An Evaluation of the
Village Forestry Specialist Programme

Asad Azfar
Anwar Ali

MER/ Forestry Sections
AKRSP, Babar Road, Gilgit
Northern Areas, Pakistan

July, 1993
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection and Training</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Extension Input</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Input</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I: Checklist</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II: Terms of Reference</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III: Map</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

The purpose of this report is to provide rough and ready programming feedback to the Forestry section on the Village Forestry Specialist Programme. While internal programme reviews tend to have hidden organizational baggage attached that complicate project assessment, in the case of this study the Forestry section staff were forthcoming and open. In this regard I would like to acknowledge the support and resources provided by the Forestry section.

Mr. Javed Ahmed, Programme Manager Forestry took the lead in identifying the involved issues and the focus of research. He also provided the services of Anwar Ali, Regional Programme Forester, Gilgit for ten days of field work. While logistics were arranged so that programme schedules were least disrupted, it is seldom that a section provides the services of a senior programme staff for an internal review. Having Anwar Ali on the team was invaluable in conducting field interviews and more importantly in clarifying various issues pertaining to the operationalization of the VFS programme. Anwar Ali also reviewed and edited the draft report.

I would also like to acknowledge the keen interest and support of Mr. Noor Mohammed, Regional Programme Officer, Gilgit. He left Anwar Ali entirely at my disposal and after the first round of fieldwork took the time to discuss the preliminary results and the Forestry programme in the Gilgit region in general.

As usual, Mr Khaleel Tetlay, Programme Manager MER, provided a solid sounding board for ideas. He also kept his patience, as the writing of the report was periodically disrupted by other programme work. I would also like to thank Maqsood Khan, MER, for taking time from his computer operations to assist in helping me format the report and in making it presentable.

I hope the report provides useful programming feedback for the Forestry section. Needless to say, that for all errors of omissions and commissions, I am the sole responsibility center.

Asad Azfar
Monitoring Officer, MER
Executive Summary

AKRSP has nurtured a network of village based specialists for two reasons, which are inter-linked and reinforcing. Village specialists provide a means to disseminate technology and inputs to the village organizations (VOs/WOs); in effect they work as a delivery mechanism and help operationalize the programme. At the same time, village based specialists are an instrument to internalize technical and input functions at the village level. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the performance of the Village Forestry Specialists (VFS') with regard to their dual role; essentially the constraints they face in internalizing input functions at the village level and the role of the Forestry section in this regard.

Three categories of VFS' were selected for research. Six VFS' were selected from the Pilot Project area (Gojal valley), six VFS' from VOs that had adopted the Refined Package and planted according to the Forestry design and six VFS' from VOs that had not adopted the design. Field work was conducted in the Gojal, Hunza, Juglotte, Gupis, Phander and Tero valleys of the Gilgit region, over a period of ten days.

For the purposes of the report, evaluation criteria are divided into four categories; selection, training, technical input and extension functions. The performance of the VFS and the role of the Forestry section were reviewed with respect to these variables, which are briefly summarised below:

It is AKRSP's belief that in order to instill accountability in the system, responsibility for the selection of a specialist should be delegated to the village organisation (VO/WO); for community pressure is the best instrument to instill accountability in a system. The community furthermore has the interest and information for selecting a suitable candidate. While the selection process is decentralised, with the VO as the ultimate responsibility center, since AKRSP has to train an effective resource person it should establish certain guidelines. In the case of the VFS, these guidelines are not clearly outlined, which undermines the selection of appropriate candidates for training. It is important for the Forestry section to carefully screen selected candidates. Candidates should be permanent residents of the village, members of the VO, literate, involved in farming and not trained as specialists in other subjects.

While it is beyond the concern of this study to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the training courses, the majority of the VFS' interviewed considered the courses beneficial in terms of technical skill enhancement and raising awareness concerning forestry. The concern of this report is to review the distribution and frequency of training courses held. There is an underlying discrepancy in the regional distribution of training courses. 7 VFS' in the Gojal and Hunza valleys have received 13 Refresher courses between them, while 10 VFS' in the Gupis, Phander and Tero valleys have received only 3 Refresher courses. The Forestry section needs to be more balanced in the distribution of it training.

With respect to technical and extension functions of the VFS, the incentives system of the Forestry section is not always consistent with programme principles. These distortions need to be removed, particularly in view of an integrated natural resource management approach. In rural support programmes, economic incentives are only warranted when they help to internalize functions at the village level; in this regard incentives in input supply are warranted for these functions are logistical and require resources however the adoption of a technical design is attitudinal and token monetary awards while facilitating one time plantation do not encourage sustainability. It is important to note that in most places the Forestry section has remunerated the VFS after a careful audit of plantations.

The Forestry section is over-extended with respect to staff and there is a high turn-over of field staff which undermines programme implementation. While keeping qualified staff for long periods is a common constraint which is difficult to overcome, the Forestry field staff should be careful to make only those commitments which they can keep; otherwise the credibility of the programme will erode.
Where the VO plans and manages its development requirements on a collective and quasi-collective management or planning basis, the activist is in a position to play an instrumental role. On the other hand, in communities where the culture of community coordination is relatively weak or there are internal conflicts the services of a specialist are not effectively utilized. Essentially where the community is not interested in using the services of a specialist, the specialist cannot be expected to be an effective technical and extension agent. In this regard the Forestry section can do little, as ultimately the success of the specialist depends on VO interest and VFS initiative.

With respect to extension and input supply, the Forestry section is establishing a network of private as well as AKRSP nurseries, so that VOs can access quality planting material on a sustainable basis. With respect to the nursery development programme the Forestry section must maintain consistency in quality. Moreover, many VFS' and other farmers are interested in establishing forest nurseries and since nurseries take time to be profitable the Forestry section should continue assisting interested farmers through appropriate incentives.

The training of a village resource cadre has established a rudimentary framework for the development of community based monitoring systems. A number of village communities maintain written specie-wise records of plantation size and survival rates. The Forestry register maintained by the VFS is an important monitoring source for the Project Forester. Furthermore, during-ups the VFS provides feedback to the Forestry staff on plantation progress, planting supply and related constraints.
Introduction

The reasons to create a network of village specialists are essentially two-fold. The short term objective is related to the effective operationalization of the programme. A trained village based cadre of specialists is a resource group for AKRSP, as they act as a conduit for the dissemination of technology and inputs; essentially they serve as a receiving mechanism at the village level. The long term objective to nurture a network of village based specialists is to internalize the essentials of the programme at the village level. Village based specialists are expected to act as a resource group for their village organizations. The idea is to establish in-built sustainability in the system AKRSP has introduced in the programme area.

