



## Decentralization and Participation in the Forestry Sector of NWFP, Pakistan – The Role of the State

IP6 Working Paper No. 7

Bernd Steimann

July 2004

## Collaborating institutions



Development Study Group  
Department of Geography  
University of Zurich  
Winterthurerstr. 190  
CH-8057 Zurich, Switzerland  
tel: +41-1-635 52 43  
fax: +41-1-635 68 44



Intercooperation  
Swiss Organisation for Development and Cooperation  
P.O. Box 6724  
Maulbeerstr. 10  
CH-3001 Berne, Switzerland  
tel: +41-31-385 10 10  
fax: +41-31-385 10 09

# **Decentralization and Participation in the Forestry Sector of NWFP, Pakistan – The Role of the State**

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#### **Author**

Bernd Steimann, MSc Geography  
Department of Geography  
University of Zurich  
Winterthurerstr.190  
CH-8057 Zurich  
bernd@geo.unizh.ch

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#### **Cover Photo**

Local people in Timri village and trees in Kanshian village, both Mansehra District, NWFP, Pakistan  
(photos by the author)



*Wipe off that past reputation:  
You are not rulers. You do not  
belong to the ruling class; you  
belong to the servants. Make the people  
feel that you are their servants and  
friends, maintain the highest standards  
of honour, integrity, justice and fair-  
play. If you do that, people will have  
confidence and trust in you  
and will look upon you as  
friends and well-wishers.*



Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Address to  
the Gazetted Officers at Chittagong, 1948

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شكر يه

## Acronyms

ACR	Annual Confidential Report
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BO	Block Officer (= Forester)
CCB	Citizen Community Board
CCF	Chief Conservator of Forest
CDEGD	Community Development, Extension and Gender Directorate
CDO	Community Development Organizer (or: Officer)
CF	Conservator of Forest
DC	District Council
DFO	Divisional Forest Officer
FC	Frontier Constabulary
FD	Forest Department
FFE	Female Forest Technician
FG	Forest Guard
FMC	Forest Management Centre
FMC-SU	Forest Management Centre Support Unit
FSMP	Forestry Sector Master Plan
FSP	Forestry Sector Project
GF	Guzara Forest
GoNWFP	Government of the North-West Frontier Province
GoP	Government of Pakistan
HRM	Institutional Development and Human Resources Management Directorate
IC	Intercooperation, Swiss Organization for Development and Cooperation
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committee
JFMP	Joint Forest Management Plan
JFT	Junior Forest Technician
KIDP	Kalam Integrated Development Project
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NWFP	North-Western Frontier Province
PF	Protected Forest
PFRI	Provincial Forest Resource Inventory
RF	Reserved Forest
RO	Range Forest Officer
SAFI	Sarhad Awami Forest Ittehad
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SFDP	Siran Forest Development Project
SFPMD	Social Forestry Project Malakand and Dir
SFT	Senior Forest Technician
SRSP	Sarhad Rural Support Project
TA/DA	Travel Allowance / Daily Allowance
TC	Tehsil Council
UC	Union Council
VC	Village Council
VDC	Village Development Committee
VLUP	Village Land Use Planning / Plan
WO	Women Organization

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research context

The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) is the northernmost province of Pakistan. Housing about 40% of the country's forest resources, it is the most densely forested province of the country. However, these forests are in a rather bad condition, and are expected to be completely liquidated by the year 2025 (Forest Vision 2025, iv). Reasons for deforestation are manifold, yet some of them without any doubt have a devastating effect on the resource base. On the one hand, forest management as practised in the NWFP is not sustainable. Forestry is a provincial subject, and the NWFP Forest Department (FD) is still characterised by its colonial setup from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This means very hierarchical structures, centralized powers and a forest management, which is mainly revenue-oriented. On the other hand, there is a flourishing black market for timber in the province, organized by a so-called *timber mafia*. Last but not least, millions of people living in the remote valleys of the mountainous province are using forests for their daily livelihoods, as fuelwood and construction timber for their houses.

Responding to these threats, several donor agencies – the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Dutch Government and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – initiated a reform process of the provincial Forest Department a few years ago. Core issues of this reform (which is under ongoing discussion) are a revision of the legal framework for forestry as well as a re-structuring and decentralization of the department's hierarchy. In addition, participatory approaches (Village Land Use Planning and Joint Forest Management) have been introduced on local level in order to make forestry more locally specific and responding to local people's demands. Meanwhile, the major part of the reform has been designed and discussed in detail, and policies, acts and ordinances as well as job descriptions for the staff have been adjusted to the new requirements. However, on the planning level (most of the planning was done in the provincial capital of Peshawar) it is unclear to what extent necessary steps have been implemented on local and regional level and where the new approaches face difficulties.

Soon after the reforms got started, a nation-wide political decentralization process was initiated in late 1999 by President Musharraf. In the course of this process it was planned to devolve forestry to the local political level. However, the NWFP provincial government resisted these plans, so that to its major extent, forestry remained with the provincial level. Relations between the Forest Department and the local political level thus got very much strained – today it is this conflict which impairs forestry in the province, too.

## 1.2 Hypothesis and research questions

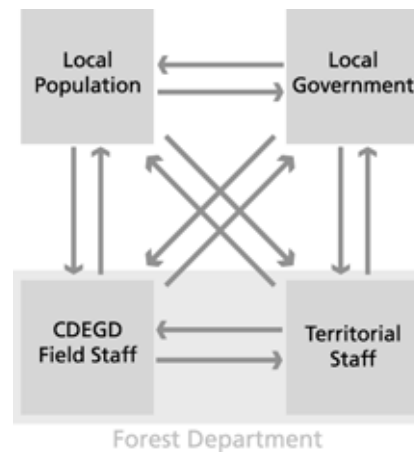
In order to clarify the situation of forestry on local level and the extent to which the decentralization efforts have already been implemented into practice, the research hypothesis was formulated:

On local level, a big gap exists between de jure and de facto forestry. Therefore, the ongoing reform process cannot be called a true decentralization yet.

In order to formulate research questions, two terms which are used in this hypothesis have first to be clarified. A definition of what a *true decentralization* is (especially with regard to natural resource management (NRM)), must be given. Section 2 gives the theoretical background on decentralization and NRM and establishes several criterias which later on serve to test the hypothesis. Second, the *local level* has to be defined. In order to reach comprehensibility, the local level has been defined as a cluster of four major stakeholder groups in forestry: The Territorial Staff of the Forest Department ('old' foresters which sometimes served for more than 30 years in the department); the recently employed social organizers of the Community Development, Extension and Gender Development Directorate (CDEGD) of the Forest Department, a new branch in the department's decentralized structure; local people; and the local government. These four groups, which cannot always be clearly distinguished, are expected to interact in certain ways, as Figure 1 shows.

This cluster leads to the following research questions:

- What part do the Territorial Staff of the FD in the management of natural resources?
- How do the FD staff perceive the ongoing changes (reforms) on different hierarchical levels?
- How does the local population perceive the role of the Forest Department?
- How does the Forest Department interact with the Local Government?



**Fig. 1** The 'local level' as defined for this study, with four major stakeholder groups (own graphic)

## 1.3 Methodology and fieldwork

### 1.3.1 Selection of the research area

Fieldwork in the NWFP was conducted between October 2002 and February 2003. It could be combined with a training at the Forest Management Centre Support Unit (FMC-SU) in Peshawar, a Swiss funded project implemented by Intercooperation, Swiss Organisation for Development and Cooperation (IC). The fact that this project was closely interlinked with the reform process of the Forest Department made it more easy to enter the department's structure. Luckily, project and department infrastructure such as drivers and housing was available for fieldwork, so that several areas could be examined within the given time.

Four villages in two different districts of the NWFP were selected for research, considering the following criterias:

- To get an efficient insight into participatory activities, the villages had to be involved in a Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) and/or a Joint Forest Management (JFM) process for some months already. One half of the villages had to be involved in JFM, the other half in VLUP.
- In order to identify possible differences, half of the villages had to be located in an area with Protected Forest, respectively in an area with Reserved and/or Guzara Forest (for the legal classification of forests, see 3.2.3).
- To cover as much representatives of the Forest Department as possible, the villages had to be located in different Divisions (administrative unit of the Forest Department).

Taking into consideration all these criterias, in Swat District (Protected Forest) the villages of *Bar Lalku* (Swat Division, *Matta* Range; JFM and VLUP) and *Dabargai* (Kalam Division, *Madyan* Range; VLUP) have been selected; in Hazara District (mainly Reserved and Guzara Forest), the villages of *Shungli* (Agror Tanawal Division, *Shergarh* Range; VLUP) and *Methal* (Siran Division, *Jabori* Range; JFM and VLUP). In addition, the villages of *Chel* (Swat, PF, VLUP) and *Timri* (Hazara, RF, VLUP and JFM) have been visited in order to attend some committee meetings.

### 1.3.2 Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were the main tool for data collection, whereby the questionnaires mainly served to remind the interviewer of the most important issues to discuss. The respondents did not read these questionnaires, and the order of questions often varied, depending on the circumstances. Participative observation was another tool used, mainly by participating in monthly meetings of Village Development Committees and by joining transect-walks with villagers and FD officials through forests. Key informants (mainly representatives of FSP in Peshawar) were interviewed without using structured questionnaires.

Because the interaction between local people and the Forest Department is mainly a matter of men, the gender aspect has not fully been taken into consideration. However, in order to cover the focus group of this study – the departmental staff – female staff members of the department have been interviewed. They also gave most of the information on the activities and perceptions of Women Organizations. Thus, the interaction of women and the state with regard to forest-related issues could be a matter of further investigation.

### 1.3.3 Fieldwork

Data was collected during two field visits, each lasting about two and a half weeks (November/December 2002 in Swat; January 2003 in Hazara). Both field visits were planned on a pilot trip of about two to three days, on which first contacts with Range Officers (ROs) and Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) could be established, and some of the selected villages could be visited for the first time. During the field visits, about one week time has been allotted to each village/range/division in order to conduct interviews with people in the villages, the Territorial Staff of the department and the staff of the CDEGD directorate. Additional time was needed for talks with DFOs and representatives of the Local Government.

Interviews were conducted by following a bottom-up approach. In each division, work was started with interviews in the villages, followed by talks with Forest Guards and Foresters and finally an interview with the RO in charge. Only after that, the respective DFO was consulted to clarify certain issues. CDEGD staff were interviewed whenever possible. This sequence could be kept in most of the cases.

Where necessary, interviews were conducted with the help of interpreters, i.e. in villages and with Forest Guards, Foresters and Female Forest Extensionists. Due to the non-availability of a professional interpreter, various people assisted in the interviews. In some cases, this turned out to be a hindering factor when the interpreter himself was part of the Forest Department (yet never of the Territorial Staff but of the CDEGD directorate). In a few cases, higher officials such as a Range Officer or even a Divisional Officer insisted on sending along a Forester or Forest Guard for visits to a village – arguing that it was „a necessary security measure“. This made it very difficult to conduct effective interviews with people in the villages, and a lot of energy had to be bestowed on making meaningful interviews possible.

All in all, about 45 interviews have been conducted in villages with members of different social groups and with gathered committees; about 20 interviews with members of the Territorial Staff of the Forest Department; eight interviews with members of the CDEGD directorate; one individual and two group interviews with

representatives of the Local Government; five interviews with key informants in Peshawar; plus uncounted informal talks with different people.<sup>1</sup>

## **1.4 Existing Research and the geographical context**

### **1.4.1 Present state of research**

General literature on decentralized natural resource management (NRM), and forest management in particular, is available in abundance. Many researchers have joined this discourse with case studies from all over the world, so that keeping control of it is rather difficult. Some of the most interesting contributions dealing with factors of successful decentralized NRM – such as Agrawal/Ostrom (1999) and Manor (2000) – have been considered for this study and will be discussed more detailed in section 2. In addition, the latest study by Ribot (2002) has served as a guideline in order to analyse the situation in NWFP.

There is a lot of particular research on the forestry sector of NWFP, too. Yet most of the studies are dealing with the technical aspects of forestry rather than with the institutional ones. Schickhoff (2002), for instance, gives a superb overview on forest degradation in the northern part of the province, analysing both its ecological and institutional causes. Although all major stakeholder groups are represented, the part on the role of the Forest Department is very much limited to its technical aspects. Other researchers such as Clemens/Nüsser (1997) or Jacobsen (1995) give valuable inputs on aspects such as population growth, ownership pattern or road construction and their impact on the forests of the Hindukush. On the other hand, Stellrecht (1997) is looking at the historical development of highland-lowland interaction with regard to forestry, concluding that a loss of influence of the highland regions over their resources is causing part of the deforestation. Yet none of these studies elaborates the 'local realities' of NWFP forestry.

In that regard, more studies are available for the Indian context. Poffenberger (1996 and 2000) gives a very detailed analysis of the institutional settings of the Indian forestry sector. Due to the fact that both Indian and Pakistani Forest Departments have been created under British rule (and therefore are still rather similar), Poffenberger's research gives a good idea on many structural problems in the NWFP.

The most thorough report on the NWFP forestry sector is given by Ahmed/Mahmood (1998). The authors give a profound overview on many different stakeholder groups and present a concise analysis of the forest policy and its current challenges. Yet again, the Forest Department itself is described in a rather general way. Latest literature on the

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<sup>1</sup> In order to protect respondents, no names will be mentioned in this study, even of those people who did not mind that. Only those who insisted to be mentioned by name will be identifiable. Where criticism about the department's internal system and working practice has been raised, the area's name will not be given. For the same reasons - and because they were hardly to be checked - personal accusations among stakeholders are not shown as well.

institutional aspects of forestry in NWFP includes Suleri (2001 and 2002), Geiser (2000 and 2003) and Southwold-Llewellyn (2002). Especially Suleri and Southwold-Llewellyn ask for details in stakeholder relations, so that they will be discussed later on in this study. For further literature on the NWFP forestry sector, see Schickhoff (2002) for technical aspects; or Ahmed/Mahmood (1998) for aspects of forest policy.

Most of the abovementioned studies are concluding that institutional reforms within the Forest Department are highly necessary. However, few researchers only ask for details of the department's structure and too often, the department is analysed in a rather superficial way. Many studies accuse forest officials of corruption but fail to ask for the causes of such misbehaviour. This study tries to fill this gap, attempting to understand the institutional details of the Forest Department, and asking how forest officials are acting under the given local and personal circumstances. It is hoped that thus, the future discussion on forestry and its stakeholders will become somewhat more balanced. It is not the aim of this study to play down the problematic role of forest officials – it is an attempt to shed light upon a 'white spot' in the research on the NWFP forestry sector.

#### **1.4.2 The geographical context**

Forest management is a highly complex issue, shaped by the relations and interactions between humans and their environment. Therefore, it is of special interest for the geographical research which is focussing on such interactions. Key issues of that research are the use of resources, the impact of that use on the resource base, and, likewise, the influence of the environment and its dynamics upon humans and their agency. On the other hand, the same is valid not only for human-environmental systems but also for interactions within social systems. As mentioned above, this study concentrates on the agency of different stakeholder groups in the forestry sector, especially on forest officials in the NWFP. Research thus concentrates on competent actors in that sector – their actions build a focal point around which the social and environmental interactions are presupposed as given. The study can therefore be understood as an analysis of strategic conduct in the sense of Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration. Giddens (1988, among others) says that human agency and social structure are in a relationship with each other, and it is the repetition of the acts of individual agents which reproduces the structure. This means that there is a social structure of traditions, institutions, moral principles, and established ways of doing things; but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently. In that sense, this research concentrates on how people – and forest officials in particular – reproduce, replace or ignore their social structures with regard to forestry.

### **1.5 Structure of this study**

Section 2 "Decentralization: Theoretical Approaches" gives the theoretical foundations for decentralization, i.e. with regard to natural resource management. Criteria are developed which later on are used to test the hypothesis. Section 3 "Forests and their institutional Environment in the NWFP" informs on the situation of forestry in the



North-Western Frontier Province, on possible reasons for deforestation, and gives an overview on recent and current initiatives in the forestry sector. The current decentralization efforts in the FD are presented in detail. In a subsequent part, the local government system, as it presents itself three years after President Musharraf's devolution efforts, is described. Section 4 "Selected Stakeholder Groups" describes the four stakeholder groups, i.e. Territorial Staff, CDEGD staff, local people and local government individually, especially with regard to their forest-related activities. Section 5 "Relations between selected Stakeholders" gives an insight into the forest-related interactions which have been observed between these four stakeholder groups. Section 6 "Analysis: Core Problems" identifies the main critical factors and problems which occur in forestry on local level. Finally, section 7 "Conclusions and Recommendations" assesses the reform and decentralization process on local level, using the criterias for decentralized NRM systems formulated in section 2. In a subsequent part, recommendations are given which can help to keep the reform process on track and to make it more efficient.

## 2 Decentralization: theoretical approaches

### 2.1 Preliminary remarks

This section will establish criterias according to which the current decentralization and participation efforts in NWFP forestry can be reviewed systematically (section 7). The idea is to find out where the current FSP approach has its strenghts and weaknesses, not only to show *where* certain things do or do not work but also *why*.

Decentralization is a very dominant issue, but it is also a complex one. Numerous authors are currently discussing different approaches and listing criterias, mainly in the political sphere, but also with regard to natural resource management (NRM). However, decentralization bears some basical principles which are valid both for political systems and NRM. It may anyway be rather difficult to exactly distinguish the two spheres from each other, especially in the situation examined for this study. Therefore, this section first discusses decentralization in a rather broad manner, considering political concerns, too. Subsequently, the focus goes to NRM concerns. As a result, a list of criterias is formulated, which serves as a guideline for the analysis of the situation in the NWFP forestry sector.

### 2.2 Three main types of decentralization

„In all its variants, decentralization is about a re-negotiation of the institutions and social arrangements through which power is exercised in different forms. It is concerned with the distribution of power, resources, and administrative capacities through different territorial units of a government or local groups.“

*(Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 85)*

The question of central importance for the definition of the different forms of decentralization is: What is being relocated to whom? The following division into three main types of decentralization is based on Manor (2000), while further types of decentralization given by other authors are listed below. But although the decentralization issue can be divided into many sub-topics, one main characteristic that is crucial for all different types must not be forgotten: decentralization must not be understood as a situation; it is a *development and a process of change* from one institutional system to another (Basta 1999, 29).

### 2.2.1 Deconcentration or administrative decentralization

<b>What</b>	Functions, responsibilities, competences
<b>To whom</b>	To lower administration (field agencies, local offices)

Agrawal and Ostrom (1999, 76) call deconcentration “the most innocuous of the forms of decentralization”. This is so because it only includes the transfer of certain functions and responsibilities, but not the final authority over activities and funds. The transfer only takes place from higher to lower levels of the same governmental hierarchy, but not to local institutions external to the state. That is why deconcentration does not necessarily need to have the same effect as devolution (see below): “If this [deconcentration] happens without strengthening democracy at the same time, it will strengthen the central power.” (Manor 2000, 4). Deconcentration can also be realized by creating new field agencies or the dispersal of agents from the centre to lower levels. At least, the process requires changes in the forms of exercising power.

### 2.2.2 Fiscal decentralization

<b>What</b>	Decision-making power over funds
<b>To whom</b>	To lower administration or non-governmental bodies

Fiscal decentralization is essential for all forms of decentralization. If the local level receives decision-making powers to be active on local level, but not the funds required to implement such activities, decentralization will become void. On the other hand, it can be rather dangerous to decentralize funds only without decentralizing decision powers on how to use these funds: If the authority over the money is not clearly defined, misuse of funds may occur. There are different possible ways to finance local activities, such as taxes or subsidies from the central power (SDC 2001, 6).

### 2.2.3 Devolution or democratic decentralization

<b>What</b>	Responsibility including the final authority, i.e. decision-making power
<b>To whom</b>	To lower authorities (governmental and non-governmental)

Unlike deconcentration, devolution also includes the decentralization of the final authority to lower levels. That means that real power is relocated away from a focal point. Power can be defined as „the capacity to affect the outcome of decision-making processes. It is important to stress that this implies a genuine role in decision-making, not just a token input in the form of consultation.“ (Fisher 2000, 3). SDC (2001, 6) defines power in this context as decision making competence, financial competence and administration.

It is crucial that power is not only shifted downwards within a given hierarchy (e.g. a state department), but to independent local authorities „which are in some way democratic“ (Manor 2000, 4). These can be legally constituted local governments, but also democratically elected local committees.

#### 2.2.4 Other types and interpretations of decentralization

##### *Delegation*

Delegation can be seen as a medium form of deconcentration, but with different actors to whom authority is delegated: „It refers to transfers of authority to public corporations or special authorities outside the regular bureaucratic structure.“ (Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 76). This means that the empowered authorities enjoy certain independence from the central power.

##### *Economic decentralization*

This refers to an attempt to deregulate the central government's control over the economy, in order to promote strategies for the development of the private sector, community participation and partnerships between the private and public sector.

##### *Deregulation*

A decentralization from governments to markets, para-markets and non-governmental organizations by dismantling price controls, quotas, and barriers to entry. The idea is “that market forces determine savings, investment, and consumption decisions of economic actors” (Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 76).

##### *Privatization*

This denotes „transfers of responsibility for public functions to voluntary organizations or private enterprises“ (Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 76).

### 2.3 Why decentralize?

History shows that most of the decentralization processes in the past have been motivated by political reasons. Decentralization has often been a crucial *part of democratization* processes, such as in Latin America and in Africa. In some countries, such as Ethiopia, decentralization has also been an *answer to pressure* exercised by regional groups onto the central government. A different example are the decentralization processes following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, when, after the sudden failure of a highly centralized system, an *organizational vacuum* asked for new structures. In East Asia, decentralization mainly occurred as an answer to the central government's inability to *deliver services* to huge populations.

In the development debates, decentralization became important in the 1970s , after it had been recognised „that the state was not necessarily the best agent to pursue development as a universal good, or to deal with the problems of poverty, unemployment and inflation“ (Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 74f).

The examples of Latin America and Africa show two main reasons for political decentralization: To give more weight to local voices by enabling *people's political participation*; and to improve the *responsiveness of elected representatives* to local demands. Reducing the physical distance between the people and their government enhances the information exchange and thus makes decision-making processes much faster. It additionally makes a system more transparent and accountable and thus can reduce corruption. Following these objectives, decentralization can be seen as „a strategy of governance prompted by external or domestic pressures to facilitate transfers of power closer to those who are most affected by the exercise of power“ (Agrawal and Ostrom 1999, 85). The same authors underline that no government will ever devolve power without getting any benefits in return: „We should expect to see devolution (...) when some central political actors or a coalition of such actors finds that devolution makes it possible to pursue their own goals more effectively.“

The examples of East Asia and the former Soviet Republics show that there can be strong economical reasons to decentralize systems as well. Economists argue that decentralization gives way to *a more economical and efficient redistribution of services and goods*. Furthermore, distributors in a decentralized system are closer to their ‚customers‘, thus better *knowing their demands and requests*. In return, enhanced responsiveness makes the ‚customers‘ more *willing to pay for the services* they use, especially if they have been involved in shaping these services.

On the political level, this leads to the argument that decentralization supports competition between local governments and thus increases their quality. This shows that political and economical reasons for decentralization often overlap or complement each other.

## 2.4 Conditions for success

If decentralization should work well, some essential conditions have to be fulfilled. Decentralized authorities have to be provided with...

