of common identity, responsibility and ownership of the marine resources. Paradoxically, the announcement of the formal process of registration gave rise to an uncontrolled increase in the number of mem-

[43] Peckett, 1996.

bers registered in the Cooperatives. The number of registered members nearly doubled between 1998 and 2000, reflecting an influx of both new migrants from outside and of opportunistic islanders previously unconnected with fisheries. This was the consequence of particular concurrent factors, such as the reopening of the extremely lucrative sea cucumber fishery, but also of the poor dialogue within the fishing sector and the dominance of the views of people with vested interests.

A traditional fishing community with a strong sense of property rights over the local resources would have used the registration process to legitimise and protect their acquired custodian and ownership rights. The Galapagos fishing Cooperatives, however, were young, weak, and several of their leaders vulnerable to corruption and political interests. New members— many of whom with no local fishing background but plenty of political and economic influence— were registered without proper procedure. Such newly registered members were not part of the process that had defined the common vision for managing the Marine Reserve and their interests focused on privileged access to lucrative resources rather than on an integrated system of sustainable fisheries. This led to profound divisions within the fishing sector and has had a destabilizing effect on the leadership of the different Cooperatives.

Since 1999, different agreements were reached between the fishing sector and the relevant authorities as to how to rectify this situation, but none succeeded. Fortunately, in February 2001, at the last negotiation of the Participatory Management Board on the annual fisheries calendar, a consensus was reached on the fact that the management of fisheries was dependent on "a system of closed access". A large group of legitimate fishermen are committed to this. The challenge is now dealing with those who consider to have acquired some "rights" in the recent registration frenzy and marginalise those among the fishermen leaders who still put personal advantage above the collective advantage of their sector.

Another common occurrence are political representatives elected by a fairly large electoral college being requested to "represent" their constituency for very specific management decisions, which chiefly concern only a minority of people in their college. The risk, in those cases, is that the interests of such minorities are *not* fairly represented. For instance, in the United Kingdom the politicians who represent urban zones (who in Europe usually outnumber those representing rural zones) are the dominant voice with regard to protected area issues.[44] The people living in and/ or next to protected areas find it hard to get their voice heard and their rights, needs and aspirations taken into account, despite being the people most directly and powerfully affected. The process is deeply frustrating for many of them.

Urban people need protected areas as recreation space. Tourism companies depend on growing numbers of visitors and are a powerful lobby. The media tend to concentrate on issues that affect large numbers of people and thus, when reporting on protected areas, they side with urban interests. It is only too understandable that politicians cater to the same interests and pay much less attention to the views of smaller rural communities. Yet, this can become a serious obstacle to good protected area management, as the concerns of the local communities may never get properly discussed or solved. For example, the statutory bodies in charge of national and regional protected areas in Italy include, as representatives of the interested local communities, the majors of the municipalities that comprise such communities within their administrative territories. Not uncommonly, these are large urban municipalities, the interests of whose residents may end up prevailing. Even in the case of innovative forms of protected area governance, such as the *Parcs Naturels Régionaux* of France (see Box 7.10 in Chapter 7), the

[44] Inglis, 2002.

politicians elected in large electoral colleges are considered fair representatives of local interests. This may or may not be true.

The above considerations touch the nerve centre of the difference between participatory and representative democracy. Ideally, a social actor willing to participate in co-management should develop an internal debate and a consensus position with regard to the specific NRM issues at stake. Elected professional politicians, however, rarely engage their constituencies in the analysis of specific issues, *e.g.,* what is needed to manage a territory or body of natural resource. More often they simply assume management responsibilities— *i.e.,* they take and enforce decisions— even when they hardly master the relevant implications and subtleties.[45] Such failures in internal organising are one of the least analysed and most insidious problems in co-management, which ultimately corrupt and spoil its meaning and value. In a nutshell, "participatory management needs participatory roots!", *i.e.,* some measure of effective dialogue, discussion of issues and participatory democracy *internal* to all relevant social actors.