These twin objectives are inter-linked and reinforcing. While village specialists are a delivery point with respect to technology and inputs, they are also agents that internalize programme functions at the village level. In training and nurturing a village specialist cadre, AKRSP is seeking to provide support in order to develop their resource capacity to the extent that they become self-sustaining. The ultimate aim is to effectively transfer the essential programme functions, especially input supply, to the village organizations.

These concerns broadly sketch the conceptual contours of the AKRSP approach; in operationalizing the programme however there are a number of constraints. The underlying dilemma lies in cultivating without creating dependency; essentially in managing a process where the village specialist becomes more of a resource person for the village organization than for AKRSP. The fundamental constraint underlying the capacity of a specialist to become an effective resource person for the VO on a sustainable basis is remuneration. VO members must be able and willing to remunerate the village specialist for his technical and input services.

This transition from a resource person for AKRSP to a resource person for the VO is more difficult in forestry than in other Natural Resource Management (NRM) fields. In livestock and agriculture, the content of a specialist’s technical input is higher than in forestry. The livestock specialist supplies medicines and vaccinates animals, while the agriculture specialist sprays plants with pesticides and supplies improved seed varieties. Not only are fellow members of village organizations willing to remunerate for these services, but with some assistance the specialist can establish small supply enterprises selling vaccines, medicines, pesticides and seeds. On the other hand, the Village Forestry Specialist (VFS) essentially sells a concept, a general design, which farmers might be willing to follow but do not consider a service they ought to remunerate. The design the VFS is trained to promote is not a technical service but teaching of a method.

On the inputs side there are more opportunities for the VFS to get remuneration for a service by working as an extension agent for the village organization by arranging supply of quality planting material. This however is only possible in places where there is demand for the seasonal services of an extension worker and the community is willing to remunerate for the cost of plants, transport and time.

To develop the VFS into an effective extension worker, the Forestry section needed to link the VFS with a broader support and incentives system. An important regard in this respect was to develop a network of nurseries that were accessible and had quality planting material. Where these nurseries were situated the VFS could be linked to nursery management and/or as an extension agent arranging supply of quality planting material for the community from these nurseries. At the conceptual level this is the approach adopted by the Forestry programme.

The purpose of this report is to examine features of the Forestry programme related to the role and performance of selected VFS; critically, the constraints they face in internalizing the input supply functions of the Forestry programme at the village level.

The VFS programme is not designed and operationalized in a vacuum, but it is an integral element of AKRSP’s Sustainable Forestry Programme. Many of the underlying shortcomings or successes of the VFS programme are therefore linked with the broader programme principles and their operational and monitoring systems. An
evaluation of the VFS programme therefore is done within the guidelines and operational features of the forestry programme as a whole. It may seem that at times the study exceeds its mandate however the issues it seeks to isolate and analyze are part and parcel of the larger puzzle.

Methodology

It is important to highlight that the study is based on a small and selected sample. Eighteen VFS’ were selected from the Gilgit region. In order to make the sample representative, six specialists were selected from the pilot project area, six from village organizations that have planted according to the standard design and six from village organizations that are planting trees but not following the design.

It was not easy to access VFS’ as many were not present in the village at the time of our field visit. For instance, the VFS for Soust (pilot project area) was a shopkeeper and was not available as he had gone to China on a business trip. Consequently five VFS’ in the Pilot Project area were interviewed. Many other VFS’ were not present in the village, some of whom were Government Servants, usually teachers and they spent substantial time outside the village. However, six VFS’ were interviewed from the ‘Refined Package’ VOs and six VFS’ from VOs that had not followed the design.

The study is based on a review of seventeen VFS’ and therefore is not a comprehensive review (which would require substantial time as there are over 220 VFS’). It does however provide a preliminary review and it attempts to highlight the general trends and the underlying strengths and constraints in the programme.

The benefits of having a Regional Programme Forester (RPF) on the team were not only that he facilitated fieldwork, particularly with issues pertaining to technical matters but the study also served as a monitoring source for the Forestry section. A detailed list of VFS’ in the Gilgit region was compiled and collated and existing records were reviewed and updated during the course of the study.

While fieldwork was conducted on the basis of open-ended discussions, a standard checklist prepared prior to the field visits, in consultation with the Forestry section, was used as reference. The checklist is reproduced in appendix I, along with the agreed Terms of Reference outlining the objectives of the study.

The findings of the study are presented in two sub-sections, which broadly cover the various features of the VFS programme; selection/training and technical/extension functions. In conclusion, we will provide a general review of the programme and recommendations for policy review.

I. Selection and Training

Underlying AKRSP’s methodology of social organization is the role of the ‘activist’, the principle agent of attitudinal change at the village level. In attempting to develop a broad based rural institutional infrastructure, AKRSP has sought to cultivate capable activists, who are willing to mobilize their community along the conceptual approach introduced by AKRSP.

The AKRSP operational methodology is to articulate a concept of development, offer a ‘partnership’ to communities willing to participate in pursuing the concept, find active resource people and provide them with the necessary support in realizing their agenda. The assumption is that on the example of successful individuals and communities others follow. This is the demonstration effect, which is largely responsible for the broad replication of the programme.
The VFS is essentially an activist in the field of forestry. While the VFS has an extension role in the VO, more than any other Natural Resource Management (NRM) specialist, the VFS has a motivational role, in that he is expected to motivate the community to plant trees according to an improved technique.

The selection of a committed and capable person is therefore critical for the success of the VFS programme. AKRSP works on an assumption that the VO is the best instrument to select an appropriate candidate, for not only does it have the interest but also comprehensive information on the credentials, commitment and accessibility of a candidate.

Moreover, the reason for delegating selection to the community is to identify a responsibility center. Delegating decision making to the village level is critical with respect to attitudinal change, as it confers responsibility and accountability to the community. The VFS is a resource person for the VO and ultimately accountable to the VO therefore he must be a candidate chosen by the VO. It then becomes an internal matter of the VO, if the VFS is ineffective or inaccessible. The underlying assumption is that community pressure is the most effective instrument to instill accountability in the system.

