

**HARYANA COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECT
FOREST DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA**



*2007 Capability Assessment of
Village Resource Management
Committees*



**JOSEPH VIRUTHIYEL with GÖRAN JONSSON
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Executive Summary</i> 1	
I. The Context	4
II. Institution Building for Community Forestry under HCFP	5
III. Methodology	8
3.1 The Evaluation Process	8
3.2 The Evaluation Tools	8
3.3 Data Analysis	9
3.4 Measuring the Capacities	10
3.5 Stages of Organizational Capability Development	12
IV. Overall VRMC Capacity Rating 13	
4.1 Project Level Capacity	13
4.2 Overall Capacity Rating in Divisions	14
4.3 Objective Assessment vs. Self-Assessment	14
4.4 Overall Capacity Score on nine Indicators	15
4.5 VRMC Capability in Dam Villages	17
V. Changes in Capacity Sub-Indicators 19	
5.1 VRMC Capability to Manage Information	22
5.2 VRMC Capability for Resource Planning	22
5.3 Conflict Resolution Capability	24
5.4 Organizational Management Capacity of VRMCs	25
5.5 Capability to Access and Mobilize Finances for Resource Management	26
5.6 VRMC Capability for Resource Monitoring	26
5.7 Resource Protection Capability	27
5.8 VRMC Capability to Support Disadvantage Groups	29
5.9 VRMC Capability for Knowledge and Skills Sharing	30
5.10 Critical Indicators that Need Attention	31
5.11 Critical Weaknesses in Different Divisions	33
5.12 Relationship between VRMC Capacity and Woodlot Survival	33
VI. Sustainability Issues 35	
6.1 Will the VRMC continue after project exit?	35
6.2 Sustainability of Village Forest Plantations	36
6.3 What will happen to the forests after harvesting?	36
6.4 Sustainability of Dams and Johads	36
6.5 Benefit Sharing Arrangement	37
6.6 Village case stories illustrating sustainability, or the lack of it	37
Appendix: Sub-indicators for 2007 VRMC Capability Assessment	42

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Capacity Assessment of Village Resource Managing Committees was taken up by Haryana Community Forestry Project from the year 2001 and became an annual feature thereafter with the exception of year 2006. The purpose of the exercise was to understand whether the project is achieving its result of “improved capacities of village communities to manage community forestry activities”. Achievement of this result is necessary to reach the project purpose of “developing a process for sustainable management of natural resources”.
2. The exercise, besides tracking the “maturity levels” of VRMCs, represented a participatory capacity enhancement exercise by providing an opportunity to the members of the VRMCs to introspect, make a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and make a concrete time bound action plan to overcome weaknesses.
3. The challenge for developing the methodology for the exercise was to reduce the abstract concept of “VRMC capacity” to relevant performance areas related to various aspects of VRMC functioning. This provides a common understanding of the concept between the external evaluator and the VRMC. This was done by identifying nine broad indicators and 55 associated sub-indicators.
4. The broad indicators were performance related to information management, planning, conflict resolution, organizational management, financial management, participatory monitoring, management of CPRs, access of benefits to the disadvantaged, and knowledge and skills training.
5. The sub-indicators were formulated in terms of “Yes” or “No” questions, each yes answer indicating a positive capacity of the VRMC. On the basis of the answers, the VRMCs were given scores out of 10 on each indicator and on the basis of the aggregated score an Overall Capacity Index was developed by the external evaluator. On the basis of the Overall Capacity Index, the VRMCs were rated as “good” (mature), “moderately capable” (likely to become mature) or “weak” (not likely to become mature).
6. The VRMCs’ score on the basis of their own self-assessment was compared with the external evaluators’ rating, and the differences, if any, were discussed and the VRMCs made aware why the ratings differed.
7. Thereafter a comparison was made with the previous years’ assessments, which gave an indication of the efforts made by the VRMC in improving their performance. On the basis of this common understanding and awareness, the VRMCs developed a concrete action plan for further improvement.
8. The current round of assessments covered all 328 VRMCs, of which 26 underwent the assessment 5 times, 278 underwent the exercise two to four times and 55 passed through the exercise for the first time.
9. According to the current assessment 24 percent of the VRMCs have an overall capacity index above seven and can be considered as “good” or “mature”, and about 71 percent have moderate capability. The proportion of weak VRMCs is only 5.5 percent. **Thus the vast majority of the VRMCs have the potential to be sustainable and continue even after project exit.** This would be a matter of great satisfaction for the project, but the actual test will come when the project ends and the VRMCs have to perform independently.

10. It is slightly discouraging, however, that the proportion of “good” VRMCs has come down from the level of 30 percent in 2005 to 24 percent currently. Nevertheless, the proportion has increased from nil level in 2003 and 9 percent in 2004. The proportion of “moderate” VRMCs has steadily improved from the level of 36 percent in 2003 to 70.5 percent in 2007. Conversely, the proportion of “weak” VRMCs has been reduced from a whopping 64 percent in 2003 to only 5.5 percent currently.
11. Among divisions, the proportion of good VRMCs is much higher in the divisions in the northern circle and the proportion of weak VRMCs is much higher in the south-western circle.
12. There was substantial variation between the assessment of the external evaluators and the self-assessment of the VRMCs with regard to “good” and “moderate” VRMCs, but there was near unanimity regarding “weak” VRMCs. The optimism of the VRMCs may augur well, spurring them to perform better in the future.
13. At the project wide scale, the Overall Capacity Index of a typical HCFP VRMC in 2007 is 6.1, which indicates that **the average VRMC has moderate capacity, with good capacity within reach.**
14. In comparison to the assessment of 2005 the capacities related to VRMC management, protection of natural resources and knowledge and skills sharing have improved in 2007. The capacity related to financial resource mobilization continued to be weak in all the assessment years. **The conflict resolution capability has shown a diminishing trend against the 2005 level, and there are evidences that new conflict areas are emerging. This aspect needs to be tackled as it has major implications for the sustainability of VRMCs.**
15. Villages of batch I and IV appear to have better capacity than those in batches II, V and VI. The batch V and VI VRMCs are fairly new, but the weaknesses in batch II VRMCs appears to be not good.
16. The proportion of VRMCs having good information management capacity has declined over the 2005 level, but is better than in the assessment years preceding it. Information being key to planning, the VRMCs need to enhance their capabilities in this sphere, particularly because the Forest Department will not be interacting with the VRMCs as frequently as in the past.
17. Regarding planning capability also there has been some declining trend, except in making some updating adjustments in the microplan and in village consensus on microplan contents, where the situation has improved since 2005.
18. In all sub-indicators related to conflict resolution capability, there is some loss of ground from the 2005 level, though this continues to be one of the strongest areas of the VRMCs in Haryana.
19. The performance with respect to organizational capacity is better than in all the previous years, which augurs well for the continued sustainability of VRMCs.
20. Regarding financial management capability, which is the weakest area of the VRMCs, there are improvements in generation of income from common land or other village resources, funding of micro-projects by non-project resources and adequacy of funds for future resource management. However, fewer VRMCs

than in 2005 believe they have sufficient funds to become sustainable and VRMC capability to generate funds from outside the village has been vastly reduced.

21. On all aspects of resource monitoring there is a decline from the 2005 level, except in the matter of logbook maintenance.
22. The substantial improvement in the resource protection realm augurs well for the sustainability of the resource management process.
23. There appears to be improvement in many areas of the capability to support disadvantaged groups. The knowledge and skills sharing capacity is also improving.
24. The report also focuses on some critical indicators that have declined over the previous year and the critical areas that need attention in the different divisions.
25. The report also attempted to correlate the capacity index with survival percentage of plantations. **It was found that the survival percentage of woodlot plantations in villages which are rated as “good” was higher at 75.5 percent, compared to 69.7 percent in villages with “weak” VRMCs.** Villages with social fencing have better survival than those without. Good VRMC capacity combined with social fencing was seen to be especially crucial for survival in woodlots with an area above 40 ha.
26. Responses to probing questions on sustainability revealed that regarding the continuance of the VRMC as an effective resource management institution there were mixed opinions. While about one third of the VRMCs are confident of functioning effectively, a good number made it contingent on the attitude of the Panchayat that will be in power and continued support of the Forest Department. In most of the villages with weak VRMC capabilities, there were strong doubts about their continuance. Regarding protection of village woodlots and tree groves, people are, by and large, conscious about the need to preserve natural resources and in many of the villages there was a firm resolve to protect them by any means. The sustainability of dams and johads appears to be assured as these meet some of the basic necessities of the communities and adequate user mobilization is in place. Regarding the end use of income from tree harvest, there was general awareness about the need to set apart a part of the proceeds for future afforestation and resource development activities, but this is again contingent upon the policies of the Panchayats that would be in position at the time of harvest. People appear to be generally aware of equitable distribution of benefits to the disadvantaged, but concrete plans are yet to emerge.
27. The overall conclusion of the study is that at least one fourth of the VRMCs have developed the maturity to effectively handle resource management activities in the future. Barring about 5 percent of the VRMCs which are weak, the rest have developed moderate levels of maturity and with sufficient handholding they would be able to carry on the process of self-directed natural resource management. There exists sufficient motivation to take up tree plantation activities both on community land and private land. Protection of trees has become the ethos of the community and wanton destruction of tree resources no longer muster impunity.
28. However, **the continued support and handholding of the Forest Department would be necessary to consolidate the gains. This could be done either through linking the project villages and their VRMCs with State or centrally sponsored schemes or through a follow-on project.**

I. THE CONTEXT

Community forestry has become a predominant paradigm in the search for a solution to the problem of degradation of natural resources and the environment. In the words of Alistair Starre, community forestry is a movement today, challenging foresters to change their thinking. The underlying principle is that people are the key to success rather than the cause of failure. However, there are many barriers to the movement in practice. These include the ownership or control of forest resources by people, exploitation by factions within communities or by outsiders, heterogeneity of communities, the long gestation period of investments that make the rewards seem to be too far away to be worth striving for, seemingly irreversible degradation due to past logging or agricultural activity, etc. Besides, participatory decision-making can be cumbersome and unwieldy. The community may not be interested in maintaining tree cover, preferring to clear it for agriculture or to make money. They often lack the technical skill to manage the existing forest or to plant new ones. Lack of sufficient capital to establish viable processing facilities is a major problem. The outside agency that is promoting community forestry may be doing so with a particular outcome in mind, an outcome not necessarily in tune with the wants and needs of the community in question; forestry on degraded or logged-over land may be acceptable.

However, the opportunities offered by community forestry are many. Local people, who are often blamed for the destruction of the forest, have the opportunity to establish a long-term source of income. Foresters have the opportunity to rediscover the grassroots of their profession. And nations have the opportunity to develop a forest-based industry that has widespread community support.

The key for the success of any community forestry is partnership. That calls for the adoption of 'bottom-up' decision-making and the abandoning of authoritarian approaches. For professional foresters have to learn from people rather than attempting to educate them in a one-way process.

Community forestry is a process of increasing the involvement of and reward for local people, of seeking balance between outside and community interests and of increasing local responsibility for the management of the forest resource. Also, like sustainable development, community forestry should be a learning experience for all involved parties.

Martel & Whyte (1992) define community forestry as a village-level forestry activity, decided on collectively and implemented on communal land, where local populations participate in the planning, establishing, managing and harvesting of forest crops, and so receive a major proportion of the socio-economic and ecological benefits from the forest. The distinguishing characteristics of community forestry, as opposed to conventional forestry, are the following (Revington, 1992):

- the local community controls a clearly and legally defined area of forest;
- the local community is free from governmental and other outside pressure concerning the utilisation of that forest;
- if the forestry involves commercial sale of timber or other products, then the community is free from economic exploitation of markets or other pressure from outside forces;
- the community has long-term security of tenure over the forest and sees its future as being tied to the forest.

II. INSTITUTION BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY FORESTRY UNDER HCFP

The European Commission supported Haryana Community Forestry Project (HCFP) is one of the most successful experiments in community forestry. Haryana State is one of the States of India that have very little forest area under government control. However, the State is endowed with a large tract of community owned land, which is under the control of village Panchayats. The prime area of such lands is leased out to farmers in auction each year to raise agricultural crops. Some lands, which are not suitable for raising crops or which do not have irrigation facilities, were either lying barren or had the remnants of plantations under social forestry. In addition, there are privately owned farm lands or sand dune affected areas on which trees could be planted if sufficient incentives and technical support were provided.

The Haryana Community Forestry Project targeted both the community owned and private land to promote the culture and practice of tree planting. The forestry models under the project were carefully designed to suit the varying land conditions and the agro-climatic requirements of the regions. Raising of village forests on community land was the main focus for investment of public funds. While providing a green belt in the villages, the village woodlots (or gram vans as the people of Haryana proudly call them) would be oriented to production forestry, yielding fuelwood, fodder, timber and income to the village community. In addition, tree groves were established on strategic locations in project villages to provide greenery, clean air and shade, serving purely environmental rather than production purposes. A later modification of the tree groves was the linear tree grove model, or strip plantation on road and canal sides.

While these two components were common for all the agro-climatic regions, farm forestry centred on poplar and eucalyptus was restricted to the more temperate and rain rich northern region, comprising the divisions of Ambala and Kurukshetra. For the south-western region, an arid and sand dune affected region, farm forestry concentrated on hardy species like neem, kikar, roheda, etc. For the sand dunes special sand dune fixation models with appropriate spacing and drought resistant species mix based models were developed. Farmers were given incentives to meet part of the investment cost in the form of free seedlings, inputs and technical support. To meet the nutrition requirements of people, horticultural tree seedlings and vegetable cultivars were provided to village households.

All these plantation models were designed to achieve the project goal of “improving the natural environment through sustainable management of the natural resources”. The purpose of the project is to “develop a process of sustainable management of natural resources through active participation of village communities”.