### a) ... adequate funds

As mentioned above, fiscal decentralization is crucial for a successful decentralization process: „Local governments should have the ability to borrow when they have the capacity to repay. The legal and regulatory framework can support this message by specifying the conditions under which local governments may borrow“ (Ford 1999, 13). „Decentralization only works if the officials not only get many tasks and powers, but also the required funds“ (Basta 1999, 34).

### b) ... adequate powers

The *legal and regulatory framework* has to enable local authorities to act on a legal basis and should support an effective service delivery. Legal barriers often inappropriately restrain the ability of local authorities to select the most desirable options for the delivery of decentralized services, including private participation and managed competition (Ford 1999). On the other hand, people should be given the

*power of association* as well as the right to lobby government agencies. For SDC (2001, 14), political *willingness to devolve power and control* is crucial for a successful decentralization.

However, it is not sufficient to devolve powers without securing them for a certain period of time. Kälin (1999, 58) states: „Local governments cannot function if their existence is continuously threatened by the possibility of higher governmental levels to dissolve them whenever they want.“ Thus, clear procedures and criterias in the form of a strong legal framework are necessary to *secure the existence of local authorities*.

*c) ... reliable accountability mechanisms*

This includes a *transparent electoral system* (regular elections, local referendums, permanent public-private councils), a *structure of responsibilities* as well as a *juridical cadre*. Elected authorities have to be accountable towards the local people, whereas the local administration has to be accountable towards the elected authorities. According to Fisher (1999, 5), a major prerequisite for ‚meaningful‘ decentralization is to build *levels of trust* in local management.

For Ford (1999, 18), a voting democracy itself is not enough if *institutionalized ways of information* and mechanisms for local communities to express their preferences do not exist: „Local government responsiveness – one of the main rationales for decentralizing – cannot be realized when there are no mechanisms for transferring information.“

Manor (2000, 6) identifies *additional conditions* that can help decentralized systems to work well, but are not essential: a well-established democratic tradition, a free press, a lively civil society (including existing participative structures, such as NGOs and other citizen groups), abundant social capital, a comparatively equitable distribution of wealth, prior land reform and a high literacy rate.

## 2.5 Possible impacts of decentralization

If the above mentioned conditions can be fulfilled, democratic decentralization can have different, mainly constructive impacts on governance, society and development (based on Manor 2000, 7f; + means positive impact, o means no impact, - means negative impact):

#### Possible impacts on governance

- + **Enhancing transparency** Decisions and decision-making processes become more visible and intelligible to the people at the grass roots. Elected members of local bodies are better able to explain decisions in terms that ordinary people will understand.
- + **Increasing responsiveness** The speed, quantity and quality of responses to citizens at the grass roots can be increased. Decentralized authorities can act without seeking approval from higher authority, thus improving the efficiency of governmental service.
- + **Making a government more open** People from the local level find it easier to gain access and influence, because elected representatives can be contacted much easier.
- + **Improving accountability** The elected members live close to the people that elected them, which sets them under greater pressure than politicians higher up.
- **Reduction of quality** If the skills and competences on local level are missing, and due to lower technical and administrative capacities, the quality of governance may decrease.

#### Possible impacts on society

- + **Increasing participation** Increased openness, responsiveness and accountability of decentralized authorities usually enables and inspires individuals and groups within society to contact elected representatives more often than before. This also enhances the commitment in implementation.
- + **Strengthening civil society and social capital** Usually, the density of associational ties within society increases.
- + **Catalysing and moderating social conflicts** Democratic decentralisation tends to moderate and civilise social and political conflicts.
- + **Breaking down cynicism about government** Governments can enhance their legitimacy and citizens become more willing to pay taxes and engage themselves in other constructive ways with the government. Kálin (1999, 49) puts it like this: „The authority of the central government decreases, but the legitimacy of the state is strengthened.“
- **Elite domination** In highly inequitable societies, decentralized bodies can be captured by elites. In such circumstances, trust and the growth of social capital are not fostered.

#### Possible impacts on development

- + **Enhancing the impact of local development programmes** Decentralization often supports a growth of at least partially elected ‚user committees‘ in different sectors.
- + **Adapting development policies to local conditions** Decentralized authorities are often able to adapt schemes devised at higher levels to local conditions and needs.
- o **Contributing to poverty alleviation** Experience shows that democratic decentralization seldom assists in alleviating poverty.
- o **Promoting economic growth** The empirical evidence strongly suggests that the impact on growth is largely neutral.
- o **Mobilizing local financial resources** It is unrealistic to expect decentralization to assist very much in mobilizing local financial resources, whereas it is more likely to mobilize human resources.

## 2.6 Main problems and hindering factors

There are many different ways in which decentralization and devolution can be misapplied:

Responsibility is often decentralized *without accompanying relocation of authority* to make meaningful decisions required for implementation. In other words: Many processes that are called devolution are in fact not more than a simple deconcentration (Fisher 2000, 5f). On the other hand, tasks and powers are often devolved without the funds required for implementation. This is why Kálin (1999, 68) asks for a holistic decentralization procedure: „Reforms have to be complete and not only for a certain branch of the government.“ Ribot (2002, 2) goes into the same direction when saying: „Transferring power without accountable representation is dangerous. Establishing accountable representation without powers is empty.“

Responsibility – and sometimes authority – is given *to the wrong people* or to inappropriate organisational forms (compare 2.7.2) (Fisher, 2000, 5f).

Approaches to devolution and decentralization are frequently based on *applying standard organizational models of local organization* (usually based on formal administrative structures) that ignore local conditions, arrangements and organizations. In other words: The application of decentralization is often sociologically naive (Fisher 2000, 5).

A main hindering factor especially in developing countries is the so-called ‚*crisis effect*‘: Central governments of countries which are continuously threatened by social and political conflicts will only slowly devolve decision power to lower levels. (Basta 1999, 36)

Decentralization can also serve a ‚*hidden agenda*‘ of authoritative central governments: In order to gain more legitimacy and acceptance among the population as well as among donors or the international community, the aim of empowering the local people is often neglected.

The *question of control* is often crucial to decentralized structures: Local authorities often have to ask for permission from higher levels before spending money or setting priorities in their local agendas. Although a tough control of local activities is necessary to prevent malpractices, this control should be of a retroactive character (*ex-post*). (Kálin 1999, 60)

## 2.7 Decentralization and natural resource management

About 60 countries worldwide are currently undertaking efforts to decentralize some aspects of natural resource management (NRM). Although the approaches and the extent of decentralization vary in every case, all involved governments and donors argue that decentralization would help to increase efficiency and equity in NRM (Ribot



2002, 3f). However, considering the criterias and possible impacts of decentralization mentioned before, one has to ask at least whether decentralized NRM systems really improve the benefits that local communities can get from natural resources. Studies in different countries have shown that devolution policies often yield only limited benefits for local people, and that in practice there are many hindering factors. Examining different case studies all over the world, Shackleton et al. (2002, 2) identify some possible types of benefits from decentralized natural resource management:

Direct benefits	Indirect benefits
Access to subsistence and commercial products	Organisational strengthening
Share of revenues from sales of timber, NTFPs, or hunting and tourism concessions	New alliances (e.g. with NGOs)
Share of incomes from permit and licence fees	New channels of communication with government
Employment	Technical and managerial capacity building
More productive resource base	Diversification of livelihoods
Infrastructural development	Political empowerment
	Pride and identity

Experience has shown that a successful decentralization of natural resource management (NRM) is highly dependent on the role of the central state and on the forms chosen for local organisations. The latter again points out the question raised in the beginning of this section: to whom is power devolved? Shackleton et al. (2002, 3) identify different possible organizational forms, all of them having pro and contras:

<b>District Organizations</b>	including local government organizations such as panchayats in India or multi-stakeholder district structures aligned to line departments. Although well supported by a legal framework, the downward accountability often varies from modest to very little.
<b>Village Committess</b>	facilitated by government departments (e.g. Village Development Committees in NWFP). The accountability is very much dependent on the degree of control transferred by the state and on the extent to which local elites capture the process.
<b>Self-initiated organizations</b>	operating outside the state hierarchy are often accountable to disadvantaged resource users. But the lack of official support and the absence of a supportive legal framework often limits their effectiveness and increases the danger of capture by local élites.

In addition, other critical factors, both within and between local bodies, should be considered:

#### *Parallel hierarchies*

„At many sites, parallel hierarchies of traditional leadership, local government and line department-sponsored committees existed. Often these had unclear or overlapping jurisdictions and mandates in NRM that led to institutional conflict and struggles for power and revenues“ (Shackleton et al. 2002, 4). Looking at the situation in NWFP, the *jirga* system<sup>2</sup>, the FD-initiated Village Development Committees and the Community Citizen Boards foreseen in the Local Government Plan 2000 represent such parallel hierarchies (see 3.7 for details).

#### *Inhomogenous communities*

It is important to understand that a „community“ is not a homogenous entity with one common interest. There are rich and poor people, educated and uneducated ones, people with influence and without. Experience in many different countries has shown that local élites often try (and succeed) to dominate NRM committees. Traditional leaders often consider a local committee as a threat to their influence and therefore try to control it. A participatory approach can further support that, as Williams et al. (2003, 164) point out: „Participatory methods are criticized for producing homogenous ‚local‘ viewpoints where none previously existed; of privileging certain voices whilst suppressing others (...)“.

#### *Diverging interests and methods*

The problem of inhomogenous communities is also valid for all stakeholders in a decentralization process. Communities and the government will hardly ever have the same interests in decentralized NRM. As Agrawal and Ostrom mention (see 2.3.2 for citation), a government will never devolve power if it cannot pursue its own goals more effectively by doing so. This is also reflected in the ways different stakeholders try to implement decentralized NRM: whereas the state often favours formal generalized resource management rules, local users mostly prefer site-specific norms adaptable to a changing local context.

## **2.8           Criteria for assessing decentralization efforts in NWFP forestry**

Based on this brief literature review, a list of criterias can now be established in order to analyse the situation examined in this study (compare section 5). The idea is to have a sort of a ‚checklist‘, with which the situation on different levels (Territorial Staff of the Forest Department, CDEGD staff, local committees etc.) and their relations can be analysed.

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<sup>2</sup> *Jirga* is the traditional council of elders in a village, acting as the authority for solving conflicts and taking important decisions. While in some villages, *jirgas* still have much influence, official courts or the police forces increasingly replace them in other places.

In order to unite most concerns, criterias and critical points mentioned above in one list, so-called 'recommendations' by Ribot (2002, 3) will be used as a starting point. Ribot's list represents an interesting attempt to analyse NRM decentralization efforts, reflecting most of the issues discussed in the preceding parts of this section. Most of these 'recommendations' are given below, each with a short comment on why and how they should be applied on the context in the NWFP. Where Ribot does not cover aspects which seem to be crucial for the situation examined, own criterias have been added, based on the aspects discussed above. If not indicated otherwise, quotations are from Ribot (2002, 3).

**Criteria 1: Work with local democratic and accountable institutions**

„Governments, donors, and NGOs can foster local accountability by choosing to work with and build on elected local governments where they exist, (...) and applying multiple accountability measures to all institutions making public decisions.“

This is about *to whom* powers and funds are being devolved – it calls for reliable accountability measures, ensured by choosing democratic institutions. It helps to check whether power is devolved to the right people or institutions.

For the situation examined, this criteria mainly covers the relationship between the FD and the local people, i.e. the Village Development Committees (VDCs). It has to be asked whether these committees really represent democratic bodies and whether they are accountable towards local people. The question will be raised whether or not it would be better for the FD to cooperate more closely with the Local Government as a democratic institution.

**Criteria 2: Transfer sufficient and appropriate powers and funds**

„Governments, donors, NGOs, and the research community should work to develop 'environmental subsidiarity principles' to guide the transfer of appropriate and sufficient powers to local authorities. Guidelines are also needed to assure an effective separation and balance of executive, legislative, and judiciary powers in the local arena.“

This is about *what* is devolved. Whilst Ribot only points out the importance of adequate powers, the importance of a fiscal decentralization must not be forgotten. For the context of this study, the criteria covers (i) whether the Territorial Staff and the CDEGD Field Staff get the required powers and funds to fulfil their new tasks; (ii) whether the local committees are sufficiently empowered by the FD. The criteria asks for a holistic decentralization approach as asked for by Kálin (see 2.4).

**Criteria 3: Transfer powers as secure rights**

„To encourage local institutions and people to invest in new arrangements and to enable local people to be enfranchised as citizens rather than managed as subjects, governments should use secure means to transfer powers to local authorities. Secure transfers can create the space for local people to engage their representatives as citizens. Transfers made as privileges subject local people to the whims of the allocating agencies and authorities.”

This criteria covers *how* power is devolved. It has to be checked whether the powers and funds devolved under the FSP approach are secure or not, both for the intergovernmental processes and the co-operation with local committees. Are the Territorial Staff motivated to use their new competences in a long-term perspective or do the higher levels of the department keep the option to intervene whenever they feel appropriate to do so? Are the new possibilities of local people in NRM only temporary privileges which completely depend on the FD's goodwill, or are they secure powers, backed by enforceable laws and regulations?

**Criteria 4: Support equity and justice and establish fair and accessible adjudication**

„Central government intervention may be needed for redressing inequities and preventing elite capture of public decision-making processes. Central government also must establish the enabling legal environment for organizing, representation, rights, and recourse so that local people can demand government responsibility, equity, and justice for themselves. (...) Governments should establish accessible independent courts, channels of appeal outside of the government agencies involved in natural resource management, and local dispute resolution mechanisms. Donors and NGOs can also support alternative adjudication mechanisms to supplement official channels instead of replacing them.”

On the one hand, this points out the crucial *role of the centre*, in this case the (upper levels of the) Forest Department. The centre is asked to intervene in the process in an ‚ex-post‘ (Kälín) manner in order to protect the rights of minorities and to ensure the rules and laws. This criteria covers both the intergovernmental processes (can equity within the department be guaranteed?) and the relations with local communities (can an élite's capture of local committees be prevented?).

On the other hand, it asks for the *involvement of third parties* which can mediate in the case of dissatisfaction of one party. In relation to NRM for instance, NGOs could act as independent body and mediator in case of conflict. It has thus to be asked whether the examined decentralization approach allows third parties.

**Criteria 5: Establish minimum environmental standards**

„Governments should shift from a management-planning to a minimum-environmental standards approach. Broad minimum standards can facilitate ecologically sound independent local decision making. (...) There is no need to expect that local authorities will not convert natural wealth into financial wealth, especially where cash is in short supply and is viewed as more valuable than standing forest.“

It would be naive to expect that local people would use the powers devolved to them for completely sustainable forest management only. In order to avoid both the local level from acting arbitrarily and the centre from exercising too much control, minimum standards are therefore required. They assure that a guideline is given for local activities and define a clear limit beyond which a central authority can interfere (if the standards are not obeyed). This study will ask whether the VLUP/JFM guidelines provide any minimum standards, according to which both parties – local committees as well as the FD – have to work, and which define clear rules according to which the FD could intervene in the process (for the case standards are not met).

**Criteria 6: Support education and information**

„Governments, donors, and NGOs can inform people of their rights, write laws in clear and accessible language, and translate legal texts into local languages to encourage popular engagement and local government responsibility. When there are meaningful rights it is critical for people to know them. Educating local authorities of their rights and responsibilities can also foster responsible local governance.“

It has to be asked whether the Forest Department undertakes enough to inform its own Territorial Staff about the new tasks, rights and powers coming with the current reforms and whether local committees are sufficiently informed about their own rights and obligations, and those of the department towards them.

**Criteria 7: Organizational models should be locally specific**

„For the future it is crucial to develop systems which are able to move. In this sense, built-in flexibility will rather lead to sustainable structures than a bold plan.“

*(Bennett 1994, 11, cit. in: Basta 1999, 40)*

On the inter-governmental level, it has to be asked whether the staff implementing the reforms in the field have enough freedom to act flexibly and according to local requirements; with regard to the relationship between the department and the communities, the question whether or not the Village Land Use Planning approach considers local circumstances and allows local solutions to local problems, has to be raised.

### 3 Forests and their institutional environment in the NWFP

This section gives a basic overview on forests in the NWFP, the current ecological situation and the legal status of forests in the province. Possible causes of deforestation are discussed, with a focus upon past and current initiatives in the province's forestry sector. For this, the two approaches of Village Land Use Planning (practised by the Forestry Sector Project) and Joint Forest Management (practised by the Forest Management Centre) are introduced. In order to give a basic understanding of the situation examined in subsequent sections, the political setup in the province will be presented as well.

#### 3.1 NWFP : area and main characteristics

##### *Area and Location*

Covering an area of 10.17 Mio. ha, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) is the smallest province of Pakistan. Located in the mountainous north of the country, its borders go with Afghanistan in the West, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab in the East and South, Balochistan in the far South and the Federally administered Northern Areas in the North.

##### *Administrative Setup*

The province, which was administratively set up in 1901 under British rule, is divided into seven divisions which again consist of total 22 districts. These are: *Hazara Division (Districts: Abbottabad, Mansehra, Kohistan, Haripur)*, *Malakand Division (Malakand, Swat, Dir, Chitral)*, *Mardan Division (Swabi, Mardan)*; *Peshawar Division (Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera)*; *Kohat (Kohat, Karak)*; *Bannu*; *Dera Ismail Khan*. Besides these units, 25'679 km<sup>2</sup> of the province are so-called FATA's – Federally Administered Tribal Areas – where neither the provincial nor the national government have much influence and which are represented towards the state each by a political agent.<sup>3</sup>

##### *Physical Characteristics*

The NWFP is mainly characterised by high mountains and uncountable valleys. From the plains around the provincial capital of Peshawar at 340 metres above sea level, the terrain reaches 7'750 metres on its highest peak, *Tirich Mir* in the North-West. While the western and southwestern ranges along the border with Afghanistan are subject to very dry climatical conditions with only scarce vegetation, the northern mountains of the outer and middle Himalayas and the Hindukush belong to the sub-tropical continental highlands with snowy winters, cool summers, and winter and spring rains. (Kureshy1997, 56)

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<sup>3</sup> GoP (2003). [http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/demographic\\_indicators98/demographic\\_indicators.html](http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/demographic_indicators98/demographic_indicators.html). Date of retrieval 3/6/2003.

*Population*

In 1998, 17,7 million people were living in the NWFP. Population is growing very fast in the province: since the 1950s, population nearly quadrupled. Today, the NWFP has an annual growth rate of 2,82% a year, which is the highest rate all over Pakistan. More than 83% of these people are living in rural areas with a population density of 238 people/km<sup>2</sup> (which is the second-highest in Pakistan, after Punjab province). The average household size is eight people, a number which is clearly above the national average. With 35,4%, the literacy rate lies far below the national average, whereby only 18,8% of women are literate (men: 51,4%).<sup>4</sup> *Pashto* is the most common language spoken in NWFP (68%), followed by *Hindko* (18%), while many people also speak *Urdu*, which is the national language of Pakistan. In 1981, 99.5% of the population were Muslims. (Khan 1991, 94f)

**3.2 Forests in the NWFP**

**3.2.1 Forest cover and tree species**

Due to climatical conditions, most of the forests of the province can be found in the valleys of Hazara and Malakand Division. According to the Forest Sector Master Plan 1993, 17% of the province's area are covered by forests (Pakistan: 4.8%), while agricultural land covers 15% (Pakistan: 23%). The exact landuse figures are given below in Figure 2. However, these figures are subject to ongoing debates over the area under real forest cover. On the one hand, out of the 1.684 Mio. ha forest cover in the province, 202'000 ha are farmland trees. On the other hand, other statistics of the Forest Department (FD) define all the areas which are under the administrative control of the FD as forests, although on many of these areas not one tree can be found anymore (Suleri 2001, 5). Thus, the datas reported by the FSMP and PFRI (compare 3.4.1 for details) differ widely, because different statistics are based on different methods. Unlike the figures given below, the Asian Development Bank claims an actual countrywide forest cover of 3,2% only (Suleri 2002, 4).

	Pakistan		NWFP	
	Area (Mio. ha)	%	Area (Mio. ha)	%
Forest / Trees	4.244	4.8	1.684	17.0
Agriculture	20.580	23.0	1.546	15.0
Range Lands	28.507	32.0	4.894	48.0
Barren Lands	26.893	31.0	0.138	1.0
Water Bodies	0.913	1.0	0.064	0.9
Urban	0.138	0.2	0.004	0.1
Unclassified	6.725	8.0	1.844	18.0
Total	87.980	100	10.174	100

**Fig. 2** Land use situation in Pakistan and the NWFP in particular (Forest Vision 2025, 2)

<sup>4</sup> GoP (2003). [www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/index.html](http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/index.html). Date of retrieval 8/6/2003.

In the hilly regions of the province, main coniferous species are Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), Blue Pine (*Pinus wallichinia*), Chir pine (*Pinus roxburghii*), Fir (*Abies pindrow*), Kail (*Pinus excelsa*) and Spruce (*Picea smithiana*). Among the broad-leaved trees, Walnut (*Juglans regia*) is the most common one. (Forest Vision 2025, 2)

### 3.2.2 Legal categories of forests

Forests in the NWFP are divided into different legal categories which are based on ownership patterns, rights and management responsibilities.

#### *Reserved Forest (RF)*

6% of NWFP forests are in this category. Mainly located in the Hazara Division, these forests are exclusive property of the state. Local people have very limited rights only, such as right of way, collection of fuelwood and permission to let their animals graze. Clearing land or cutting trees is forbidden, even if for local use only. Reserved Forests have been demarcated in the settlement of 1872 and 1905.

#### *Protected Forest (PF)*

30% of NWFP forests are in this category. Originally inherited from the princely states of Chitral, Dir and Swat, these forests can mainly be found in the districts of Chitral, Dir, Swat, Buner, Shangla and in Kohistan on the west side of the Indus. Although declared as State property, local people have a few rights, such as share in timber sales proceeds for local right holders from areas which are harvested according to a management plan of the FD (so-called 'royalties'; 60% share in Malakand Division, 80% share in Hazara Division). Use of timber for local purpose is allowed with the permission of the FD. Additionally, collecting fuelwood and grazing of animals is permitted.

#### *Guzara Forest (GF)*

33% of NWFP forests are in this category. Guzara forests are privately owned but managed by the FD. Only owners and right-holders in these forests can cut timber with the permission of the FD, others do not have the right to apply for a permit (but can ask the owner to apply for them). Dry wood can be collected by everyone, as long as the owners or right-holders do not have any objections; the same is valid for grazing. Guzara forests can be found in Hazara Division, but not in Malakand.

The remaining 31% of NWFP forests consist of plantations and trees on farmlands as well as communal and private forests – categories which do not play an important part in this study. Later on, section 4 will show that the *de jure* situation described here does not represent the *de facto* situation. Illicit cutting by various stakeholders is widespread throughout the province and in all types of forests.



### 3.2.3 Important forest stakeholders

Those stakeholder groups which are relevant for this study will be described more detailed in section 4. Here, only a general overview will be given. A complete listing of forest stakeholders is given by Ahmed and Mahmood (1998, 21).

#### *Residents*

In relation to forests, local people can be divided into three main categories: *Guzara* forest owners, rightholders, and non-right-holding forest users. All of them mainly use forests for collecting fuelwood, cutting timber for house construction, grazing animals, and collecting non-timber forest products.

#### *Gujars (nomads)*

Seasonal migrants which pay a certain fee (*qalang*) to local land-owners or forest rightholders in order to let their animals graze. Thus, they mainly depend on the forest for grazing and collecting fuelwood.