While a candidate must be chosen by the VO, it is important for AKRSP to establish general guidelines for selection; essentially because AKRSP has to train an effective VFS. The guidelines need to be general enough that they are not difficult to fulfil. The following four broadly cover the essentials:

a. since the VFS is a resource person for the VO, he should be a member of the VO

b. the VFS should be literate in order to facilitate training and subsequent record keeping. The VFS furthermore is supposed to be provided with a written Terms of Reference (TOR) identifying his role and functions. Basic literacy is a requisite to follow the TOR and more importantly to monitor progress through proper record keeping

c. the VFS should not be a specialist in other subjects, as concentrating skills in one person reduces accessibility

d. should be a permanent resident of the village; in that the candidate should preferably be a farmer and not a government servant or involved in a full-time business.

i. Selection

From the general trends in the selected sample it is clear that the Forestry section has not been screening selected candidates with respect to the above mentioned guidelines. During the Pilot Project phase under the auspices of IUCN, broad guidelines for VFS selection and training were established however these have not been consistently followed.

At least 50 per cent of the VFS' selected are illiterate, which undermines their ability to retain instructional material and maintain proper records. Over 50 per cent of illiterate VFS' do not maintain a register of plantation records and survival rates, while over 75 per cent of literate VFS' have maintained a forestry register. In some VO's, if the VFS is illiterate an office bearer of the VO or a relative of the VFS maintains forestry records on the advice of the VFS. While the sample is small and these figures may not hold as a rule, the direction of the general trend is evident.

---

1While a small number of women have received VFS training, a women's specialist programme in forestry has not been formalized.
Another issue of concern in the screening procedure is the duplication of skills in one resource person. Almost one third of the VFS’ were also trained as specialists in other NRM subjects, all in agriculture. Presently this is not a critical constraint since forestry work is seasonal. The plantation period lasts a couple of weeks, usually in the months of April and May. Input supply is also seasonal and does not consume too much time. Duplication of skills however is detrimental in the case of NRM specialists leaving the village or undertaking off-farm work. In terms of accessibility, if one person is trained to perform two NRM functions where one has little opportunities for remuneration, they will accord low priority to that activity. Of all the VFS’ that had arranged input supply for the VO, none was a specialist in another NRM subject. While the sample size is small and this may not hold as a rule, broad inferences can be drawn. Furthermore, it is important to note that in all cases where two skills were duplicated in one resource person, forestry training followed training in another subject.

Concentration of multiple skills in one person becomes a particular problem in developing the Master Trainers programme, where the resource skills of existing specialists are further refined, essentially with respect to extension and marketing functions. The Master Trainers programme is an attempt to reinforce the existing capacity of the village based specialist network, essentially with respect to extension and marketing. In this regard, one person who is a specialist in more than one field will not be able to effectively service the entire VO.

In all the cases the VFS’ was a member of the VO however there was one exception. The VFS for Mayoon Paen in Hunza was not a member of the VO and was selected for training because he was unemployed and his father was influential in the VO. The Mayoon Paen VFS had never worked for the VO. As a non-member the VFS felt no obligation to be involved with forestry developments at the village level.

These general guidelines need to be made clear to the VO during dialogues and it is important for the Forestry section to screen the selected candidates before giving them training.

ii. Training

In conjunction with the Human Resource Development Division (HRDD) the Forestry section provides two types of courses, a Regular and a Refresher course. Farmers selected by the VO are given a ten days Regular course in Gilgit. The focus of the training courses is to introduce improved planting techniques designed and tested by the Forestry section. Moreover, the specialists are briefed on their role as extension workers for their village in terms of facilitating the supply of quality planting stock between AKRSP and the Village Organization (VOs). The Regular course is a critical input, which is also an integral part of AKRSP’s efforts to enhance the human resource skills of the region’s small farmers.

While it is beyond the concern of this study to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the training courses, which have been independently evaluated\(^2\), the majority of the VFS’ interviewed considered the courses beneficial in terms of technical skill enhancement and raising awareness concerning forestry. In evaluating the VFS programme, the concern of this report is to review the distribution and frequency of training courses.

In the Pilot Project area, all the VFS’ underwent a seven day training course in 1987 organized by IUCN. In 1991 the Regular VFS course was substantially revised, with respect to instructional material and audio-visual aides. All the VFS’ in the Gojal Valley have subsequently attended Refresher courses however the Forestry section should consider offering these VFS’ a Regular course (if any of these VFS’ are selected for a Master Trainer’s course then it would be redundant to give them a Regular course).

There are exceptions that need to be reviewed on an individual basis. VFS Jamalabad has never received a Regular course. In 1987, Ali Beg was selected by the VO for VFS training. After attending the course the VFS decided he did not have the time to work as a resource person for the VO and nominated Mohammed Salim as VFS. Mohammed Salim has attended 3 Refresher courses however he has never received a Regular course. Similarly two VFS’ in Gupis (Hamardas and Khonakui) received training in 1987 however they have not attended a Refresher course since. Both of these VOs are ‘Soft Package’ VOs. It would be useful to give these VFS’ a Regular course.

Decisions to provide additional Regular training should however be qualified. Only those VFS’ who are interested and have shown some initiative in the VO should be given additional training. Some VFS’ are indifferent to forestry development and it would be a waste of resources to try and develop them into effective resource people.

Another concern of the Forestry section should be to carefully redress regional imbalances in training. While the effectiveness of the programme essentially depends on the initiative of the beneficiaries, the programme should try to be balanced with respect to the distribution of supply channels. This also applies to training courses. The Forestry was introduced as a pilot project in the Gojal valley and the development of its programme reach has been the strongest in the Gojal and to a lesser extent in the contiguous Hunza valley.

In terms of the distribution of the training courses, seven VFS’ in the Gojal and Hunza regions have received thirteen Refresher courses among them, while ten VFS’ in the Gupis, Phander and Juglotte regions have received three Refresher courses. The sample size is small however the general trend is evident.

Another related matter of concern is the provision of instructional material, essentially a written Terms of Reference and a planting kit. These items are supposed to be distributed to VFS’ following the completion of the training course. Over 50 per cent of the VFS’ interviewed said that they had either not received a kit or received an incomplete one. Similarly, over 50 per cent interviewed had not received a written Terms of Reference outlining their role and functions as VFS, while most others were not sure if they had received one or not (these tend to be the illiterate ones). Only 3 VFS’ said they had received a written TOR and one VFS had circulated copies of it in the VO. This should be recommended to VFS’ during the training course, as it would give the VFS as well as the VO a clear idea of the VFS’ functions as a resource person for the VO.