The participatory management methodology of the project is designed to enhance the stake of village people in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and management of project activities. The objective of the project is to reverse the process of degradation and depletion of natural resources through community led initiatives for development of village forests. One of the project results is empowering disadvantaged sections of the village community, including women, to have a dominant say in decisions regarding development of community forests. Community involvement is ensured through the village based institution of Village Resource Managing Committees (VRMCs), which are helped to develop technical, managerial and social capacity to carry on community forestry activities even after project phase-out. Disadvantaged sections represented by Scheduled Castes and women are given due representation in the membership of the executive body of these committees. Being a sub-committee of the Village Panchayat, the latter, being the organ of local self-government based in the community itself, becomes the ultimate guardian and custodian of community forests, which are common property resources of village people.

The project did not rest content just by forming the village based natural resource management institution. To develop the capabilities of this institution to mobilize the village communities they represent to participate actively and benefit from the various inputs provided by the project was the major challenge. This was done by adopting a process approach. Utmost care was taken to select the project villages in the first place. A database on all the villages in project divisions was prepared on the parameters of village backwardness and potential for community forestry activities by scanning through all secondary sources. After short-listing the villages, the division level forestry team made a quick assessment of the villages by making visits and interacting with the communities. On the recommendations of the team the PMU made the final selection of project villages. This scientific village selection system precluded any political or other external influence.

Project implementation was done in a phased manner, starting with a set of about 60 villages in the year 2000-2001, with 50-60 villages in each subsequent year or batch. In each village intensive social mobilization and forestry work was done for three years continuously with the intention of transferring the responsibilities to the communities in the fourth year or thereafter subject to the development of sufficient capabilities and maturity of the village based resource management institution. The technical support from the forestry team continues throughout the project cycle.

A peculiar feature of the community forestry development process adopted by the project is a yearlong preparatory and social mobilization phase preceding the plantation year. This year is used to identify village problems and priorities through Participatory Rural Appraisal, forming the Village Institution through consensus, providing them initial training, undertaking microplanning, forming the micro-project monitoring team, etc. The microplan has a forestry development section (to be financed under the project) and a general development component (the funds for which have to be mobilized by the Village Panchayat through convergence with programmes of line departments). Thus people are involved very closely in preparing the development plan for their own villages, as also implementing and monitoring implementation.

Once the mobilization phase is completed the village takes up the plantation work with the onset of monsoons. People contribute by providing labour, helping in distribution of seedlings, participating in planting and maintenance operations and tracking progress, growth and survival. During this establishment phase, the planted area of common land is fully closed for grazing, but people can cut and carry grass free of cost. Though the restriction on grazing causes inconvenience in the short run, the luxurious growth of grass in the planted area compensates for the loss. In about three years' time, the trees reach the required height and girth and are free of damage through grazing.

It is the intention of the project that the close association of people through the Village Resource Management Committee will create the enabling condition to carry on forestry as a sustainable way of village economic and social life even after project exit.

The project has taken conscious steps to develop capacities of village communities and their resource management institution through the following activities:

- sensitization, awareness raising and publicity;
- assistance in managing the VRMCs through on-the-job training in organizing meetings, maintaining records, monitoring and evaluation;
- training and retraining of office bearers of VRMCs, also training of other VRMC members, including exposure visits;
- organizing entry point activities;
- technical and managerial advice.

The project also tracked the results of its capacity building efforts through the help of its Technical Assistance team. A participatory tool for tracking institutional capacities was developed in 2001 and piloted in 26 sample villages. The exercise became an annual feature from 2003 and since then all VRMCs were subject to the assessment.

The aim of the exercise was to measure the achievement of the project result of “improved capacities of village communities to manage community forest activities”. The exercise looked for evidence that the project was marching towards the achievement of the project purpose of “developing a process for sustainable management of natural resources through active participation of village communities”. This is necessary if the project is to achieve the goal of “improved natural environment”.

The utility of the exercise will consist in the information it throws up regarding the following:

- Is the result being achieved?
- What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the achievement of the result?
- What remedial measures need to be taken for better attainment of the result?

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Evaluation Process

Participatory VRMC capacity assessment tools were pre-tested in 26 villages (a 20% sample) of existing VRMCs in October/November, 2001. These 26 villages belonged to Batch I (where the project commenced its activities in year 2000-01) and Batch II (year 2001-02). Reassessment of the same set of villages was done in January 2003, along with a first assessment of another 144 villages of batches I to III. Considering the utility of the exercise in sensitizing the VRMCs and the project staff, as well as serving the purpose of an indirect participatory method of capacity building, the assessments were extended to all villages from 2003. Thus in the 2004 assessment exercise all the 230 villages in which the project had initiated activities were covered. In 2005 a total of 278 villages were covered. In 2006 there was no assessment, as it was considered that too frequent assessments would not be needed. The current assessment covered all existing 328 VRMCs (two more have subsequently been formed). This includes batch VI villages which underwent the assessment exercise for the first time. Batch V villages underwent the exercise for the second time. Batches I to IV have undergone the exercise three to five times.

The current field exercise was carried out during September 2007 by experienced local consultants together with selected SDOs. The report has been prepared by the Sociologist in the Technical Assistance team, with data processing analysis and other inputs by the TA Team Leader.

3.2 The Evaluation Tools

The participatory capacity assessment tools were similar to those that were previously used by the team in 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2005. Slight modifications in the tools were made in 2005 by adding a few sub-indicators, redefining some and deleting some.

As in the past, the assessment tools comprised the following:

- A **VRMC Capability Self-Assessment Chart** to be filled in by the representatives of the VRMC at a full VRMC meeting with guidance from the assessment team. The chart has four columns. Column 1 provides the names of the nine capability indicators in Hindi. Column 2 is where the VRMC rates itself as having a capability that is “excellent”, “very good”, “good”, “medium”, or “weak” for each of the nine capabilities; the scores associated with these ratings are 10, 8, 6, 4 and 2/0 respectively. Column 3 is where the VRMC writes the actions that are needed for them to improve their capabilities. Column 4 is where the time frame for the improvement to take place is entered. The columns are to be filled in by the VRMC members formed in a circle and the assessment team formed part of the circle in order to create an atmosphere of togetherness.

This self-assessment gives an opportunity to the VRMCs to examine where they stand with respect to achieving the goal of sustainability and independence and decide on a course of action they need to initiate to achieve autonomy and sustainability. They also commit themselves to take the actions needed. A copy of the self-assessment sheet is left with the VRMC, which they have to display at a prominent place in the Chetna Kendra so that the village community also has the occasion to see the assessment and contribute their share to strengthen their VRMC. During each round of self-assessment the facilitating team has to discuss with the VRMC the action taken in this direction. However, the experience has been that the self-assessment sheet is usually opened only at the time of the next

round of evaluation. The SDOs need to ensure that the self-assessment sheet is used by the VRMCs to initiate remedial action, by holding discussions on it during VRMC meetings at least on a quarterly basis.

- A **Checklist of probing questions related to the “Nine Key VRMC Capacity Indicators”**, which are used at the time of carrying out the self-assessment with the VRMC. The team used the checklist to assist the VRMC members in understanding the meaning of each of the nine main capacity indicators, which may be misunderstood by the VRMC members unless qualification and explanation take place prior to the VRMC self-rating. This checklist has space for inclusion of information provided by the VRMC that might help the team in further amplifying their own objective assessment of the VRMC later on through case studies or anecdotal information.
- A **Matrix of “Capacity Sub-Indicators” related to the “Nine Key Capability Indicators”** is used to objectively measure, through mostly Yes or No answers, a set of questions regarding diverse aspects of establishment and functioning of the VRMC. Most of the sub-indicators measure the capacity of the VRMC, a few relate to the performance of project staff and their level of support to the VRMCs. Several of the sub-indicators relate to long term sustainability aspects of the VRMC. This matrix is to be completed by the assessment team (Outsiders) during the visit to the village through varying interview techniques. All this data lends itself to quantitative analysis. As the self-assessment in some cases tends to be overoptimistic, this matrix provides a basis for objective evaluation (outsider evaluation)

The assessments were done individually for each VRMC and it took about three hours to complete each exercise.

3.3 Data Analysis

There has been some changes in the assessment system from the 2005 round of assessments compared to the earlier ones. Firstly, in the previous system there were 79 sub-indicators for 9 broad indicators of capability. From 2005 the number of sub-indicators was reduced to 55, as some of the indicators had become redundant. Some sub-indicators were also redefined or their emphasis changed, while others were added. Table 2.1 depicts the changes.

Table 2.1: Summary of the number of indicators and sub-indicators used in VRMC capability assessments

Main indicators →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	All
No. of sub-indicators in old system	8	8	7	15	9	9	10	6	7	79
No. of sub-indicators in new system	4	7	6	9	6	6	7	4	6	55

Secondly, the present system assigns weightage to different sub-indicators according to their perceived importance. The weightages range from 1 to 2.5 for the sub-indicators, making the total score for each broad indicator 10 and the possible score for nine indicators 90. The overall capacity index was arrived at by dividing the total score by 9, the maximum possible score being 10.

As the various indicators carried different possible maximum score in the previous system, the Overall Capacity Index (OCI) was previously calculated as follows: each indicator was given the rating of ‘weak’ if the score was 0, ‘moderate’ if the score was 0.5

and 'good' if 1. The indicator rating score was then added up, giving the OCI rating 0-3 = weak, 3.5-6 = moderate and 6.5-9 = good. As total possible score for each indicator in the new system is always 10, the OCI is now simply calculated as the average of the individual indicator scores, with the following rating: 0-4 = weak; >4-7 = moderate; >7-10 = good.

Table 2.2: Ratings for each broad indicator

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>No. of sub-indicators</i>	<i>Max score</i>	<i>Score range for rating</i>		
			<i>Weak</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Good</i>
Information generation/access	4	10	0-2.5	5	7.5-10
Planning	7	10	0-5	5.5-7.5	8-10
Conflict resolution	6	10	0-4.5	5-7	8-10
VRMC management	9	10	0-4.5	5-7.5	8-10
Financial resources	6	10	0-4	4.5-7	8-10
Participatory monitoring	6	10	0-4.5	5-7	8-10
Management of CPRs	7	10	0-4	5-6	7-10
Benefiting the disadvantaged	4	10	0-2.5	5	7.5-10
Knowledge & skills sharing	6	10	0-4	5-6	7-10
Overall Capacity Index	55	90/9 = 10	0-4	>4-7	>7-10

3.4 Measuring the Capacities

Capability of any institution is an abstract concept which is difficult to measure. Therefore we have developed nine broad indicators covering various dimensions of VRMC capabilities. These broad indicators are again measured through a set of sub-indicators. A brief description of the indicators follows in this section.

Information access

- The institution has developed an adequate information base relating to its field/area of activities;
- the members of the community have access to such information;
- this information system provides a basis to understand the problems it wants to tackle and the potential solutions available.

Planning capability

- The institution is capable of planning its activities through making appropriate choices to solve the problems it wants to address;
- the plans it develops is understood by the community;
- the community approves the plan.

Conflict resolution capability

- The institution openly discusses conflicts that arise in the course of resource management and settles them to achieve its goals. In the context of VRMCs, conflicts may arise within the office bearers of the organization, with the Panchayat to which it is affiliated, with the general membership or with functionaries of HCFP.

Organizational capability

- VRMC has a representative character (represents all stakeholders);
- it is democratically elected or selected;
- all households in the community have a stake in the organization;
- the general membership owns up the activities and plans of the organization;
- the general membership is informed about its activities through meetings or circulation of reports;
- it has financial transparency through book-keeping and auditing;
- it has an agreed bye-law/constitution and has a recognized legal character;
- office bearers have received and internalized the messages of training programmes;
- link workers contribute to the activities and are trained.

Capability to access and mobilize resources

An organization needs to mobilize adequate financial and human resources to meet the requirements for implementing its plans. These may be:

- Resources within the community
- Resources from the project
- External resources.

Capability to monitor plan implementation

Monitoring of efficiency of its accepted plans and projects and evaluation of its effects and impacts are essential for organization performance. In the context of HCFP the VRMCs participate in this function in the following ways:

- By maintaining logbooks of various forestry activities.
- By forming micro-project monitoring committees to monitor progress and watch over tree survival rates. These committees provide regular feedback to the VRMCs for taking up remedial action.
- By involving the community to participate in project implementation and monitoring.

Capability to protect natural resources created under village projects and all natural resources in the village

These may be through the medium of:

- Social fencing systems (warnings, fines, social boycott, etc. of offenders, appropriate rules and regulations approved by the Panchayat)
- Physical works
- Protection watchers
- Any other means.

While monitoring may provide necessary inputs for such protection measures, the actual follow-up will constitute the protection function.

Capability to provide supplementary income to disadvantaged groups and women

The capability is directly related to the project purpose of sustainable management of natural resources. For when basic social and economic needs of significant sections of the village community are not met, they cannot be expected to support resource management efforts. The capability of VRMCs in this sphere can be understood through:

- The support provided by them to form Self-Help Groups and facilitate the taking up of income generating activities by these groups.
- Ensuring that the village poor get wage employment under the programme.
- Ensuring that the poor have access to grass, lopping and dry matter from plantation areas.

Capability to share knowledge and skills related to resource management

This capability relates to the action taken by the organization to transmit to the village community the knowledge and skills developed among its office bearers through various training programmes arranged by HCFP. The idea is that once training support from the project is not available the VRMC should be in a position to continue the knowledge imparting function through grassroots level trainers.

3.5 Stages of Organizational Capability Development

It takes time for any organization to develop its capabilities. There will be uneven development among organizations formed at the same time, due to differences in educational and social composition of the leadership, differences in community solidarity, resource availability and diverse other factors. But it is possible to differentiate three stages of organization development – the initial stage, the growing stage and the mature stage. In the context of VRMCs in Haryana we may say that ideally the first year of VRMC formation can be treated as the initial stage, the second and third years as the growing stage and by at least the fourth year, they must ideally reach the mature stage. But this ideal situation may not always prevail and some VRMCs, which have completed 4 years, may still be at the initial stage, whereas some VRMCs may have reached the mature stage within two years.

A good evaluation system must be able to pinpoint these different levels of development and assign reasons for such uneven development. It should be able to tell what actions need to be initiated to enable the VRMCs that lag behind to develop more quickly.