In a nutshell: "participatory management needs participatory roots!" i.e., some measure of participatory democracy internal *to the relevant social actors.*

Appointing a representative to convey the "internal agreement" to the negotiation forum

The social actors who wish to take part in the negotiation process need to identify and appoint one or more individuals to represent them *vis-à-vis* other actors (see also Box 2.5 in Chapter 2). For some (*e.g.*, an established government agency, a cohesive traditional community, a well organised modern municipality), this may require little effort. For others (*e.g.*, a heterogeneous community or a resource user group some of whose members may be in internal competition), this may require a major investment in time and resources and the Start-up Team may be requested, again, to provide support.

In some cases a split between the NRM opinions and views of community members and those of the people officially in charge of representing them becomes apparent. For instance, a resource management committee was established in the 1990s to act as liaison between the Djawling National Park (located at the delta of the Senegal river, in Mauritania) and the local administrative authorities. The committee was staffed with the "intellectuals" of the area, namely the local teachers who had left their villages many years before for teacher training. Having lost contact with the local ecosystem and having being imbued with a concept of "development" as something measured in cubic metres of concrete, these people were visceral against the national park. Instead of the park, they supported the construction of a dam, despite the fact that such a dam would entirely destroy their delta ecosystem and traditional landscape. In contrast, most local villagers, who made a living from the resources of the delta, could see the logic of what the park management was trying to do to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem, and agreed with it.[46]

The Iranian NGO CENESTA, which promotes community-based sustainable livelihood initiatives, devised a simple and ingenious way to help communities to identify who should take on a role on behalf of the whole community (*e.g.,* a representative for a given forum, a project animator, etc.). They call for a general meeting in which people are encouraged to brainstorm on the main qualities and characteristics of an ideal person to take on the requested role. Views are

[45] Bebbington, 1998.
[46] Hamerlynck, 1997.

… a simple and ingenious way to help communities to identify who should take on a role on behalf of the whole community….

elicited, listed, discussed and agreed upon through open discussion. On the basis of the list of criteria thereby produced (including, for instance, factors such as "knowledge of the local NRM situation", "personal commitment to the wellbeing of the community", "honesty", "negotiation skills", "maturity and stature to represent the community", or even "having lots of children and needing a job") the group is later invited to list, discuss and prioritise the names of "individuals who fit the criteria" and could effectively play the requested role. In this way, the community is freed from having to choose the most obvious persons, such as the ones who usually deal with government officials, the relatives of the chief, etc.

Learning from the experience of CENESTA, it should be stressed that the criteria to identify a representative need to be genuinely identified by the community or interest group, and not by the Start-up Team, and that the decision should be taken in a congenial atmosphere, free from rush and coercion. Time is also needed to gauge various factors, and the community or group, ideally, would have time to discuss in detail the pros and cons of various options on its own. An alternative to this method is the voting system, open or secret. Usually, this is framed by the obliged choice among self-appointed candidates, and the group does not have the time to openly discuss the pros and cons of different choices. The choice of representatives of a rather large community of people can be the fruit of delicate compromises and needs to pay attention to a variety of considerations, including respect for gender, ethnic and tribal differences (see, for instance, Box 5.13, as well as Box 2.4 in Chapter 2).

Box 5.13 **Twelve clans of a tribe need twelve representatives… not ten and not fifteen!**

In the 1980s, a project supported by UNDP was engaged in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods among numerous communities in the Darfur region of Sudan. As part of the initiatives supported by the

project, the Beni Helba tribe of Baqqara (cattle herding) pastoralists needed to be represented in a decision making body for the purpose of a tribal ceremony. Since a history of interventions from the government had weakened the tribal system of governance, the tribe at first decided to convene a representative from each of the forty communities into which many of the tribespeople had settled. Once convened, this group was named "The Committee of the Forty" and was clearly at odds with the normal organisation of the tribe which consisted of twelve clans.

As if by magic, as soon as the Committee of the Forty met, it became clear to everyone that it would not work. They decided to select from among themselves a small group of *twelve* representatives to handle the work of deciding, planning and organising the events more efficiently, and, lo and behold, each of the twelve representatives happened to be from one of the twelve clans of the Beni Helba tribe! Things went very smoothly from then on until the tribal chief, who was a bit dishonest, convinced them that if a group of twelve could work better than forty, then a still smaller number would do even better. No sooner had he appointed a few of his cronies to handle the considerable money that had been collected from the whole tribe, than the money disappeared. This caused a great uprising against him, and the Grand Council of Elders of the whole tribe met with a single agenda item— to start impeachment procedures for the chief. Only when the existing chief made a public apology and promised to never indulge in such behaviour again, and restored the Committee of the Twelve, did the Grand Council of Elders agree to forgive him and restore him to his chiefdom. All went smoothly afterwards!