Following is a table of general information on the selection and training of selected VFS’ in the Gilgit region. It outlines a broad picture and should serve as a useful monitoring source:
Table I       Selection and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Refresher</th>
<th>Kit</th>
<th>TOR</th>
<th>Literate</th>
<th>SPEC@</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilot Project:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Murkhun</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Jamalabad</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Agr/For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Galapun</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khaiber</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Passu</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Agr/For</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refined Package:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Parri I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Ghulagmuli Bala</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Ghulagmuli Pacen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Tero Center</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>M/CR/For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Qaimabad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Phander Bala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soft Package:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khanabad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Mayoon Paeen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Hamardas</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Junrotte</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Agr/For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Allabad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Agr/For</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khonakui</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>For</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Received a VFS course before the regularization of the programme in 1991
- Many issues came up during the course of discussions and were subsequently added to the checklist; consequently there are gaps in the information collected
+ As a result of miscommunication one VFS received two Regular courses. The VFS was serving four VO's. One of the VO's was asked to select a specialist for training however the VO thought the specialist serving them was invited to Gilgit and they selected VFS Ghulagmuli Bala
@ Specialists in respective fields in order of training received
# M - VO Manager; CR - Cluster Representative
II. Technical and Extension Input

The technical and extension roles of the VFS are variable on community interest and to a lesser extent on VFS initiative. Active VFS have promoted design plantations in their community however the community has been 'relatively' cohesive and integrated with respect to functional roles3. This is related to the general maturity level of the VO and its role as a village level development body. Where the VO plans and manages its development requirements on a collective or a quasi-collective management or planning basis, the activist is in a position to play an instrumental role.

On the other hand, in communities where the system of management and planning is restricted to the extended household, or there are internal conflicts, the services of a specialist are not effectively utilized; as the concept of a community resource person does not exist or is relatively weak. Essentially where the community is not interested in using a specialist as a resource person, the specialist cannot be an effective technical and extension agent.

The Forestry section can only play a supporting role in institutionalizing the specialist as a resource person. Aside from training a resource cadre, the Forestry section has introduced an incentives system in order to internalize the technical and extension functions of the VFS at the village level. The incentives system covers input supply and remuneration for VO plantations independent of AKRSP, as well as for VFS performance.

The incentives system is a mainstream feature of the Forestry programme, to the extent that distribution of remuneration and compensation (for VO plantations from self-arranged planting stocks), as well as related monitoring occupies a substantial part of the Project Forester’s time in the field. It is important to review the operational features of the incentives system, as well as its appropriateness with respect to the AKRSP approach. A programme which aims to be sustainable by internalizing expertise and input supply at the village level cannot be indefinitely supply driven. This also has implications for an integrated NRM strategy, as the incentives system will need to be coordinated within broader concerns.

The following sub-sections respectively review the technical and extension performance of VFS’, role of the Forestry programme and the related constraints.

i. Technical Input

The technical input of a VFS can only be realized in communities which seek the services of a VFS. In cohesive communities where either land is developed as a common property resource and plantations are undertaken collectively or the community coordinates its activities related to land and labour, the VFS is able to be an effective resource person for the VO.

In these areas, notably Parri I in Juglote and two VOIs in Tero, the VFS has physically supervised VO plantations. In Parri I, the plantations are on private plots however the VFS gave the layout for plantations and supervised plantations, which are according to design. In Tero, Tero Center and Tero Bala have reclaimed a large track of rocky land. The VFS for Tero Center, who is also a VO Manager and a Cluster Representative, took the initiative in mobilizing his VO in clearing parts of rocky slopping land on a mountain side and planted approximately 5000 plants. The design has been followed but with some modifications. According to the design for high altitude areas the ditch should be one and a half feet deep. The VFS however said that the land was rocky and this requirement was inappropriate for their area.

---

3The concept of a 'cohesive' community is used as a theoretical construct in a broad sociological sense, where all communities lie along a continuum. There are no 'cohesive' or 'non-cohesive' communities, essentially all communities are variable with respect to their 'cohesiveness'.
The neighboring Tero Bala VO also undertook a similar task by developing a continuous piece of land, also planting approximately 5000 plants according to design. In both these plantations the VFS played both the role of an activist as well as a supervisory role. The VFS was not remunerated in either VO, as labour was free and collective and the VFS was a part of the team.

It is important to note that in the Gupis and Phander regions, many VO members and VFS' considered the design irrelevant to their land patterns, where land and water resources are scarce and the most of the available land is sloping hill terraces. While in some places this observation was used as an excuse by the VFS for not following the AKRSP method, in others (e.g. Tero Center) where the community had shown interest and initiative, the grievance seemed genuine.

This is a technical issue beyond the concern of the monitoring report however the Forestry section should review whether a standard design is appropriate for the entire programme area. In particular, the Gupis, Phander and Tero farmers challenged the relevance of the design and perhaps this region would be a good place for reviewing the design in collaboration with the region's farmers.

The VFS can only explain the design in VO meetings and privately to interested farmers. In many communities there is resistance to the design, as some consider it inappropriate while others are not ready to break from tradition. Where there is resistance to the design there is little incentive for the VFS to motivate, as he must bear the opportunity cost of his time, with low expectation of results.

In communities where there are farmers willing to adopt the design and there is demand for the VFS with respect to technical assistance, the VFS has relatively more incentive; as the opportunity cost of his time is compensated by community approbation (which has a high social value in 'cohesive' communities). In communities cohesive with respect to NRM practices, as a farmer the VFS is used to working with others and as utilization of land and labour is coordinated the dissemination of improve technology is easier for the specialist; as functional linkages for these are existing.

In isolated cases the VFS has received token remuneration from the communities in cash or in kind. This cannot be expected on a sustainable basis, as the VFS does not provide a technical input and in most communities labour is shared during plantations. Consequently, the VFS working and supervising plantations will not be remunerated. Moreover, the basics of the forestry design are simple and with some assistance the farmers willing to learn will do so quickly. Many of the design plantations the VFS had not supervised himself.

Since the VFS was not receiving remuneration due primarily to low technical input, the Forestry section decided to remunerate the VFS in VOs that had followed the design. For every seasonal plantation according to design the VFS is remunerated Rs. 500. According to the VFS' remuneration was given after a thorough audit and in most instances where the VFS was remunerated plantations were according to design (although in Khaiber the plantations were irregular and the VFS was remunerated).