#### *Provincial Government / Forest Department (FD)*

Forestry is a provincial subject in Pakistan, and forests are an important source of income for the respective government. Thus, the provincial department "is under pressure to increase the flow of revenues to the exchequer, sometimes compromising its role to sustainably manage the forests." (Suleri 2001, 8). The department still reproduces colonial structures from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, being organized in a strictly hierarchical way. *Forest Guards*, *Foresters* and *Range Officers* represent the department on local level.

#### *Federal Government*

Although forestry is in the hands of the provinces, it was the government in Islamabad, represented by the *Inspector General of the Forests*, which in 1993 imposed the ban on commercial timber harvesting (see 3.2.4).

#### *Timber contractors*

Usually, the felling, conversion and transportation of trees is not done by the FD itself. Since 1977, this is in the hands of the so-called Forest Development Corporation (FDC), an institution external to the FD hiring professionals on contract-basis for harvesting particular areas. *De facto* bound to working plans issued by the Forest Department, these contractors often tend to cut more than required in order to increase their profit. The ban on timber harvesting has seriously hampered their business.

#### *'Timber Mafia'*

Because profits in the Pakistani timber business are very attractive (due to shortage in domestic supply and import restrictions), a whole cluster of local élites such as wealthy villagers, local politicians, rich outsiders and representatives of the FD are actively involved in illegal timber business. Local residents are often hired for logging and transportation – what makes it very difficult for officials to get hold of the wire-pullers.

*Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

There are numerous environmental NGOs in the NWFP. Two of the most important ones dealing with forestry are *Sungi* and *SAFI*. The *Sungi Development Foundation* has been established in 1989. *Sungi* (which means 'partner' in the local *Hindko* dialect) works on issues of policy advocacy and community development. With presently 70 staff members, it operates in four districts of Hazara in *Haripur*, *Abbottabad*, *Mansehra* and *Battagram*, covering more than 100 communities and over 150 community-based organizations. In 1997, *Sungi* helped to establish the *Sarhad Awami Forestry Ittehad (SAFI)*, an alliance of various forest stakeholders which are challenging the state forest reform process. The common aim is to protect the forests and people's forest rights. By 1999, *SAFI* had a membership of approximately 3000 forest dwellers, organized with committees at provincial, divisional, and district level (Geiser 2000, 13).

*International Donor Agencies*

Several international donors support the forestry sector reforms in the NWFP. Among them are the Swiss and the Dutch government (the latter cancelling its support in early 2003) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which jointly established the *Forestry Donor Coordination Group*, a forum for discussing forestry-related issues with the government.

Other important stakeholder groups are international NGOs or the wood-processing industry.

**3.2.4 Demand, supply and pressure**

It is important to distinguish between local demand by people living in the respective areas and market demands. Some experts believe that the local demand is small enough so that the provincial forests could be managed in a sustainable way. (For average figures on local timber consumption, see 4.3.3). However, with an ongoing population increase in the province, the local demand is growing day by day.<sup>5</sup> Poffenberger (2000, 72) notes: "The environmental consequences of rapid population growth are direct and visible, including the denudation of forested hillsides, increased demand for forest products and fuelwood (...)"

The market demand in the country is estimated around 2.3 Mio m<sup>3</sup> (Forest Vision 2025, 4). Together with high timber prices (partly due to a restrictive import policy, it is twice the global average) one can understand that timber smuggling is a flourishing business. Even after the Federal Government, under the impression of devastating floods in September 1992, imposed a total ban on commercial timber harvesting, illicit cutting for sale did not stop. Nevertheless, the ban is still in place today, and has been lifted for a short time in 2001 only. Many experts even believe that timber smuggling increased since the ban had been imposed: "Ironically, the ban aggravated the problem of illegal cutting. One reason for this was discontinuation of demarcations and work-plans by the

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<sup>5</sup> Compare Balzer 2002.

Forest Department, in effect, making the ban a *carte blanche* for unregulated harvesting.” (Suleri 2002, 3). The ‘timber mafia’ plays a crucial part in that. Surprisingly, in 1992 the Provincial Forest Resource Inventory (PFRI) concluded that the actual pressure on forests was for the purpose of fuelwood (88%) and not for timber (12%). Supposedly, illegal cutting had not been considered for the study, and many experts doubt these figures. Yet it is clear that the ban could not prevent the demand from remaining too high, and that (informal) wood supply continues to be everything else but sustainable. Thus, PFRI also reported that “unless special measures are undertaken, it is apprehended that the major part of the [accessible] present natural forests would have been liquidated in the next 25 years.” (Forest Vision 2025, iv)

### 3.3 Past initiatives in NWFP forestry

As a matter of fact, the findings of the PFRI were not very new. Several initiatives taken by the Forest Department itself and other organizations attempted to tackle the problem of deforestation in NWFP in the 1970s already. Major initiatives started in the 1980s:

#### *Kalam Intergrated Development Project (KIDP)*

The Swiss-supported project was initiated in 1981 and came to an end in 1998. Focussing on the Kalam and Bahrain Tehsils in Upper Swat (Malakand Division), KIDP formed numerous Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in order to enable the villagers to help themselves for community development. Major activities concerning forests were the development of a new harvesting system, the establishment of local timber checkpoints and afforestation in Protected Forests. “KIDP gave the communities a sense of ownership in natural resource management and a confidence that collaborative approach works” (Suleri 2001, 12).

#### *Social Forestry Project Malakand and Dir (SFPMD)*

The Dutch-assisted project operated from 1987 to 1997, pioneering social organization and capacity building of local communities with the introduction of the *Village Land Use Planning* approach (VLUP). Although the project concentrated on forest rightholders only, it succeeded in familiarizing the Forest Department with the participatory VLUP approach, which later on was inherited by the Forestry Sector Project (FSP) and initiated the establishment of a Social Forestry Section in the FD.

#### *Siran Forest Development Project (SFDP)*

It was this German-supported project, which from 1992 onwards for the first time introduced the idea of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) in Pakistan. The challenge was to bring together in one committee local people and FD officials in order to share powers and responsibilities in local forest management. SFDP also succeeded to initiate a change in the legal framework when the principles of JFM were fixed in the *Hazara Protected Forest Rules 1996*. The JFMC in *Methal*, Hazara, which is examined in this study, was originally initiated by SFDP. The project finally closed down in the late 1990s, due to resistance and non-compliance by the provincial government.

### 3.4 Recent and current initiatives

#### 3.4.1 Recent initiatives in planning and legislation

##### *Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP)*

Before the floods in September 1992, the Government of Pakistan together with ADB and UNDP prepared a 25-years master plan in order to give a national perspective of the forest sector and its future priorities. These were: doubling tree cover in area terms and quadrupling (!) wood production until 2018 by intensified management (and a doubling of the FD's staff); better protection and rehabilitation of public forest as well as an improvement in landuse. Ahmed and Mahmood (1998, 94) term the FSMP as "extremely ambitious" and being "likely never to be funded".

##### *Provincial Forest Resource Inventory (PFRI)*

After the floods, officials came to the conclusion that a lack of well-stocked forests in the hills had caused the catastrophe and imposed a ban on commercial timber harvesting (in the beginning it was planned to lift the ban after two years). Under this impression and with the assistance of the German GTZ, an in-depth study about the state of forests in NWFP was started in order to establish a scientific data base and to identify further activities. The resulting PFRI for the first time pointed out the alarming gap between supply and demand and predicted the extinction of forests within the next 25 years.

##### *Hazara Protected Forest Rules 1996*

Until recently, forest policies in Pakistan were completely tied to their colonial past. Apart from minor changes, the *Forest Act 1927* was never adapted until today. In 1996 only, the SFDP (see 3.3.1 for details) succeeded to modify the Act with the Hazara Protected Forest Rules, fixing a mandate and guidelines for Joint Forest Management in the province.

#### 3.4.2 Current reform of the legal framework

Revising and modernizing the legal framework for provincial forestry has been one of the main tasks of the Forestry Sector Project (FSP; see 3.5 for details):

##### *Forest Policy 2001*

With the NWFP Forest Policy 2001, the new participatory approach in forest management finally got a legalized status. Participation of local communities, promotion of private sector investment, and recommendations for the revision of the forestry legislation are included. Illegal harvesting and the local need for fuelwood and construction timber are recognized as core problems. The policy for the first time not only addresses stocked areas, but also the management of rangelands, wastelands, watersheds and farm forestry. In this regard, the document can be seen as a trendsetter in Asia. (Suleri 2001, 14)

Nevertheless, the 'Sarhad Awami Forest Ittehad' (SAFI) criticized the new policy as a completely donor-driven document, being not more than a lip-service that would not

lead to a true change in the Forest Department's attitude towards local people. The Forestry Donor Co-ordination Group (2000, 19) stated: „Though the rights of resource users and right-holders and other forms of participation are mentioned in other parts of the policy document, it is not made clear what the implications are for the role [of the FD].“

#### *NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002*

The Ordinance, which has been promulgated on June 10, 2002, defines the institutional details for forestry in the province, following the guidelines given by the Forest Policy 2001. The Territorial Staff of the FD is declared as a 'force' and can now carry weapons on duty for self-defence, although only Range Officers are allowed to open fire. It is therefore expected that in future, the number of legal cases against forest officials will decrease. The document was warmly welcomed by the Territorial Staff for giving them more power in dealing with offenders. Interestingly, the Ordinance also provides a legal cover for the participatory approaches Village Land Use Planning and Joint Forest Management, and describes the staff's involvement in the work with local communities. For many observers, this is a serious contradiction that will result in a status quo of the present situation. This problem will also be addressed in this study.

The Ordinance replaces the former Forest Act 1927 – yet due to constitutional reasons, it had to be promulgated as an Ordinance. In its draft stage already, it was criticized from various parties for not satisfying in many ways, especially cementing the important role of the Forest Department. The Forestry Donor Co-ordination Group (2000, 18) stated: „The Forest Act in its present draft is not prescribing the new roles and tasks [for the FD] that are resulting from the policy focus on participation of the civil society in natural resource management. Hence, there is a central discrepancy between the forest policy document and the forest law in this most important aspect of the whole sector reform.“ Several civil society organizations unanimously rejected the Ordinance and held public protests against it. SAFI even announced to observe June 10 as a 'black day'.

### **3.5 Institutional reforms: the NWFP Forestry Sector Project (FSP)**

#### **3.5.1 Principles and objectives**

In 1996, the Forestry Sector Project (FSP) was started under a loan agreement between the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Pakistan (GoP), while the Dutch Government was financing the technical assistance components. The project should continue the various initiatives from the 1980s and 1990s (compare 3.3.1), by institutionalizing a participative approach for sustainable natural resource management within the FD that could be applied throughout the province. Besides implementing legal reforms (compare 3.4.2) and other tasks, FSP has mainly been working on the enhancement of the department's institutional capacity by following these principles and objectives (Heering 2002):

**FSP principles**

- Institutionalization of the participatory forestry approach in the working of the department
- Social organization and capacity building of local communities' organizations
- Creation of specialized units in important areas
- Increasing coordination and co-operation and promotion of team-based management in the department
- Decentralization of planning and authority
- Re-definition and re-orientation of the role of the FD towards advisory functions
- Addressing gender concerns in the department
- Improving the training and education system of the department

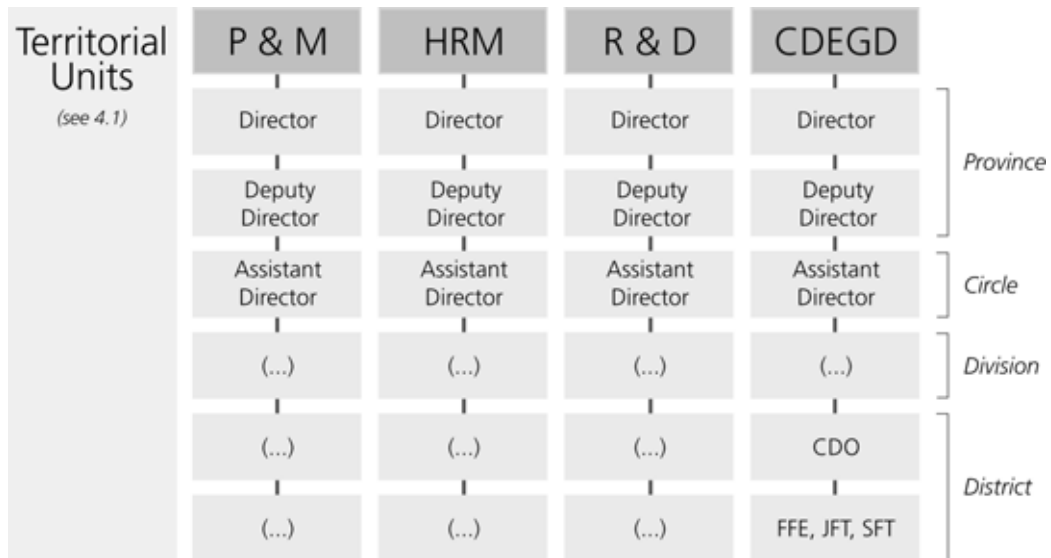
**3.5.2 Reorganization of the department**

In order to increase coordination and co-operation within the FD, to decentralize planning and authority and to enable the department to implement the new participatory approach, a new 'matrix-structure' for the department has been developed. Main characteristic of this structure is that the territorial units (Forest Guards, Foresters, Range Officers etc.) are now supplemented by four specialized directorates: Planning and Monitoring (P&M)<sup>6</sup>; Human Resource Management (HRM); Research and Development (R&D) and Community Development, Extension and Gender Development (CDEGD).

On the one hand, the matrix should allow a devolution of power within the department, following the principle of subsidiarity (decisions should be taken on the lowest level possible). Each representative of the territorial unit should get a counterpart on the same level in every directorate in order to strengthen the horizontal links within the department and to make the organizational structure less hierarchical. On the other hand, horizontal links should enable the FD to build teams on field level in order to work with the communities in an integrative manner for Village Land Use Planning (see section 5).

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<sup>6</sup> It was foreseen to change the existing Forest Management Centre (FMC) into this new directorate. However, at the time of research this has not happened.



**Fig. 3** The new matrix structure of the Forest Department (own graphic, based on: GoNWFP, Presentation on the Devolution and Re-Organization Plan 2000, 22)

Last but not least, the task of Farm Forestry has been devolved to the district level and is now under the control of the District Government. This measure included devolving staff, too, and allowed the FD to downsize its own staff. However, this ‘devolution’ has often been criticized, as it is widely known that Farm Forestry is not a key issue, so that the impression could be gained that the FD was glad ‘to get rid of’ that task (an impression, by the way, which has been given not only by local politicians but also by representatives of the FD) (compare 4.4.3).

### 3.5.3 Village Land Use Planning (VLUP)

A key tool for the interaction between the Forest Department and local people is Village Land Use Planning (VLUP), an approach which has been introduced in the province by the Social Forestry Project Malakand and Dir in the early 1990s (compare 3.3 for details). In order to understand the VLUP approach, it is crucial to know first the new managerial approach of the Forest Department:

“In order to ensure participation of communities according to social forestry principles in the planning and implementation process, NWFP is divided into three Resource Management Circles (RMC) and 29 Resource Management Units (RMUs), which are the strategic planning units for NRM (...) RMUs have further been sub-divided into 118 Resource Management Sub-Units (RMSs), covering about 5,000 villages, out of which about 3,000 may be considered suitable for significant NRM interventions. RMSs serve as planning units for which operation plans (OPs) are prepared under the broad guidelines of the strategic plans of RMUs. OPs provide the financial and organizational basis for undertaking village land use plans (VLUP) in selected villages within the RMS, while VLUPs serve as a tool for participatory planning and the organization of the village community and NRM interventions. OPs are prepared for each village using the methodology developed in

SFPMD i.e., through village development committees (VDCs), which are established during the VLUP process.”

*(FSP revised PC-1, 2001, cit. Suleri 2001, 14f)*

In other words, Village Land Use Planning should add the participatory element to forestry in the NWFP, by devolving certain decisions and powers to the village level. The methodology for VLUP is as follows: After a village has been selected by the FD, a small team consisting of representatives of the Territorial Staff and the CDEGD field staff inform the villagers in a large meeting about the objectives and opportunities of the approach. If the villagers agree to cooperate, they can elect two committees, a Village Development Committee (VDC) for men, and a Women Organization (WO) for women. A democratic electoral process should ensure that these committees represent all sections of a community. At the same time, data collection in the village begins jointly by FD staff and local people in order to identify major problems and potentials in the village. In several subsequent meetings, FD staff and the VDC/WO (separate meetings with female FD staff for the WO) develop a Village Land Use Plan which has to be presented to the whole community for approval. Besides basic information on the respective village, the plan provides the objectives agreed upon, the planned interventions, expected outcomes and the ways of implementation and monitoring. Some interventions can already start before the plan has been finalized, e.g. nurseries and plantations controlled by local people, trainings on bee-keeping or traditional birth assistance for women. Formal co-operation starts when an official agreement for the duration of five years between the FD and the VDC/WO has been signed.

Thus, Village Land Use Planning concentrates on community infrastructure interventions and NRM activities such as nurseries and plantations. Changes in the management of designated forests (such as Protected or Reserved Forests) are not foreseen.

#### **3.5.4 Current situation**

While FSP was fully working at the time of research, the situation changed drastically only a few weeks later. By the end of April 2003, the Dutch government decided to stop the grant given to FSP, arguing that the performance of DHV – the Dutch consultancy company in charge – was not satisfying. Thus, the whole technical assistance component of FSP got suspended, with immediate effect on local and international staff. After a phase of uncertainty about the continuation with another consultancy company, it was finally decided in June 2003 to pull out for good. Thus, only the ADB loan is granted (situation July 2003). VLUP has been continued in the field, even though most of the FSP offices in Peshawar have been closed down.



## 3.6 Joint Forest Management (JFM)

### 3.6.1 Joint Forest Management in the NWFP

Joint Forest Management foresees the involvement of local people in the management of designated forests. It was the German-funded Siran Forest Development Project which for the first time introduced JFM in the province (see 3.3). Two examples were started on a trial basis, one in Siran Forest Division, the other in Agror Tanawal Forest Division (both located in Hazara). When the SFDP closed down, both trials stopped for several years until the Swiss-funded Forest Management Centre Support Unit (FMC-SU) again started to implement JFM on a trial basis and continued to work with the same villages. Today, one of these villages is again actively involved in JFM<sup>7</sup>, while additional trials have been started in other divisions.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.6.2 The JFM approach and its experiences

With more or less the same methodologies as used by the VLUP approach, JFM seeks to involve local people in the management of designated forests (Protected, Reserved and Guzara Forests). "JFM is a form of Collaborative Forest Management where products, responsibilities, control and decision making authority is shared jointly between local users and the forest authority." (Khattak 2001, 3) The procedure in a village is quite similar to VLUP: after a village has been selected for JFM, local people are informed jointly by representatives of the FD Territorial Staff and FMC. If they agree to cooperate, forest areas, owners and users are identified, before a Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) is elected on democratic principles by the villagers. Only then, the preparation of a JFM Plan begins, while some first minor interventions can already start. After approval of the plan by the government, the JFMC and the FD sign an agreement for the implementation of the plan.

As the first initiatives for JFM date back to the early 1990s, the approach draws on some experience in the province, including a few success stories, such as a better permit procedure for construction timber in *Methal* (see 5.1.2 for details). Other advantages can be a more effective protection of forests from illicit cutting and a mutual control of local people and the FD Territorial Staff. In addition, the workload of the latter can decrease a lot. Experience has shown that the realization of JFM in Protected Forests is much more difficult than in Reserved Forests, as the structure of users and rightholders in PFs is much more complicated (see also 5.1).

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<sup>7</sup> *Methal*, which was examined for this study. JFM in *Fathebandi* has been stopped due to various reasons.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. *Bar Lalku* in Malakand Division, a village that was examined for this study.

### 3.6.3 Integration of JFM and VLUP

Considering that JFM and VLUP are based on the same principles, foreign advisers of FMC and FSP came to the conclusion that the two approaches should be merged. The only differences are with regard to the scope of the approach (JFM: designated forest area; VLUP: village area) and the degree of involvement of the FD in management (greater role in JFM than in VLUP) (Werter 2002, 4). Thus it was decided in 2002 that in future, a joint VLUP/JFM approach would be followed. It is foreseen that in each selected village, both a VLUP Committee and a JFM Committee are established, while the process of information of villagers and data collection has to be done once only.

The idea of a joint approach led to many misunderstandings both within the FMC and the FSP and was a matter of long and emotional discussions until early 2003. The fact that many in the FD did not agree to include local people in the management of designated forests (and thus rejected the idea of JFM) caused much delay. At the time of research, implementation of the joint approach was only in its very beginning.

## 3.7 Local Government

### 3.7.1 Background

After seizing power in Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf on October 17, 1999 presented seven 'main objectives' for his presidency. One of these objectives was called 'devolution of power to the grassroots level', which should strengthen democracy nation-wide on the three levels state, province, and district. In order to follow a bottom-up approach, reforms were started on the lowest level. A National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) was formed as a 'think tank'. In March 2000, the NRB presented the 'Local Government Plan 2000', a new framework for government structures on district and sub-district level. Local elections were announced for the same year and started in December 2000. The next year, the Local Government Ordinance 2001 was finalized so that on August 14, 2001 (Pakistan's Independence Day), all new Local Governments could take office.

### 3.7.2 Principles and structure

#### *Principles and Targets*

The reforms followed three basic principles which are: people-centered development (to gain back confidence in politics); rights- and responsibility-based approach (citizens' rights for development, participation and information); service orientation (the political and organisational culture of the government has to become service-oriented and accessible). Based on these principles, five "empowerment targets" were set (Local Government Plan 2000, 1).

### Empowerment targets by the Local Government Plan

- 1) Devolution of political power
- 2) Decentralization of administrative authority
- 3) Deconcentration of management functions
- 4) Diffusion of the power-authority nexus (i.e. fighting nepotism)
- 5) Distribution of resources (e.g. finances through taxes)

#### Structure

In order to clearly divide powers and responsibilities between different local levels, the Local Government has been (re)defined into three levels: the district level; the tehsil level (sub-unit of a district); and the union level (sub-unit of a tehsil, consisting of several villages). For each of these three levels, councils have been elected by Pakistani citizens during 2000/1. Seats have been reserved for women, minorities, and farmers on every level.

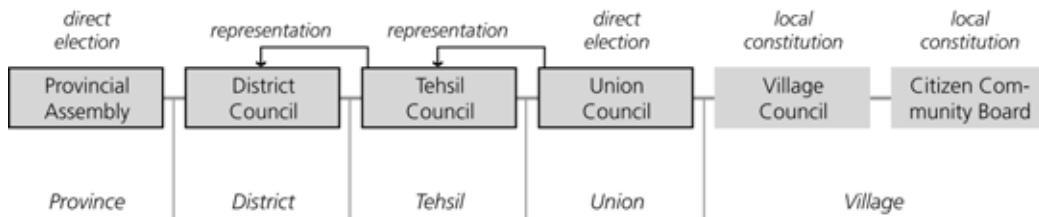


Fig. 4 General structure of the Local Government (own graphic)

The most power lies with the districts, whose administration is responsible for the issues of health, finance and planning, works and services, agriculture (under which also forestry should have been located; see 3.7.3), education, literacy, community development, information technology, revenue, magistracy, and law. Monitoring committees of the District Council supervise the work of the administration. Additionally, police functions have been transferred to the district level. The police is headed by a District Police Officer, who is elected by the Provincial Government.