In general, identifying a representative involves finding an effective compromise between two interpretations of what "participation" entail. As mentioned above, representative democracy sees people's participation as mediated by political leaders, usually professional politicians (in the best of cases locally elected and in touch with their constituencies; in the worst, imposed by party politics and detached from local sentiments and aspirations). Participatory democracy stresses the direct involvement of communities and individuals through their active roles in a variety of social duties. In this latter sense, representation is a more complex process, and each act of representing a group is backed by prior discussions, collective analyses, and even referendum-based decisions. The specific person assigned the representation role is also more likely to rotate though time. Some professional politicians are actually endorsing this mode of operation in their work.

A genuine participatory process accommodates the grassroots involvement in the discussions through their representatives, but also allows enough time for the information to flow among the relevant peoples and to be internally discussed before decisions are taken.

The Start-up Team should be supportive but "hands off" with regard to the choice of representatives of each social actor. Before representatives are admitted at the table of negotiation, however, it should make sure of a few points. Is each representative actually an agreed spokesperson for the group he or she is representing? Can this be independently verified? Also, what reporting mechanisms are in place to ensure that the local communities or other represented social actors will receive comprehensive information on the participatory management processes and decisions? If the CM process is done in isolation from the grassroots, the result may be their disaffection or even their opposition to the decisions taken in their name. A genuine participatory process accommodates the grassroots involvement in the discussions through their representatives, but also allows enough time for the information to flow among the relevant peoples and to be internally discussed before decisions are taken. This can and should be explicitly monitored in the co-management process.

5.4 Preparing for the negotiation meetings: procedures, rules, logistics and equity considerations

Once the key relevant actors are organised to take part in the negotiation, the CM process is quite advanced. The next task for the Start-up Team is to identify a preliminary set of procedures and rules about *how* the negotiation should be held—an advice charged with cultural and political implications. The task also involves the organisation of the logistics for the meetings.

Procedures, rules and logistics

Traditional societies have arrays of procedures for negotiating agreements, such as discussions of facts among community elders or in larger gathering in the occasion of a religious festivity or a market fair. Many of those procedures are convivial, simple, effective and inexpensive. A Start-up Team in tune with the relevant social actors will know about the existence of such procedures, and eventually agree on linking the natural resource management negotiation with appropriate, culturally-specific institutions and events (see Box 5.14).

Box 5.14 **Traditional *jirga* as a model for "roundtable" meetings**
(adapted from Halle, 2002; G.N. Jamy, personal communication, 1997)

In the northwest province of Sarhad, Pakistan, at the border with Afghanistan, China and Russia, a new participatory process has been reaffirming the old tradition of *Jirga* for nearly a decade. *Jirga* is the customary tribunal system of the Pathan people, where a community gathers in an open space before its elders to discuss important matters and resolve conflicts. Applying this method to discussing environmental issues gave birth to cross-sectoral "roundtable" consultations on issues of environmental sustainability in Sarhad.[47] In a roundtable the representatives of various social actors— including government sectors, NGOs, media, women's groups, academics, and the private sector— sit together to discuss issues of economy, environment and development. There is no permanent Chair, and no special recognition of power positions. Facilitation is on a rotational basis, usually carried out by one of the participants. The roundtables have the important recognition of the government, which "notifies" the expected participants to attend the gathering, but, at least at the beginning, they encountered some major resistance. The resistance was due to their non-hierarchical process and was only partially mitigated by the fact that the model was related to the local tradition (the model is also similar to the model of roundtable consultations practiced in Canada).