There are two features of the incentives system with respect to technical functions that need to be carefully examined. If the remuneration is simply an award then it is not critical to advertise the policy however if it is also introduced as an incentive the information regarding the policy should be effectively distributed in all the programme area. Most VFS' in VOs that had not followed the design are not aware that the Forestry section will remunerate them for design plantations, as many have never met a Forestry field staff person since they were trained. Since the Forestry staff is over-extended and needs to be selective with respect to follow-ups, information about the remuneration policy should be systematically spread in the programme area through Social Organizers (SOs); as SOs are field based and have a more extensive reach. Where design plantations are reported the Project Forester will visit the VO and remunerate the VFS after an audit (which is the present policy).

Most VFS' interviewed said the VO would not remunerate for technical supervision, on the other hand, many
expect AKRSP to continue paying them cash for trees they plant on their land. The more services are provided free of charge, the more the community expects these services and takes them for granted.

While the VFS remuneration is a short-term incentive it is important to review its relevance with respect to the cost to AKRSP (more in terms of programme principles than monetary cost) and benefit to the community. Basically the Forestry section is paying to promote forest plantations according to design. Remuneration in this respect does not help institutionalize a forestry system but is a monetary award. Where the community coordinates its concerns and the natural resource base is available, the services of a VFS can be effectively utilized. Providing a token remuneration has little effect on the technical performance of the VFS.

In development programmes attempting to promote autonomous and sustainable development, incentives are only warranted when they help to internalize roles and functions in the communities they are trying to help.

ii. Extension

While adoption of the technical package is based on the communities willingness and is motivational in nature, extension functions are logistical and require resources. An incentive system in this regard is more relevant as it helps to internalize input supply functions at the village level given that it is properly programmed and operationalized.

Extension and input supply, which essentially means arranging quality planting material for the VO, is the most critical function of the VFS and central to the sustainability of the programme. Input supply functions link the VFS and the Project Forester in two ways. As a resource person for AKRSP the VFS mediates the demand and supply of planting stock between the VO and the Forestry section. As a resource person for the VO the VFS is responsible for arranging the supply of planting stock from AKRSP or any other supply outlets.

The incentives system with regard to extension and input supply serves the dual role of the VFS as a resource person for AKRSP and as a resource person for the VO. The Forestry section supplies planting material to VOs on demand; the cost of plants and transport are financed by the Forestry section (thirty per cent of the planting stock is financed by the VOs). On the other hand, in order to develop the extension capacity of VFS' the Forestry section provides the transport cost and TA/DA for the VFS, as well as seventy per cent of the cost of planting stock purchased. In connection, the Forestry section is also assisting the development of a network of private nurseries as well as AKRSP nurseries, so that VOs can access quality planting material on a sustainable basis.

The report will respectively review the dual features of the incentives system. Moreover, the input supply functions logistically link the VFS with the Project Forester, which has implications on the internal monitoring system of the Forestry section. While the effective VFS' are useful resource persons for monitoring feedback, particularly with respect to plantation size and survival counts these linkages are informal. This section will review methods to develop such linkages on a more systematic and formal basis.

Moreover, as discussed in the introduction to section II, the extension role of the VFS is variable on community interest as well as on specialist initiative. There must be a demand in the community for an extension agent facilitating the supply of quality planting stock. In most places farmers wanted access to quality planting stock (most preferred rooted plants) however due to a number of constraints they fulfil their requirements from their own cuttings. This section will also review VO constraints in acquiring quality planting material.
expect AKRSP to continue paying them cash for trees they plant on their land. The more services are provided free of charge, the more the community expects these services and takes them for granted.

While the VFS remuneration is a short-term incentive it is important to review its relevance with respect to the cost to AKRSP (more in terms of programme principles than monetary cost) and benefit to the community. Basically the Forestry section is paying to promote forest plantations according to design. Remuneration in this respect does not help institutionalize a forestry system but is a monetary award. Where the community coordinates its concerns and the natural resource base is available, the services of a VFS can be effectively utilized. Providing a token remuneration has little affect on the technical performance of the VFS.

In development programmes attempting to promote autonomous and sustainable development, incentives are only warranted when they help to internalize roles and functions in the communities they are trying to help.

ii. Extension

While adoption of the technical package is based on the communities willingness and is motivational in nature, extension functions are logistical and require resources. An incentive system in this regard is more relevant as it helps to internalize input supply functions at the village level given that it is properly programmed and operationalized.

Extension and input supply, which essentially means arranging quality planting material for the VO, is the most critical function of the VFS and central to the sustainability of the programme. Input supply functions link the VFS and the Project Forester in two ways. As a resource person for AKRSP the VFS mediates the demand and supply of planting stock between the VO and the Forestry section. As a resource person for the VO the VFS is responsible for arranging the supply of planting stock from AKRSP or any other supply outlets.

The incentives system with regard to extension and input supply serves the dual role of the VFS as a resource person for AKRSP and as a resource person for the VO. The Forestry section supplies planting material to VOs on demand; the cost of plants and transport are financed by the Forestry section (thirty per cent of the planting stock is financed by the VO). On the other hand, in order to develop the extension capacity of VFS' the Forestry section provides the transport cost and TA/DA for the VFS, as well as seventy per cent of the cost of planting stock purchased. In connection, the Forestry section is also assisting the development of a network of private nurseries as well as AKRSP nurseries, so that VOs can access quality planting material on a sustainable basis.

The report will respectively review the dual features of the incentives system. Moreover, the input supply functions logistically link the VFS with the Project Forester, which has implications on the internal monitoring system of the Forestry section. While the effective VFS' are useful resource persons for monitoring feedback, particularly with respect to plantation size and survival counts these linkages are informal. This section will review methods to develop such linkages on a more systematic and formal basis.

Moreover, as discussed in the introduction to section II, the extension role of the VFS is variable on community interest as well as on specialist initiative. There must be a demand in the community for an extension agent facilitating the supply of quality planting stock. In most places farmers wanted access to quality planting stock (most preferred rooted plants) however due to a number of constraints they fulfil their requirements from their own cuttings. This section will also review VO constraints in acquiring quality planting material.
a. Input Supply by the Forestry Section

The input supply channels of the Forestry section are most developed in the Gojal valley where in collaboration with IUCN, AKRSP introduced the pilot project in 1987. Consequently, the contiguous Hunza valley is also well serviced with respect to input supply functions. On the other hand, in the Gupis, Phander and Tero regions the supply of plants has been minimal (in all the VO's visited in these regions the Forestry section had never supplied planting stock). The input supply patterns of the Forestry section have been reinforced with time and variation in programme implementation have led to regional imbalances that need to be redressed.