Some tasks concerning finances, land use control, rural planning and municipal standards have been devolved to the Tehsil Administration which again is controlled by monitoring committees of the Tehsil Council. Union Governments have only limited administrative tasks, with each a secretary for municipal functions and community development. Below union level, two additional entities have been proposed by the Local Government Plan: Village Councils (VCs) and Citizen Community Boards (CCBs). Both of them should be in contact with their Union Council in order to tackle communal problems. While VCs are institutionalized, CCBs should be created through local initiative.

### 3.7.3 Current situation in the NWFP (as per June 2003)

Although elections were held and all the councils (except VCs and CCBs) and administrative bodies in the NWFP were established, real power has not yet been devolved from the Provincial to the District Government. This dilemma is very well illustrated by the forestry sector: initially it was planned that all forest-related issues should be devolved from provincial to district level, thus relocating the control over the Forest Department away from the Provincial Government. Yet as forestry is considered very important, the provincial level did not agree and successfully thwarted the plan. As a result, only farm forestry was relocated to the district level.

Similarly, Village Councils and Citizen Community Boards did not work either from the very beginning. None of the villages visited for this study so far established these political bodies (for more details, see 5.4).

The main reasons for disagreement between province and districts are the degree of control exercised by the province, and the distribution of funds between the two levels. While many District Nazims complained about constant intensive control and sabotage of their activities, the Provincial government blamed several Nazims for misusing their powers and embezzlement in funds. This finally led to a demonstrative collective resignation of all the NWFP District Nazims on June 1, 2003 (The News, June 2, 2003). Only after the personal intervention of President Musharraf and the assurance that their powers would not be abridged, the Nazims decided to withdraw their resignations on June 11, 2003.

## 4 Selected stakeholder groups

This section presents the four stakeholder groups which for this study have been considered as constituting the 'local level'. The context in which they act shall be described, although none of these groups should be understood as a homogenous entity. Relations between these stakeholder groups will be discussed in section 5.

### 4.1 Territorial Staff of the Forest Department

#### 4.1.1 Staff and their roles and functions

A consistent definition of who belongs to the 'Territorial Staff' (TS) or 'Field Staff' of the Forest Department does not exist. For this study, Range Officers (ROs), Foresters (Fs) and Forest Guards (FGs) are examined. Nevertheless, Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) have also been consulted and are mentioned where necessary.

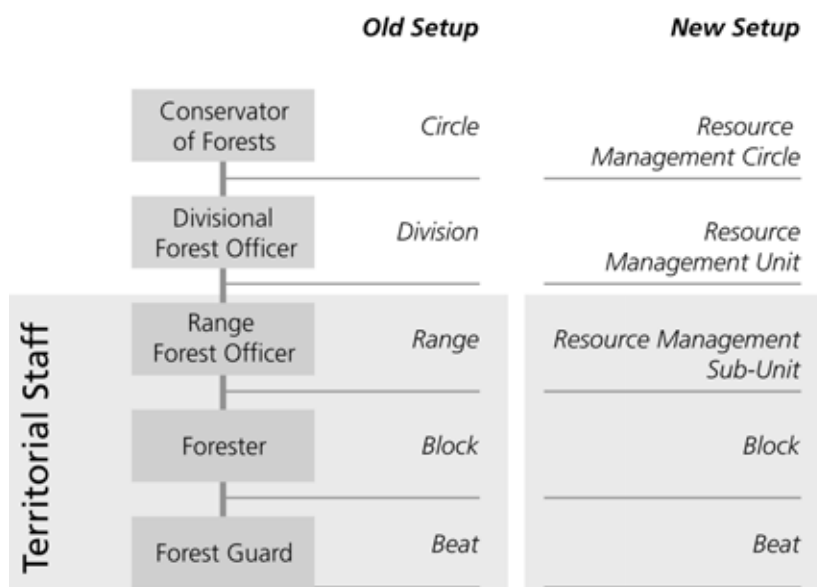


Fig.5 Staff hierarchy of a territorial unit of the Forest Department (own graphic)

The NWFP is organized in three territorial units (Malakand, Abbottabad, FATA/South), each headed by a Conservator of Forests (CF). In Malakand Circle, for instance, seven DFOs are superior to 22 ROs. Each Range consists of about two to five blocks; each block of three to six beats.

For each level of the hierarchy, roles and functions are clearly prescribed. Out of these, the most important ones are:

<b>Range Officer</b>	<p>„(...) acts as a conduit between the TS (Forest Guard and Forester) and the DFO and is responsible to supervise and control the field operations according to the instructions issued to him by the DFO.“ (VLUP Methal, 22)</p> <p>The Range Officer is in charge of a range that consists of two to five Blocks. Thus holding a key position within the department, he is provided with many powers. A Range Officer has the following <b>main tasks</b> to fulfil (prioritization as given by an interviewed RO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest protection (preventing illicit cutting/smuggling)</li> <li>• Fulfill the requirements of communities (handling applications for construction timber)</li> <li>• Meet communities (VDCs and/or JFMCs)</li> <li>• Supervise nurseries and soil conservation</li> <li>• Check harvesting operations</li> <li>• Prepare working plans</li> <li>• Co-ordinate and supervise subordinates and communicate orders to them</li> <li>• Deal with people coming to Range Quarter with many different requests</li> </ul>
<b>Forester and Forest Guard</b>	<p>„(...) are in charge and responsible for protection of forests against all sorts of illegal usages by the local population and also carry out other operations like fencing, planting etc.“ (VLUP Methal, 22)</p> <p>A Forester is in charge of one block (that is why he is also called Block Officer) consisting of three to six beats. Every beat is controlled by one Forest Guard. <b>Main duties</b> of Foresters and Forest Guards are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the forests by patrolling in the beat/block and on roadsides</li> <li>• Mark trees for harvesting</li> <li>• Work in the villages with VDCs resp. JFMCs (giving technical advise on forestry issues such as nurseries, plantations; attending Monthly Meetings of the committees)</li> <li>• Some Forest Guards are not in charge of a beat but are working on a road checkpost or in a mobile patrolling squad. Being transferred frequently within a block, most of them know all these different duties</li> </ul>

#### 4.1.2 Formal and informal assets: Range Officer

Based on field interviews, the following assets can be identified for the Territorial Staff.<sup>9</sup>

##### *Formal assets*

Having a lot of paperwork to deal with, the RO is equipped with a Range Quarter where he has an office and rooms to live. Many of these Range Quarters were built during colonial times and are sometimes in a rather poor condition. All visited Range Quarters have a telephone and electricity, but the remote ones have no gas, so that they have to heat by making fires. Electricity, gas and telephone bills have to be paid by the RO himself as well as the fuel for the car that every RO has at his disposal. Ranked on grade 16 in the governmental scale, a Range Officer earns between Rs. 5'000 and 12'000/month (depending on years on duty) with an annual increment of Rs. 295. For the case that no Range Quarter is available, an allowance of approx. Rs. 550/month for renting rooms is included in this amount.

Range Officers require at least a BSc in forestry, yet most of them have a MSc. Thus, ROs are often fluent in English. Being transferred every two or three years to another range, they usually do not originate from their respective range. A RO has to write Annual Confidential Reports (ACR) on his subordinates, judging their performance by following a given framework. In the same way, a RO is judged by his DFO.

##### *Informal assets*

Holding a key position in the FDs hierarchy, a RO has many possibilities to increase his salary by informal means (the following examples are as given by a RO himself). The RO is in charge of handing over the monthly salary to his subordinates (F, FG). Thus he can cut their salaries in order to pay the electricity, phone and gas bill and the fuel for his official car. Having the control over the finances for departmental nurseries and plantations, the RO can delay payments to locals or fake the accounts. In the harvesting process, the RO can make a deal with the contractor by marking more of the valuable species (not in accordance with the working plan). The contractor pays Rs. 1 to 2/cft to the RO for this service. Thus, one RO could earn additional Rs. 60'000 in just one month (before the ban and during its temporary lifting in 2001). Playing a key part in the permit procedure for local timber use (compare 5.1.2), the RO can force applicants to pay a certain amount for a permit.

#### 4.1.3 Formal and informal assets: Forester and Forest Guard

##### *Formal assets*

Besides an official cap and a salary of about Rs. 4500/month (depending on years on duty and with an annual increment of Rs. 80 for FGs; Rs. 120 for Fs), Foresters and Forest Guards have no facilities at all. They neither have a car for going to their

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<sup>9</sup> In order to distinguish between 'official' assets provided by the state and assets which result from professional activity and/or other circumstances, the terms 'formal' and 'informal' will be used.

respective areas nor do they get money to cover their expenses for public transportation. No accommodation is available for them in their respective areas. Wood or coal for heating the checkpoints has to be organized and paid by the Forest Guards in charge. Road Patrol Squads are equipped with a car by the FD, but not with the fuel required to run it. Both Fs and FGs are allowed to carry a gun while on duty (compare 4.1.4), but are not equipped with any weapon by the department. Another burden that mainly lasts on the lower Field Staff is the fact that they have to cover all expenses for a field visit of higher officials, such as accommodation and food. During a field visit it could be observed that some members of the provincial assembly (MPAs) together with their friends were using a forest resthouse for a private visit without paying one rupee, although consuming a big amount of firewood. In that case, the costs had to be covered by the chowkidar (watchman) of the lodge.

Foresters and Forest Guards are professionals, trained in a 6-months course at the Sarhad Forest School. Having no BSc or MSc in forestry, it is impossible for them to be promoted to the rank of a RO. Usually, Fs and FGs do not know English. But most of them are locals, living in their respective area and therefore knowing very well the social network – often much better than their superiors.

FGs and Fs can be transferred and appointed to certain duties (as well as be dismissed) by the DFO. However, in daily work they are subordinate to their RO, who also writes their ACR which is submitted to the DFO. The content of an ACR – as its name suggests – must not be communicated to the respective subordinate, unless it contains a serious complaint or an extraordinary praise.

#### *Informal assets*

Being the only responsible for a huge area such as a beat or block, Fs and especially FGs are in direct

***„There are hundred-thousands of ways for the field staff to earn more money.“***

*A Range Officer*

contact with local people every day. Far from any controlling authority (Range Quarter), it is upon them whether or not to report any offender according to the official procedure (a written report to the RO) or to settle the issue on the spot by *making a deal with the involved people* (compare 5.1). The same applies to FGs working on checkpoints.

A simple calculation illustrates that these low-level officials are very much dependent on such illegal ways of earning money: one FG interviewed has been working for more than 20 years for the department, now earning Rs. 4800/month. With ten children at home, this amount is hardly sufficient to nourish his family, not to speak of other expenses such as school materials, clothes etc.



#### 4.1.4 Legal framework and its interpretation

The current legal framework for the Territorial Staff's activities is the Forest Ordinance 2002, put in force in June 2002.<sup>10</sup>

All the ROs are very well informed about the legal framework and the rules and regulations, not only about its existence but also about its content and implications for field activities. Foresters and Forest Guards usually know which rules are in force, but differ widely in their interpretation if asked for details. During interviews in Hazara, two issues turned out to be understood in many different ways both by Foresters and Forest Guards.

##### *How to handle offenders / Collecting fines*

Asked for the options they have if catching offenders in the forest (e.g. somebody cutting a tree illegally), different Fs and FGs give many different answers. The variations are as follows:

- A FG can collect the fine on the spot, but he cannot issue a receipt because he has no receipt book. For this, the offender has to be brought to the RO.
- The fine can never be collected on the spot. Every time, a report has to be written and the offender has to be sent to the court.
- The offender has to be brought to the court only if he resists or is unable to pay the fine on the spot.
- Only Fs and ROs are allowed to collect the fine on the spot.
- Fs and FGs are allowed to arrest offenders.
- Fs and FGs are not allowed to arrest offenders. Only the police can do that.

One FG even gave two different interpretations of the same topic. The same variety can be observed in Hazara Division if asking Fs and FGs for the amount of fines for forest offences:

- Pine Rs. 150/cft; Deodar 400/cft; can depend on market value; doubled amount at nighttime
- Deodar 600/cft, other species 300/cft; doubled amount if caught for the second time
- For all species the same amount; 150/cft if unprepared, 400/cft if prepared; doubled at nighttime
- 150/cft if unprepared, 300/cft if prepared; doubled at nighttime
- Depending on: species, green or dry, prepared or unprepared, day or night

These statements lead to the impression that the rules on fining offenders are in fact shaped by the Field Staff themselves in a rather individual manner.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In Swat District, some confusion regarding the actual legal framework exists. One DFO was of the opinion that the Forest Ordinance 2002 has not been applied yet (February 2003), due to non-compatibility with the legal status of the FATA's belonging to the Malakand Division. Yet FSP representatives in Peshawar denied that.

*Use of weapons*

The same problem occurs if asking Hazara Field Staff about the regulations on how to use weapons on duty:

- Fs and FGs are allowed to carry a weapon on duty but can only use it for self-defence. Only a RO is allowed to open fire.
- Guns are not allowed for Fs and FGs.
- F and FG can use weapons in any case.
- F and FG can use weapons in self-defence and for stopping cars (shooting on tyres)

The first interpretation is the official one, given in the Forest Ordinance 2002: only ROs are allowed to open fire on offenders. This fact has been criticized by many officials, as in most cases, the Range Officer is not there when offenders are brought to bay. Apart from this, the new Ordinance is very much welcomed by the Field Staff, for giving them more power and authority in their daily work.

#### 4.1.5 Internal reform: awareness and criticism

*Awareness*

Foresters and Forest Guards are not informed at all about the ongoing reforms within the department. Most of them think that the reform only consists of the new participatory approach of Village Land Use Planning (VLUP). Only one Forester said that FSP contacted him once for his opinion on VLUP. Most of the staff only realized that things are changing when a Community Development Organizer (CDO) was appointed to their division. This might be true in most of the cases; but it also might serve as a welcomed excuse to avoid new tasks. Also Range Officers said that they have not been involved in designing the new setup of the department, but at least got more information than their subordinates on current and future changes.

*Criticism*

Many interviewed officials (even up to DFOs) think that FSP was too far from the field realities in

*„The FSP reform is rather a re-  
destruction than a reform.“  
A Range Officer*

order to be able to realize serious and practicable reforms. Not being informed in a proper way, many reject FSP in general as working in a top-down manner and being completely donor-driven.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Southwold (2002, 9f) comes to the same conclusion: „ (...) the implementation of their [Fs and FGs] discretionary powers do not simply reflect different contexts; but also their individual interpretations of the government policy which is reflected in their different constructions and practices. (...) The interpretation of the law is diverse among different Forest Guards, as is their implementation of the law.“

<sup>12</sup> Jan Willem Nibbering, a consultant at FSP, confirmed that it was an initial decision not to involve FGs, Fs and ROs in discussing the new setup. Their involvement started in 2003 only, by discussing their new job descriptions.

*Suggestions*

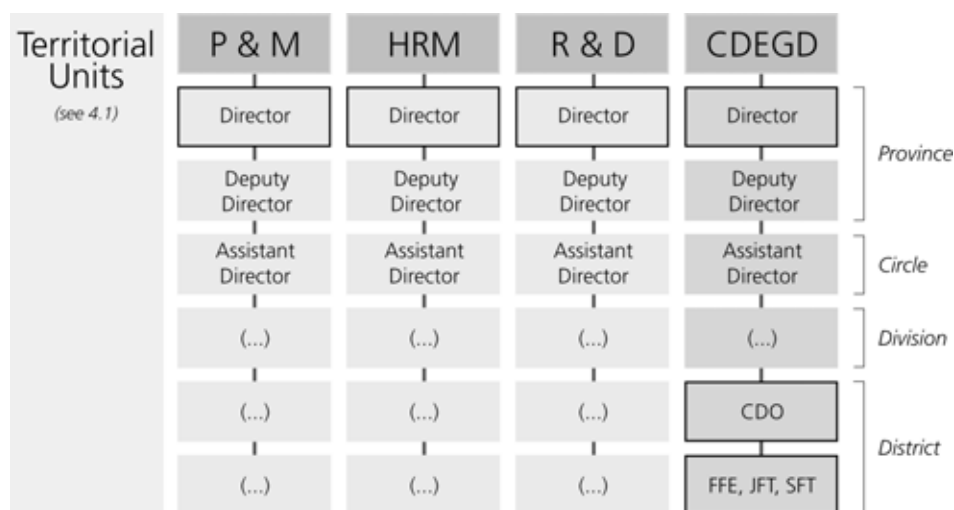
Asked for what they would like to change within the department, a majority of the interviewed staff mentioned that their facilities should be improved. The general opinion is that the department heavily increased the duties of the Territorial Staff, but at the same time decreased their facilities. The following issues have been mentioned several times, both in Swat and Hazara Division:

- More salary
- Motorbikes or cars for the Territorial Staff
- Mobile phones or walkie-talkies for better co-ordination among the TS
- Travel allowances for Fs and FGs if they use public transport on duty
- Uniforms for the TS to gain more authority
- Allowances to buy shoes (FGs walk a lot and have to buy new shoes frequently.)
- Coal for heating checkposts

Many Foresters and Forest Guards in Swat hoped for a soon approval of the new Forest Ordinance to gain more power and authority in their daily work (i.e. use of weapons and uniforms).<sup>13</sup>

## 4.2 CDEGD Staff

### 4.2.1 Roles and functions



**Fig.6** The CDEGD (Community Development, Extension and Gender directorate) and the other specialized directorates of the new FD setup. Only the black bordered officials were appointed and active at the time of research – this illustrates how isolated CDOs and FFEs are acting. (P&M: Planning and Monitoring; HRM: Institutional Development and Human Resource Management directorate; R&D: Research and Development). (own graphic, based on: GoNWFP, Presentation on the Devolution and Re-Organization Plan 2000, 22)

<sup>13</sup> Compare footnote No.10.

The CDEGD field staff consist of Community Development Organizers (CDO), both male and female; Female Forest Extensionists (FFE) as well as Junior and Senior Forest Technicians (JFT resp. SFT). The main tasks of the CDEGD field staff are as follows:

- Guidance and assistance to the Territorial Staff at all levels in issues of community development and extension.
- Awareness raising and motivation of rural communities for NRM.
- Guidance and assistance to communities in VLUP and JFM. CDO focus on social organization and participatory planning process.
- Maintain village organizations after their establishment, keep regular contact and continuously support their functioning (i.e. to attend the monthly meetings of the committees).
- Assist Territorial Staff in training of VDCs, WOs and JFMCs.
- Field co-ordination of community development, extension and gender & development activities with other agencies and organizations.
- CDOs should monitor whether a participatory approach is effectively followed by area management staff and communities in all steps of VLUP and JFM. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of VDCs, WOs, and JFMCs.
- Female CDOs with FFEs to ensure mechanisms of exchange and negotiation between VDCs and WOs.

This means that male CDOs with the support of Junior and/or Senior Forest Technicians (if available) are responsible to deal with the male population in a selected village and to establish a Village Development Committee (VDC), whereas female CDOs and/or FFEs deal with the female population and establish a Women Organization (WO). Once a committee is established, the follow-up including trainings and technical advice should be handed over to the Territorial Staff. The process of building a VDC in a village has been described by a CDO as follows:

„First, we establish contact with the people, explaining our participatory approach. This can be done by convincing influential people, who themselves explain it to the common people in the village. After they understand the idea and agree to participate, we start to build a VDC. This takes about one month, sometimes up to three months. When the VDC is established, the planning process starts. After a plan is approved and implementation starts, the CDO should attend the monthly meetings of the VDCs and proceed the minutes to the DFO. Thus, the CDO represents the VDC towards the Forest Department. If we work on VDC building and planning, we handle three villages at once during four months.“

Although being part of the CDEGD directorate, CDOs and FFEs are under direct control of their respective Divisional Forest Officer in daily work.

#### 4.2.2 Formal and informal assets

The assets available to CDEGD field staff vary considerably in different areas covered by this study. Thus, no general picture can be drawn. Some CDOs (female as well as male) have a car at their disposal whenever they go for field visits, while others should

have one theoretically but hardly can get it on time because other people from the Territorial Staff are using it on other purpose. Some CDOs and FFEs have an own office, equipped with computers and all the required infrastructure, while others do not even have a chair to sit on.

All interviewed CDOs (female and male) have a MSc, most of them in social sciences, but also in economy or international relations. FFEs usually attended school up to 12th class and were prepared for the job in a 3-months training. Obviously, not all of them have been selected according to their professional qualifications; in some cases it was reported that they only got the job due to private relations to higher officials in the Forest Department. This often results in a weak motivation and performance. Yet the opposite could be observed, too: one female CDO left her former job as a teacher to start working for the FD, although the salary was less than before.

Ranked on grade 16, CDOs have an initial income of about Rs. 4'300/month, FFEs about Rs. 2'500/month. Most of them have a contract with the CDEGD directorate in Peshawar. Such contracts are often valid for a very short period of time only, sometimes not more than 3 months. By the end of this period or at the end of the year, the DFO and/or the ROs of the respective area write an Annual Confidential Report (ACR) on the CDO. This report goes to the CDEGD directorate and has a major influence on the renewal of the contract. Some CDOs report on their own subordinates, e.g. on SFTs, JFTs or drivers. All CDEGD field staff report on a regular basis and directly to the directorate in Peshawar on their working progress. Apart from that, meetings with the CDEGD director in Peshawar take place frequently.

No general statement can be made on the payment of TA/DA. Some CDOs say to get their allowances whenever they go for field visits or for workshops in Peshawar, while others have to pay all expenses on their own, even bus trips to and accommodation in Peshawar when attending meetings or workshops.

It thus seems that most of the assets available to the CDEGD staff in the field very much depends on their direct superiors, especially on their DFO. This fact is discussed in detail in section 5.2.

Last but not least, CDOs and FFEs are often 'greenhorns' in the department. This implies that they do not know the internal 'rules of the game' as well as the members of the Territorial Staff do. This and the fact that they are not directly involved in jobs related to harvesting and transportation of timber makes it more or less impossible for them to use informal networks in order to increase their salaries – although they earn about the same or even less than the Territorial Staff.

### 4.2.3 Internal reform: awareness and criticism

#### *Awareness*

Being part of a recently created branch of the FD, the CDEGD staff are generally better informed about the ongoing reforms than the Territorial Staff. Most of them have been informed in initial trainings about the current changes in the department. Because their professional future very much depends on the success of the FSP reform, they generally show more interest towards the new participatory approach than the Territorial Staff.

#### *Criticism*

As CDEGD staff in different areas are subject to very different working conditions, it is not possible to give a general impression. Some of them are happy with their current status, while others are not at all. However, a majority criticised the abovementioned short-term contracts, resulting in ongoing uncertainty and weakening their motivation. Most of the CDOs say that the area they are responsible for is too big for one person only, so that they are not able to spend sufficient time on all the selected villages. Some also complained about the low salaries, which were below the minimum for a grade 16-official. The repeated criticism about the involvement and co-operation of the Territorial Staff in VLUP/JFM is discussed in section 5.2. It can be said that nearly all of the issues mentioned by the CDEGD staff relate to internal problems within the FD itself.

#### *Suggestions*

The desire to get a permanent status equal to the Territorial Staff has been expressed several times. CDEGD staff with few infrastructural assets asked for better support by their superiors or – even more desired – by their own directorate. Several respondents expect that their situation will improve as soon as the CDEGD assistant directors would be appointed to their respective division (to the CF's office).

## 4.3 Local people

Because it is not the aim of this study to analyse the situation of local residents, this overview on their environmental and socio-economical setting and their use of forest resources is rather superficial. Nevertheless, some basic informations are required in order to make the subsequent section on interactions between stakeholder groups better understandable.