Sarhad is a tribal area where the Pathan people continue to practice customary law, conserving a strong sense of collective decision-making. Consultation is the basis of Pathan society. Many Pathan people function through a non-monetary economy and harvest the same resources on a rotation system. The province encompasses barren mountains that, because of various causes, have suffered heavy deforestation. There is little agriculture and industry, with activities principally based on live-

[47] To fit local customs more appropriately those could have been called "roundrug" discussions.

stock rearing. Land ownership is in the hands of a few, and the small landholders are usually pastoralists. The literacy level is low, except among the non-Pathan Pakistanis. Sarhad is unique in that it has the largest refugee population in the world (more than 40% of the residents of Peshawar are actually Afghan refugees), a fact that exercises a strong influence on the economy, business and transport sectors. The official language is English, with Urdu and many others spoken.

The initial roundtable gatherings took place in the mid nineties and were held every 3-4 months, each including 40-45 members, some of whom in charge of bridging ideas from and to villages and grassroots communities. Special efforts were made to recruit educated women to communicate with village women who, by custom, do not talk to men who do not belong to their families. The groups generated ideas, discussed issues, made recommendations, and reached consensus on strategies for action, on which they reported back at the following meeting. Written inputs were submitted to the roundtable members in the meeting interim periods. Overall, the roundtable process proved inexpensive, as the costs incurred were only the venue and travel/ accommodation for the participants. Round tables usually took place in the capital city of Peshawar, with rotating venues.

A key to trust-building in the *Jirgas* on environment was the fact that meetings did not to start by tacking controversial issues, but rather with discussing positive topics, such as exploring what is involved in a conservation strategy. One of the most productive effects of the round tables is that they led to changes of attitude among government officials. In the presence of the press and NGOs, the government had to make concrete efforts to take on a protagonist role, and, as a direct result of trust-building, it invited to meetings some of the social actors and sectors that were formerly excluded from decisions. The visibility promoted transparency, as decisions could no longer be taken behind closed doors. This is particularly significant for Pakistan, where the communication gap between government and civil society tends to be large. In the *Jirga* meetings people began to see that relevant actors are not necessarily juxtaposed in their aims, that decisions need not to be taken in isolation, and that, gradually, civil society can affect governance issues. Concurrently, the NGO sector was also gaining strength. At the end of each session, the participants made an assessment of the proceedings. The collected assessments were reviewed at the beginning of each year, for an inventory of lessons learned to refine the process.

In the mid-1990s, two of the 22 districts in Sarhad had roundtable processes in place to discuss their district strategies. In 1996, six specific roundtables were initiated, all with environment and conservation as an underlying theme, but each with a distinct focus: Environmental Education; Industries; Agriculture; Urban Environment; NGOs; and Communications. Later, a roundtable on Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism was added, as well as 2 specific ones for the Chitral Conservation Strategy and the Abbottabad Conservation Strategy. In 2002, the roundtables are a broadly accepted norm of public decision-making in Sarhad and have also being adopted in Balochistan and Northern Areas provinces. Some topics, such as Forestry, have proven extremely difficult to handle, as the Forest Department, with some support from the military government, resented what it perceived as a threat to its authority. After a long delay due to such resistance, the Forestry roundtable has been only recently notified in Sarhad. The roundtables on Industries and on Agriculture, on the other hand, have been particularly active, while the ones on Environmental Education, Communications and the Cultural Heritage exist but appear dormant. An important lesson from the experience of the roundtables is that they require a clearly defined role to fulfil— best if including a realistic policy agenda. The issue of leadership and support is also critical as the roundtables are rarely self-propelled and need some on going facilitation and incentives. In all, however, roundtables have proven to be a useful and creative vehicle. They reinforced the concept of participatory decision-making, even though their policy influence remains somehow limited.

In some cases convivial gatherings may not be sufficient for negotiating a fair and sustainable NRM agreement. This is especially true when the relevant actors do not share the same cultural backgrounds, values, attitudes and habits. A handshake equivalent to a sacred pact for some may just be a pleasant discussion of possibilities for someone else. Some people may not speak the same language, both literally and metaphorically, in the sense that the meaning of terms and concepts may need a careful "translation" between them. There may also be large power gaps or unsettled conflicts among the social actors, so that people may not feel comfortable or even safe, to volunteer their views and expose their interests and concerns.