In the pilot project area the Project Forester had delivered planting material to all the VO's except Jamalabad, which lies off the Karakorum Highway (KKH). In these VO's the VFS takes a demand from the VO, forwards it to the Project Forester, who delivers the planting stock to the VFS. The financial cost to the VO is minimal, as the transport cost and seventy per cent of the planting stock cost is provided by the Forestry section. These VO's lie on the KKH and are easy to access. On the other hand, Jamalabad a Pilot Project VO which lies of the KKH has never been supplied planting stock by AKRSP.

Moreover, after six years of operations the extension and input related functions should be transferred to the VFS. The Forestry section should stop supplying planting stock to VO's and the VFS should be properly briefed on the extension incentives offered by the Forestry section (the VFS for Galapun was not aware that the Forestry section provides the transport cost and TA/DA for the VO to arrange its own planting stock). If the Forestry programme is going to be sustainable it must encourage the community to take initiative and internalize extension functions at the village level.

In three of the VO's Murkhun, Galapun and Passu, the VFS' were not satisfied with the quality of planting stock supplied by AKRSP (as most of the plants were brought from down-country nurseries which were inappropriate as they have different sprouting seasons). The VFS' furthermore said the plants were not always supplied on time. In Jamalabad and Galapun the Project Forester made a demand to purchase cuttings from the VO, which were prepared but never collected by the Project Forester. The Forestry section is over-extended with respect to field personnel and therefore field staff should be careful in making commitments they can keep. Failing to deliver on agreements only erodes the credibility of the programme.

b. Input Supply by the VFS

Forty per cent of the VFS' interviewed had arranged the supply of planting stock for the VO. The largest distribution was in the Refined Package area, where the community interest and VFS initiative are strongest (though the sample is small and these figures may not hold as a rule). In most places the planting stock was arranged with AKRSP remuneration and from AKRSP nurseries. There were exceptions where the VO had purchased the planting stock from neighboring hamlets and did not demand AKRSP remuneration. In Qaimabad, Phunder there was a continuing conflict related to remuneration. The VFS had brought cuttings for Rs. 6 on demand however the Forestry section refused to remunerate more than Rs. 3 per cutting. The VFS claimed that the Project Forester had not established a price ceiling, which was contradicted by the Forestry section.

The strongest and the weakest link with respect to input supply by the VFS are local nurseries. A network of nurseries will provide VO's with access to quality planting material and work as an incentive for them to internalize extension functions. In this regard the Forestry section is establishing AKRSP nurseries as well as assisting farmers in developing private nurseries. The majority of VFS' interviewed were interested in establishing their own nurseries though shortage of land was a constraint for some. Where possible the Forestry section should encourage VFS' to establish their own nurseries and in this regard incentives for technical supervision

---

*For a more detailed review of the extension and input supply performance of the Forestry section in the pilot project area, see Raja Ataullah Khan and Asad Azfar, "The AKRSP/IUCN Sustainable Forestry Programme (Gojal Valley): A Preliminary Review"
could be diverted to VFS nursery development.

Their is an underlying concern related to the quality of AKRSP nurseries that needs to be considered and corrected. VOs will only access nurseries if they know that the nursery planting stock is of superior quality than their own cuttings. This year many VOs in the Gupis area took plants from the AKRSP Gupis nursery (distributed free of cost). Due to road disrepair most of the plants had dried before reaching the nursery however they were still distributed. All the VOs visited in the Gupis area complained the quality of planting stock was poor and most of the plants had dried.

An important consideration of the Forestry Sustainable Five Year Plan is to improve the quality of planting stock in the programme area. The Forestry section therefore must carefully maintain quality control in supply functions. A successful nursery is a critical input. The Parri I VFS took 5,400 plants from the AKRSP nursery in Gilgit in 1992 and from the Juglotte nursery in 1993, with a survival count of approximately 95 per cent. He has been working as an effective extension agent for two years arranging input supply from the AKRSP nurseries in Juglotte and Gilgit nurseries, which are accessible and provide quality planting material. Farmers will access AKRSP nurseries if they are assured of quality planting stock.

c. Community Based Monitoring Systems

An issue of concern identified in the pilot project design (Hunza Series Reports) was the development of community based monitoring systems, which are functionally linked to the development of a ‘sustainable’ forestry programme. Effective regular monitoring is essential for appropriate modifications and adjustments in project implementation as well as for future project design. In this respect internalizing regular and systematic monitoring mechanisms at the village level can serve a dual function. Not only does this enhance the programming capacity of the VO, but with effective linkages VO monitoring can provide feedback for the Forestry programme.

The training of a village resource cadre has established a rudimentary framework for the development of community based monitoring systems. A number of village communities maintain written species-wise records of plantation size and survival rates. The Forestry register maintained by the VFS is an important monitoring source for the Project Forester. Furthermore, during follow-ups the VFS provides feedback to the Forestry staff on plantation progress, planting supply and related constraints etc.

The Forestry section should consider developing this monitoring linkage on a more formal basis. This issue assumes more importance with the development of the Master Trainers programme in Forestry. Formal linkages can be developed in a number of ways. A standard questionnaire could be distributed to VFS’ and VO Managers (where the VFS is illiterate) summarizing plantation performance, constraints and demands. During Refresher courses, a session could be reserved for monitoring feedback, with the responsibility of the training course convener to file a summary report to the Forestry section. These are general suggestions which the Forestry section should review in conjunction with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research section (MER) as well as the Human Resource Development Division (HRDD).
## Table II  Technical and Extension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Input Supply</th>
<th>Timely Supply by AKRSP</th>
<th>Remuneration TA/DA</th>
<th>Follow-ups/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Murkhnun</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>AKRSP, VO/VO</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Jamalabad*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied**</td>
<td>VO</td>
<td>2.3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Galapun**</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No#</td>
<td>4.5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khaiber</td>
<td>Yes@</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>AKRSP, VO/VO</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Passu</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refined Package</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Parri I</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>AKRSP</td>
<td>Frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Ghulagmuli Bala</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>AKRSP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Ghulagmuli Paen</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Teru Center</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>AKRSP</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Qaimabad</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>AKRSP/Self</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Phander Bala</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied**</td>
<td>AKRSP</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Package</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khanabad*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-/AKRSP</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Mayoon Paen*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Hamardas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>-/VO</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Junrotte</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Aliabad</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No##</td>
<td>Never Supplied**</td>
<td>-/VO</td>
<td>Never~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFS Khonakui</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Never Supplied</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Not applicable/missing
* The village lies off the KKH
** AKRSP failed to deliver or purchase after making a commitment
+ No Forester visited in the 1993 planting season/Declining frequency
@ Irregular planting but was remunerated by AKRSP
# Plantations according to design but never reported
## VFS has never arranged planting supply but other VO members have
~ The VFS is inactive; the VO Manager has some contact with the Forestry staff
Conclusions and Recommendations