### 4.3.1 Environmental setting: resources and their condition

In general, forests close to the villages are in a rather bad condition and depleting at an alarming rate. Especially in well accessible areas close to settlements, where in accordance with maps of the FD dense forest should be found, often not a single tree is left. Most of the remaining trees are heavily lopped, while young trees are very rare. Most of the well-stocked forest remains in inaccessible and remote locations only, where cutting and extracting of trees is too difficult and costly.

Possible causes for the condition of forests as seen by different stakeholders will be discussed in section 5.1. However, it can be said that a vast majority of local people agrees to the fact that the forests are decreasing very quickly and that the current situation is much worse than ten years ago. *Methal* (Hazara) is the only exception, where due to the work of the local Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC), most of the villagers observed an improvement of forest resources.

#### 4.3.2 Socio-economic setting: livelihood assets

##### *Physical assets*

In most of the villages visited, access roads are unmetalled, in a bad condition or not available at all (e.g. *Methal*). None of the villages has a pipe gas connection, electricity is very rare and usually available to a few households only. There are no phone connections. Most of the villages have primary and middle schools, but it could be observed that some of them do not run smoothly. In some cases, girls' schools had to be closed due to the non-availability of teachers. None of the villages visited had any dispensary or other health care facilities – only in *Dabargai*, medicaments can be bought.

##### *Financial assets*

Main income for most of the people are *remittances* of relatives working in Lahore, Karachi or abroad. Agricultural production mainly serves for subsistence and is often not enough to be sold on markets. Illegal cutting of trees for sale is widespread both in Protected and Reserved Forests. Timber and firewood is illegally sold on local markets (compare 5.1.3). *Protected forests*: Before the ban on timber harvesting has been imposed, royalties paid by the FD have been a very important (but irregular) income for owners of shares in the forest. *Reserved forest*: No legal income from reserved forests is possible.

##### *Natural assets*

The condition of forests has been described above. The steep terrain and the usually harsh climatic conditions limit agricultural production. Main crops are wheat and maize. Rangeland is used for grazing. Water resources seem to decrease as most of the people say that rain- and snowfall became very rare during the last ten years.

##### *Human assets*

Population of the study villages varies between 1'600 and 6'300.<sup>14</sup> Local job opportunities are very rare. As a result, many households have at least one male member in labour migration (in Lahore, Karachi or abroad). With 35,4%, even the official literacy rate is quite low – and even less for women (compare 3.1.3). The health status has not been investigated.

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<sup>14</sup> Numbers drawn from the respective Village Land Use Plans.

*Social assets*

This is a too wide topic to be discussed in a few words only. At least it can be said that the communities – in contrast to some statements found in VLUPs – cannot be understood as homogenous entities. Rich and poor families, landowners and tenants, educated and uneducated people all have different interests and possibilities and follow different livelihood strategies. Several internal conflicts on resource use could be observed, some of them discussed in section 5.1. The *jirga* system exists in all study villages, although it lost some of its influence on conflict resolution. More and more conflicts are solved through court decision, or – if about natural resources – by the VDC or JFMC.

#### 4.3.3 Forest use and ownership of shares

Due to the different legal status of Protected (PF) and Reserved Forest (RF), ownership status and the use of forest resources differ widely in Swat and Hazara. Nevertheless, some facts are valid for both regions: The average per capita need of firewood has been calculated as 1.5m<sup>3</sup>/year (Khattak 1995, 11f). The same author estimates for *Methal* (Hazara) that every year 4% of all houses are under construction or renovation, and that for constructing a new house, about 30 m<sup>3</sup> of standing trees volume are required (Khattak 1995, 12). It can be assumed that these figures are more or less the same for other villages both in Hazara and Swat.

Another common phenomenon is illegal cutting and timber smuggling. While cutting of trees and transportation is mainly done by locals, wire-pullers and employers are often wealthy and influential people living in regional centres. Many locals and FD officials identify timber smuggling as one of the main threats to forests (see section 5.1 for details). Forests are also used as grazing grounds for livestock (mainly sheeps and goats, few cattles). In many forests, medical herbs and plants are collected, a job mainly done by women.

In Protected Forest, some sections of the communities have substantial rights to use the forest. They receive between 60 and 80% from the sale of produce (so-called *royalties*, which have not been paid anymore since the ban was imposed). The forests, however, are *de jure* owned by the state. Thus, both owners and non-owners of shares are only allowed to cut a tree for construction with a permit issued by the FD. Reserved Forests are exclusive property of the state and bear only minor concessions to the local people. The option of permits for cutting a tree does not exist. Guzara Forests are legally owned by landowners, but the right of management lies with the FD. The owners have to apply for a permit if they want to cut a tree in their forest. Non-owners have no right for permits, so that their only way to get one is to apply indirectly through an owner.

#### 4.3.4 Main priorities for development

Main problems identified by local people concentrate on infrastructure, although men and women set different priorities for development. For men, improvement of roads is by far the most important issue in all the villages visited, followed by a better drinking



water supply. Local job opportunities, better schools, electricity and gas supply, tree plantations and nurseries plus health care units have also been mentioned several times. For women, income generation and trainings on women's activities such as livestock management, animal husbandry and traditional birth attendance, as well as a better drinking water supply and better education for girls are the topmost priorities (VLUPs *Methal, Dabargai, Chel* and *Shungli*).

#### 4.3.5 Awareness and acceptance of local committees

The activities of local committees and their co-operation with the FD will be discussed in section 5.1. However, it seems interesting to what extent these committees are known and accepted within the villages. For this, non-members from different social groups were consulted.

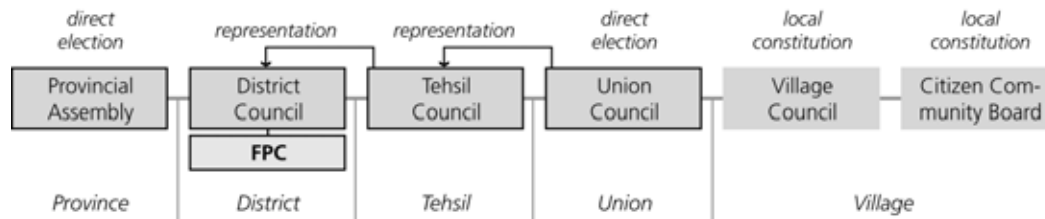
Generally speaking, most local residents know about the existence of a VDC. They are aware that some kind of committee has been constituted, and many people also know that the committee is somehow related to forest protection. Many put their hopes in the work of that committee, especially to protect the forests from offenders, to allow a better permit procedure but also to improve the village's general infrastructure. Yet most of these non-members did not get any benefits from the process so far. Many said that their committee did not show much activity yet. Only few people completely disown the local committee, condemning it as a „band of thieves“ (a villager in *Shungli, Hazara*) that would only work for its own benefit.

In *Methal*, where a JFMC has already been working for some years, people are mostly satisfied with their committee's achievements. The permit procedure, in which the committee plays a crucial part, brought real benefits to several people. All respondents know the committee and some of its activities. Just one man had the impression that the JFMC would work for rich people only, but he also admitted that in the end, it achieved more than the Local Government. Another man who has been a JFMC member some years ago complained about the lack of transparency in the committee's financial issues, but was generally satisfied, too. He added that jealousy was a common phenomenon in villages such as *Methal* – as soon as somebody would start to do something successfully, others would become suspicious and would try to hinder him wherever possible.

### 4.4 Local Government

#### 4.4.1 Forest Protection Committees (FPCs)

Members of the two District Councils of *Mingora* (Swat) and *Mansehra* (Hazara) were interviewed. With one exception, all respondents are members of a Forest Protection Committee on district level.



**Fig. 7** Structure of the Local Government. Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) exist on district level only (own graphic)

Whereas Union and Tehsil Councils have limited influence only and thus can each build a few internal committees only, District Councils form numerous committees to supervise the activities of the District Administration. Despite forestry was not devolved to the District Government (compare 4.4.2), both District Councils visited established a so called 'Forest Protection Committee'.

#### *Constitution and members' background*

There seems to be no specific internal rule on how a committee on district level must be constituted and how it should work. This would at least explain the differences between the two committees examined: the FPC *Mingora* consists of seven members from different rural, forested areas within *Mingora* District. Among them, some own shares in the forest in their respective area, while others are non-owners. In *Manshera* District, the FPC consists of five members, all of them owners of *Guzara* Forests. There are no female members in both of the committees.

#### *Activities*

The story of the FPC *Manshera* is quickly told: the committee has been constituted in 2002 but never started to work (for its future plans on co-operation with the FD, see 5.3). The FPC *Mingora* turned out to be more active: the committee holds regular meetings with representatives of the Forest Department in order to discuss current problems and to forward suggestions from the local to higher levels of the FD. One committee member in *Mingora* said that he could already mediate between the FD and his village when a conflict about plantations arose. The committee understands itself as sort of a mediator between the FD and local people (for the local people's view on that, see 5.5).

#### *Funds*

None of the two committees examined has any funds available for implementing own activities. Both FPCs can only discuss, advise and mediate.

#### *Perception of environment*

All interviewed FPC members complained about severe deforestation in their respective areas. Population increase and lack of energy resources in remote villages were mentioned repeatedly as possible causes. Harsh criticism of the Forest Department's previous harvesting practices was raised as well as the complaint that FD plantations hardly ever showed any result. All FPC members were of the opinion that

the ban on timber harvesting declared in 1993 has had an adverse effect, leading to increased illicit cutting both by local people and the 'timber mafia'.

#### **4.4.2 Farm forestry**

Under the Local Government Plan 2000, only farm forestry on private agricultural land and raising of private nurseries has been relocated (or 'devolved') from provincial to district level. Important ('hard') issues such as harvesting, marking, preparation of plans and plantations remained with the FD on provincial level. It is expected that these relocated 'soft issues' rather bring costs than any income for the District Government. It can therefore not surprise that the District Councils hardly show any initiative regarding farm forestry. In *Mansehra* District, nothing happened since the setup of the new Local Government. In *Mingora* District, one plantation could be realized during 2002 with a budget of Rs. 50'000. For 2003, the same amount will be available for further plantations and/or nurseries. However, council members in *Mingora* admitted that a true strategy for farm forestry was still missing, although one Range Officer, one Forester and three Forest Guards have been appointed to work with the district administration's Agricultural Director.

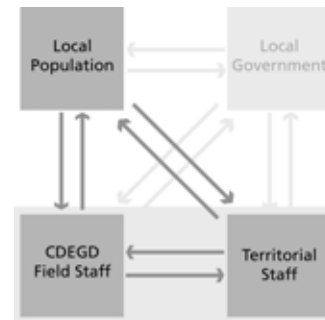
Several council members expressed their hope that some day, all the tasks of the FD would be relocated to the district level – together with other 'rich' departments now still with the provincial level. All in all, they believe in the new setup of the Local Government and accept that its implementation will take a long time.

## 5 Relations between selected stakeholders

This section examines the relations and interactions between the four stakeholder groups. The framework which has been introduced in section 1 serves as an 'optical guideline' in order to make this section better understandable.

### 5.1 Local people – Territorial Staff and CDEGD Field Staff

Because the relations between local people and the Territorial Staff are manifold and rather complex, not all their details can be discussed. The situations in Protected Forests (Swat), Reserved and Guzara Forests (Hazara) will be distinguished whenever major differences occur. First, 'traditional' links such as prosecution of offenders and the permit procedure is discussed and only afterwards, 'new' links such as Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) and/or Joint Forest Management are presented.<sup>15</sup>



#### 5.1.1 Perception of legal situation and forest ownership

##### *Protected Forests (Swat)*

The fact that in Protected Forests, some people own shares in the forest (compare 4.3) while others do not makes that situation more complex. Many shareholders perceive the forest in which they hold shares as their own property, thus not accepting the legal ownership by the state. The impression could be gained that most of them know the legal definition but do not care. Non-owners or users usually do not think about the legal status of forests – if they want to use forest products, they have to deal with the respective shareholder, not the FD. The Territorial Staff of the FD generally know very well the legal status of the Protected Forests.

##### *Reserved and Guzara Forests (Hazara)*

Even in villages with various types of forests (e.g. *Shungli* village), local residents seem to be more aware of the legal situation. Guzara owners usually know very well what belongs to them and what kind of rights they enjoy in their own forests, while non-owners are aware of the state's ownership of Reserved Forests. The same is valid for the Territorial Staff.

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<sup>15</sup> The following terms will be used: 'owners' means owners of shares in the forest, while 'users' describes non-owners or tenants.

### 5.1.2 Permit procedure and quotas

#### *Protected Forests (Swat) : local people*

Whether or not people use legal ways to apply for a timber harvesting permit differs widely between the study villages. In *Bar Lalku*, none of the owners ever applied, arguing that this was their own forest (compare above) and that only outsiders would need a permit. They also said that the whole permit procedure would take too long and would be too expensive (up to Rs. 8000). One respondent mentioned an agreement with the government, allowing local people to cut as much as they wanted, while another said to pay about Rs. 200 to the FG if felling a tree. In fine, nobody knew exactly about the local quota. Some said that 380 trees/year would be allotted to *Bar Lalku*, another mentioned 300 trees/y for Bar and Kuz Lalku together. A third respondent never heard of any quota. Users usually do not care for applications and permits – they directly deal with the owners.

In *Dabargai*, however, people still use the legal way of applications. Both owners and users apply individually for a permit in the beginning of every year. They hand in their applications at the RO's office. If a permit is refused, they contact their VDC for a second chance. Then the VDC would discuss every application and contact the RO again. Nevertheless, people were not satisfied with the way their applications are handled. The process would be too lengthy, usually taking two to five months. It also happened that a permit was issued but afterwards, no FG came to mark the tree. Several people mentioned that it was difficult to find the RO and that they had to visit the Range quarter several times until they could hand over their application. Opinions on the quota differed from 15 trees/y to one tree per capita each year. Most respondents said that the quota was not sufficient.

#### *Protected Forests (Swat) : Territorial Staff*

Forest Guards and the Forester of Lalku Block interpreted the local quota differently. 360 trees/y would be allotted to people residing outside the village, while only six trees a year could be used by local residents. The Forester in charge admitted that this quota was too small and that the demand would be much more, resulting in widespread illicit cutting. He thus advocated an increase of the quota.

The RO responsible for *Dabargai* said that three quotas existed: A local quota (20 trees/y) for local use through applications; a central quota for emergent needs (e.g. when a house burns down); plus a concessional rate for people living in other areas devoid of trees. He said that the permit procedure was the same as it had been under the Wali, and that the applications would be handled as quick as possible. Usually, the procedure would take three to six months. A Forester mentioned that nowadays, people would get smaller trees than in the past. Because of that, the local quota would not be sufficient anymore for house construction.

*Reserved Forests (Hazara) : local people*

In most areas with Protected Forests, people still have no right to apply for permits. For them, the only legal way to get timber is by purchasing it on local markets. In *Methal*, however, a permit procedure was introduced in which the local JFMC plays a crucial part: all applications can be handed over to the committee that checks together with the Territorial Staff whether or not the applicant is in urgent need. A majority of respondents in *Methal* was satisfied with this procedure, even accepting the payment of Rs. 200 to 300/permit to the committee's joint account. The process would take two weeks up to a maximum of five months. Many respondents reported that before the committee was constituted, the TS had to be bribed for every tree with up to Rs. 2'000.

However, a few people opposed this view. Some blamed the JFMC for preferring influential people, not forwarding poor people's applications in the same manner. A member of the JFMC also said that the co-operation of the FD got worse, issuing two to three permits per year only, far less than in past years. The same respondent said that the FD again started to take money (Rs. 2'000 to 3'000) for each permit.

*Reserved Forests (Hazara) : Territorial Staff*

The generally good impression of the permit procedure was confirmed by the Range Officer in charge and his subordinates. The RO only complained that not everybody would pay the Rs. 200 to the joint account yet, as was agreed. According to him, the permit procedure would take 20 to 30 days. Nobody would have to pay the FD for a permit.

*Guzara Forests (Hazara) : local people*

Several Guzara owners have been interviewed in *Shungli* village. All of them said to hand over their applications to the RO in Shergarh but complained that with three to six months, the whole process would take too much time. Getting a permit or not would often be a gamble. Most of the owners said that they had to pay the TS all the time, well aware of the fact that this was not an official fee but a bribe. Amounts would vary from Rs. 1'000 to 4'000/tree. One respondent said to give the money to a FG who himself would distribute it among his colleagues. Yet other owners never had to pay anything for a permit. Users, not allowed to apply directly, usually ask an owner to apply for them. Yet some could directly pay a FG in order to get timber. Another respondent admitted never to wait with cutting a tree until a permit was issued.

*Guzara Forests (Hazara) Territorial Staff*

The RO in charge assured that no money has to be paid for any permit. Usually, the process would take about one month. He also confirmed the (legal) practice of users applying through owners. A Forester was convinced that all people would apply for permits and thus, no illicit cutting would occur. Not all of his colleagues shared this opinion (compare 5.1.3).

### 5.1.3 Forest protection by the Territorial Staff

#### *Local people*

Besides the permit procedure, one of the main interferences between local people and the TS takes place in the forest itself. Many respondents already made some experiences when they were caught by the TS while cutting trees illegally. Their descriptions of these incidents give a – subjective – impression of ‘field realities’. In *Bar Lalku* (Swat), some respondents said that the FG would never hinder them cutting timber for private use, while others had to pay in any case. Usually, people paid the FG or F on the spot, what means that no legal case followed the incident. Others paid in timber instead in cash, usually between one third and one sixth of the felled amount. Several people said that a good private relationship with the TS would help to reduce fines. One man even stated that he already cut some trees illegally by order of a FG.

In other villages such as *Dabargai* and *Chel* (Swat), the situation seems to be different. Here, nobody ever paid any fine on the spot, but only after a legal report to the FD and the court was made. This might be true if considering the already important role of the VDC *Dabargai* in the permit procedure. However, the fact that the neighbouring village of *Chel* is widely known as being full of timber smugglers (up to 50%, as one villager estimated) raises some doubts. The situation in *Shungli* (Hazara) is very similar to that in *Bar Lalku*. Several respondents – both Guzara owners and users – said that they had to bribe the TS with amounts between Rs. 2’000 and 6’000. Again, the importance of a personal, good relationship with FG and F was pointed out.

Only in *Methal* (Hazara), the situation seems to be different. Here, the local JFMC initiated own controls, sending small patrols to the forests. FGs or Fs join these patrols from time to time. Thus, no irregularities have been reported with regard to the punishment of offenders.

Representatives of the committee said that the size of the fine was depending on the wealth of the

***„It is better to bribe. If you don’t, they [the TS] take even more by imposing legal fines.“***  
*A villager of Shungli*

offender, but was usually Rs. 100/cft. The whole amount would flow into the joint account of the committee and the FD. Confiscated timber would be given to villagers in need, with the consent of the RO.

In all study locations, people reported that the Territorial Staff were present in the forests all the time. Especially FGs would patrol every day. Nevertheless (with the abovementioned exception of *Methal*), the general opinion is that the TS do not follow the law when catching offenders. The opinion that especially FGs and Fs are heavily involved in timber smuggling is widespread. In *Methal*, the general opinion on the

Territorial Staff's work was good. Few people only criticized that FGs and Fs would not regularly join the committee's patrols.

Several villagers both in Swat and Hazara said that they already reported offenders to the RO, thus trying to support the TS in fulfilling their job. Yet these hints had not always been followed by the concerned ROs.

#### *Territorial Staff*

Asked whether an effective control in their respective areas would be possible, most of the TS said that only the control of organized smuggler groups was a problem (for smuggling, see 5.1.4). Some officials mentioned the fact that the rural population was increasing every day, while the number of FGs and Fs remained the same, or would even decrease. The TS in charge of *Methal* said to join the local committee's patrols irregularly. Several staff members confirmed that some people would report to them on offenders, saying that such hints were always taken serious. The Territorial Staff's perception of how fines are collected and when offenders should be reported has been given under 4.1.4. The conclusions drawn there seem to confirm the villagers' reports of an arbitrary way of conflict resolution between local people and the Forest Department on field level.

### **5.1.4 Reasons for deforestation as seen by villagers and TS**

#### *Local people*

Except in *Methal*, most respondents agreed that the condition of forests worsened during the last ten years. Notably owners of shares in Protected Forests and Guzara owners complained a heavy deforestation, while users described the situation a bit less dramatically.<sup>16</sup> Local consumption of fuelwood and construction timber as well as grazing in the forest were mentioned as main reasons. Surprisingly, many people did not blame the FD for insufficient controls but said that local control mechanisms were missing. The ban on timber harvesting was identified as the main reason for an increase in illicit cutting: Many said to have lost their jobs when legal harvesting stopped in their area. Smuggling, carried out by locals and outsiders jointly in a well organized network and often supported by the TS, was another main reason put forward. In Hazara, below average precipitation during the last ten years was mentioned more than once. Last but not least, nearly every respondent complained a lack of alternate energy resources such as gas or electricity.

Generally, there is a common understanding of some basic problems: many people realize very well the interrelation between poverty and deforestation, and often

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<sup>16</sup> One interpretation for that could be that owners suffer a direct financial loss if ,their' forest disappears, as no royalties will be paid anymore when no trees are left to be harvested.



formulate ideas on how the situation could be improved. The Territorial Staff are heavily criticized as supporting illegal cutting by corruption and involvement in smuggling, but often local weaknesses are admitted as well. Many people realize that without local control mechanisms, a true protection would be impossible.

In *Methal*, most respondents reported an improvement of forest resources over the last few years. Many observed more young trees and undergrowth. All interviewed people attributed this to the effectiveness of the local JFMC with regular controls and honest working practices. Illicit cutting seems to have nearly disappeared, with only a few locals still ignoring the committee's authority. According to most respondents, smuggling completely disappeared in *Methal*.

#### *Territorial Staff*

Most of the FGs, Fs and ROs agreed that the forests are decreasing at an alarming rate.<sup>17</sup> Only in *Methal* village, the majority of the TS was satisfied with the latest development, being a result of a functioning Joint Forest Management as they said.

Yet asked for reasons for the heavy deforestation, opinions on different hierarchical levels differed widely, especially between field- and DFO-level. In the opinion of Forest Guards, Foresters and Range Officers, the main (and often only) cause of deforestation was the local consumption of fuelwood and construction timber, caused by an increasing population, widespread poverty and the non-availability of alternate energy sources. Timber smuggling was often mentioned as secondary reason. One RO only located organizational weaknesses within the FD.

DFOs identified several reasons for deforestation: While all of them agreed with the TS on population increase and poverty as major threats, they additionally stressed timber smuggling as a very serious problem. Moreover, several DFOs criticized the former management practices of the FD (i.e. the contractor-system for timber harvesting) and the fact that even nowadays, members of the TS would not follow the law they should enforce. All of them agreed that the ban on timber harvesting had a devastating effect on the forests by stimulating illegal cutting.

*„In the past, smugglers just had eggs and donkeys.  
Nowadays, they have kalashnikovs and cars.“  
A Forester*

Many FGs, Fs and ROs complained the numerous new roads and tracks that were built in their respective areas during the last few years, saying that effective controls would thus become more difficult. They stressed the fact that smuggling was often organized by rich and influential people not living in the villages but in regional centres, often

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<sup>17</sup> Only in the *Bar Lalku* area, all the Territorial Staff said that the forest was more dense than before, mainly thanks to a change of attitude in the villages – an perception that differs diametrically from the villagers' statements.

members of the Local Government. Thus, smuggling was well organized, and local people hired as henchmen would be very well equipped with pickup cars and weapons. Most of the smuggling activities would take place at night or on Friday, when most officials attend *juma* prayer. Numerous incidents were reported when FD officials tried in vain to stop cars, often risking their own lives. Smugglers often would not shrink from beating FGs and Fs, pushing FD cars off the road or even shooting at everybody who was in their way. Thus, one FG had recently been killed on duty, while another interviewed Forester was shot in the knee two years ago.