In such cases, the Start-up Team would better take a pro-active role and propose a schedule of meetings, some rules and procedures for participation, and some professional support to facilitate the negotiation. The relevant actors could well discuss and modify such proposed rules and procedures but it is important that an entity trusted by all parties takes the initiative to plan in detail at least the first meeting among the relevant actors. To begin with, an agreement should be obtained on the participants, agenda, place, date, hour, working language, languages in which translation will be available, logistics and facilities necessary for the meeting that will launch the CM process (see Checklist 5.2). The Start-up Team is best placed to propose such procedures and obtain an agreement upon them.

Checklist 5.2 Clarifying the procedures and logistics for the negotiation meetings

- Who will need to be present at the negotiation meetings? (Who are the main relevant actors in NRM in our specific context? Have all been contacted? Have we missed anyone so far? Can new participants "volunteer" to attend? What are the procedures for new "relevant actors" to be accepted?)
- The representation shall be formal (written *affidavit*) or accepted also in informal ways? (The appropriateness of a written *affidavit* should be gauged according to the context, including the relative number of literate *versus* non literate people in the communities.)
- What percentage of the total relevant actors has to be present to declare the meeting valid? (Consider possible coalitions of social actors who may wish to boycott meetings.)
- What language(s) shall we speak? Is there a need for interpreters? (This is a fundamental issue to assure a fair and equitable negotiation.)
- What are the aims of the CM process, as identified by the Start-up Team? Are those well known by the relevant actors? Will those be recalled, discussed and finalised in the first negotiation meeting?
- Who is the convener of the first meeting? How are invitations transmitted? How far in advance of the meeting itself?
- Has the preliminary agenda of the first meeting been transmitted to the relevant actors? Will it be recalled, discussed and finalised during the first meeting? By whom?
- Who will act as Chair of the first meeting? Is there a need for one (or more) facilitator(s)? Could the facilitator be a local person, or should we call for a professional from outside? Is a Chair needed at all, *i.e.*, could the meeting simply be managed by a facilitator?
- Where shall they meet and, at least approximately, when? (Consider seasonal changes in workload of

rural communities.)

- Approximately, how many times are the actors expected to meet during the negotiation phase? (This should be communicated during the first meeting)
- How shall people be seated in plenary meetings? (Round arrangements, with or without tables, are generally preferable.) Will observers be allowed? What is the maximum number of people allowed in the main meeting room?
- Are facilities available for smaller meetings of working groups, close to the main meeting room?
- What toilet facilities are available? Are those in good working conditions?
- Are refreshments to be served? Meals? Drinks? If not, can those be found near by the meeting venue? Where will drinking water be made available?
- What is the total budget available to support the negotiation phase? Who provides those resources? When and how will the providers be acknowledged?
- On which basis shall travel costs be reimbursed? If people cannot afford to advance the travel costs, how can such costs be disbursed in advance? Who handles the money?
- Is there a need for chairs, tables, rugs and mats, lamps, boards, paper, cards, felt pens, sticking tape, soft boards, pins, projectors, microphones, standing tables and/ or other materials to support discussions and presentations? Will everyone feel comfortable using those means for presentations? If not, how can cultural sensitivities be accommodated?
- Are special requirements catered for? For instance, for vegetarians, for Ramadan observers, for people needing to stop work for prayers, for people with handicaps, for women in need of someone to care for small children?
- Who is responsible for the smooth functioning of the logistics (*e.g.,* send a reminder to the agreed participants, get the premises opened, cleaned, make sure that light is available if the meeting will last after sunset, etc.)?

All relevant actors should be informed in advance about the proposed agenda for the first of a series of meetings and receive an invitation for their chosen representative to participate in it. The note will make reference to the name and process description already adopted during the social communication events. The goal of the meetings to come may be set quite high, for example a series of meetings "..to understand the main challenges to our natural resources in the next twenty years, and prepare together to face them" or be simple and specific, such as "…to decide together the best fishing rules for the part of the river comprised between village A and village B". It should be specified that substantive issues of relevance to the social actors will be discussed and the main points of the proposed procedures, logistics and rules should be included. Whenever possible, the conveners should be a respected local authority or a governmental agency with local presence and legitimacy, although the Start-up Team could also play that role.