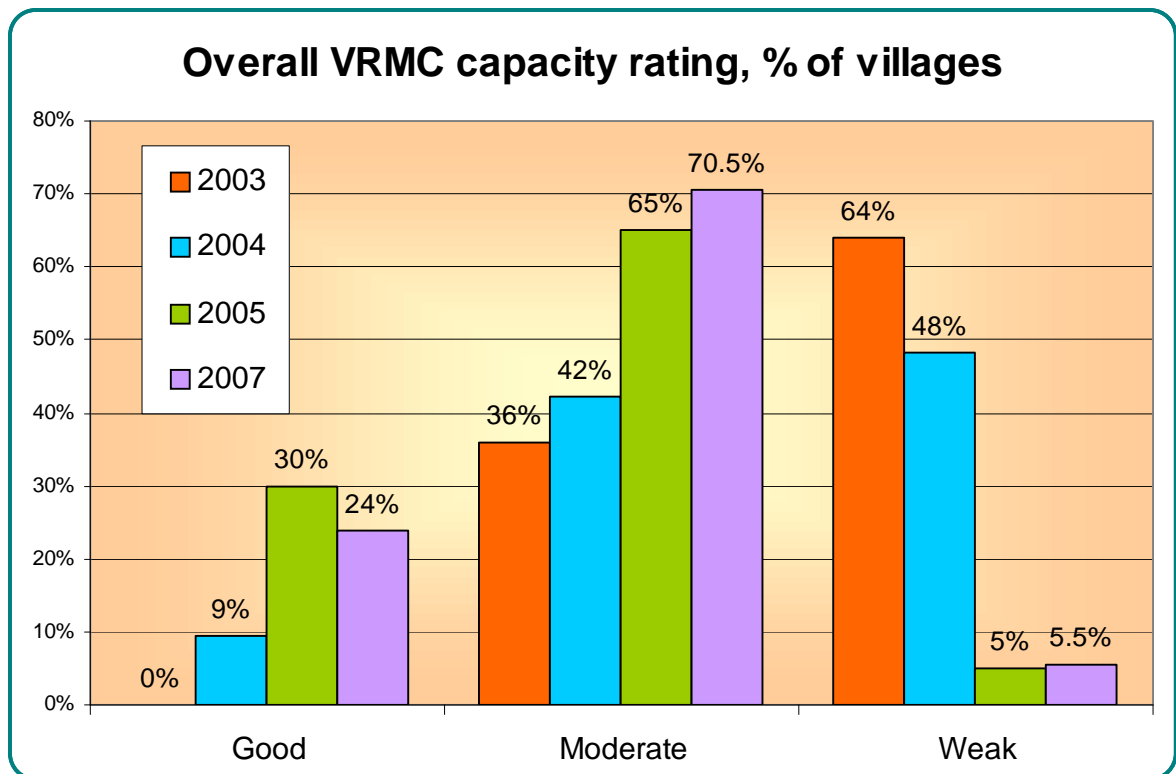
On the basis of external assessment of the performance of VRMCs on each of these indicators, we categorize the VRMCs as “good”, “moderately capable” or “weak”. These categorisations may alternatively be viewed as “mature”, “moderately mature” and “not mature”.

IV. OVERALL VRMC CAPACITY RATING

4.1 Project Level Capacity

The percentage of VRMCs that have been rated as “good” by external assessment has shown substantial increase from the initial assessment year of 2003, when none of the 169 VRMCs studied was assessed as good. The percentage increased to nine percent in 2004 (out of 230 VRMCs), increased to 30 percent in 2005 (N = 278), but there was a drop to 24 percent in the current assessment (N = 328). This is to be compared with the logical framework target of 25 percent of the VRMCs being able to act autonomously.

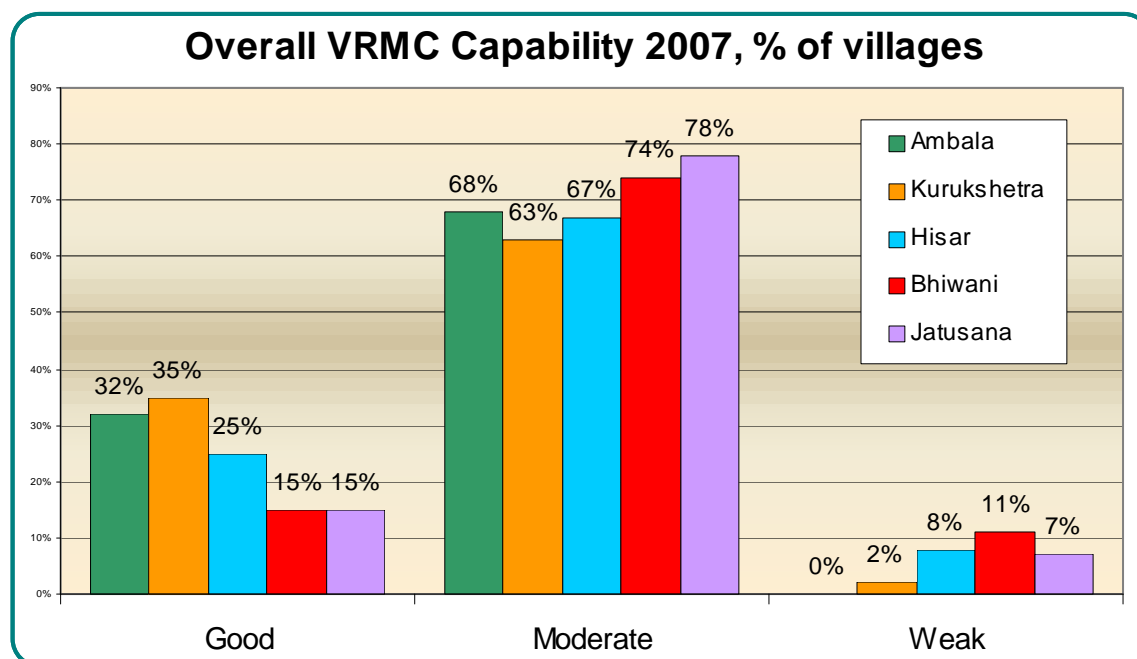
Figure 1:



The proportion of VRMCs with moderate capacity has been showing steady increase from the level of 36 percent in 2003 to nearly 71 percent in the current assessment. Correspondingly the proportion of weak VRMCs witnessed a steady decrease from the level of 64 percent in 2003 to 5 percent in 2005 and 5.5 percent in 2007. The project's logical framework has a target of 75 percent active VRMCs; if this is taken to represent VRMCs with good or at least moderate capacity, the target has been well achieved.

It may be concluded from the above that the consistent capacity building of HCFP has paid off and the small number of weak VRMCs shows that the project strategy of empowering grassroots level resource management institution has been relevant, efficient and effective. There is still some time left for the project to concentrate on strengthening the small number of weak VRMCs and further strengthen the moderate VRMCs to reach the stage of maturity. The good VRMCs could be relied upon as role models and catalysts for the weak ones to emulate and draw inspiration from.

Figure 2:



4.2 Overall Capacity Rating in Divisions

Table 4.1 and Figure 2 depict the Overall Capacity Ratings of VRMCs in different divisions. It is found that around one third of VRMCs in Kurukshetra and Ambala have been rated as “good” in external assessment.

Table 4.1: Division-wise Overall Capacity Rating of VRMCs

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Total
Good	25	19	15	11	9	79
Moderate	54	34	41	55	47	231
Weak	0	1	5	8	4	18
Total	89	54	61	74	60	328

25 percent of VRMCs in Hisar are “good” compared to 15 percent each in Bhiwani and Jatusana. At the same time, the highest proportion of weak VRMCs (11%) is found in Bhiwani. In the northern circle, only an insignificant proportion of VRMCs have been rated as weak. This is probably due to the fact that the northern circle has a long tradition of forest based livelihoods, aided by the existence of a vibrant timber processing industry and more amenable climatic conditions. The south-western circle, on the other hand, is highly arid and tree farming is a difficult proposition.

4.3 Objective Assessment vs. Self-Assessment

In addition to the external assessment by the consultant’s team, each VRMC was requested to make a self-assessment of their own capacity, using the same parameters as used in the external assessment. Easy to understand pictorial methods were used for this assessment. The comparison shows considerable variation in the two types of assessments. While the external assessors rated one fourth of the VRMCs as “good”, nearly two thirds of the VRMCs rated themselves as good. Concomitantly “moderate” rating reduced from a little over 70 percent in external assessment, to 34 percent in self-assessment. Only in the matter of “weak” assessment there was nearness of perception.

Table 4.2: Rating of VRMCs: Objective Assessment vs. Self-Assessment

Rating	External Assessment		Self-Assessment	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Good	79	24.1	204	62.2
Moderate	231	70.4	112	34.1
Weak	18	5.5	12	3.7
Total	328	100	328	100

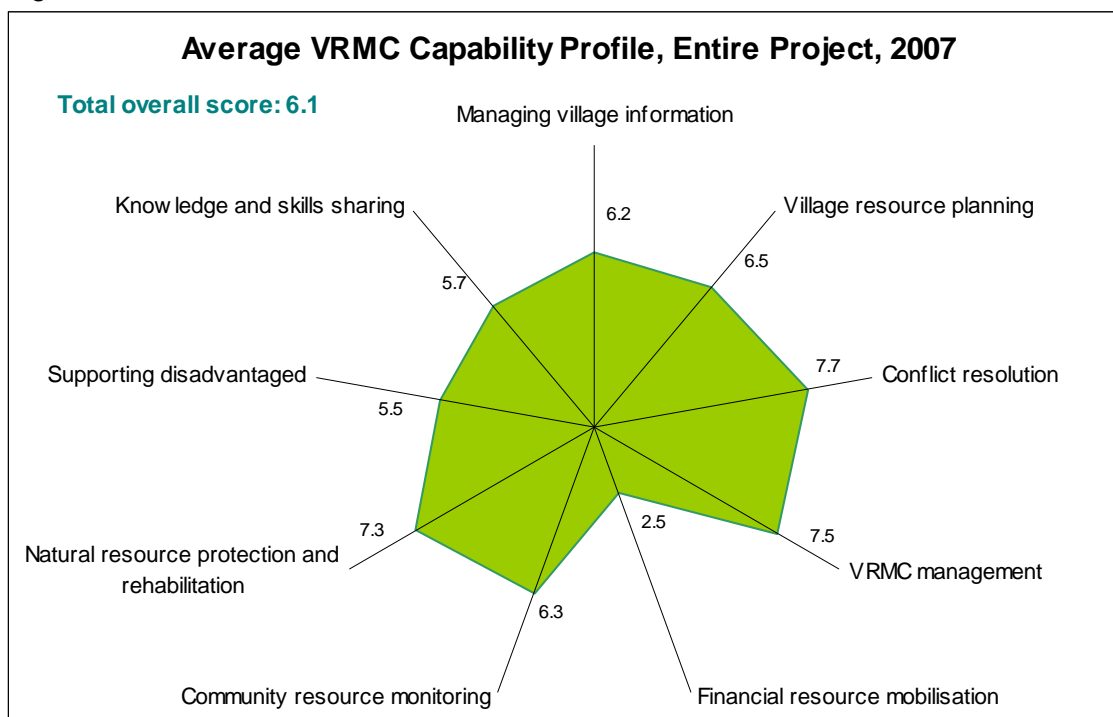
The more optimistic rating in self-assessment and its divergence with the objective assessment is not unnatural as the VRMCs themselves need not have a project-wide exposure and perspective and the high value nature of the assessment criteria. In fact this optimism may augur well as the VRMCs tend to strive for better levels of performance in the future.

4.4 Overall Capacity Score on nine Indicators

At project wide scale, the overall capacity of an HCFP VRMC in 2007 was 6.1 out of a maximum score of 10. This score is slightly less than the score of 6.2 in 2005, but much higher than the score of 1.2 in 2001, 3.9 in 2003 and 5.1 in 2004. The marginal decrease from the 2005 level could be attributed to the coverage of a larger number of newer VRMCs in the 2007 assessment and some downtrend in the capacity of the older VRMCs, which have completed most of the project related activities.

As in 2005, the highest score is for the capacity related to conflict resolution. The score on this indicator at 7.7 is lower than the score of 8.8 obtained in 2005. This probably could be due to the cropping up of differences arising out of change of composition of VRMC membership or change of Panchayat leadership and the factionalism related to these changes. The capacities that have witnessed improvements over all the previous years are VRMC management (7.5 compared to previous best score of 6.3 in 2005), natural resource management and protection (7.3 against the previous best of 7.1 in 2005) and knowledge and skills sharing (5.7 against the previous best of 5.3 in 2005).

Figure 3:

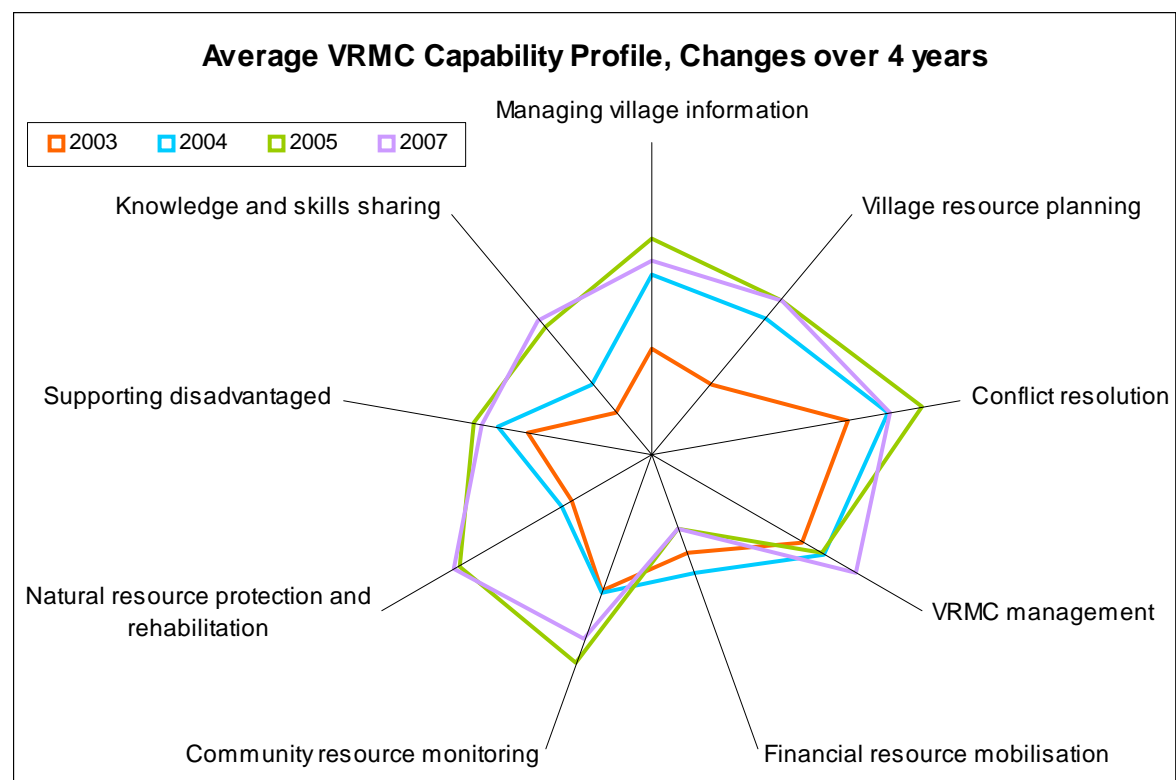


The weakest capacity is related to financial resource mobilization which remains at the level of 2.5. Village resource planning capacity score is 6.5 in both 2007 and 2005. On all other indicators the capacity score is less than 2005 but much better than the previous years.