#### 5.1.5 Co-operation on VLUP / JFM

As the situations in the four study villages differ widely, they are discussed separately. General observations are given at the end of the section.

##### *Bar Lalku (Swat) : VDC members<sup>18</sup>*

Constituted in September 2002, the VDC was still very young at the time of research. This is why no activities have taken place so far, except monthly meetings in which all committee members and interested non-members participate. It was reported that the constitution of the committee took place in a participatory way, and the committee members expressed their satisfaction with the procedure. Many different social groups are represented. A Village Land Use Plan (VLUP) has been finalized by the FD in November 2002. However, it seems that the committee was not involved in the planning process, as none of the committee members did know the plan. Nevertheless, they hope for the FD „to solve all our problems“. Asked for their own priorities, they stressed the need for road improvement and other infrastructural interventions.

The committee was satisfied with the support from the Range Officer and the social organizer working for FMC. Both of them would attend every VDC monthly meeting, unlike the FGs and the F. It cannot surprise that the young committee did not yet develop a ‚common sense‘ about the future co-operation with the FD. While some argued that the committee would not survive without any guidance and financial support from the department, others insisted that the VDC would be able to protect the forest on its own, saying that any co-operation with the FD would be impossible due to its corruption. Some suggested to work with the RO and with FMC only. All in all, the VDC members did not observe any change in the Territorial Staff's attitude so far.

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<sup>18</sup> Bar Lalku has been selected by FMC as a pilot village for Joint Forest Management (JFM) activities. Although no Joint Forest Management Committee has been constituted at the time of research, the two approaches run integrated and the social organizer from FMC is working closely with the existing VDC.

*Bar Lalku (Swat) : Territorial and CDEGD Staff*

Statements of the Forest Guards and the Forester in charge turned out to be very contradictory. While some of them said that the forest condition improved very much due to the good work of local committees, others complained that local people would not show any interest to protect the forest and to co-operate with the FD. However, they admitted to dislike the idea of sharing power and influence with local committees. The social organizer working for FMC reported that when the F and his FGs realized that VLUP would threaten their power, they never again attended any committee meetings. Even the CDO in charge would not support the process. After being involved in the initial phase of the process he did not show up anymore although FMC contacted him several times. A possible reason for that might be that he was overburdened with work in other villages, or that the presence of both the VLUP and JFM approach created some misunderstandings (and welcomed excuses).

*Dabargai (Swat) : VDC members*

The committee was constituted in November 2001. According to members, the constitution process was participatory, so that many different social groups are represented in the committee. Each one training on bee-keeping and agricultural extension has taken place since, in which three local residents participated. Two nurseries and one plantation could be established, the latter guarded by a local watchman. Grazing could be restricted in certain areas. As described under 5.1.2, the VDC started to mediate in the permit procedure. All these activities were implemented before the VLUP was finalized, which was still under approval at the time of research. No committee member knew what exactly would be included in the plan. Yet it seemed that the committee's only contribution which found its way into the plan was the selection of areas for controlled grazing. Future plans of the committee were road construction and more plantations.

The committee showed satisfaction with the FD's support in the process, saying that Fs and FGs visited the village frequently when nurseries and plantations were started. Yet many complained that initially, the FD made promises which it was not able to fulfil now. While many started to realize that the FD would set other priorities, a majority hoped for a soon improvement of the link road and of other infrastructure.

*Dabargai (Swat) : Territorial and CDEGD Staff*

The FG in charge of advising the committee on plantations and nurseries said to visit the village frequently. He complained that the VDC would not be united and would not work properly. A Forester was of the same opinion, blaming local people for their indifference towards forest protection and for their mistrust in the department. The RO in charge did not blame the people but identified structural problems which would hinder the approach's success: local residents would not perceive the forest as their own property yet, thus not realizing the problem of deforestation. Without proper

education, local people would never be able to understand the importance of the process, he said.

The CDO in charge complained that the Territorial Staff would not support him in the village (compare 5.2). The TS would even hinder him to attend monthly meetings and would delay payments to the committee for nurseries.<sup>19</sup> The overall impression is that the VLUP process in *Dabargai* works very slowly and that the TS do not do more than the absolute minimum.

*Shungli (Hazara) : VDC members*

The VDC *Shungli* has been constituted in May 2002. Since then, some local residents could participate in a bee-keeping training, and monthly meetings have been held. Plans for plantations and nurseries have not been realized yet. The committee members were satisfied with the presence of the TS in their meetings, although the RO would attend meetings only when the DFO came on a visit. The committee now would have the possibility to force FD officials to fulfil their duties, by reporting to their superiors or by seeking the help of the nearby stationed Frontier Constabulary (a detachment of the Pakistan Army). VDC members knew that their VLUP was under approval at the time of research, saying that they could contribute by suggesting areas for plantations and regeneration and by proposing specific trainings.

Many members expressed their hope that the process would help to create new job opportunities (e.g. guards for plantations) and to reduce illicit cutting in the area. Others hoped for the soon realization of a water supply scheme. Asked whether the Territorial Staff's attitude towards local people changed in the course of the planning process, nobody observed a true improvement.

*Shungli (Hazara) : Territorial and CDEGD Staff*

Most Fs and FGs said to stay in close contact with local people, by attending all committee meetings and discussing their concerns whenever possible. Some officials said to be glad that the new approach would henceforth release pressure from their shoulders. The RO in charge observed that local residents would start to realize the importance of forest protection and would give more and more valuable inputs. He was convinced that it was wise to increase their involvement in forestry: „Local people have many benefits from the forest – so why should they not face the problems related to it, too?“

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<sup>19</sup> Suleri (2001, 25) reports similar situations, quoting a VDC member (from another village): „In order to get the payment for the cost of nursery raised in 1999, I am chasing RO, as well as the DFO concerned for the last two years but they just treat me as I am asking for alms.“

The CDO in charge said that local people had been fully involved during the whole planning process, by preparing land use maps, discussing main points and selecting activities out of a given 'intervention package' prepared by the department. He was happy with the people's contribution, saying that they would start to realize the benefits which would result for them. Thus, none of the villagers seriously resisted the approach. The only concern he expressed was that the committee might get disappointed about the lack of co-operation by the TS.

The following story illustrates very well that some officials already found ways to preserve their influence: a Forest Guard supported the village in which he lives in constituting a VDC and a WO (not *Shungli*, but in the same range). The result is, that his sister is now secretary of the WO, his cousin president of the VDC.

Participatory observation, however, revealed that the co-operation in *Shungli* does not work as well as all the involved people said. The attempt to participate in the committee's monthly meeting in January 2003 failed when – apart from one Forest Guard – neither committee members nor representatives of the FD (including the CDO in charge) were present at the fixed time. It thus became apparent that a communication gap exists both within the village and the department, as well as between these two parties.

*Methal (Hazara) : JFMC members*

Due to the fact that the VDC in *Methal* was only recently constituted, the main focus of research was put on the work of the Joint Forest Management Committee. JFM was initiated in *Methal* by the German-funded Siran Forest Development Project (SFDP) in 1995. The committee was inactive for some time when the financial support by SFDP stopped with the closing of the project. Later on, it was revived by FMC, so that at the time of research, it consisted of 24 members. The committee now contributes to forest protection by patrolling regularly in two compartments, and plays a decisive part in the permit procedure (compare 5.1.2). Two nurseries and plantations have been raised. Committee members were very satisfied with their achievements, especially with the permit procedure and the improved protection of their forests. According to a majority of respondents, the attitude of the Territorial Staff towards local people improved since the constitution of the JFMC, although their presence in monthly meetings was not regular. The DFO would visit them every third month. A minority complained that the TS would continue to oppose the committee, and that outside of the compartments controlled by the JFMC, bribing and illicit cutting would continue. Regarding the JFMC's concentration on forests, committee members expressed their hope that the recently created VDC would work for the improvement of infrastructure.

*Methal (Hazara) : Territorial and CDEGD Staff*

The Range Officer in charge agreed that the TS changed their attitude towards local people during the last few years. He was of the opinion that 75% of the whole TS already adapted to the new situation and thus were considering local people as partners rather than opponents. He said that he would attend all monthly meetings in *Methal*, while his subordinates would regularly join the committee's patrols. The permit procedure would run smoothly and therefore, much pressure had been released from the TS. However, some local residents would still be dishonest and would not support the process. The Forester in charge of *Methal* even blamed the committee for concealing illicit cutting from the FD.

All these observations lead to the conclusion that in all study villages, a lot has been achieved within a short period of time. According to respondents, local committees were constituted in a participative manner. Nurseries and plantations were raised and are maintained in most of the places. Even before Village Land Use Plans were approved, areas for controlled grazing have already been selected and are now guarded. Monthly meetings, in which rather open discussions can take place, are held. Some people slowly trust in the TS again (mostly in ROs). In general, the process seems to make people more open towards external actors (compare 5.6.1). Among the TS, a slow yet certain change of mind can be observed. Whilst the majority of FGs, Fs and also some ROs still think in 'old terms', some officials seem to arrange themselves with the new circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, general problems can be identified which seem to originate from structural shortcomings of the reform process, within the department and the local communities. Even at an early stage already, many committee members were indignant about the department's unwillingness and/or inability to fulfil all the promises made in the beginning of the VLUP process. To convince people for VLUP, FD officials often promised better roads, water supply schemes etc. – things that the FD neither has the knowledge nor the funds for. During the planning phase, many people realized that the department's priority was on forests rather than on infrastructure – while for the communities, it is often the other way round.

While people could constitute their VDCs themselves, their participation in the plan preparation seemed to be very weak. When local people can but choose interventions from a pre-defined 'intervention package' and suggest areas for controlled

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<sup>20</sup> Suleri (2001, 23) states, that „(...) community members said that they were able to feel a positive change in the attitudes of FD officials, reveals that things are getting better and through capacity building of FD territorial staff true spirit of social forestry may be achieved.“

grazing/plantations, participation is reduced to mere consultation. The fact that all the Village Land Use Plans from different villages and areas look surprisingly equal confirms the impression that these plans are not very much locally specific. It thus cannot surprise that some people complained about unprofitable trainings.<sup>21</sup>

Another problem (that may get solved in the course of time) is that many VDCs could not find a ‚common sense‘ yet. Different committee members often have completely different objectives, also with regard to a future co-operation with the FD. The contention that in the villages, „a good social cohesion exists“ (VLUP Shungli, 5), thus seems rather naive.

Likewise, FD officials working with the communities are far from building a ‚team‘. While the TS usually blame local people for any setback, the CDEGD field staff put the blame on Foresters and Forest Guards. This might be the reason for (or the result of) the observed communication gap between the CDEGD field staff and the TS on the one hand, and the department and local people on the other hand. Under these circumstances, the probability that disappointed committees break off their co-operation with the FD becomes rather high.

#### 5.1.6 Co-operation on Women Organizations (WOs)

Information about the Women Organizations‘ performance could only be gained through female CDOs and FFEs. According to them, co-operation proved satisfactory. The fact that WO are constituted only after a VDC has been formed would make it much easier for women to organize themselves, as one female CDO said. Local men would be much more open towards a women organization after having realized the benefits of a VDC. Thus, the resistance among local men would be manageable. In a few areas only, men would still resist any involvement of women in development work, accusing the FD of being too modern, thus confronting religion.

One FFE working in *Mansehra* reported that most women could join a WO only with the consent of their husbands. She furthermore mentioned that the priorities identified by a WO often diverged from the priorities identified by the male VDC. Although the aims of both parties are recorded in a common VLUP, none of the plans consulted has yet solved or even addressed this contradiction (compare also 4.3.4).

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<sup>21</sup> „Most of the VDC members in the project village had attended trainings in the nursery raising, while WO members had attended trainings in livestock management. These training were imparted in 1999. However, the majority of the trainees admitted that they never applied any of the skills learnt in those trainings in practical life“ (Suleri, 2001, 25).

## 5.2 Territorial Staff – CDEGD Staff

### 5.2.1 *De jure* co-operation on VLUP/JFM

The most important tasks which the TS and the CDEGD field staff should jointly implement are as follows:

Territorial Staff	CDEGD Staff
<p><b>All TS</b> keep regular contact with VDCs and WOs. Generally, the TS has to give more input than the CDEGD staff.</p> <p>The <b>DFO</b> helps by awareness raising and motivation of communities, especially in the beginning of the process.</p> <p>The <b>RO</b> coordinates field activities for VLUP, he should provide technical extension in the beginning of the process and monitor its implementation.</p> <p><b>Fs</b> and <b>FGs</b> motivate communities, provide technical extension and create linkages for VDCs and WOs with other partners.</p>	<p><b>CDOs and FEEs</b> raise awareness and motivate communities for VLUP. Later on they provide guidance and assistance to communities in VLUP, focussing on social organization and participatory planning. They assist the TS in their work with communities, providing guidance and assistance at all levels in issues of community development and extension.</p> <p><b>CDOs</b> coordinate field activities, monitor and evaluate their performance jointly with the TS and identify training needs.</p> <p><b>Female CDOs</b> have to give more input as there is no female TS.</p>

In other words: TS and CDEGD staff should jointly motivate and convince communities to constitute committees, providing them social (CDEGD staff) and technical support (TS). In order to slowly hand over the process to the TS after a committee is established, the CDEGD staff also have to provide guidance and assistance at all levels of the TS in issues of community development and extension. FSP documents mention explicitly that the Territorial Staff should give more input than the CDEGD staff.

### 5.2.2 *De facto* co-operation on VLUP/JFM

As the whole VLUP process is still very young, one cannot expect a perfect functioning of the abovelisted co-operation. Most of the village committees have been constituted in 2002 only, so that in most areas, the participatory approach is still in an initial stage. Nevertheless, some problems seem to be of structural nature.

In practice, CDEGD field staff and TS are working in small teams in the villages. In Swat, such a team consists of each one Range Officer (RO), Community Development Organizer (CDO), Forester and Forest Guard. Female teams consist of one female CDO and one or several FFEs. Thus, female CDOs and FFEs are not directly involved with



the TS, but co-operate with their male CDEGD colleagues (CDOs). This is why mainly male CDOs could comment the team-work with the Territorial Staff.

#### *CDEGD Field Staff*

The general impression is that the CDEGD field staff are not satisfied with the Territorial Staff's performance. Several CDOs complained that FD officials on different levels would not fulfil their duties. It seems that in many cases, Foresters and Forest Guards only unwillingly accompany the CDOs to committee meetings. The complaint was heard that Fs and FGs would have a completely different style of communication with local

people, giving authoritarian orders rather than trying to facilitate the people's own contributions. Some CDEGD staff fear that people will thus become

***„We are asked to initiate a social change within the Territorial Staff, but that is impossible. It is already tricky enough to start a social change within the communities.“***

*A CDO*

disappointed. One CDO said that it was theoretically his task to change the Territorial Staff's attitude towards local people, by training them 'on the job' (compare 5.2.1): „We are asked to initiate a social change within the Territorial Staff, but that is impossible. It is already tricky enough to start a social change within the communities.“ Some CDOs therefore recommend more trainings for the TS, which would prepare them for the new participatory approach.

Some cases were reported in which ROs or DFOs delayed payments to VDCs. Money that should have been transferred to a committee for seedlings (for nurseries maintained by a committee according to the Village Land Use Plan) was withheld for a while. According to another informant, this happened with intent to demonstrate the Territorial Staff's authority over the VLUP process.

Own observation revealed that the TS do not always fulfil their task to attend the committees' monthly meetings. In several VDC meetings attended both in Swat and Hazara, representatives of the TS did not show up at all – and if, mostly after the meeting was over. The usual excuse was an urgent mission against offenders or a fire in a remote forest area. As the case may be – repeated complaints of CDEGD staff about similar incidents confirms the impression that the Territorial Staff often try to avoid their new tasks.

#### *Territorial Staff*

The Territorial Staff describe the situation completely different. All Forest Guards and Foresters involved in VLUP said to attend the VDCs' monthly meetings regularly. Most of them described their role as giving technical advise on nurseries and plantations. Some also said to have supported the preparation of the Village Land Use Plan or the constitution of the VDC.

Generally, FGs and Fs admitted that these new tasks were an additional burden for them but that this would not cause further problems. Many said to be positive about the

new participatory approach and that they liked to do the job. If something was not running well in a village, they usually blamed the local people for dishonesty and greed (compare also 5.1).

Range Officers usually located more and other problems. Although they said to attend meetings whenever possible, they admitted that in the co-operation of CDOs and TS, not everything was going well. Several ROs pointed out that many FGs and Fs would fear to lose their influence over their respective area if VLUP would run well. One RO said that „nobody of the Territorial Staff will ever willingly share his power. Especially the Forest Guards were real ‚kings‘ of their areas.“ The same officer argued that most of the FGs and Fs did not yet realize that the new participatory approach would really affect them.

*„We are not mentally free to do that job.“  
A Range Officer*

According to him, this was caused by a poor information policy by the FSP, and a widespread indifference among the TS. Another RO pointed out that under the current system (in which CDOs are supervised by ROs or DFOs), CDOs were not able to bring their knowledge and talents to the process. Concerning the attendance of VDC meetings, all ROs agreed that in future, when more committees will be constituted, it would be impossible for the TS to attend every single meeting. Some suggested to hire other, specialized staff for the implementation of VLUP.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.2.3 Mutual perception and acceptance

To a major extent, the abovementioned problems might result from a communication gap between the CDEGD staff and the TS. Especially male CDOs felt dismissed by the TS (compare 2.2). They assumed that this was due to their short-term contracts and their inexperience in ‘technical’ forestry. Some felt wronged by the fact that a Range Officer, although ranked in the same grade, would write their ACR. In their daily work, they perceived most of the TS as acting too authoritative towards local people. All these complaints can also be seen as a result of a certain frustration.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Suleri (2001, 23) concludes that „one expects an active involvement of the territorial staff in project activities. However, it did not seem to be the case in project villages visited for this study. One can argue that it was partly due to the fact that training programmes for FD field staff were delayed due to various organizational reasons and the evolutionary process of institutional reform would not complete overnight.“

<sup>23</sup> Suleri (2001, 24): „The project staff [CDEGD staff] deputed in the DFO offices, on the other hand, tends to compare itself with the staff serving in DFFW [Forest Department] for years and get frustrated over the social status and influence the FD staff enjoys.“

Actually, many Forest Guards and Foresters *do* perceive the CDEGD staff as short-term partners. Many seem to think that the ‘FSP-approach’ (as many of them call VLUP) would consist of nurseries and plantations only. This is especially the case where VLUP was initiated recently. CDOs are thus often perceived as outsiders to the Forest Department.<sup>24</sup>

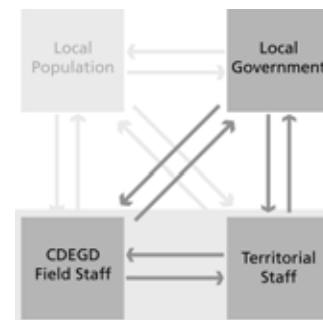
#### 5.2.4 Situation of female CDOs and Female Forest Extensionists

As mentioned earlier, female CDOs and Female Forest Extensionists (FFE) usually work in a team on their own, thus not directly co-operating with the TS. It does therefore not surprise that they did not complain about the behaviour of the TS. One FFE said that the only resistance she experienced was from within her own family. All female staff interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the support they received from their DFOs, both in terms of finances and infrastructure. Due to the fact that all female respondents have been appointed recently, a comparison with the situation as it was two years ago (when the first female CDOs were appointed) cannot be made.

However, some respondents reported that among the TS, female CDOs and FFEs were not accepted very well. Many staff members would be of the opinion that the Forest Department should not hire women at all.

### 5.3 Forest Department – Local Government

As Farm Forestry is not a key issue (compare 3.7.3), the respective activities of the Local Government and the Forest Department have not been investigated. Yet other forms of co-operation turned out to be more essential for the decentralization process.



#### 5.3.1 Co-operation of FD with Forest Protection Committees on district level

##### *Mingora District*

As already mentioned (4.4), the District Council *Mingora* constituted a Forest Protection Committee (FPC), consisting of seven members. The committee holds regular meetings with representatives of the Forest Department, i.e. the DFO *Mingora* and Range Officers from *Matta* and *Mingora* Range. Both parties reported fruitful discussions but complained a lack of decision-making power. All they could do was to

<sup>24</sup> Suleri (2001, 24) states that the TS is „not accepting the new entrants of project staff as their integrated part and consider them (the project field staff) ,too young and inexperienced to tackle the issues of sustainable forestry management’.”

give suggestions to higher levels of the Forest Department. Both the FPC and the DFO have neither enough decision-making power nor funds to implement anything. The DFO nonetheless stressed the necessity of such meetings, although „some committee members only follow their personal goals and are not honest “, as another official said.

#### *Mansehra District*

The situation in *Mansehra* District is completely different. Although a FPC exists on district level, not a single meeting between FD and committee was held so far. Both parties know each other but leave it to the other side to initiate the co-operation. A FPC representative said that the committee would be ready to co-operate, „if they [the FD] contact us.“ On the department’s side, the motivation to establish contact is close to zero, as is its trust in the committee’s honesty. FD officials said that some committee members would be well-known for being deeply involved in timber smuggling.

### **5.3.2 Other (informal) interaction**

On levels below district level, formal co-operation between the FD and the Local Government does not exist. However, in the daily work of the Territorial Staff informal interactions can take place.

#### *Local élites pressurizing Territorial Staff*

It is not unusual that influential people pressurize the TS for various reasons. Several cases have been reported when Range Officers were put under pressure by – often rather wealthy and thus influential – local politicians to release arrested offenders, or to hand out confiscated weapons and other material. A Range Officer in Hazara complained that „the local councillors come all the time to ask for a reduction of fines.“ This seems all the more credible when considering that local élites are often said to be involved in timber smuggling. Apart from that, they may try to please their voters by helping them out of troubles.

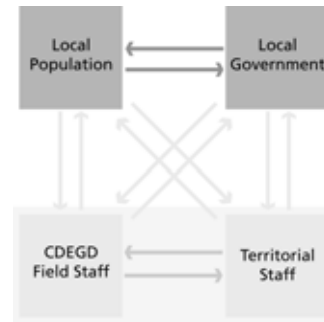
#### *Union Councillors in local committees*

Other interaction takes place through VDCs. In some villages, Union Councillors are members of the Village Development Committee, too. This can result in positive synergies for the committee’s work, yet can also lead to internal (within the committee; see 5.5) and external conflicts (with the Territorial Staff). However, no such conflict has been reported so far.

## 5.4 Local people – Local Government

### 5.4.1 Activities of Local Government on village level

The Local Government Plan 2000 intended to link the Local Government's lowest level – the Union Councils – with the communities through so-called Village Councils (VCs) and Citizen Community Boards (CCBs):



„The Village Council will facilitate citizen participation to solve their problems. [It] will act as the most direct interface between the Citizen Community Boards and local public officials. The Village Councils will undertake their functions in close co-ordination with the monitoring committees and citizen community boards on local matters and micro-development projects.