The rules of a negotiation process are cultural rules. This cannot be stressed enough. But, modern societies always include a multiplicity of cultures. How can the process be fair if it risks being culturally alien or imposing for some of its participants? A possible answer is "by embracing cultural pluralism". Cultural pluralism basically sees human beings as cultural beings. Their cultural diversity is recognised and appreciated and their dialogue encouraged. Cultural minorities are protected against conscious or unconscious discrimination and allowed to

Cultural pluralism implies an on-going— and very demanding— "political judgement" exercise.

carry out their life differently from others within a range of permissible diversity that is, for each society, historically determined. Between assimilation and laissez-faire, this third way of cultural pluralism implies an on-going— and very demanding— political judgement" exercise. For instance, an important step of such political judgement involves devising a set of preliminary rules for the negotiation process. The Start-up Team is in charge of that, and should propose such preliminary rules to the relevant actors during their first negotiation meeting. Checklist 5.3 presents an *example* of a set of rules, which may be appropriate in some situations and quite inappropriate in others, and which should be discussed, revised and eventually approved by all actors involved in the negotiation.

Checklist 5.3 Example of rules for the negotiation process

- all identified relevant actors are invited to the negotiation meetings and participate via formal representatives;
- participation is voluntary but whoever does not come is taken as not being interested in taking part in decisions; however, if more than 40% of the relevant actors are not present for a meeting, the meeting will be adjourned;
- language should always be respectful (people should refrain from insults and verbal abuse) and disrespectful individuals shall not be recognised as legitimate representatives;
- everyone agrees not to interrupt people who are speaking but also no one is allowed to speak about a specific point for more than 3 minutes (or 5 minutes or…);
- everyone agrees on talking only on the basis of personal experience and/ or concrete, verifiable facts;
- everyone agrees about *not* putting forth the opinions of people who are not attending the meetings (and are not represented officially);
- consensus is to be reached on all decisions and voting should be resorted to in most exceptional cases only;
- "observers" are welcome to attend all negotiation meetings;
- a facilitator will always be present to moderate the discussion and ensure its fairness, but he/ she will never discuss or take side on substantive issues;
- meetings will never last more than 4 hours; evening meetings will always end before or at 10:00 p.m.

Equity considerations

The tasks of the Start-up Team are not only of a practical nature. Indeed, the Team is also the prime guarantor of fairness and equity throughout the CM process. For that, it is never too early to carry out a specific reflection on equity, and on how it can be fostered. The results of such a reflection can be made explicit and incorporated into the rules and procedures of the negotiation.

What does "equity" mean in a co-management process? The question has been examined in some detail in Chapter 2.3. As it was discussed, specific answers depend on specific contexts but, in general, equity can be sought by:

- promoting the recognition of entitlements held by unprivileged groups;
- promoting the recognition of entitlements rooted in valid and legitimate

grounds (as defined by the relevant society) *versus* entitlements rooted in the exercise of some form of power (see Checklist 2.3 in chapter 2);

- promoting a fair share of management functions, benefits and responsibilities among the entitled actors, and a fair negotiation process to decide about it.

Checklists 5.4 and 5.5 offer some concrete examples of how to go about that.

Checklist 5.4 **Promoting equity in co-management: some examples and ideas**
(adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000)

- disseminating information on the environmental values, opportunities and risks of relevance for all social actors;
- disseminating information on various natural resource management options;
- ensuring freedom of expressing views and organising for action;
- providing support to the social actors, and in particular the weakest actors, to organise (*e.g.*, to build their own capacities, to develop and internal agreement on NRM issues, to develop a fair system of representation);
- promoting a fair setting (forum, platform) to negotiate management functions, rights, benefits and responsibilities; this should be non-discriminatory, follow agreed procedures and be assisted by an impartial and competent facilitator;
- helping the social actors, and in particular the weakest actors, to participate in the negotiation process (*e.g.,* by supporting them to travel, by offering translation service, by providing training in negotiation and conflict management techniques);
- allowing a fair hearing to the "grounds for entitlement" and views put forth by every actor;
- utilising a variety of forms of participation (consultation, advice, technical committees, etc.) to reach the broadest possible mutual satisfaction of all relevant actors;
- utilising a variety of flexible NRM mechanisms (zoning, detailed rules of use, etc.) to accommodate the interests and concerns of different actors;
- promoting a tight proportionality between the management entitlements and responsibilities and the benefits and costs assigned to each relevant actor;
- adopting deliberations by consensus (coupled with fair negotiation rules) among the key relevant actors;
- keeping an open door to new actors who may identify themselves as the discussion develops, and offer to contribute;
- supporting participatory action research, adaptive management and a fair measure of democratic experimentalism (learning by doing), allowing to adjust NRM plans, agreements, organisations and rules on the basis of concrete experience;
- assuring that the negotiated co-management plans, agreements and rules are fairly and effectively enforced.