Table 4.3: Time series Capacity Score on nine Indicators

Capacity Indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
Managing village information	3.4	5.8	6.9	6.2
Village resource planning	2.9	5.7	6.5	6.5
Conflict resolution	6.4	7.7	8.8	7.7
VRMC management	5.6	6.3	6.3	7.5
Financial resource mobilisation	3.3	4	2.5	2.5
Community resource monitoring	4.6	4.7	7.1	6.3
Natural resource protection & rehabilitation	3	3.3	7.1	7.3
Supporting disadvantaged	4	5	5.8	5.5
Knowledge and skills sharing	1.8	3	5.3	5.7
Overall	3.9	5.1	6.2	6.1

Figure 4:



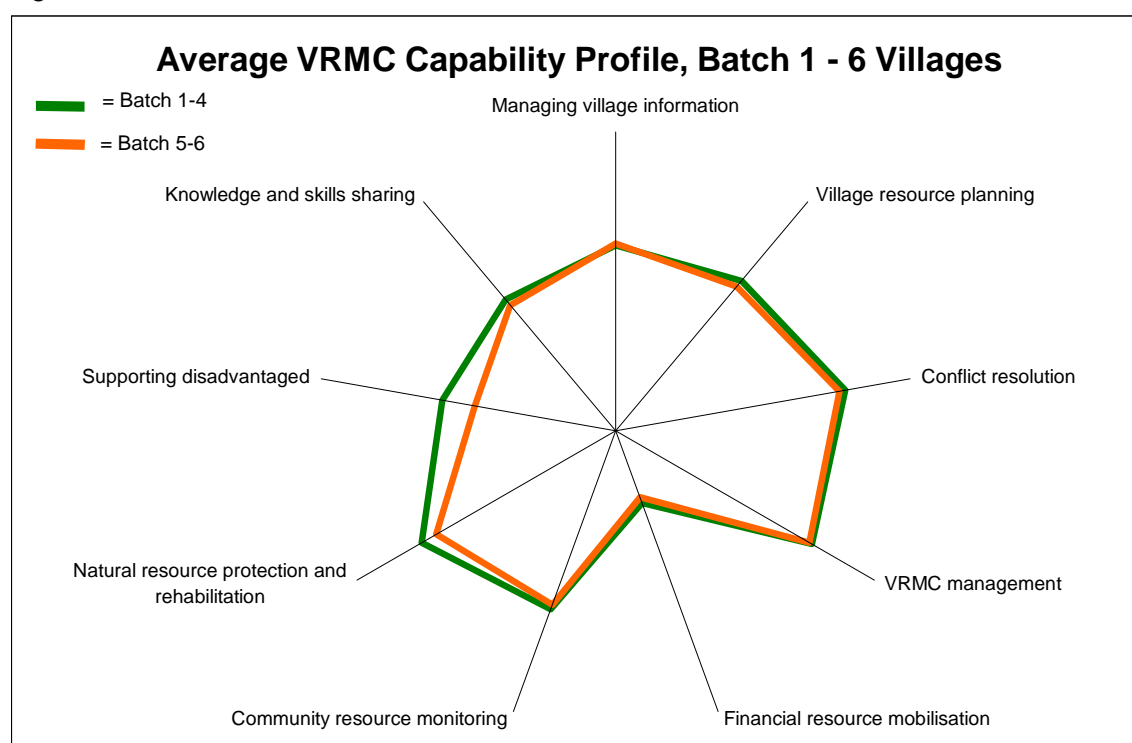
An attempt was made to compare the capacity score to the age of VRMCs (Table 4.4 and Figure 5). Batch 1 villages, those in which VRMCs were formed in 2000-01, and also batch 4 villages (2004-05), appear to have greater capacities in most of the indicators than the other batches. VRMCs in batches 2, 5 and 6 have lower scores than the average score of all VRMCs taken together.

However, there are only marginal differences in overall score related to the age of the VRMC. The younger VRMCs have been catching up with the rest, except for the indicators “Natural resource protection and rehabilitation” and “Supporting disadvantaged” (almost all Self-Help Groups are located in batch 1-4 villages).

Table 4.4: Batch-wise Capacity Score of VRMCs at Project level

Capacity Indicator	Batch 1	Batch 2	Batch 3	Batch 4	Batch 5	Batch 6
Managing village information	6.3	6.1	5.9	6.4	5.9	6.5
Village resource planning	7.1	6.5	5.9	6.6	6.4	6.3
Conflict resolution	8.1	7.6	7.5	7.9	7.6	7.6
VRMC management	7.9	7.2	7.3	7.8	7.4	7.6
Financial resource mobilisation	2.7	2.1	2.6	2.9	2.4	2.3
Community resource monitoring	6.3	6	6.4	6.7	6.5	6
Natural resource protection & rehabilitation	7.6	7.5	7.6	7.4	7.2	6.7
Supporting disadvantaged	6.6	5.7	5.8	5.6	4.5	5
Knowledge and skills sharing	6.1	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.6
Overall	6.5	6.0	6.1	6.3	5.9	6.0

Figure 5:



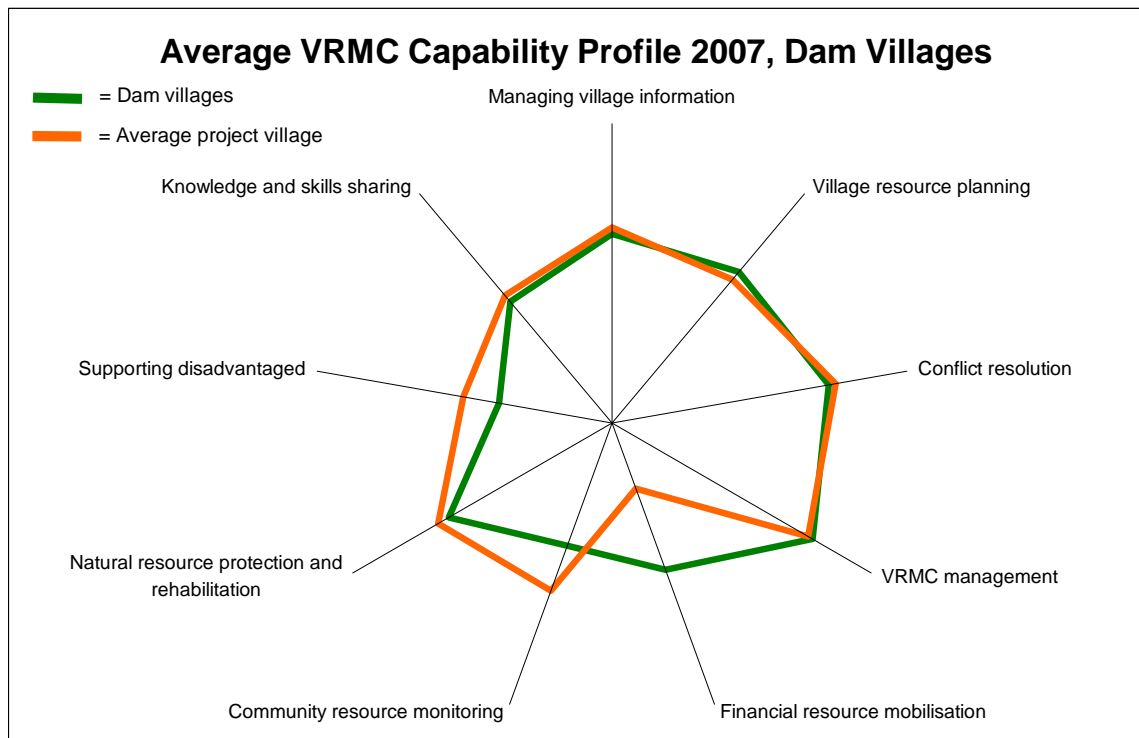
4.5 VRMC Capability in Dam Villages

There are 19 villages in the northern circle in which earthen dams have been constructed under HCFP. (Two of them, having newly formed VRMCs, were not assessed.) These are fringe villages to adjoining Government Forests. The dams have been constructed on Government forest land, to store water from the forest catchments. The dams serve the function of arresting run-off from the catchments, increase moisture regime of the downstream agricultural land and store water for use in the farmers’ fields. The farming community can draw water from the dams through pipes that have to be installed

through community contribution. The availability of water has helped improve the agricultural productivity and economy of farmers, increased milk yields and given impetus to economic enterprises like fish rearing in the reservoir, growing of seeds for sale, growing of fodder, etc. Most of these fringe villages do not have much community land for afforestation. Therefore, the main function of the VRMC is to install systems for irrigating downstream fields, watch over sharing of water, maintain the dam in good condition, etc. Impact studies have documented the economic transformation of the farming community in the dam villages, including the landless.

Figure 6 below shows that the average capability of the dam villages is higher than that of all villages taken together in financial resource mobilization and village planning. With respect to VRMC management they are at par with an average HCFP VRMC and almost at par in conflict resolution and managing village information. But in all other respects they score lower than the average HCFP VRMC. The financial management capability is higher, as mobilizing resources for undertaking irrigation utilization facilities and water distribution provided both an economic opportunity, as well as being an economic and social necessity. These VRMCs also have access to money from the water contractor trough auction. Agriculture being dependent on irrigation water, the farmers have a stake in strengthening the equitable water use arrangements and maintaining the dam in good condition. It may be pointed out that the dams have been so designed and meticulously executed that water for irrigation is available throughout the year. Downstream water table has improved, recharging wells and generally enhancing the moisture regime.

Figure 6:



V. CHANGES IN CAPACITY SUB-INDICATORS

In this section, we analyse the changes that have taken place between 2003 and 2007 on each of the 55 sub-indicators of institutional capacity. The extent of the capacity is measured in terms of whether the VRMCs possess a characteristic or perform a desired function or activity which is considered to be essential for performing the role of a resource management institution. The extent of positive response would give an idea of the extent of maturity and sustainability of the institution as a people owned resource management institution. This analysis would reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the VRMC. The trend over the years on capacity rating on the nine main indicators is provided in Table 5.1 below and Figure 7 overleaf. Division-wise performance on the nine indicators in 2007 is graphically presented in Figure 8. Tables on the performance of each VRMC against all 55 sub-indicators are given in Volume 2 of this report.

Table 5.1: Time series on trends in Capacity Ratings (no. of VRMCs)

Capability Indicator	Weak	Moderate	Good	Total	Year
Managing Village Information	112	43	14	169	2003
	52	105	73	230	2004
	20	69	189	278	2005
	35	120	173	328	2007
Village Resource Planning	147	18	4	169	2003
	114	74	42	230	2004
	67	142	69	278	2005
	63	184	81	328	2007
Conflict Resolution	27	98	44	169	2003
	21	90	119	230	2004
	8	28	242	278	2005
	43	64	221	328	2007
VRMC Management	48	88	33	169	2003
	34	131	65	230	2004
	52	167	59	278	2005
	24	137	167	328	2007
Financial Resource Mobilisation	134	33	2	169	2003
	108	91	31	230	2004
	208	61	9	278	2005
	273	50	5	328	2007
Community Resource Monitoring	80	70	19	169	2003
	124	56	50	230	2004
	28	125	125	278	2005
	49	185	94	328	2007
Natural Resource Protection	78	81	8	167	2003
	118	93	19	230	2004
	30	51	197	278	2005
	33	45	250	328	2007
Supporting Disadvantaged	109	51	7	167	2003
	152	39	39	230	2004
	51	129	98	278	2005
	44	195	89	328	2007
Knowledge & Skills Sharing	155	14	0	169	2003
	197	20	13	230	2004
	91	99	88	278	2005
	80	141	107	328	2007