There are two underlying weaknesses of the forestry programme as a whole, which affects the performance of the VFS. First, the Forestry section is over extended with respect to personnel, which undermines the delivery and monitoring mechanisms of the programme. Second, the Forestry programme has been operationalized in stages, with the initiation of the Pilot Project in the Gojal valley in 1987, followed by a programme-wide replication in 1991. This has led to considerable regional variation in programme operationalization. The focus of the Forestry programme with respect to supply channels and training is strongest in the Gojal and Hunza regions. This is a consequence of time as well as priorities.

In the Pilot Project area it is time to reorient the supply driven approach and transfer input functions to the VO. In this regard, the Forestry section should concentrate on developing a network of quality nurseries and stop the supply of plants to the VO's doorstep. Many VFS' are interested in establishing private nurseries however they are hesitant because nurseries take a few years to become profitable. Private nurseries should be encouraged by offering appropriate incentives, as it would transfer operational and management responsibilities to the village level. It also provides the only potential for income for the VFS, which is essential for sustainability.

In terms of input related follow-ups and distribution of training courses, the Forestry section needs to redress regional imbalances. In certain VO's in the pilot project area the Project Forester takes a demand from the VFS and supplies planting stock to the VO's doorstep. Often the plants are distributed free of cost and the part-financing rule, where VO's pay for thirty per cent of the cost is waved. The paradox is that the VFS' in other areas might evolve into a better resource person as they have to rely more on VO resources than AKRSP incentives. The model plantations in Teru Center and Teru Bala were largely on the initiative of the VFS and the interest of the VO. The Forestry section did remunerate the VFS and compensated the VO for the planting material however this was an \textit{ex post} incentive.

The quality of planting stock in AKRSP nurseries has been criticized by many farmers, particularly in the Gupis area. The failure of the nursery in Gupis has eroded the credibility of the Forestry section. In terms of bringing attitudinal change at the village level AKRSP must lead with example. Only those commitments should be made that can be delivered. Moreover, the services need to be consistently of a higher quality than existing services.

It is important to note that the Forestry section is quick to recognize the contribution of effective VFS' through frequent follow-ups, input support and non-monetary awards (like certificates and plaques) in VO meetings. The Parri I VFS said that the Project Forester often visited the VO and felt the visits invaluable in terms of sustaining motivation. These token gestures are a good way to acknowledge personal contribution, for services as an award but does not compromise programme principles. In Teru the VFS had a received a certificate from the Forestry section, which was displayed in the main lounge of the VFS' house. As awards for VFS performance are distributed in a VO meeting, it is not only a public acknowledgement of the VFS but also a tribute to the VO.

If the Forestry programme expects to be sustainable it is essential to remove the distortion in the incentives system with respect to programme principles. In development programmes that involve community participation, monetary incentives are only warranted when the assist in internalizing functions at the community level. As we have discussed above, incentives for input supply and extension are warranted in this respect, while for design promotion these are questionable. Moreover, when one NRM section provides a service free of charge while others are encouraging self-financing it undermines the ultimate objectives of the programme. For this purpose an integrated NRM strategy is recommended, which is formally recognized by the respective sections. This means that NRM sections have to be more coordinated and disciplined in programming. While there is donor interest in forestry in particular and NRM in general, these resources should not be exhausted at the expense of programme principles.
Similarly, there is another aspect of the incentives system which has not been discussed in the report as it does not directly relate to VFS performance. The Forestry section pays the VO for plants members have planted from their own cuttings. Forest plantations are natural resource investments people are making and have been making for centuries. The purpose of AKRSP is not to subsidize these investments, but to provide incentives for people to improve the method of natural resource management. The focus of AKRSP therefore is investment in natural resource management and not in natural resource development as such; for the latter is an integrated intervention that for reasons of resources and legitimacy, only the state can introduce. AKRSP through its NRM sections can contribute to the development of natural resources essentially by introducing improved natural resource management techniques. To the extent that productive incentives help to internalize improved natural resource management techniques at the community level, AKRSP is involved in natural resource development.

AKRSP’s real contribution in the end will not be the number of trees planted, though this is important (not least for the reason that it provides a verifiable indicator), but attitudinal change, where the people are prepared to accept the responsibility and believe in their ability to realize their development agenda; this is the essence of sustainability. The trees planted today will be gone tomorrow, if the people don’t accept responsibility for their dwindling natural resource base and have a sustainable capacity in terms of an organizational structure and input supply linkages to redress the imbalances.

An underlying constraint faced by the Forestry section is a high turn-over of field staff; which means that often the programme is over-extended and staff is stretched in terms of time. As most of the field work is logistical and the parts of the programme area difficult to access inadequate staff is a serious constraint. Moreover, a high turn-over has a deeper effect on programme implementation, as it is difficult to socialize new staff with respect to programme principles. In AKRSP, orientation is essential, as any programme attempting to promote attitudinal change must internalize its message. Due to pressures of time and deadlines, it is difficult for the Forestry section to properly programme its staff. While sectional staff orientation should be given greater consideration, it is important to develop a system where programme orientation is received on the job.

In technical sections execution is essentially independent, which means it is the responsibility of the Programme Manager to instill accountability. A broader framework of accountability needs to be developed from the Social Organizers (SOs) to the Regional Programme Officers (RPOs). As has been the case in Gilgit, the RPOs should intensively and periodically brief field staff on programme principles, particularly new field staff. Furthermore, the senior Forester should monitor the ‘approach’ of newly hired field staff and the latter should coordinate field work with the SO. The SO should act as the ‘external’ field monitor with respect to technical field staff and should file confidential reports to the respective Programme Managers and RPOs.