Checklist 5.5 **Evaluating the outcome of a settlement on the basis of its fairness**
(from Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987)

- Was the process open to public scrutiny?
- Were all the groups who wanted to participate given an adequate chance to do so?
- Were all parties given access to the technical information they needed?
- Was everyone given an opportunity to express his or her views?
- Were the people involved accountable to the constituencies they ostensibly represented?
- Was there a means whereby a due process complaint could have been heard at the conclusion of the negotiations?

It is also useful to consider that co-management processes can expose the disadvantaged groups to the risks of manipulation and control by the more powerful ones. As a matter of fact, the more advantaged in societies are also likely to be the people best capable of exploiting participatory approaches and participatory management systems. This can only be counteracted by some form of affirmative action, *i.e.*, special support for marginalised groups. In order to promote more just outcomes, the politics at work should be discussed openly. Some steps can be taken to help place the vulnerability of the disadvantaged groups at the centre of concerns (see Checklist 5.6).

Checklist 5.6 **Some ideas for truly "levelling the playing field"**
(adapted from Edmunds and Wollengberg, 2002)

- inform participants fully about to whom conveners and facilitators are accountable;
- give disadvantaged groups the options of *not* participating in negotiations (avoid being more "visible" to powerful stakeholders);
- create possibilities far disadvantaged groups to use alliances with more powerful groups in negotiations;
- acknowledge the right of disadvantaged groups to identify "non-negotiable" topics, or items they view as inappropriate for discussion in the negotiations;
- acknowledge that not each group may wish to support fully and unconditionally the agreements to be developed. Encourage stakeholders to express their doubts about impending agreements. View a "consensus" too easily reached as a possible way to mask differences in perspective and discount the input of disadvantaged groups;
- assess the likelihood that external events require revisions in agreements and make provisions for disadvantaged groups to be involved in those revisions;
- approach negotiations as one strategy among several that disadvantaged groups may pursue simultaneously, and in particular help them identify alterative strategies in case the good will of other actors may not last;

- assess the legitimacy of processes, decisions and agreements in terms of the role and implications for disadvantaged groups; for each group participating in negotiations analyze the reasons far participation or non-participation, how groups are represented, and the history of relationships among groups;
- view negotiations as a long-term, iterative process and be ready to monitor impacts and adjust strategies to assist disadvantaged groups accordingly.

Conspicuous differences in privilege and power are quite common between social actors, for instance between governmental agencies and local communities. But local communities are also ridden with internal inequities, based on caste, class, gender, ethnic origin, age groups, etc. These inequities can be significant deterrents to participatory management of natural resources and conservation of the environment as they are of any other democratic process. There are many examples where local communities have tackled this problem on their own, but there are probably many more cases where this has not happened (the inability of lower caste families to secure their own land and the many cases of political and economic discrimination about women are typical examples). Unfortunately, conservation initiatives can exacerbate such inequities[48] and it is only too rare that they may attempt to redress them. Some unusual examples are described in Boxes 5.15 and 5.16.

Box 5.15 **Strengthening social actors before the negotiation process: the case of the Baka People in the Dja reserve (Cameroon)**

The Dja Game Reserve is situated in the heart of the dense humid forests of Southern Cameroon. It is part of the world network of biosphere reserves and has been declared a World Heritage Site. The management of this reserve affects and concerns several social actors, including the Bantu and Baka residents, the timber exploiting companies, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and the local administration.