Figure 7: Full page chart “VRMC capacities over the years” directly from Excel

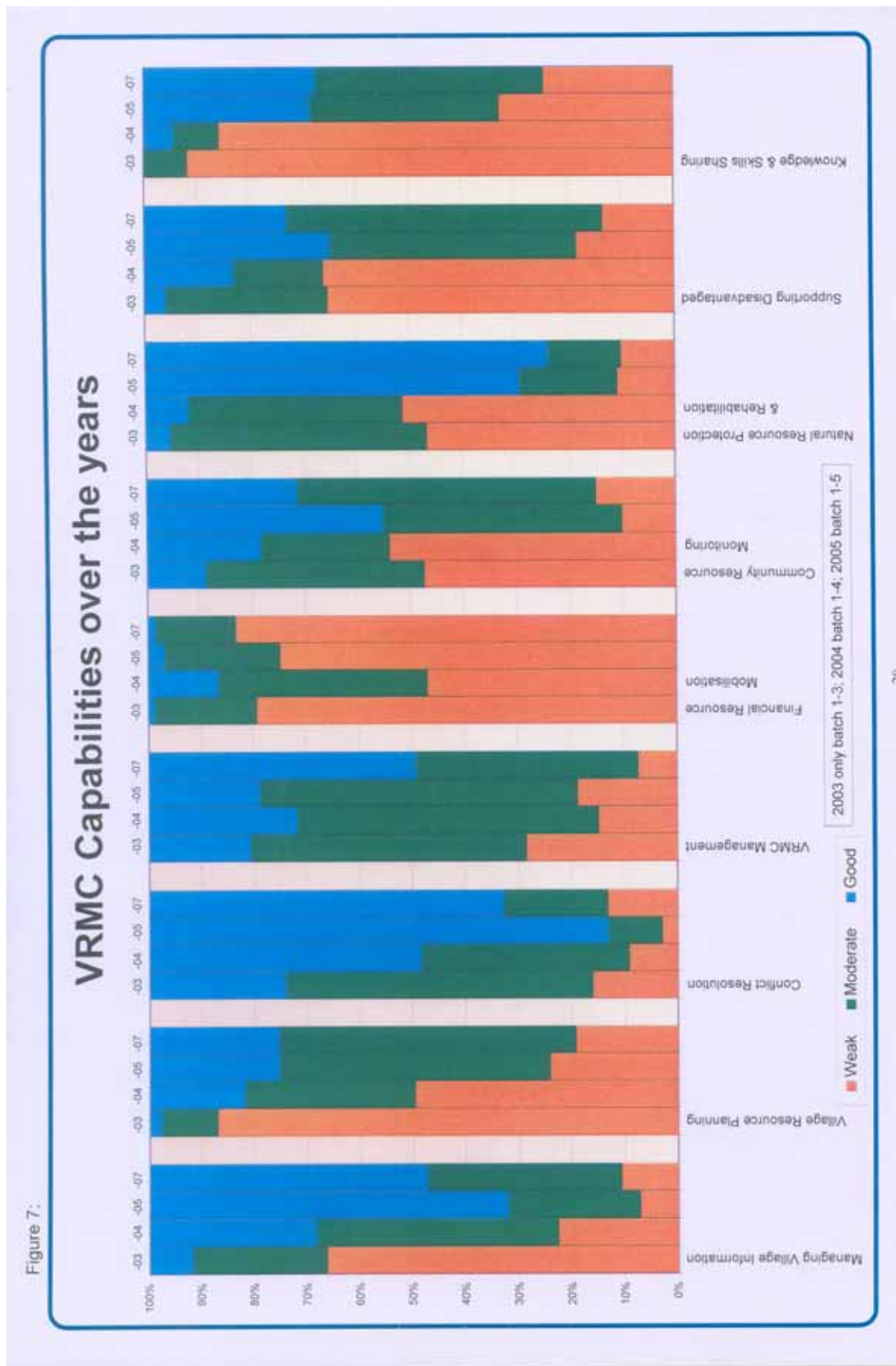
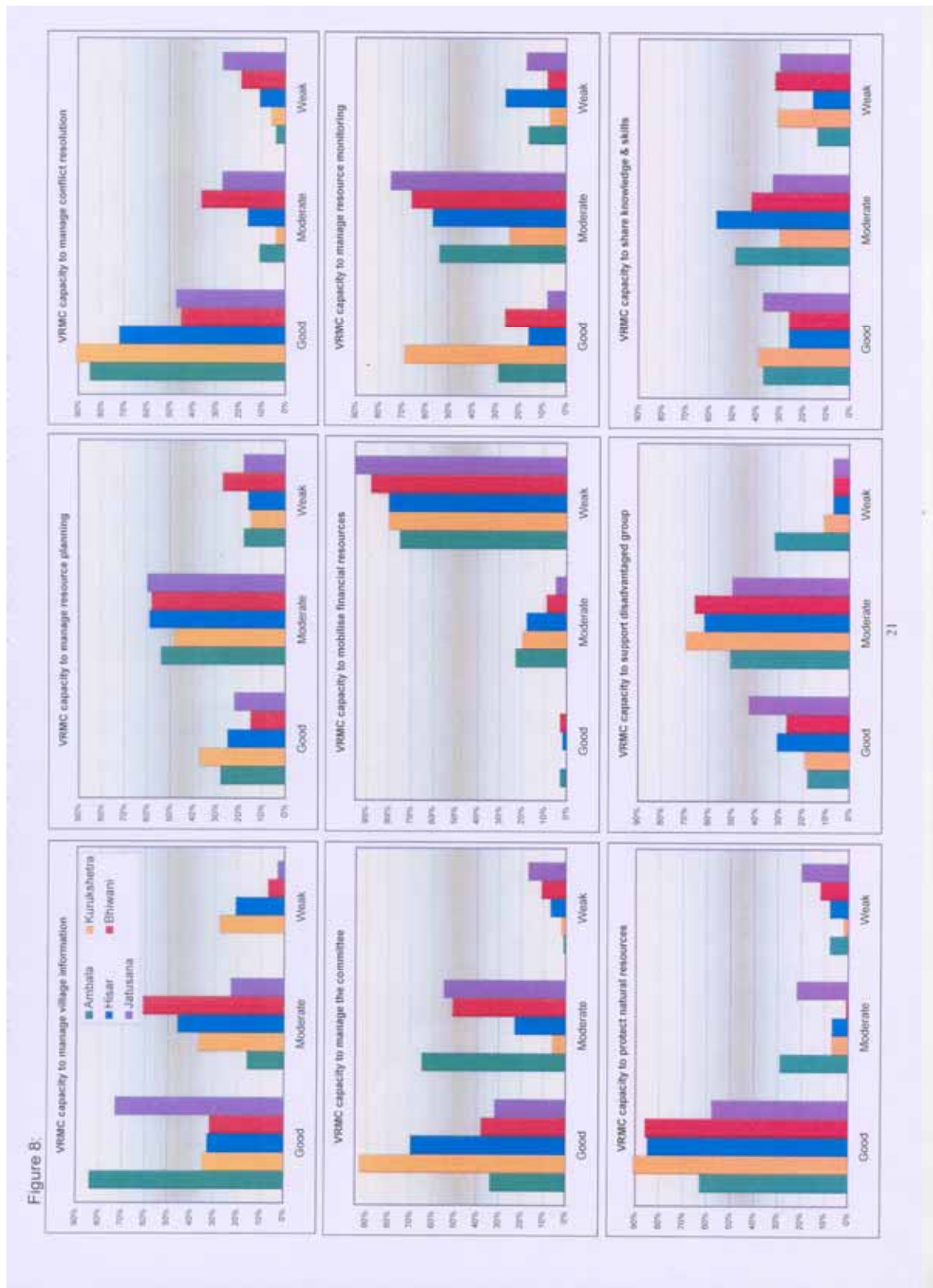


Figure 8: Division-wise performance on nine indicators (full page Excel chart)



5.1 VRMC Capability to Manage Information

Information is the key to successful planning and implementation of any development activity. Any village level institution, which caters to the public good, should have information on a variety of activities in its domain. Institutions not endowed with such information cannot take up development work efficiently. One of the roles envisaged for VRMCs is to develop a village information system that will serve as a springboard for planning village development, benefiting not only the VRMCs themselves but also the village community it represents and the Panchayat of which it is a part. The information that is relevant for the VRMCs is information of HCFP and what it has to offer to the villagers, information on village natural resources and socio-economic conditions and information of programmes and policies of line departments of the government. Table 5.2 depicts the findings in this regard, for the assessment years of 2003 to 2007.

Table 5.2: Percent of VRMCs with positive response on Information Management

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
VRMC reads HCFP extension literature	55	75	91	85
VRMC has updated PA data	7	19	22	20
Monitoring board PA data explained to villagers	53	70	74	61
VRMC has information on Government schemes	38	66	87	83

On all the sub-indicators of this area of capacity, the percentage of VRMCs showing positive response has decreased in 2007 from the level of 2005. This indeed is a matter of serious concern, and would represent possible erosion in the maturity level of the VRMCs. However, the situation is still far better than in 2004, and more than half of the VRMCs are still rated as “good”, while 11 percent are “weak”. Among divisions, the percentage of VRMCs getting “good” rating is highest in Ambala (84%), followed by Jatusana (73%). The lowest good rating of 32 percent is in Bhiwani, followed by 33 percent in Hisar.

Table 5.3: Division-wise capability in Managing Information

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	0%	28%	21%	7%	3%	11%
Medium	16%	37%	46%	61%	23%	37%
Good	84%	35%	33%	32%	73%	53%

5.2 VRMC Capability for Resource Planning

There are 8 key sub-indicators to measure the VRMC capability for resource planning. The VRMCs were trained in the first year to undertake microplanning – both theoretical and on-the-job. The first microplan that they made in the preparatory year was assisted by external technical support teams, but in subsequent years they were expected to replan on their own. The eight sub-indicators measure progress towards this goal.

Village Shaharyapur, Bhiwani Division

HCFP was introduced in Shaharyapur in 2005. The then Panchayat promised to provide land for plantation. However, leadership changed after election and the newly elected Panchayat refused to provide land. Therefore there is no woodlot plantation in the village. The only HCFP work done is 5 ha modified sand dune fixation. The VRMC members confided that the differences have been overcome and people want VRMC to continue after June 2008, though there was no woodlot plantation. The Panchayat regrets not allowing plantation on village common land. But if a new project is introduced, people have resolved to jointly work together to make it a success. There is high demand for farm forestry, kitchen gardens and nurseries in the village.

Table 5.4: Percent of VRMCs having capability for Resource Planning

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
Full village agreement on microplan contents	72	88	88	93
Microplan contents known by VRMC	22	85	81	72
Monitoring board microplan targets explained to villagers	20	62	68	55
VRMC has discussed microplan with Panchayat	14	67	95	81
VRMC has discussed microplan with BDPO	8	36	43	19
VRMC has updated/adjusted the microplan	NA	NA	17	40
VRMC has realised project related microprojects	NA	NA	86	90
VRMC has realised non-project related microprojects	NA	NA	33	32

The existence of village wide agreement on the microplan, indicating the participatory nature of the initial microplanning process, has increased from 88 to 93 percent. However, there is a declining trend in the general VRMC knowledge of microplan contents, down to 72 percent from the previous level of above 80 percent. Use of monitoring board to disseminate information on progress in the achievement of the microplan has come down to 55 percent compared to the 2005 level of 68 percent. Updating of the microplan improved from the level of only 17 percent in 2005 to 40 percent in 2007. Nevertheless, the majority of the VRMCs have not done any replanning exercise. Only about one third of the VRMCs realized non-project related micro-projects in both the years.

While practically all VRMCs discussed the microplan with the Panchayat in 2005, only about 80 percent continue to do so now. This is probably the result of all tree plantation in the microplan having been completed, some non-project related micro-projects having been realised – and no updating of the microplan to include new micro-projects. This decline is even more obvious in the case of the VRMC discussing the microplan with the BDPO. Only one fifth of the VRMCs have done so recently, compared to 36/43 percent in previous years. Now that all planned plantation under the project has been completed, there is clearly a need for most VRMCs to revisit the village microplan and contemplate their role in continued village development.

Village Chudharwali: Hisar Division

The VRMC and Panchayat together have recently renovated johads at the cost of Rs. 5.66 lakhs. The VRMC has good rapport in the village and if some conflict arises, the two bodies are able to settle them. The VRMC is trying to get land from the Panchayat on lease hold basis to plant trees.

Social Action: VRMC Ghursal, Hisar Division

If someone damages standing trees and saplings, he is levied a fine of Rs. 500/-. The VRMC has also arranged school wall construction and installation of ceiling fans in the school. Free health check-up of children was held in August 2006. The Van Mahotsav was celebrated in the village in the presence of collector Shri V Umashankar.

In terms of capacity rating, Kurukshetra division topped with 37 percent of the VRMCs being rated “good”, followed by Ambala (28%). The lowest good rating of 15 percent was in Bhiwani, followed by Jatusana (22%). Altogether, one fourth of the VRMCs were rated good and one fifth weak.

Table 5.5: Division-wise capability in Resource Planning

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	18%	15%	16%	27%	18%	19%
Moderate	54%	48%	59%	58%	60%	56%
Good	28%	37%	25%	15%	22%	25%

Bagla VRMC gets rejuvenated after training

In the beginning, VRMC members were not adequately motivated. However, after a training programme in 2005-06, the committee became active and is now working very efficiently. Besides tree plantations, the committee is looking after other development works in the village and monitors the functioning of Anganwadi centre, school, cleanliness of the village, etc. They are also taking part in immunization, pulse polio programmes and are very satisfied with their activities. There is good coordination among Panchayat and VRMC and to fulfil the target they are jointly arranging land from the Panchayat for plantation work.

5.3 Conflict Resolution Capability

It is natural for conflicts to arise in the process of community decision making, particularly with respect to management of common property resources. Conflicts may arise at the institutional level – within the VRMC's executive committee itself, between VRMC and the Panchayat (more so when there is a change in the composition of the Panchayat due to elections), between individual members of the community and the institutions, between the institution and the staff of the collaborating partners, etc. However, the manner in which these conflicts are managed and resolved goes to prove the maturity and development of any resource management institution and the ultimate success of the common endeavour itself.

Most of the VRMCs had developed good conflict resolution capabilities in the past. In the current assessment also, this capability continues to be strong, though on all sub-indicators there appears to be some decline. This decline probably is due to changes both in the leadership of the VRMCs and the Panchayats. It could also be due to the slackening of interest at all levels. Any loss of conflict resolution capability would be detrimental to the sustainability of VRMCs and would need to be addressed by the project through appropriate exit strategies, which need to be designed by wide scale discussions at the community level by project staff.

The continued high level of consensus on common land use is satisfying, while the deterioration in the previously universal respect for tripartite agreement obligations is a matter of concern. Maintenance and protection of common land plantation is, after all, the cornerstone of VRMC raison d'être.

