

Community-based Biodiversity Conservation in the Himalayas

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Foreword

Nestled among the mighty Himalayas, the state of Uttarakhand represents a unique mix of biological and cultural heritage. The state is known for its rich tradition of community-based conservation in the face of increasing demands for industrialization.

India's legislative framework, which had for long turned a blind eye on these traditions, is beginning to concede the importance of community institutions as an important vehicle for conservation. Significantly, the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, mandates the formation of local-level biodiversity management committees and recognizes the need to identify sites of biodiversity importance as heritage sites, marking a departure from the state-led command-and-control approaches towards conservation. In this scenario, it is critically important to document community efforts in managing biological resources, especially in states like Uttarakhand, where these resources constitute a global public good with enormous local benefits.

This volume brings together a set of articles that explore the participatory resource management systems and institutions such as van panchayats and sacred groves, and attempts to assess their compatibility with current legislative and policy provisions. In a significant way, these articles aim at bridging the gap between policy and practice, to provide field-level inputs to national- and state-level processes of policy deliberation. Several of these articles were presented in a state-level workshop on community conservation in biodiversity-rich areas (Srinagar, Garhwal, 24–25 November 2009) and received critical inputs from a cross-section of experts and stakeholders.

I would strongly recommend this volume to all practitioners of natural resource management and anyone interested in delving into our deep cultural traditions.



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