(...) A local elected body, or its relevant committee may facilitate the creation of Citizen Community Boards, or the citizens themselves may create them. (...) As voluntary organisations the Citizen Community Boards will organise themselves, determine their own form of functioning, and choose their own leaders through the mechanisms they see fit.“

*Local Government Plan (2000, 15))*

It has been learnt that in practice, none of these bodies exists. Both in Swat and Hazara, not a single study village constituted such an organization, neither Village Council nor Citizen Community Board. Union Nazims of *Mingora* District admitted that no committees on village level were constituted so far. On union level, however, a few committees exist in which non-councillors are represented, too. The Union Nazim of *Kattai* (Hazara) said that he constituted one Citizen Community Board within his union by selecting himself three to four representatives from every village plus a secretary and a president. He said that he got an order from the Provincial Government to do so but never got any funds to maintain the CCB. The way he described the formation of the Board did not give the impression of a voluntary organisation.

Asked how Union Councillors would learn about local people's problems, the same respondent said that suppliants would contact him every now and then. The fact that he was available „twenty-four hours a day“ in his area would make the Local Government very responsive towards local people. However, during research for this study, the attempt to meet this Nazim in his village failed several times due to his non-availability. The interview was finally conducted in *Abbottabad*, where he owns several houses.

#### 5.4.2 Perception of Local Government by local people

Asked for their satisfaction with the Local Government, local residents usually express their deep disappointment. A vast majority of people from many different social classes both in Swat and Hazara said that most of their hopes for change with the new system were not fulfilled. Most people expected investments in infrastructure, e.g. road levelling or water supply, while only in *Methal* (Hazara), the Union Council made an allowance for repairing a school building. People's speculations about why nothing happens are manifold:

- „The Union Councillors have neither time nor interest to care for people in remote villages.“
- „The Council consists of rich people only, so they do not know our problems and take all the money for themselves.“
- „Every councillor only supports his own village.“
- „They are busy with their own internal conflicts.“
- „The local councils are good, but they do not get the money from higher levels such as the Provincial or National Government.“
- „They do not have enough authority to do something.“

In general, the Local Government is blamed for apathy, lack of interest, nepotism and corruption. In *Shungli* (Hazara) the story goes that the Union Council drew up a budget of Rs. 18 lakhs for levelling a road, from which only 2 lakhs were used effectively, while the rest disappeared in various pockets. In *Methal*, people said that the Union Council had been inactive for a long time due to an internal conflict about the latest election procedure of the Union Nazim (a case that was submitted to court). When the conflict was finally settled, the provincial elections started so that the councillors were again busy with issues other than local development.

The system as a whole was also criticised. Higher levels of the government were blamed for not giving

**„Our Union Nazim has neither authority nor money. He has only stamps in his pockets.“**  
A villager in Chel, Swat

enough authority and funds to lower levels. In Swat, old people often compared the current situation with the time when the area was still under the rule of the *Wali* (until 1969). They all wished that the *Wali* would return, as everything was much better under his rule, as they said. Many people expressed their hopes for a change initiated by the newly elected Provincial Government (the elections took place in October 2002). With the MMA (*Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal*, a coalition of religious parties) in power, many now expect a fight against corruption and nepotism. Nevertheless, some people already seemed disillusioned when after the elections, none of the elected candidates came back to their villages to realize all the promises made during the election campaign.

Generally, most people do not hope for help from the government anymore. They realized that the Local Government has neither sufficient funds nor the will to use available funds in a proper way. As a result, many villagers said that they would trust much more in non-governmental organizations (see 5.5).

#### 5.4.3 Union Councillors as members of local committees

The only true – but not institutionalized – link between village committees and the Local Government exists if a councillor is elected as a VDC member. In *Bar Lalku* (Swat), a Union Councillor was also member of the local VDC. However, this did not have any negative (e.g. domination) or positive (e.g. fund raising) effect so far, supposedly due to the fact that the committee was very young at the time of research. The female CDO in *Mingora* reported of female councillors being on a WO. Yet she also said that up to now, no formal links between these organizations and the local councils could be created. In *Dabargai* (Swat), the VDC president's brother is a Union Councillor – what turned out to be a hindering factor in discussions. When asked for their satisfaction with the Local Government, other committee members did not dare to express their dissatisfaction in the presence of their president – sign of a certain domination over the committee by the president.

### 5.5 NGOs – FD / local people / Local Government

Although this study did not concentrate on the non-governmental organizations' role in NWFP forest management, some insights in their role on local level and their co-operation with the Forest Department could be gained.

#### 5.5.1 NGOs – local people : activities of NGOs in villages

Only in *Shungli* (Hazara), NGOs seem to play an active part. The 'Sarhad Rural Support Programme' (SRSP) helped to build a water supply scheme in some hamlets of the village. Besides that, the organization offers loans with a small interest rate and planned various trainings. In general, local residents expressed their satisfaction with the organization's activities.

Another organization active in *Shungli* is 'Young Generation', located in *Oghi*, which is about 25 km northeast of *Shungli*. It is a new, locally funded organization that cares for the poor and sick people, providing them medical treatment.

Residents of *Shungli* were very happy with these two organizations – at least happier than with the Local Government. „They [the NGOs] have less money than the Local Government, but they are much more effective“, a respondent said. In the other study villages, no organization was active at the time of research. In *Dabargai* (Swat), KIDP (see 3.3) funded the construction of a school back in 1997. The example from *Shungli*

shows that even in remote villages, NGOs seem to be more accepted and welcomed than a few years ago.<sup>25</sup>

### 5.5.2 Involvement of NGOs in field activities of the Forest Department

Although the Forest Department started to involve more and more NGOs in the preparation of Operational Plans both in Swat and Hazara, external involvement on field level (i.e. in the implementation of the new participatory approach) remained close to zero. A female CDO in *Mingora* reported how she sent several young women from different WOs to computer trainings offered by a local NGO.<sup>26</sup> Since the training was free of cost, all the department had to do was to organize a pick-and-drop service for the participants. The same CDO intended to involve more NGOs in future, while her male colleagues in *Mingora* did not seek the co-operation with any NGO so far. All they did was blaming several organizations for being interested in urban areas only, and said that the people in charge would prefer to sit in *Mingora*.

In Hazara, both in Siran and Agror Tanawal Division, no involvement of NGOs in the VLUP process was observed. However, the CDO in charge of *Shungli* assured to seek their co-operation soon, especially with those who had already been active in the respective villages, e.g. SRSP and 'Young Generation'.

### 5.5.3 Co-operation between the Local Government and NGOs

The relation between the state and civil society organizations is a very delicate one in the NWFP. Statements of the new provincial government give the impression that NGOs are considered as a threat rather than as partners. It thus should not surprise that a co-operation between the Local Government and NGOs in Swat does not exist at all. When asked for reasons, District Councillors said that in Swat, no NGOs specialized on rural areas would be available. In Hazara, some co-operation takes place, yet not related to forest management. The Union Nazim of *Kattai* (Hazara) was contacted by the Sarhad Rural Support Project (SRSP) to jointly improve infrastructure in the area. Besides that, 'Sungi' seems to be in contact with the District Council, yet details on this co-operation are not known.

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<sup>25</sup> Suleri (2001, 29) argues that, „another positive contribution of VDCs/WOs is the acceptance of CBOs and NGOs in the rural areas of NWFP. (...) with the introduction of social forestry approach, the community members are much open to external interventions (...)“.

<sup>26</sup> The NGO's abbreviation is PVDP.



## 6 Analysis

This section presents the core problems identified by the study. The same stakeholder groups as presented in sections 4 and 5 are listed again.

### 6.1 Territorial Staff of the Forest Department

#### *Gap between defined and practiced role*

Obviously, the *de facto* role of Forest Guards, Foresters and Range Officers differs widely from their *de jure* role as defined in the legal framework for the Territorial Staff. Depending on the situation, existing laws are interpreted differently, modified or even ignored. Examples discussed in this study (e.g. on fining offenders or the use of weapons) showed that this was not only due to a non- or misunderstanding of the rules, but is also done willingly, in order to gain personal – often financial – benefits. However, discussion pointed out that difficult personal and professional circumstances often force FD officials to ignore the law in order to earn their livelihoods or, if threatened by criminals, to save their lives. It is an open secret that corruption and nepotism are widespread within the FD. Yet being realistic, such phenomena must be seen as unavoidable concomitants of the current field realities. Forest Guards and Foresters receive very low salaries even after many years on duty, while their job offers them numerous informal opportunities of earning additional income. When control mechanisms for the TS hardly exist or do not work properly (if the superior is involved in informal activities, too, or is too weak to enforce the law), cheating becomes very easy.

#### *More tasks, less facilities / lack of incentives for VLUP / JFM*

Many FD officials on field level complain that in recent years, their duties increased very much while facilities and salaries remained the same. Besides their traditional duties to secure forest protection, the additional task of VLUP asks too much of many FD officials, so that their motivation to give a real input to the VLUP approach is very weak. Thus, their rejection of the new participatory approach seems based on two reasons:

First, many (but by far not all) FGs, Fs and also ROs feel threatened by the new approach. They soon realized that if the communities are given more responsibility and control over forest-related issues, this would impair their own powers and put them under a certain control by the local population. Translated into practice, this would mean that opportunities to bypass the law and thus earn additional income would be reduced.

Second, few incentives only were offered by the FD to motivate the TS for the new approach. Trainings in social organization for Fs and FGs certainly help to improve the VLUP approach, yet might hardly substitute any lost opportunity of informal earning.

In addition, the FD did not find a way yet to appreciate committed staff. Whether or not a Forester fulfills his job seriously, has no impact on his salary, as he is assessed by the traditional ‚Annual Confidential Report‘, which hardly takes into account personal commitment going beyond prescribed duties. A Range Officer described the situation as follows: „Those who are doing more, get less. Those who are doing less, get more.“

*Contradiction of the Forest Ordinance 2002 and the FSP approach*

The roles defined for the TS by the Forest Ordinance 2002 on the one hand and the FSP approach on the other hand, are completely inconsistent with one another. While the Ordinance turns the TS into a ‚Forest Force‘ with more powers than ever (e.g. the use of weapons in certain cases), the FSP approach wants to bring the TS closer to the local population. While the Ordinance – which was highly welcomed by most FD officials – reproduces the department’s traditional (some say ‚colonial‘) approach, regarding local people as being a threat to forests, the FSP’s objective is to vest them with decision-making powers with regard to forest management. This does not mean that the new Ordinance is not necessary, since widespread smuggling and other forms of illicit cutting have shown the urgent need for a strict law enforcement. Yet combined with the FSP approach, it demands from the Territorial Staff to play a double-part which is very difficult – if not impossible – to fulfil.

Veteran FD officials seem particularly affected by this, as they show more difficulties in adapting themselves to such new challenges. A DFO put it like that: „My field staff are still thinking in the old ways of protection. It is very difficult to change the point of view of an old Forest Guard who served for more than twenty years. But if we do not change, how can the communities change?“ Another DFO pointed out the same difficulties, saying that he would prefer if the two tasks of protection and participation were separated from each other

*Impression of being ignored by a top-down, unrealistic reform*

Many Forest Guards and Foresters said that they were never contacted by FSP so far. Neither did FSP ask for their opinion about the new structure of the FD and their professional future, nor were they ever invited for trainings on the new approach. Such statements might sometimes serve as a welcomed excuse for avoiding new tasks, yet they above all disclose the Territorial Staff’s reservations against FSP. Up to DFO level (and most probably even higher up), many officials consider FSP experts as outsiders, who would be unaware of the ‚field realities‘, while sitting in far-away Peshawar. In consideration of that, FSP’s initial decision to ignore the Territorial Staff might have been a mistake, certainly reinforcing the widespread opinion among the TS that FSP was but an abstract and temporary project that could be ignored, too. Unfortunately, the latest news on FSP seem to confirm the TS in their opinion (compare 3.5.4).

## 6.2 Territorial Staff – CDEGD Field Staff

### *TS perceive CDEGD field staff as temporary*

Due to the Territorial Staff's abovementioned perception of FSP, many Forest Guards and Foresters regard the CDEGD field staff as being a temporary phenomenon. This does not surprise, as most CDEGD officials are hired on short-term contracts, often for not more than three months. Consequently (and because they are not professional foresters), CDOs feel dismissed and complain insecure working conditions. This certainly hampers their motivation to do a good job.

### *Communication gap and lack of team-work*

The FSP approach requires that CDEGD field staff and TS would join in teams in order to work with local committees. *De jure*, the Territorial Staff were required to give the major input in these teams, while CDOs would facilitate the process and support the TS only if necessary. *De facto*, however, the CDEGD field staff are giving the major input in VLUP activities, while the support by the TS is often insufficient. Suleri (2001, 23) comes to the same conclusion: "FSP social organizers [=CDEGD field staff] are appointed for facilitation in preparation of first three VLUPs in an RMS (then the process would be handed over to FD staff, and later on to the partner NGOs identified for this purpose). Thus ideally the Territorial Staff should avail the guidance available through FSP staff for VLUP preparation. However, it was realized that it is the project staff that interacts with VDC members the most."

CDEGD officials not only complain of a communication gap between them and the TS, but also say that the TS would often try to obstruct the process by refusing to support VLUP activities. Possible reasons for this attitude have been given above.

### *CDEGD field staff are completely dependent on higher officials of the TS*

Although ranked on grade 16 (and thus on the same level as a Range Officer), a CDO's range of action is often very much dependent on the respective DFO or RO. In principle, CDEGD officials are subordinate to their own directorate, while in daily work, they are under the control of their DFO. If a DFO is convinced of the FSP approach and if is willing to spare his time on the activities of CDOs and FFEs, this can be a fruitful co-operation. If not, it can seriously affect the CDO's performance and motivation. Whether a CDO gets a car when going to the field, or TA/DA when attending a workshop in Peshawar, is up to the DFO. All this would not be so grave if DFOs and ROs would not assess their respective CDOs and FFEs through Annual Confidential Reports, which decide about the continuation of their (short-term) contracts. Consequently, CDOs and FFEs hardly ever dare to complain about their working environment, since they would risk to lose their job. For instance, one case was reported when a DFO who used an official car for private purpose, forced a CDO to sign the faked car logbook.

All this hampers the motivation of the CDEGD field staff, and does not allow them to give their best attention to the VLUP activities, as their decision-making powers are often reduced to a minimum.

### **6.3 Territorial Staff – local people : general relations**

#### *Permit procedure as major problem*

The permit procedure (application for an official permit for the felling and use of timber for local consumption) turned out to be a permanent matter of discussions in all study villages. In many places, people do not apply anymore as they would never be considered, as they said. Many among those still applying in a legal way expressed their disappointment about the complicated and lengthy procedure. People often blamed the department for delaying the application process willingly, saying that permits would hardly ever be issued without a bribe.

Representatives of the Territorial Staff strongly denied that, saying that permits would be issued as quick as possible. They mentioned that people would often submit insufficient applications, thus causing complications. All in all, the permit procedure appears as a major source of quarrel and dissatisfaction between the TS and local people. Only in *Methal* village, a new procedure was introduced which satisfies both parties.

#### *People's acceptance of FD depending on circumstances*

It was learnt that the department's authority among local people is very ambivalent. Especially in Protected Forests, hardly anybody accepts the state as the legal owner of forests. Owners of shares in the forest perceive themselves as the only landowners, denying any rights and powers of the department. This attitude (‘Why should we ask the department, if this is our forest?’) explains why many owners of shares do never apply for a permit. If people get caught while illegally cutting timber, FD officials are often considered as a ‘necessary evil’. The fact that many officials are ready to take bribes instead of imposing legally defined fines furthermore undermines the department's weak authority.

In other cases, however, even owners of shares accept the authority of the Territorial Staff. If a conflict about forest resources cannot be solved locally, the FD is often asked for help. A case has been observed in Swat, when shareholders asked a Forester to trounce their tenants who cut timber without asking for permission. They were afraid of the offenders and did not dare to meet them, so only after intense discussions, the complainants agreed to accompany the Forester. The example shows that local people accept the authority of the FD only if its enforcement results in a benefit for them. They are well aware that in other situations, the TS are too weak or not willing to enforce the law, so that their authority can be ignored without taking much risk.

*TS and local people shape rules jointly on the spot*

It was often heard that offenders were released after paying a certain amount on the spot to the respective FD official. It seems that none of these amounts was ever registered in the legal way. Some people were freed after giving a certain amount of timber to the respective official. Many said that the amount of a bribe would depend on the personal relationship between the offender and the official.

The Territorial Staff denies such practices. Yet as many Foresters and Forest Guards vary widely in their explanations how to handle offenders and impose fines, the impression arises that they often follow their own rules. While it is difficult to quantify the commonness of such practice, it must also be stressed that there might be many officials who enforce the law correctly. However, even if a small minority only ignores rules and regulations, such behaviour undermines the department's authority, and seriously obstructs its credibility regarding VLUP. How can local people accept the FD as a serious partner in VLUP, if they know the 'field realities'?

The same applies to smuggling activities. Supposedly, some FD officials in different areas are directly involved in smuggling, either by not hindering such activities or by supporting them actively. It thus can happen that the same official works with local people in Village Land Use Planning and forest protection in the daytime, while actively damaging the resource base through smuggling at night.

#### **6.4 Territorial Staff/CDEGD Field Staff – local people: VLUP/JFM**

One cannot expect that the new co-operation on VLUP runs smoothly after such a short time. Nonetheless, several structural problems make successful VLUP impossible.

*Communication gap between committees and the FD*

Besides a communication gap between the CDEGD field staff and the TS (compare above), there is also some sort of communication gap between local committees and the FD officials in charge of VLUP. It is obviously that communication can be difficult in remote areas such as the ones examined. However, if a monthly meeting fails only because neither FD officials nor local residents make any effort to confirm the date in advance (described earlier in this report), the VLUP process seems seriously damaged by a lack of proper communication and motivation.

*Doubts of participation on VLUP preparation*

Doubts must be raised on the extent of people's participation in the preparation of Village Land Use Plans. Although CDOs and FFEs said that many different participative tools were applied in the planning process, most plans look surprisingly equal. This identicalness might result from the predefined 'intervention package', from which local people are asked to choose some interventions, and which reduces a

committee's range of action from the very beginning. Another reason might be that many CDOs – who are responsible for finalization of the plans – are overburdened with work and resort to 'copy-paste' working methods. Anyway, the quality of the plans can lead to complaints from local side, when trainings offered by the FD are of no avail for improving local livelihoods. Many respondents who had already attended a training said that they never could apply any of the skills learnt, and raised doubts about the usefulness of VLUP.

*FD raises (too) high expectations and has other priorities than local people*

Another source of dissatisfaction among committee members is that many of them joined the VDC under false assumptions. A new road to the village, a water supply scheme, a functioning school system – such were the expectations that many local residents had from the new approach. Meanwhile they realized that VLUP mainly concentrates on forest protection and afforestation measures, and that infrastructure interventions are of secondary importance only. The lack of clean drinking water or the absence of a road are problems which manifest themselves every day, while deforestation might cause trouble after ten to fifteen years only. Thus, VLUP fell short of many people's expectations.

This does not mean that forest protection was not an urgent issue. However, it seems that FD officials enlisted local people for VLUP by raising false hope, which the department is not able to fulfil, as it has neither the capacity nor the funds to do so. Yet it can be assumed that local people also raise illusions on their own, hoping that the FD would solve all their problems. Be that as it may – the current situation entails the possibility that many people turn away from the process soon. This would weaken the local support for VDCs and WOs (a support that was still strong at the time of research).

*Priorities of WOs and VDCs often differ*

Nearly all Village Land Use Plans consulted showed that priorities for development of Women Organization and Villlage Development Committee differ. While women often prioritize access to clean drinking water, the male VDC often wants to concentrate on road improvement. A CDO in Hazara confirmed these differences, but also said that only local people themselves would be able to solve them.

*Committees are often not united / Danger of élite domination*

"A good social cohesion exists. In addition, same socio-economic conditions prevail in the village, which can be termed as classless. This will further contribute to good social cohesion." (VLUP Shungli, 5) Data collection for this study revealed that there is a difference between the opinion of a gathered committee and the opinions of its individual members. It could be observed that, when asked in privacy, VDC members differed widely in their opinions about what the committee should do in future. In *Bar*

*Lalku* (Swat), some members were convinced that the VDC could only survive with a close co-operation with the FD, while others categorically ruled out such a co-operation. Similar trends could be observed in other places.

It is only natural that a committee takes some time to develop a 'common sense'. Yet the example also shows that a committee's official opinion can be dominated by a powerful minority. In a committee meeting in *Dabargai* (Swat), hardly anybody else than the VDC president rose to speak. When a question about the Local Government's performance arose, nobody dared to say a word because the president's brother was a Union Councillor. It is therefore understandable if non-members blame the VDC for working for rich people only. Suleri (2001, 25) points into the same direction: "The main challenge for FSP is to involve all sections of the village community to work for sustainable natural resources management, leading to sustainable development of the area. Land tenure system, however, is one of the major hurdles in equitable distribution of the benefits arising out of the project activities, especially where the lands (or hillsides) are privately owned."

## 6.5 Forest Department – Local Government

### *Hazara: lack of trust*

Other than in Swat, where FD and District Council hold regular meetings (see below), no effort has yet been made to establish contact in Hazara. Although both parties stressed the importance of mutual understanding and co-operation, neither of them seemed willing to do the first step. This has to do with the composition of the Forest Protection Committee, that consists of rich Guzara owners only, out of which some are suspected of timber smuggling. Under these circumstances, co-operation on district level does not seem realistic at present.

### *Co-operation in Swat is very much limited*

The regular meetings held in Swat are working, but the range of possibilities is very narrow. The forum has neither the decision-making power nor the funds required to implement anything. It can only raise ideas and bring them forward to higher levels of the FD.

### *Formal links only on District level*

The regular meetings held between FD officials and representatives of the District Council Forest Protection Committee are the only institutionalized link between the FD and the Local Government. On lower levels such as tehsil and union, no formal co-operation was reported (and is also not foreseen in the Local Government Plan). Unfortunately, the few informal links that exist did not yet show any results. However, the fact that many male and female Union Councillors are on a VDC or WO is a promising opportunity for the future. Through such links, local councils could be informed about the committees' activities, or funds could be raised.

*Danger of parallel institutions: VDC/WO and VC/CCB (compare 5.4.1)*

The objectives of Village Councils and Citizen Community Boards – the two political bodies foreseen in the Local Government Plan 2000 for the village level – are nearly congruent with those of the existing VDCs and WOs (to initiate developmental work on local level in a participative manner). Although at the time of research, neither VCs nor CCBs existed in the visited areas, their formation would only unnecessarily compete with already existing committees. The most promising approach would be to merge the two ideas and fulfil the aims of both parties – government and FD – with the existing, but strengthened committees. A formal link between FD and Local Government on village level would be a welcomed side effect.



## 7 Conclusions and recommendations

This section evaluates the ongoing decentralization process by applying the criterias for decentralization, established in section 2. Thus, the reform's main strengths and weaknesses are pointed out. A subsequent part comes up with recommendations on how the core problems and bottlenecks identified for the reform process and the VLUP/JFM process in particular could be tackled.

### 7.1 Evaluation of the decentralization process

#### Criteria 1: Work with local democratic and accountable institutions

##### *Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

Committees are elected in a reasonably democratic procedure, and represent most of a village's *kheIs*. Usually, rich and poor, rightholders and non-rightholders (in Protected Forests), owners and non-owners (in Reserved and Guzara Forests) build a committee. However, a democratic formation does not necessarily anticipate a committee's domination through local élites. Yet this is rather a problem of democracy itself than of the examined approaches.