Table 5.6: Percent of VRMCs with Conflict Resolution capability

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
Consensus on common land use as per microplan	76	87	97	93
VRMC resolves conflicts in a participatory manner	NA	87	97	77
VRMC leaders respected by all social groups	84	79	88	87
Smooth relation between VRMC and Panchayat	90	93	98	89
Rights & responsibilities of tripartite agreement respected	17	47	95	75
Villagers see VRMC as an able forum to resolve conflicts	NA	NA	57	52

The vast majority of the VRMCs in the northern circle have received good rating on this capability, while less than half of VRMCs in Jatusana and Bhiwani have received good rating. Altogether, two thirds of VRMCs have been rated good and 13 percent weak.

Table 5.7: Division-wise rating of VRMCs on Conflict Resolution capability

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	4%	6%	11%	19%	27%	13%
Moderate	11%	4%	16%	36%	27%	20%
Good	85%	91%	72%	45%	47%	67%

5.4 Organizational Management Capacity of VRMCs

The organizational and management capability of VRMCs have been assessed on the basis of eight proxy indicators, which we felt were critical to the successful day-to-day functioning of VRMCs. On almost all sub-indicators there is improvement over the situation in 2005. The sub-indicators which have shown substantial improvement are maintenance of cash books, more frequent VRMC meetings, improved performance of Link Workers and the appropriate use of Chetna Kendras. The slackening of enforcement of rules is, however, a matter of concern, particularly in the context of the VRMCs having to shoulder natural resource management responsibilities on project exit, which is imminent. The VRMCs also continue to be generally weak in ensuring contribution of membership fees from constituent households. Moreover, for the VRMCs to evolve into true democratic institutions, certainly more than the current one fourth of them need to arrange repeat elections of executive committee members.

Table 5.8: Percent of VRMCs with Organizational Management capability

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
Rules & regulations for VRMC management enforced	28	59	79	70
Cash book is properly maintained	72	69	72	86
VRMC meetings with quorum held at least 6 times a year	57	84	84	93
VRMC highlights resource management in meetings	47	60	90	83
VRMC had repeat election of members after 3 years	8	32	19	26
Link workers hired by VRMC and found useful	66	88	67	92
Chetna Kendra used for other purposes than training/meetings	49	62	59	77
At least 50% villagers contribute VRMC membership fees	20	35	46	42

VRMCs in Kurukshetra have the maximum percentage of good rating, while Bhiwani and Jatusana divisions continue to be lagging behind. Half of all VRMCs have been rated good for their organizational management capability, with only 7 percent rated weak.

Table 5.9: Division-wise capability in Organizational Management

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	1%	2%	7%	11%	17%	7%
Moderate	65%	6%	23%	51%	52%	42%
Good	34%	93%	70%	38%	32%	51%

Organizational problems in Bodla village

After the recent Panchayat election, the powerful new Sarpanch heads the VRMC also. But he is a busy man and is not able to devote time for VRMC work. The Link Worker was selected by the new Sarpanch. But he is not fully aware of the committee activities. A busy Sarpanch, an unaware Link Worker and disheartened committee members constitute the Resource Management institution in this village.

A proactive VRMC: Village Barana

In this village the VRMC is very active and has good coordination with the villagers. Committee members informed that this is a non-political committee that is actively working for village development. The chairman and Panchayat members are working in close coordination. The VRMC has taken initiatives to install smokeless chulhas, cleaning of ponds and water tanks, upkeep of village ring road (Phirni), etc. There are 35 SHGs in the village sponsored by different departments. The committee has provided training to SHG members from time to time, and there is good coordination among SHGs and committee members. For forest protection, the committee has levied fines to the tune of Rs. 6000/- on those who are damaging trees. This money was spent on re-plantation work.

5.5 Capability to Access and Mobilize Finances for Resource Management

Accessing and mobilizing financial resources to implement micro-projects and becoming financially sustainable has always been a weak area for the VRMCs. Compared to 2005, the situation has further deteriorated. Though more than half of the VRMCs now have sufficient funds to manage plantations – an improvement on the situation in 2005 – only around one fourth consider that they generate enough funds to become financially sustainable, a huge decline from the more optimistic view held in 2005. Generation of income from village resources has improved since 2005, but generation of external resources has been drastically reduced.

Table 5.10: Percent of VRMCs moving towards Financial Sustainability

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
VRMC generates income from common land	4	8	15	16
VRMC generates income from other village resources	28	23	14	25
VRMC generates income from external resources	20	31	15	3
VRMC realises micro-projects funded by non-project resources	NA	NA	6	13
VRMC has sufficient funds to manage plantations	NA	NA	46	55
VRMC generates sufficient income to become sustainable	NA	NA	40	27

The financial mobilization capability is the weakest attribute of the HCFP VRMCs. Only an insignificant proportion of VRMCs has, as of now, developed adequate capacity in this respect in any of the divisions. As the project fast approaching exit stage, this issue needs to be confronted as a policy concern at State level and discussed threadbare at village level. Only 2 percent of the VRMCs have been rated good, with 83 percent still weak.

Table 5.11: Division-wise capability in Financial Resource Mobilization

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	75%	80%	80%	88%	95%	83%
Moderate	23%	20%	18%	9%	5%	15%
Good	3%	0%	2%	3%	0%	2%

Revenue through intercropping in VWL: Village Paju, Bhiwani Division

The VRMC of Paju village has generated income by undertaking inter-cropping in the VWL area once and thereafter leasing out the land for inter-cropping, without causing damage to trees.

A small step in finance mobilization: Village Alaudinpur, Division Bhiwani

The VRMC collected membership fee to the extent of Rs. 1900/- in the year 2000-2001 from 190 households and in the year 2002-03 it collected Rs. 910/- from 91 households. In 2005-06, it collected Rs. 900 from 90 households. The committee has good cooperation from the Panchayat and the VRMC is planning to increase the membership fee from the households.

5.6 VRMC Capability for Resource Monitoring

HCFP has given particular emphasis on involvement of VRMCs in monitoring project implementation at all stages. Micro-project monitoring teams have been formed to help the VRMC take care of this function. They are involved in monitoring every process including site selection, choice of species, watching over the growth and maturing of trees, protecting them from damage, conducting tree survival surveys, etc. Logbooks are maintained at village level to track input flow and its end use. Micro-project monitoring boards have been erected at a central point in villages to display information on progress

so that the community becomes aware of project implementation and the entire process becomes transparent. VRMCs are also to appraise the village community about progress at biennial Gram Sabha meetings.

Plan to strengthen VRMC: Village Singhani, Bhiwani Division

In village Singhani, there is a plan to strengthen the VRMC by drawing membership from resourceful village people who are willing to contribute to village development activities. The VRMC has no source of income except membership fees. The VRMC and Panchayat have good relationship and jointly look after tree plantation work. The VRMC has plans to do replantation work after tree harvest. The fund generated from tree plantation will be utilized for replantation and village development. There is one johad in the village under HCFP and villagers are using johad water and mud for plantation work.

Except in the matter of maintaining logbooks there appears to be a general decline in positive responses with respect to participatory monitoring. It is especially worrying that VRMC reporting to the Gram Sabha hardly ever takes place.

Table 5.12: Percent of VRMCs with Monitoring capabilities

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
VRMC reports microplan progress to full village meetings	11	9	32	15
Village monitoring team reports progress to VRMC	38	46	70	66
Village monitoring team involved in tree survival surveys	66	74	94	89
Microproject logbooks are in use by VRMC	NA	NA	91	97
Logbooks are complete and up-to-date	75	41	72	63
VRMC ensures that monitoring board shows accurate progress	35	44	58	40

Further, except in Kurukshetra, where 69 percent of the VRMCs have been assessed to be good in terms of monitoring capability, the situation is not good generally. Strengthening of the monitoring function needs special attention at project level, as without this it will not be possible for the project endeavour to be sustainable after project exit. Altogether, less than 30 percent of VRMCs have been rated good for their monitoring capability, with 15 percent rated weak.

Table 5.13: Division-wise capability in Community Resource Monitoring

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	16%	7%	26%	8%	17%	15%
Moderate	54%	24%	57%	66%	75%	56%
Good	29%	69%	16%	26%	8%	29%

5.7 Resource Protection Capability

The raison d'être of the VRMCs is ensuring protection of all natural resources of the village, whether developed under HCFP or through other support systems. On this capability there is improvement from the 2005 level on four sub-indicators out of seven. These are enforcement of cut-and-carry system for grass and other by-products, receiving tree survival bonus for woodlots, implementation of improved water management systems and implementation of pruning and thinning operations on woodlots. Enforcement of cut-and-carry system expresses a sensitivity of the community to conserve resources, while improved receipt of tree survival bonus indicates sustainability of plantations on community land. Improved water management systems refer not only to the earthen dams constructed in the northern circle and the johads rehabilitated in the south-western circle, but to an equal degree to VRMCs having

facilitated improved management of water conservation systems on their own. There is considerable involvement of the VRMC and community in pruning and thinning operations. The transfer of technology in this sphere will go a long way in the long term sustainability of woodlot plantations.

On the flip side, however, there is a worryingly substantial decline in the management of other common land resources and enforcement of social fencing. Probably there is a slackening of guard as many of the plantations have grown to such a stage where damage due to browsing may not be much. But the possibility of illegal cutting of trees still exists if adequate social fencing arrangements are not in place.

Exemplary work by a young VRMC in Serla village

Serla is a 5th batch HCFP village. The project was welcomed by the villagers and the VRMC established village woodlot plantation on Panchayat land. VRMC did its work very efficiently and received good cooperation from the Panchayat. A villager felled a Roheda tree from the village woodlot. When the VRMC came to know about this incidence, they called a meeting and asked the person to explain his conduct. The committee maintained that if a tree is cut down today without any disciplinary action, the whole woodlot could be cut down in the future. A joint meeting with the Panchayat was called and it was decided to impose a penalty of Rs. 1100/- on that villager. The felled tree was auctioned for Rs. 350/-.

Struggle for protecting trees by VRMC of Kanipala village

While felling trees from an earlier plantation, the Sarpanch of the village connived to fell 3000 trees from the HCFP village woodlot. The committee duly informed the DFO and BDPO about this, but no action was taken. The committee then complained to the DC who initiated an inquiry. After the enquiry a penalty of Rs. 78,000/- was imposed on the Sarpanch. But due to political influence the Sarpanch did not pay any penalty, nor did he arrange replantation. When this came out in newspapers, the then Sarpanch offered to pay Rs. 2 lakh to close the chapter. But committee members did not agree and decided to go to the High Court, because the Forest Department was also not extending help to the committee in accordance with the tripartite agreement. They also brought this issue to the notice of the Chief Minister, but so far no action has been taken and it is not possible for the committee to run under political pressure.

Sanctions against tree felling: Village Dighawa Shamian

Two persons once started lopping branches of trees in the woodlot. On detecting this, the VRMC imposed a penalty of Rs. 200/- and Rs. 100/- respectively on the offenders. The wife one of the members of the VRMC once damaged 30 trees in the woodlot. Another VRMC member saw this and caught her red-handed and informed the committee. The committee imposed a penalty of Rs. 1100/- on her and strictly warned her never to do this type of mischief in future.

Table 5.14: Percent of VRMCs with Resource Protection capability

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
Woodlot management is in line with tripartite agreement	62	78	93	86
VRMC implements improved water management systems	8	13	13	31
VRMC manages all common land natural resources	31	19	85	76
Social fencing for protection of community plantations in place	76	71	80	63
Cut-and-carry system for grass collection is implemented	39	57	66	89
Tree survival bonus for good woodlot management received	21	44	74	93
Pruning and thinning of woodlots is implemented	NA	NA	39	69

Resource protection appears to be best in Kurukshetra, Hisar and Bhiwani divisions, where 85 to 91 percent of the VRMCs have been assessed as good on this aspect. Surprisingly, Ambala is lagging behind, along with Jatusana division. Altogether, three fourths of VRMCs have been rated good and only 10 percent weak.

Table 5.15: Division-wise capability in Natural Resources Protection

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	8%	2%	8%	12%	20%	10%
Moderate	29%	7%	7%	1%	22%	14%
Good	63%	91%	85%	86%	58%	76%

In any case, there is need for the project to continue to sensitize village communities about the need for increased involvement in resource protection, especially regarding social fencing and the need to manage woodlots according to tripartite agreements.

Fire protection in Ghiradsi village

Plantation work was got done by the VRMC on Panchayat land. In the last summer farmers of a neighbouring village set fire to their agricultural waste in their fields. The fire slowly spread to the woodlot of Ghiradsi and destroyed the trees. The committee members tried their best to control the fire, but some of the forest area was fully affected by that fire and near about Rs. 8000/- was damaged. The committee members convened a meeting and demanded that nearby villagers compensate the loss. The neighbours exerted political pressure and refused to pay. The committee decided to go to court for justice. The committee feels that this will be a deterrent for the future. All villagers are unanimously supporting the committee and look upon the Forest Department to help them.

5.8 VRMC Capability to Support Disadvantaged Groups

It has been the experience in the past social forestry interventions that disadvantaged sections generally do not reap much benefit from common property management efforts. Rather, they tend to lose due to the closure of common land for afforestation due to restriction on grazing, collection of products, etc. In HCFP project design and the subsequent modification in project strategies adequate safeguards were incorporated that disadvantaged groups, namely Scheduled Castes, women and landless graziers, do not lose their due share of benefits. Studies by HCFP have shown that the weaker sections in fact benefited more than they lost. VRMC capability assessments also give at hand that VRMCs show special sensitivity to the disadvantaged by providing the benefit of wage employment to them. In fact the percentage of VRMCs doing so increased from 87 percent in 2005 to 94 percent in 2007. A third of the VRMCs actively promoted at least one SHG (of women) in their villages in 2005. The proportion declined to 24 percent in 2007, but this is due to the fact that the project has not promoted SHGs in batch 6 villages, which entered VRMC assessments from 2007. Similarly, promotion of non-plantation activities for the disadvantaged has also declined. The proportion of VRMCs ensuring share of plantation benefits to the disadvantaged has remained at a high 87 percent. But it would be a good idea to continue sensitization work on the need for distributive justice and equity, which is a prime long term purpose of the project.