The main weakness of this report is that it does not consider the role of the SO in programme delivery and monitoring. With the differentiation of the programme and the development of the Master Trainers programme, the conceptual role of the SO is not clear and needs to be reconsidered. Since the spirit of AKRSP is social organisation, the SO is, or ought to be, the most ‘socialized’ element in the programme. With better coordination between the SO and the field staff, the delivery and monitoring capacity of the technical sections can be strengthened. Particularly with respect to the development of an integrated NRM strategy, the SO can work as an effective field coordinator.

These suggestions for programme review are essentially aimed to expose some of the underlying issues that ought to be examined and to provide a broad framework for debate.
Appendix I: Checklist

Functions/Role of VFS

- does the VFS understand his role
- does the VFS agree with his role
- is there a written ToR/checklist for the VFS

Input supply

- method/logistics/constraints
- quality of planting material
- availability/timely supply/constraints (farmer perceptions)
- constraints in arranging supply of cuttings, rooted stock
- is the planting stock available on time
- frequency of contact with Forestry field staff/ideas for improvement

Technical input

- planting according to forestry design
- coverage of specialist/constraints/remuneration
- feedback on regular/refresher courses
- quality of technical supervision/review of planting methods
- survival rate of plantations under Refined Package
- progress on plan targets

Specialist selection

- has the specialist remained in the village
- demand/need for the specialist
- is the specialist accessible/constraints
- rate of remuneration/willingness to remunerate

Monitoring

- remuneration awarded by AKRSP/amount awarded
- methods of monitoring VFS performance/criteria
- feedback from VFS to forestry staff on planting progress/constraints

Sustainability of VFS

- what does the VFS consider his role to be
- after AKRSP how does the VFS foresees his role
- is the VFS acting as an extension agent/marketing agent
- has the VFS considered establishing small supply related enterprises
- demand of the VFS/how active is the VFS
- are farmers willing to remunerate the VFS
- is the role of the VFS becoming redundant with the dissemination of improved planting methods
Appendix II: Terms of Reference

Introduction

The reason to create a cadre of village specialists is that they would act as a resource group for their village as well as for AKRSP. Moreover, the development of a trained village cadre is a means not only to introduce improved technical methods of planting and nursery development, but it also provides a base to internalize the fundamentals of a social forestry system within the village.

In the conceptual stage the functions of the village forestry specialist (VFS) went beyond providing technical assistance and supervising plantation, to facilitating the process of preparing cuttings and transporting materials to planting sites; essentially functioning as effective extension workers and institutionalizing the link between the programme and the beneficiaries.

For this purpose farmers selected by the village organisation were given a two week training course in forestry. The focus of the training courses was to introduce improved techniques designed and tested by the Forestry section. Moreover, the specialists were briefed on their role as effective extension workers for their village in terms of facilitating the supply of planting stock between AKRSP and the village organisation.

An increasing concern at AKRSP over the last few years has been to gradually shift input related functions to the village organizations. For this purpose a Master Trainers programme was introduced, where the best specialists would receive additional training in order to enhance their extension and marketing skills. The idea is essentially to develop a better trained and capable village resource cadre that can serve as effective extension workers.

A review of the VFS programme can provide useful guidelines for the design of the Master Trainer programme, as it will give an idea of the resource capacity of the existing cadre of specialists.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the role and performance of the village forestry specialist programme within the guidelines of the Five Year Sustainable Forestry Development Programme.

The objectives of the study are essentially two-fold. First, the evaluation will review the role and performance of the VFS as a resource person for their village as technical as well as an extension agent and the constraints they face. Second, their role as extension agents for AKRSP and the nature and quality of their participation in AKRSP packages. The following indicators will be reviewed:

- Resource Persons for the Village
  - arranging inputs (cuttings, rooted stock)
  - technical assistance in planting; dissemination of improved planting methods
  - choice of the specialist; whether he/she have remained in the village
  - coverage of the specialist
  - quality of assistance (farmer perceptions)
  - demand for services; whether one specialist can effectively serve a village;
  - remuneration for extension and technical services
  - whether planting done by farmers on their own follow the design of the Refined Package
  - management and development of WO nurseries/women’s perceptions on the performance of the VFS/constraints/remuneration
  - demand/need/willingness for Women Forestry Specialists (WFS')
Resource Persons for AKRSP

- arranging timely supply of inputs (cuttings, rooted stock)
- quality of technical supervision; a general review of planting methods
- the frequency of their contact with AKRSP field staff; with regards to input supply, feedback for monitoring
- management of forest nurseries; quality of planting stock; effective and timely supply of planting stock
- remuneration provided by AKRSP; amount awarded, distributed on merit
- prospects for the sustainability of the VFS without remuneration from AKRSP
- progress on plan targets

Another issue of concern identified in the forestry programme design was the development of community based monitoring systems, which are functionally related to developing a sustainable forestry programme. Moreover, it was recommended in the forestry programme design that an internal monitoring system of the forestry section should be in place prior to programme implementation. Effective regular monitoring is essential for appropriate modifications and adjustments in project implementation as well as for future project design. Regular and systematic monitoring mechanisms need to be internalized at the village level.

The concern of this study is with the internal monitoring capacity of the Forestry section, essentially to review the role of the VFS in facilitating the monitoring system of the forestry section, particularly with respect to the nature and frequency of feedback with AKRSP staff. Since the role of the VFS was expected to evolve into an effective extension agent, they can act as useful resource persons for AKRSP with respect to regularly monitoring the programme’s progress, particularly with respect to the Refined Package.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative evaluation and field work will be conducted on the basis of open-ended discussions. Specific issues and questions will be outlined in a questionnaire which will be broadly based on the above mentioned indicators and further refined from discussions with the forestry staff, VFS programme design papers and preliminary field visits.

The team will comprise of a programme forester to provide a technical review of the performance of the VFS’. Aside from providing a comprehensive review of the VFS programme, the study will also be a source of general monitoring.

The study will be conducted in selected VOs of the Gilgit region. Since the VFS is a resource agent for the village in arranging input supplies, accessibility to the market is an important criteria. Villages with varying accessibility to Gilgit town need to selected for this purpose.

Three types of areas in the Gilgit region will be selected. The pilot project (Gojal Valley), plantation under Refined Package area and where a specialist has been trained however plantation under the supervision of the Forestry section has yet to be initiated.
Appendix III: Map