VDCs and JFMCs can be called accountable towards their communities. Committee meetings are open to non-members, so that outsiders can check its activities and raise their voice as well. Nonetheless, communication problems between a committee and the rest of the community were observed in many of the study villages. This can be caused by a bad information policy of the committee itself, or by a lack of interest of non-members.<sup>27</sup>

Without doubt, linking local committees with local government bodies would increase the committees' legitimation and accountability. Such links would be in the sense of Ribot (2002), too, who prefers local bodies which are part of a government structure instead locally initiated bodies.

#### Criteria 2: Transfer sufficient and appropriate powers and funds

##### *Internal processes (TS, CDEGD staff)*

The reform process conferred many new tasks, but hardly any additional decision-making power upon the Territorial Staff. Giving technical assistance in the VLUP process does not require important individual decisions, especially not on financial issues. Only the Forest Ordinance 2002 vested the TS with some new police powers (e.g. use of firearms).

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<sup>27</sup> Because most committees have been very young at the time of research, a true evaluation of this criteria is not possible yet.

The same applies for the CDEGD field staff. Although the VLUP process assigns a vital role to CDOs and FFEs, they can hardly ever decide about the co-operation with local committees. Important operational and financial decisions remained with higher officials such as ROs or DFOs, so that even short field trips of CDOs can be cancelled anytime by a DFO.

*Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

VDCs have only very limited decision-making power over operational and financial planning. The VLUP process is very much predetermined, not allowing local people to realize their very own ideas. In the planning process, committee members can only help to collect village data and can suggest some minor interventions. Many committees learn about the full content of 'their' plan only after its approval by the FD.

The situation of JFMCs is somehow better. In *Methal*, where the only efficient JFM committee exists, local people can exert influence both through the permit procedure and through local forest patrols. Since collected fines go into a joint account by the committee and the FD, local people are endowed with the possibility to control such funds.

**Criteria 3: Transfer powers as secure rights**

*Internal processes (TS, CDEGD staff)*

It is often up to ROs or DFOs whether lower staff can play a part in the VLUP process. Although the rules and regulations *de jure* secure the powers of a CDO, they are *de facto* often with his superiors. The implementation of the reform process on local level thus very often depends on the will of a few individuals. If a DFO is in favour of the new participatory approaches, he can support his staff very well; if he wants to obstruct the reforms, he can easily stop the process in his area. As long as such arbitrariness exists, none of the devolved powers are secured.

In addition, most of the CDEGD field staff are working on a short-term contract basis. DFOs and ROs can exert most influence on these contracts by assessing the CDEGD staff through Annual Confidential Reports. CDOs and FFEs are therefore confronted with very insecure working conditions, as they are highly dependent upon their superiors not only with regard to VLUP activities, but also for their own professional future.

*Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

The few powers given to local committees are not secured at all. The VLUP agreement signed between the FD and a committee can be terminated nearly arbitrarily by the department. Possible reasons for cancellation are if "the VDC fails to act according to the principles of VLUP", or if the department is not "in a position to fulfil the financial obligations forthcoming from this agreement" (VLUP Chel, 30). Contrary to this, the committee has no possibility to cancel the agreement if the FD does not fulfil the obligations agreed upon.

**Criteria 4:** Support equity and justice and establish fair and accessible adjudication*Internal processes (TS, CDEGD staff)*

On the department's local levels, equity can not be guaranteed yet. The CDEGD field staff are disadvantaged in several ways. First, they are hardly accepted by the TS; second, their working conditions are much worse than those of the TS (no long-term contracts); third, they are considered by most other officials as temporary staff only. The upper levels of the CDEGD directorate did not take any measures to strengthen the position of their field staff so far, so that CDOs and FFEs are further subject to the will of DFOs and ROs. Due to a lack of experience, CDOs and FFEs hardly ever succeed to make use of informal networks, which allow the TS to generate additional income. Although the reforms are not to be blamed for that, some CDOs get frustrated by the fact that many of their colleagues earn several thousand Rupees more every month.

Third parties have hardly been involved so far. At the time of research, no NGO was involved to support the TS and the CDEGD staff in VLUP activities.

*Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

In principle, equity within local committees is guaranteed by a democratic election procedure, which is supervised by the FD. However, local élites can capture the process and dominate a committee. Often, an influential and rich man is elected as president of a committee (e.g. VDC *Dabarga*), or, if the presidency is with a representative of a smaller *khel*, the VDC secretary dominates the process (e.g. VDC *Timri*). CDOs have only limited influence on such processes, and since rich people are often good communicators, they can also control the contact between the committee and the FD.

Third parties such as NGOs do not play a part yet in local VLUP or JFM activities. Even where NGOs are locally active and accepted (e.g. *Shungli*), they have not been involved in the process yet. Several CDOs and FFEs affirmed their intention to seek contact with such organizations but did not realize it so far. Due to the fact that local committees are not officially linked with the Local Government, no third party exists which could act as an independent channel of appeal for local committees. Thus, the ombudsman – installed on district level in the course of the Local Government Plan 2000 – is not responsible for the VLUP process.

**Criteria 5:** Establish minimum environmental standards*Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

The VLUP procedure defines more organizational and social than environmental standards. Every Village Land Use Plan mentions these 'principles of VLUP', which define the participation of minorities, an integrative approach for the whole village area, and the active participation of women in the process. Moreover, every plan formulates the obligations for both the VDC and the FD. For the local committee, the obligations are: restore and maintain vegetation cover; open a joint bank account together with the FD; collect financial or physical contributions for the VLUP activities

in the village; keep proper records; keep the FD informed about all meetings etc. (VLUP Chel, 29). Thus, 'restore and maintain vegetation cover' is the only obligation dealing with environmental quality. However, its blurry formulation does not allow to apply it as a criteria for measuring the co-operation's success or sustainability.

The plans also formulate the objectives of the joint activities for the plan period, e.g. 500 acres of plantations, 360'000 seedlings distributed, five herdsmen hired etc. It is mentioned that the FD and the committee will monitor the proceedings jointly. "Annual progress will be reviewed (...) [and the] plan be revised." (VLUP Chel, 28). Yet no plan defines the measures to be taken if the objectives are not met within the given time. The objectives and obligations can therefore not serve as standards which would provide clear guidelines – they rather give a free hand to the FD to intervene whenever wanted.

#### Criteria 6: Support education and information

##### *Internal processes (TS, CDEGD field staff)*

The Territorial Staff has not been sufficiently informed about the ongoing reform, its implications on field level, and the new VLUP approach. Many officials were never briefed, while others received basic trainings on developing social skills for VLUP. All in all, the FD (and FSP in particular) has no institutionalized 'information policy' for its lower levels. This resulted in a rather unclear and often wrong impression about the reform among the ground level staff. Most Foresters and Forest Guards are much better informed about the content of the Forest Ordinance 2002 – albeit many different interpretations about its practical use exist. The fact that the TS are not informed in a transparent way allows them to avoid new responsibilities, using the simple excuse that nobody told them to do so.

The CDEGD field staff are generally better informed. All interviewed CDOs and FFEs received an initial training on objectives and methodologies of the new approach. Contrary to the TS, these people were exclusively hired for implementing VLUP.

##### *Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

The information flow between the FD and local committees is not sufficient. The impression could be gained that in the initial phase of a VLUP procedure – when local residents are informed about the approach – the department does not openly inform about its own priorities. It can thus not surprise that some committee members got disappointed about the committee's achievements, when they realized that the FD prioritized nurseries and plantations rather than community infrastructure.

Village Land Use Plans are initially written in English, and only later on translated into the local language. VDC members thus often lack important information about the plan, and can check it only after approval by the FD. It is therefore of little use only if objectives and obligations are clearly mentioned in every plan.

**Criteria 7:** Organizational models should be locally specific*Internal processes (TS, CDEGD field staff)*

Due to organizational logic and financial constraints, the department cannot be expected to establish different organizational models for every particular location. The new setup of the FD, with four specialized directorates supporting the Territorial Staff and covering all different aspects of modern forestry, seems well considered and flexible enough to tackle varying local circumstances. The only problem is that the framework does not leave much space for individual decisions, so that even the CDEGD field staff must work according to rather stiff procedures. A highly flexible system would be able to hire specialized staff upon requirement, yet budgetary constraints do not allow that at the moment.

Last but not least, the decentralization process did not succeed yet in removing the department's strong hierarchical (or colonial) structure. Superiors are still very much feared, and there is hardly any possibility for the field staff work to their way up. Consequently, local working practices are still characterized by hierarchical relations rather than by horizontal, more flexible interactions, as foreseen by the reform.

*Local committees (VLUP / JFM)*

As mentioned above, VLUP activities are often very schematic. Comparing several Village Land Use Plans from different areas leads to the impression of a 'copy-paste' working style, since most plans look surprisingly equal. Whether or not a village is remote, whether it is located in protected or reserved forests, whether in Hazara or Swat – all plans define the same aims, objectives and interventions. This is certainly caused by the common practice of presenting a given intervention package, out of which the committee is asked to select a few interventions. Such practice leaves hardly any space for local demands and ideas, so that many people in different areas complained the non-usefulness of the trainings they attended.

Only the Forest Protection Committee and FD officials in Swat developed some locally specific solutions (compare 5.3.1). So much the worse is it that this kind of promising local co-operation receives neither financial nor logistical support from Peshawar.

## 7.2 Final conclusions

In order to formulate the overall findings of this study, the main hypothesis, which has been formulated in the beginning of this study and which guided the research, shall be considered again:

On local level, a big gap exists between de jure and de facto forestry. Therefore, the ongoing reform process can not be called a true decentralization yet.

Considering the preceding sections and the evaluation done in section 7.1, the hypothesis can be verified. The major differences between the legal framework for forestry and its arbitrary interpretation and non-observance on local level clearly show

that *there is a considerable gap between de jure and de facto situation*. However, it is impossible to describe the one and only *de facto* situation – as numerous the different individuals working in the department are, so numerous are the *de facto* situations. Range Officers, Foresters and Forest Guards have their own individual practices in order to tackle the daily challenges they get confronted with, and every new situation requires new responses. In this sense, forestry as it is practised in the field can be seen as a very creative procedure, which tries to find appropriate solutions to local and very specific problems. Such problems also include the difficult circumstances in which these officials operate, and which sometimes force them to ignore existing rules. In order to supplement their often meager salaries, to feed their families, or to save their own life when being threatened by criminals, their often only choice is to find informal solutions. Thus, their rather bad image as acting arbitrarily and maliciously, should at least partly be revised. However, one must not forget that such practice does not correspond to the law and makes sustainable forest management impossible.

Several criterias of decentralized systems have not been fulfilled at the time of research. Although the Village Land Use Planning process succeeded to establish reasonably democratic committees representing a useful basis for further co-operation between the Forest Department and local people, most other criterias are met partly only.

Within the department, few powers only were devolved to lower levels of the (still very strong) hierarchy. Key decisions concerning local activities remain with higher officials. Consequently, it is them who influences the extent to which the VLUP approach becomes realized in the field. Most of the powers devolved to the lower staff are therefore not secure. Officials who can be sacked anytime by their superior will not dare to make use of their new decision-making powers, especially not if the superior is known to disfavour the new approach.

At the time of research, the information flow within the department was insufficient. Most foresters and forest guards were never officially informed about the department's reforms, their new tasks with VLUP, or the role of their new teammates, the CDEGD field staff. However, this problem has been recognized by the planning level by the end of 2002, and necessary measures (workshops for foresters and forest guards) are considered. Last but not least, the VLUP approach, which proved to be very promising, is applied too systematically. Although VLUP would allow locally specific solutions, all the committees examined 'decided' to take the same measures in order to solve their problems. Both in Hazara and Swat, plans are as like as two peas in a pod, indicating a lack of creativity and room for action on local level.

What the NWFP Forest Department calls a decentralization should therefore rather be termed as a deconcentration – according to the definitions given in section 2.2, shifting of workload, functions and some competences to lower staff are the main characteristics of a deconcentration (or administrative decentralization). Agrawal and

Ostrom (1999, 76) call this process “perhaps the most innocuous of the forms of decentralization”.

### 7.3 Recommendations

This section tries to translate some of the abovementioned findings into practice. Although it is very difficult to ‘change the wheels on a running train’ (or to reform a department while it should continue to work), a number of practicable interventions can be recommended. If the current reform should succeed in future, some of them will be inevitable.

#### 7.3.1 Territorial Staff of the Forest Department

*Create incentives for the implementation of VLUP/JFM approaches*

„Those who are doing more, get less. Those who are doing less, get more.“ (compare 4.1). Currently it is not the performance of a subordinate that counts, but his loyalty towards his superiors. Respecting the department’s strictly hierarchical structure gets rewarded, while showing personal initiative and taking risks in order to improve existing procedures is not welcomed. The Annual Confidential Report (ACR) embodies this system, although it has no influence on the staff’s salary (which cannot be raised by any means but the annual, fixed increment). Thus, a more dynamic way of staff assessment, including efficiency wages for officials who show a vivid interest to fulfil their tasks properly, should be considered. Officials working well with the communities could be financially rewarded, what in turn would decrease their dependency on informal ways of earning. “Merits such as creative problem-solving, honesty, and field-based achievements must drive the incentive system, rather than seniority or politics.” (Poffenberger 1996, 10)

Trainings offered to the TS as an incentive will only have limited effects. Due to their low salaries, most of the Forest Guards, Foresters and Range Officers urgently need the money they can earn by informal means. Nevertheless, trainings are crucial in order to prepare the staff for the new tasks, obligations and powers they receive in the course of the whole reform. Poffenberger (1996, 235) writes: “Without guidance through formal and in-service training, forestry staff were unable to respond to the changing needs of the forest department or the needs of participating forest communities.”

Besides efficiency wages, other forms of additional legal incomes should be considered. Rewards for catching offenders should be raised (giving a bigger share to lower staff levels). Otherwise, taking bribes instead of imposing legal fines remains much more attractive.

*Reduce workload by seeking co-operation of local NGOs*

Many new tasks were fathered on the Territorial Staff since the FSP approach is practiced. VLUP activities are time-intensive, especially when committees are constituted and technical advice has to be given. Even when this initial phase is over, and the CDEGD field staff is expected to reduce their contribution towards VLUP, the

TS remains busy with community work. In order to reduce the Territorial Staff's tasks it would thus make sense to seek the co-operation of local NGOs. Organizations already active in a respective village should be involved in VLUP/JFM. Moreover, NGOs can also act as mediators, helping to solve potential conflicts between the FD and local committees.

That this can happen, the state has to revise its perception of NGOs as possible opponents and notorious critics. Nevertheless, potential partners should be selected with care. NGOs can only assist, not replace the Territorial Staff in VLUP – as it is important that the TS remains involved both in protective and participative activities. Otherwise, the same old practices as described by this study will continue to obstruct the FSP approach. Poffenberger (1996, 219) comes to the same conclusion for Indian forestry, advising that “since the government is not in a position to hire new staff [the same applies for the NWFP], it may be better to adjust the workload (...) by obtaining NGO help to cover areas under joint management.”

*Institutionalize information channels within the Forest Department*

Involving lower staff levels in the reform discussion seems an absolutely necessity. After all, some TS have recently been involved in discussing their own new job descriptions. Information about the reform, its approaches, the new tasks and powers must be transferred systematically. Up to now, the flow of information was absolutely informal, so that it must not surprise that Foresters and Forest Guards have a wrong (and rather negative) picture of the FSP reform. If information channels would be institutionalized, the new approach could certainly gain more support in the field, bringing ‚far-away Peshawar‘ closer to the Territorial Staff's ground realities.

The initial decision not to involve the TS in discussing the reform shows that no bottom-up communication exists within the department. To change that, the FD has to provide an institutionalized forum, in which the field staff can communicate their own field experience to the higher levels of the department. The role of Forest Guards and Foresters is often under-estimated, as Poffenberger writes: “Beat officers are perhaps more strategically positioned and practically informed than any other agency individual (...) they can serve as the eyes and ears of the forest department's programme-monitoring”. (1996, 236)

### **7.3.2 Territorial Staff – CDEGD Field Staff**

*Improve acceptance of CDEGD field staff*

In order to secure the powers of the CDEGD field staff, they need better working conditions, i.e. long-term contracts. As the TS know about the short-term contracts CDEGD officials have, they are not interested to establish any serious working relations (the CDO might be sacked again after three months). Moreover, short-term contracts hardly motivate the CDEGD staff to get involved with VLUP and to develop sustainable working practices.



The abovementioned, better information of the TS would also improve the CDEGD staff's acceptance. As soon as the TS realize that VLUP is not only a temporary exercise, and that the FSP reforms concern the whole department, their perception of the CDEGD staff might change.

*Reduce dependence on DFO / RO*

To reduce the CDOs dependence on DFOs and/or ROs, their co-operation with their own directorate should be improved. At present, both CDOs and FFEs are working in isolation, without any regular contact to superiors in their directorate. The appointment of assistant directors on field level might improve the situation, yet it will not solve the main problem. As long as CDOs are assessed by a DFO or a RO – people who sometimes disfavor the FSP approach as a whole – their job situation will remain too insecure. As long as the TS has a hand in sacking CDEGD staff, an open discourse on VLUP is not possible on field level. The fact that most CDEGD officials insisted that their names must not be mentioned in this study additionally illustrates their unease.

Not only is the CDEGD field staff's job security highly dependent on the TS, but also their daily affairs. Some CDOs complained their complete dependence on a DFO's decisions. Their freedom to plan professional activities was very much limited by internal restrictions. One CDO was abused for office work, which was not at all related to his job, while meetings with local committees had to be cancelled. That is why CDEGD officials must be given more decision-making power on their own professional activities. Participatory natural management such as VLUP requires a flexible and creative working style. Under the current circumstances, this is not possible.

### **7.3.3 Territorial Staff – local people (general relations)**

*Introduce new permit procedure as established in Methal*

The introduction of the model established in *Methal* seems to be the only way to solve the endless quarrels about the permit procedure in Protected and Guzara Forests. *Methal* made very good experiences by involving the local JFM committee in the procedure, so that both the department and local people can control each other. However, this requires that a committee has reached a certain stage of maturity and has established a common sense.

*Accept obligations within FSP approach*

As long as some FD officials do not consequently enforce the law, people will accept the FD's authority only if they can benefit from doing so. Supposedly, the Territorial Staff's acceptance will increase as soon as local people realize that Foresters and Forest Guards can help to generate real benefits through Village Land Use Planning. This requires, however, that the TS accept their obligations within the FSP approach, giving a true input and supporting the local committees.

### 7.3.4 Forest Department – VDCs/WOs

#### *Establish regular communication between the FD and local committees*

The communication gap between the FD and local committees is closely interlinked with the communication gap between the TS and the CDEGD field staff. If the department officials would succeed to build a team, communication with local people would certainly improve. A certain regularity seems crucial, especially in the beginning of the VLUP process. If monthly committee meetings fail after few months already, the probability that the whole process breaks down increases. In *CheI* (Swat), three consecutive meetings of the VDC did not take place due to different reasons (mistakes were made both by the FD and the VDC), so that local people lost their interest.

#### *Reassess Village Land Use Planning process*

If the copy-paste style in Village Land Use Plans is caused by the CDEGD officials' huge workload, it might help to involve local NGOs in VLUP. Such a co-operation would reduce the pressure now weighing upon CDOs. Due to financial constraints, the possibility that the CDEGD directorate would hire more staff for the field level seems rather unrealistic at the moment.

Besides that, the usefulness of the intervention-packages used for VLUP must be questioned. Many of the trainings proposed are of no much use for local people. In order to find local solutions for local problems, trainings should be locally specific and be based upon people's own priorities whenever possible.

#### *Avoid raising too high expectations*

This is not only a fault of the FD, as people often raise unrealistic hopes on their own. Yet while giving preliminary information about VLUP, the FD must be open and honest, so that people remain realistic in their expectations. Otherwise, the acceptance of a VDC/WO will decrease quickly again.

Although VDCs are not (yet) concerned with Joint Forest Management, the idea of involving VDCs in the permit procedure should be considered. Experience from *Methal* has shown that the JFMC's acceptance is mainly based on the (partly financial) benefits people receive through the improved permit procedure. Establishing a similar procedure in other areas would help to increase the acceptance both of local committees and the FD.

#### *Support TS in its double-role*

The Forest Ordinance has been written and promulgated, so this cannot be changed anymore. It is even advantageous that the TS have to play their part in VLUP, so that sooner or later, their attitude towards local people might change. However, it must not be ignored that FGs, Fs and ROs have to fulfil many different tasks now. As soon as additional committees are established in the same areas, they will be completely overburdened with work. The involvement of NGOs thus becomes an absolute necessity, which can help to release pressure from the TS. Other institutions such as the Frontier Constabulary in Hazara could support the TS in forest protection. Nevertheless, the TS must play their part in VLUP/JFM. Otherwise, many of them will

continue using informal practices. which run counter to participatory natural resource management.

*Make local committees united*

It is the task of CDOs in particular to unite committees and to make sure that they cannot be dominated by local élites. Leading figures in a committee – president, secretary, treasurer – must represent different *khe/s* and social classes, so that poor people's concerns of being ignored by the VDC can be appeased. The idea of a changing presidency every (second) year could be considered. Yet even common members or outsiders could potentially dominate a committee. However, a strong WO/VDC will be able to deal with differing opinions among its members.

Local committees would be strengthened when linked with other partners from the private sector, or with NGOs (in *Shungli*, for instance, SRSP could be a good partner). Such partners could mediate when conflicts between the FD and a committee arise.

### 7.3.5 Forest Department – Local Government

*Hazara: establish basic co-operation*

Under the current circumstances, one must not expect that the FD would start to co-operate with the existing Forest Protection Committee of the District Council. The only possible solution would be that the FPC reconstitutes itself in order to become more representative – an option that does not seem very realistic at the moment.

*Swat: endow existing co-operation with decision-making power*

If the Forest Department really wants to show its will for decentralized structures, the co-operation between the FD and the District Council in *Mingora* must receive a minimum of decision-making powers and funds. A special fund for the joint implementation of small-scale pilot activities on district level should be considered, which could be financed jointly by both parties. This would at least give a chance to this unique and promising co-operation.

The involvement of other partners in this kind of co-operation could be considered. Representatives from the private sector and from local NGOs could give valuable inputs. Thus, the idea of Forest Round Tables, a stakeholder forum on provincial level, which has been established in the course of the reforms, could be introduced on district level.

DFOs should be given an opportunity to prove that problems can be solved on district level. If they complain that Peshawar was too far away and that the FSP reforms were unrealistic, they should at least have an opportunity to demonstrate the district level's ability to tackle its own problems.

*Make use of existing links within VDCs/WOs*

Up to now, VLUP did not capitalise on the fact that many members of VDCs and WOs are also on a Union Council. Such links could become very valuable in future. If one day, the Union Councils should become vested with more powers and funds (what, in

fact, is highly questionable), VDCs and WOs could be ideal partners for carrying out local interventions. But even now, councillors on local committees could act as fund-raisers, since many of them have excellent social assets in their respective area. FD officials working with local committees should pay more attention to this option.

*Avoid parallel institutions*

Another link to the Local Government could be that VDCs and WOs would do the job of the Village Councils (VC) and Citizen Community Boards (CCB), which are foreseen in the Local Government Plan 2000. This would mean that local committees would hold regular meetings with their Union Council, or that councillors would attend the monthly committee meetings. However, this only makes sense when the local committees reached a certain stage of maturity and unity. While a strong committee would be able to profit from such a co-operation, weak committees would run the risk of being dominated by the politicians. Be that as it may – as long as no real fiscal decentralization takes place within the Local Government, there is only little interest for local committees to seek this partnership.

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