Table 5.16: Percent of VRMCs with positive response on Support to Disadvantaged Groups

Sub-indicators	2003	2004	2005	2007
VRMC provides >50% of labourers from disadvantaged groups	88	91	87	94
VRMC actively supports at least one Self-Help Group	15	24	34	24
VRMC has promoted a non-plantation activity for disadvantaged	NA	NA	23	17
VRMC gives priority to disadvantaged in plantation benefit share	NA	NA	87	87

Division-wise performance shows that Jatusana has the highest proportion of VRMCs rated good on this aspect, followed by Hisar and Bhiwani. Only Ambala division shows a high incidence of weak VRMCs. Altogether, 27 percent of the VRMCs were rated good, while 13 percent were found to be weak.

Table 5.17: Division-wise capability in Support to Disadvantaged Groups

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	32%	11%	7%	7%	7%	13%
Moderate	51%	70%	62%	66%	50%	59%
Good	18%	19%	31%	27%	43%	27%

Nalwa VRMC outreaches to the community

The VRMC arranged books, school uniforms and fee concessions to poor and needy school children. The VRMC has been able to control the loud playing of musical instruments at night. The VRMC with the help of Gram Panchayat has also a charitable dispensary which provides primary medical care at nominal cost.

Replication of SHG model: Khari Surera , Hisar Division

The VRMC has also constituted Self-Help Groups of women below poverty line. SHG women are doing their work very efficiently. They have taken a loan of Rs. 3 lakhs from banks and started sheep rearing business. Each woman in the group purchased 10 sheep and is repaying loan instalments regularly. Their economic condition has improved. Seeing the success of these Groups, Smt Rajeshwari, the leader of one of the groups, formed another SHG in the village. That group is also doing well and has taken a loan of Rs. 4.5 lakhs from the bank. Each group member purchased 15 sheep and is repaying loan instalments regularly.

SHG Marketing Problem: Asalwas Dhubia, Bhiwani Division

In the village two SHGs, Radha and Lakshmi, are actively functioning. The awareness level of SHG members is very high. Besides saving and inter-lending, the groups are engaged in soap making and vermi-composting. They, however, are faced with packaging and marketing problems. Radha SHG has a saving of Rs. 1.5 lakhs. The women are confident that the SHGs will continue to function after project exit if marketing and packaging problems are solved at the earliest.

5.9 VRMC Capability for Knowledge and Skills Sharing

A major thrust area of the project has been to endow the VRMCs and village communities with the skills and knowledge necessary for sustainable participatory resource management. Special training packages were provided to members of VRMCs on various aspects of resource management. It was expected that the VRMCs would in turn pass on the skills and knowledge to the members of the village community.

Table 5.18: Percent of VRMCs with positive responses on Knowledge and Skills Sharing

Sub-indicator	2003	2004	2005	2007
VRMC trainees share skills with other community members	44	84	78	79
VRMC members provide land for agro-forestry demonstration	14	29	43	51
Demo plots imbue new techniques and skills to villagers	16	11	12	22
VRMC has organised other training activities for villagers	5	18	6	7
Regular interchange with at least one other VRMC	NA	NA	67	74
VRMC has promoted community forestry to another village	NA	NA	85	80

Out of six sub-indicators, there is substantial improvement in three, namely participation in agro-forestry demonstration, acquisition of knowledge by villagers from demonstration plots and interaction with other VRMCs. VRMC trainees' sharing of knowledge with community members remains at a high level, around 80 percent of VRMCs, and the same proportion of VRMCs has promoted the concept of community forestry to other villages. However, very few VRMCs have organised their own training activities.

Among divisions, Ambala, Kurukshetra and Jatusana top with 37 to 39 percent VRMCs having good capability on this aspect. However, Kurukshetra and Jatusana also have around 30 percent are rated as weak, along with Bhiwani. Altogether, one third of the VRMCs are rated good, one fourth weak.

Table 5.19: Division-wise capability in Knowledge and Skills Sharing

Rating	Ambala	Kurukshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Overall
Weak	14%	31%	16%	32%	30%	24%
Moderate	49%	30%	57%	42%	33%	43%
Good	37%	39%	26%	26%	37%	33%

5.10 Critical Indicators that need Attention

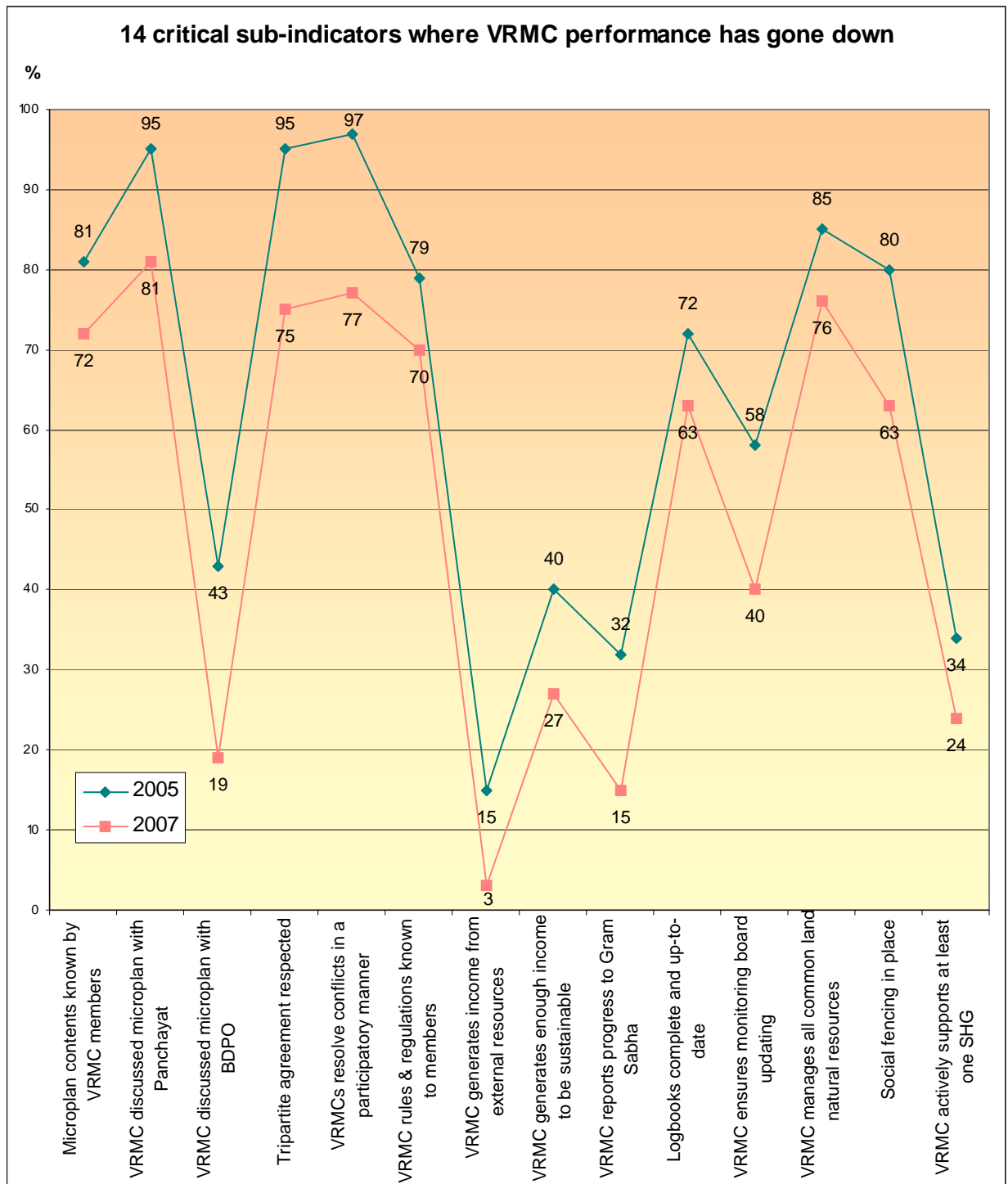
Table 5.20 and Figure 9 present indicators that are critical for the long term sustainability of the VRMCs, which have shown decline from the 2005 level and need careful attention. These relate mainly to planning capabilities (3 sub-indicators), conflict resolution capabilities (2 sub-indicators), organizational management (1 sub-indicator), financial resource mobilization (2 sub-indicators), monitoring and transparency (3 sub-indicators), resource protection (2 sub-indicators), and support of the disadvantaged (1 sub-indicator).

Table 5.20: Critical Indicators rating gone down

Sub-indicator	2005	2007
Microplan contents known by VRMC members	81	72
VRMC discussed microplan with Panchayat	95	81
VRMC discussed microplan with BDPO	43	19
Tripartite agreement respected	95	75
VRMCs resolve conflicts in a participatory manner	97	77
VRMC rules & regulations known to members	79	70
VRMC generates income from external resources	15	3
VRMC generates enough income to be sustainable	40	27
VRMC reports progress to Gram Sabha	32	15
Logbooks complete and up-to-date	72	63
VRMC ensures monitoring board updating	58	40
VRMC manages all common land natural resources	85	76
Social fencing in place	80	63
VRMC actively supports at least one SHG	34	24

These general system weaknesses have to be addressed on an urgent basis as part of the project's exit strategy. The strategy has to be discussed, negotiated and agreed to between all the stakeholders concerned – the project, the VRMC, the Panchayat and the community in general. Without such a negotiated exit and hand-holding arrangement, the efforts of a decade would dissipate, as we have guideposts from past social and community forestry experiences in Haryana.

Figure 9:



5.11 Critical Weaknesses in different Divisions

One of the weakest areas across all divisions appears to be lack of sharing progress information in Gram Sabha meetings. 279 VRMCs are beset with this problem. This severely restricts transparency and could be one of the reasons why the village community is not always having a sense of ownership of its own representative resource management institution. This is also reflected by 159 VRMCs stating that villagers do not view them as a body able to resolve conflicts. Unless this area is strengthened, sustainability of VRMCs would become problematic. The problem may have become aggravated at this point of time due to change in leadership both at Panchayat and VRMC levels. Other weak areas which will restrict the operational space of VRMCs are insufficient funds to protect plantations (146 VRMCs), absence of social fencing (121 VRMCs) and non-awareness of rules and bye-laws by VRMC members themselves (100 VRMCs).

There are 57 VRMCs which do not have access to relevant information on government programmes concerning village development. Their highest number is in Ambala. VRMC members' non-awareness of contents of microplan exists in 91 VRMCs, with a high proportion in the south-western divisions. Sharing the microplans with Panchayats is absent in 61 villages, the problem being less acute in Bhiwani and Hisar.

Table 5.21: Critical VRMC weaknesses across divisions, number of VRMCs found wanting

Sub-indicators	Ambala	K'kshetra	Hisar	Bhiwani	Jatusana	Total
No information on other Government schemes	20	14	9	3	11	57
Microplan contents not known by VRMC members	3	5	25	23	35	91
VRMC did not discuss microplan with Panchayat	15	20	7	3	16	61
Tripartite agreement not respected	24	3	15	17	22	81
Villagers do not see VRMC as able to resolve conflicts	17	32	23	40	47	159
VRMC rules not known to members	12	2	14	39	33	100
VRMC does not report progress to Gram Sabha	56	54	52	62	55	279
Logbooks are not complete and up-to-date	17	1	38	32	35	123
VRMC does not manage all common land resources	27	5	19	18	11	80
Social fencing is not in place	12	4	24	37	44	121
Insufficient funds to protect plantations	8	4	48	65	21	146
No regular interchange with other VRMCs	3	18	21	8	36	86
VRMC not promoting community forestry to other village	8	7	13	20	19	67

The tripartite agreement between HCFP, VRMC and Village Panchayat appears not to be respected in 81 villages, only Kurukshetra division having less problem in this regard. Other weak areas include inability to manage common land resources other than project plantations (80 VRMCs), lack of interchange of experiences and ideas with other VRMCs (86) and lack of interest in motivating other villages to take up community forestry (67 VRMCs).

5.12 Relationship between VRMC Capacity and Woodlot Survival

It would be interesting to understand how the performance of villages with respect to survival of the village woodlot (VWL) is related to the capacity of their VRMCs. The correlation found is presented in Table 5.22.

The survival percentage of woodlot plantations in VRMCs with "good" Overall Capacity Index (OCI) was higher at 75.5 percent compared to 69.7 percent in "weak" VRMC villages. The difference at the aggregate level may not look striking, as the Forest Department is still responsible for gap-filling and other maintenance in many of the woodlots. If the analysis is further extended to existence of social fencing, it is found that woodlot survival is 79.8 percent in villages with social fencing, as against 75 percent in

villages with no social fencing. The overall capacity of the VRMC is thus seen to be slightly more crucial for survival than social fencing.

However, the parameters overall capacity of the VRMC and the existence of social fencing reinforce each other and looking at their combination a significant difference in woodlot survival was found. Villages with “good” VRMCs and social fencing have an average woodlot survival of 75.6 percent, as compared with only 67.7 percent survival in villages with a “weak” VRMC and no social fencing.

Weighing in the size of the woodlot, it was seen that VRMC capacity and social fencing mattered much more in case of bigger woodlots (above 40 ha). Average survival of these bigger woodlots was 76.6 percent if the VRMC is overall “good” and practises social fencing, whereas survival was only 62.5 percent in villages with a “weak” VRMC that does not practise social fencing. Such survival differences are there also for woodlots below 40 ha, but to a lesser extent - 75.2 percent and 68.8 percent respectively. To achieve good survival it seems imperative to ensure social fencing in combination with overall VRMC capacity development, especially when raising larger plantations.

However, HCFP woodlot survival is no doubt very satisfactory on all counts, irrespective of VRMC performance. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that given favourable agro-climatic conditions, a capable VRMC practising social fencing significantly increases the probability of tree survival. What social fencing systems can achieve is to prevent the severity of biotic and social interference. Other factors for survival could be the quality of land in which the woodlot is raised, availability of water for protective irrigation, disease infestation, etc.