The Baka are pygmies. They are a hunter and gatherer society characterised by nomadic customs. Under the influence of the government settlement policy, some Baka communities have been compelled to settle down in villages located in proximity of Bantu villages. This unprecedented co-existence has perturbed the organisation of the Baka society and modified their customary relations with the Bantu. The settled Baka found themselves obliged to abide by the norms regulating the social relations of the Bantu. Thus, the Baka were deprived of their traditional rights to land and natural resources: the Bantu recognised for them only the right of subsistence. As a matter of fact, the Bantu have a prejudicial image of the Baka. For them, the Baka are inferior people.

It is in such a context that the project Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of the Dja Reserve, financed by the Dutch Cooperation Agency and implemented by the IUCN, decided to promote a co-management process. For that, it appeared necessary to ensure that the Baka would be able to sit at the negotiation table, and that the Bantu would recognise them as a social actor with valid resource entitlements. To this purpose, activities were designed to address both the Bantu and Baka communities. Regarding the Baka, the project facilitated the recognition of the Baka chiefdom by the government administration, the rightful remuneration for Baka work by the Bantu employers, the government's attribution of community forests to the Baka, the self-reliance of the Baka women in the

[48] Sarin *et al.*,1998; Raju, 1998.

acquisition of their cooking salt, etc.

At the beginning, the support of the project was geared towards the internal sharing of information and discussion among the Baka themselves about their entitlements and about what they recognised to be the entitlements of the Bantu. As a second step, opportunities for discussion were provided also between the Baka and Bantu communities. The two ethnic groups recognised to be interdependent for a number of reasons, including the practice of barter, which makes them fully complementary with respect to several needs, and the custom of blood pacts, which binds some Baka clans and Bantu families.

The project stood on the ground of this interdependence to promote a dialogue on issues hitherto considered taboo and to bring the Bantu to accept to lose certain prerogatives by ensuring just remuneration to the Baka and by recognising their chieftaincy and their rights to have access to community forests. In this way the project succeeded in bringing both the Baka and Bantu to agree on the daily wages for the Baka who work in the fields of the Bantu. This agreement has been legitimised in a ceremony in 1988, during which the Baka and Bantu delegates embraced each other— a truly remarkable feat in the local context! Unfortunately, the severe scaling down of the operation of the Dja Project in 1999 has all but interrupted the efforts towards the co-management process in the area.

Box 5.16 **Towards more gender and equity sensitive representation in local Joint Forest Management organisations**
(adapted from Sarin *et al.*, 1998)

Joint Forest Management (JFM) in India represents a radical departure from the tradition of centralised forest management. In less than a decade some remarkable results have been achieved: 16 states have issued JFM orders; large numbers of forest officers, NGOs and village men and women are experimenting with new approaches and relationships; and between one to two million hectares of degraded forests are regenerating under local care. The participatory management institutions in JFM play a mediating role between the forest department and its general body membership. To be able to play this role in a gender and equity sensitive manner, the local institution should be able to articulate and represent the interests of all user sub-groups of a forest area in the partnership agreement.

All state JFM orders, except those of Gujarat and the draft JFM rules of Haryana, use the *household* as the basic unit of membership for the local institutions. The initial JFM orders prescribed eligibility of only *one* "representative" per household as a general body member. This automatically denied the majority of women, and some marginalised men acutely dependent on forests, the right to participate in JFM on their own behalf. The rule prevented them from gaining an institutional identity and direct access to all the tangible and intangible resources and benefits available through the new participatory management institutions being promoted. This is so because the one representative is invariably the man who is socially and culturally perceived to be the "head" of the household. Only exceptions are all-women households or households of widows without adult sons.

In order to make JFM more gender and equity sensitive, several changes were suggested in the existing JFM framework and especially in the *membership norms* of the participatory management institutions. For example, it was proposed that each household be represented by at least two persons, one being male and the other female, and that all states make the presence of 30 to 50 percent women mandatory for completing the quorum for JFM institution meetings. In addition to these proposals, several practical strategies have been being tried out to increase the influence of forest-dependent women and

men. For example, gender-separate meetings have been organised, Some women organisations and some local associations and coalitions based on people-to-people processes have been promoted. More women staff are employed in Forest Departments. And some new silvicultural practices, responsive to gender and class-differentiated survival needs, have been developed.