The average capacity index of VRMCs with survival percentage above 80 percent was 6.3, compared to 6.1 in villages with less than 80 percent survival. The difference is indeed very small, partly explained by the fact that the oldest VRMCs, which are still the best, also have the oldest woodlots, and survival is also under the best circumstances expected to come down, even to a level below 80%, with increasing age of the plantation.

Table 5.22: Relationship between VRMC Capacity, Social Fencing and Woodlot Survival

Average survival in villages with VRMC OCI >7 ("Good")	75.5%
Average survival in villages with VRMC OCI ≤4 ("Weak")	69.7%
Average survival in villages with Social Fencing	79.8%
Average survival in villages without Social Fencing	75.0%
Average survival in villages with VRMC OCI >7 ("Good") + Social Fencing	75.6%
Average survival in villages with VRMC OCI ≤4 ("Weak") and with no Social Fencing	67.7%
Average survival in villages with VWL ≥40 ha, VRMC OCI >7 + Social Fencing	76.6%
Average survival in villages with VWL ≥40 ha, VRMC OCI ≤4 and no Social Fencing	62.5%
Average survival in villages with VWL <40 ha, VRMC OCI >7 + Social Fencing	75.2%
Average survival in villages with VWL <40 ha, VRMC OCI ≤4 and no Social Fencing	68.8%
Average Overall Capacity Index of VRMCs with VWL survival ≥80%	6.3
Average Overall Capacity Index of VRMCs with VWL survival <80%	6.1

VI. SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

In order to understand the sustainability of the VRMCs and the process of village resource management, five probing questions were asked to the VRMC members, as well as members of the general village community. These were:

- (i) Will the VRMC continue after project exit?
- (ii) Will the village woodlot and the tree groves continue to be maintained and looked after, after project exit?
- (iii) After harvesting, will the area be replanted and developed?
- (iv) Will the dams and johads constructed under the project continue to be well maintained? and
- (v) Benefit sharing arrangements.

6.1 Will the VRMC continue after project exit?

There were different opinions on this aspect. Many VRMCs are very confident that they will continue to exist and function well. This confidence arose from existing good coordination between the Panchayat and the VRMC, expected and already realised returns from forestry activities and the increased awareness regarding ecological and economic benefits of community forestry. For example, in Bhangera, Sandhya, Jhanda, Asalwas Dubia, Baralu and Bidnoi villages, as in several others, there is excellent coordination between Panchayat and the VRMC. If this continues, VRMC will continue to function well. The people feel that by having a separate body to look after the forestry function, the Panchayat is able to devote more attention to other activities. People of Bhangera village are also hopeful of the continued functioning of the VRMC, but they feel that there is necessity to include some social service minded people who can devote adequate time for looking after forestry activities. This opinion is shared by several VRMCs and the process of re-organization of VRMCs has already started. People of Shahzadwala feel that the VRMC has become a necessity because village forestry development would not have been possible without its existence.

However, some of the VRMCs are of the opinion that for the continued functioning of the VRMCs, further support from the Forest Department is needed. The support of Government is necessary to ensure that people do not cause damage to trees with impunity. This opinion is expressed by for instance people of Baniawala, Bhagpat, Haibatpur, Rampur Rariyan, Shergarh, Salimpur, Pahladgarh and Ruggarh. One of the reasons for this diffidence is the presumed political interference in the working of the VRMC (Haibatpur). Some of the VRMCs are afraid of causing schisms in the community if they insist too much on strict enforcement of rules, especially when powerful sections of the community are involved.

Some VRMCs, like the one in Barana, feel certain that they will continue, as the committee is constituted of educated people who want village development, and the VRMC is a non-political body not fraught with political factionalism like many Panchayats. The non-political consensus based character of the VRMC has also been emphasized by e.g. the Asalwas Dubia VRMC, in contrast to an ever changing Panchayat. The Sujri-Sujra VRMC opines that work that couldn't be done in the past was now done through the VRMC and people are aware of this.

Other villages were of the opinion that the Panchayat is a more useful institution as the VRMC exists in name only. This is the opinion of the people in villages like Bholiwala and Pammuwala. People of Sarami village confided that the VRMC is not functioning effectively and whatever development is taking place is only due to the presence of the Forest Department officials. VRMC is not able to act effectively against encroachers.

The people of Nawagaon are of the opinion that the VRMC is not very much aware about their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the continuance of this VRMC after project exit is in doubt. Maybe if some educated and social minded people are included in the VRMC, the situation might improve.

6.2 Sustainability of Village Forest Plantations

In many of the villages, people are very happy with forest protection work being carried out by the VRMC, especially where hardy species like eucalyptus have been planted. There the trees have grown to such a stage that grazing can cause no harm. People say that this species can coppice twice or even thrice after the first harvest. Village people are in general proud of their forest as it has improved their environment and is a potential source of income for development. VRMCs have been able to put in place a social fencing system, due to which damage to trees has become a rarity. This happy situation prevails in villages like Bhangera, Bhangeri, Baniawala, Meghuwala, Shahzadwala, Bhagwanpur, Bhagpat, Nagli, Bhattuwala, Malikpur Bangar, Sultanur, Shergarh, Darpur, Salimpur, Gadwali, Rampur Harian, Sandhya, Painsal, Haibatpur, Bakala, Rampur Rariyan, Lalhari Kalan, Sirsi, Bhiton, etc, to name just a few. Good social fencing system exists in Kathgarh and Nanheri. People of Jhanda village have taken a resolve that they will protect the woodlot and the tree groves in whichever way they can. People of Nawagaon confided that the joint working of the Panchayat and the VRMC has helped maintain the woodlot in good condition. The VRMC of Kurdal has been able to protect the woodlot against illegal felling, something the Panchayat could not do for an earlier plantation raised in the 1980s.

6.3 What will happen to the forests after harvesting?

In villages where hardy species like eucalyptus or sheesham, prosopis, etc. have been planted, the trees have reached a stage where they do not need much protection measures except watching over illegal cutting. In some villages, people have resolved that they will keep protection watchers and their remuneration will be met either by the VRMC or Panchayat.

In the villages where there are all round weaknesses, people are not at all clear about the measures to be taken for protecting the trees.

Regarding plans after harvesting, most villagers want to take up replantation work, but many of them make it contingent upon the attitude of the Panchayat then in power. Some have expressed doubts whether the financial resources will be adequate to enable replanting.

6.4 Sustainability of Dams and Johads

From the very beginning, the project has been very conscious about involving people in maintenance of dams and johads. People were required to contribute their share in meeting the cost of laying the pipelines for carrying water to the fields. Apart from this, the availability of water throughout the year has galvanised the economy of the farmers in the downstream areas, improving production and productivity of crops, increasing milk yield and enabling people to cultivate high value crops, especially production of seeds. Due to these favourable aspects, people have developed an enduring stake in maintaining dams well and corpus funds have been generated for their maintenance. These systems will continue to work effectively. However, people would need assistance in technical aspects of maintenance, as also continued extension support.

Johad rehabilitation has also created collective action, not only in actively participating in the rehabilitation of johads, but also in their maintenance. In fact, in the arid south-

western zone, water is a scarce commodity and people will pay any price to maintain water conserving reservoirs in a good condition.

6.5 Benefit Sharing Arrangement

In probably none of the villages the stage for final tree harvesting has come. However, this is likely to happen very soon in the villages where short duration species like eucalyptus have been planted. The harvest is likely to yield substantial amount of income for the village community. Conflicts are likely to arise at this stage. Foreseeing this, the project has incorporated a clause in the tripartite agreement regarding benefit sharing in such a way that 30 percent of the total share would be retained by the VRMC to fund further afforestation activities in the village, including re-plantation of existing woodlot areas. The balance 70 percent would be retained by the Panchayat to undertake village development activities as per the wishes of the Gram Sabha.

While most of the villages appear to be aware of this clause of the tripartite agreement, in some of the weaker villages, where there is doubt about the coordination between Panchayat and the VRMC, there is a diffidence about the implementation of the provision of this clause. People have given a vague answer that the issue will be settled by the Panchayat then in power. The project has come out with a manual on the measures to be undertaken by the VRMC for maintenance of plantations, harvesting of the trees and benefit sharing arrangement. However, it is not very clear whether the contents of this manual have percolated to the members of the VRMC, the Panchayat and the village community in general. Therefore, there appears to be need for one-to-one interaction between the Department on the one hand and the VRMC and the Panchayat on the other hand, regarding benefit sharing and maintenance arrangements before the project makes a complete exit from the villages. This would be absolutely necessary for sustenance of the community forestry endeavour carefully built for nearly a decade.

6.6 Village case stories illustrating sustainability, or the lack of it

The following part gives an illustration of how VRMCs are proceeding towards sustainability, or have failed to do so. All these village case stories are from Jatusana division, which was found to be rather poor in the capability performance of its VRMCs. Even so, also this division has thrown up some shining paragons, though they are in mixed company. Like all other case stories presented in this report, these cases were collected at the time of the VRMC assessment field exercise in September 2007.

Village Nangal Mala: A sustainable resource management institution

The President of the Nangal Mala VRMC is the ex-Sarpanch, who is socially active. The other members of the VRMC are also aware and forward-looking. The VRMC is proactive towards resource management and conservation and coordination with the Panchayat is excellent.

Once, while excavating soil for a water management project, 130 trees of the neighbouring village woodlot were damaged. The VRMC persuaded the Watershed Committee to instruct the contractor to stop work and pay a fine of Rs. 2500/- to the neighbour VRMC. The Nangal Mala VRMC also helped in replanting the area.

Another activity of the VRMC was construction of a water storage tank at a cost of Rs. 14,000/-. The Vice President, Smt. Shakuntala Devi, bore the cost of a pipeline for bringing water from a stream in the jungle to the site. Wild animals and birds quench their thirst from this tank. It has also increased soil moisture in the fields.

The VRMC frequently waters the trees in the tree groves and linear tree grove and has erected protection enclosures around the trees at its own expense. The trees in the 64 ha woodlot were subjected to severe frost in winter. The VRMC spent Rs. 3350/- to minimize the damage. The VRMC is confident that it will continue to manage village resources effectively and has resolved to invest its share of the profits from final harvest for replantation activities.

Village Beri: Women's empowerment and a VRMC fighting encroachment

Both Link Workers as well as the members of the VRMC are quite enlightened. Some of the members hold positions in other institutions in the village and people generally follow what they say. Last year the Link Workers were changed, as the earlier ones were not doing their job well. Smt. Bina Devi, the present lady Link Worker, is a needy widow. She formed seven SHGs in her own village and six in an adjacent village. She is trying to link these groups with the DRDA programme. All the female members of the VRMC are members of her SHGs. A tailoring training centre is about to be opened for the benefit of the village women. Smt. Bina Devi has good knowledge about SHG management.

In August 2007, the VRMC assisted the Panchayat to survey common land occupied by some villagers and removed the encroachment from 0.3 acre. The VRMC filed a First Information Report (FIR) to the police against persons uprooting trees from an earlier woodlot plantation, which had the desired effect. Another person who was grazing sheep and cutting down branches in the woodlot was reprimanded. This person appeared before the Panchayat and agreed not to repeat his mistake. This has acted as preventive measure against damage to the plantations. The VRMC is planning to use the Resource Management Fund to erect a village entrance gate. It also plans to utilize the profit from tree harvest for village development as well as for resource management.

Village Mundain: A VRMC under lock and key

No meetings are convened by this inactive VRMC. The Chetna Kendra is not maintained well and is mostly under lock and key. The doors and windows of the Chetna Kendra are in a damaged condition. The Secretary of the VRMC, the brother-in-law of the lady President, withdrew the fixed deposit of Resource Management Fund and has not yet refunded the amount. The Panchayat Sarpanch has filed a case against him. The other VRMC members are not putting any pressure on him as they are under his influence. The same members continue in the VRMC for nearly seven years. The VRMC has failed to distribute farm forestry incentives to the farmers. The trees of the linear tree grove were damaged when the village road was widened. The VRMC persuaded the Panchayat to replant the trees along the widened road. The survival of this VRMC after project exit is doubtful.

Village Bewal: A good VRMC getting weakened

After re-election of members, the Bewal VRMC has become weakened. Meetings are infrequent. Farm forestry incentive has not been distributed. Members are least interested and they are a divided house. Grazing in the woodlot by people from this village as well as outsiders is going on unhindered. In contrast, the SHG of the village is functioning very well. This VRMC can still be revived as since about 3-4 months meetings have begun to be held again and the earlier President and Secretary continue to be members, though they are not as active as before.

Village Kherkhi: Strong social fencing

The VRMC has a President without constructive attitude and an active lady Vice President. The VRMC played an effective role in saving the woodlot. When graziers did

not stop grazing sheep in the woodlot, the VRMC filed an FIR. After this, people do not dare to graze their animals in the woodlot. They had to pay a fine of Rs. 551/- to the VRMC. The VRMC also lodged a complaint with the SDO about three people uprooting trees in the old social forestry plantation, against whom the Department issued *challans*.

Regarding the continuance of VRMC, there is doubt in the minds of the members, though the Vice President is keen on its continuance. The VRMC has a corpus fund of Rs. 69,647/-, which it intends to use for resource management purposes. Attitude of people regarding protection of trees has undergone a positive change and they have some fear about punitive action by VRMC. The Panchayat also supports all actions taken by the VRMC to protect trees. Regarding use of proceeds from tree harvest, the VRMC does not have any concrete plan.

Village Sundrah: Protection in spite of inactive VRMC

Though there is good coordination between VRMC and Panchayat, the President has grown old and most members of the VRMC are inactive. Most business is carried out by the Secretary. There is not much link between women of the village and the VRMC. The lady Link Worker helps the SHGs. The woodlot of the village is in two areas. The Secretary takes good care of the area that falls near his residence. The responsibility for the other part vests in the PME members. Both the areas are well protected.

Most of the members felt that the VRMC will continue, but they want to make it more manageable by removing inactive members. Regarding replanting the woodlot area, the then Panchayat will take a decision.

Village Karira: Community involvement in tree protection

The President, Secretary and two members of the VRMC are socially aware, but the Link Worker, an ex-Sarpanch, is a political person and stays out of the village most of the time. Important monitoring records are not maintained. It was decided unanimously that the farm forestry incentive of Rs. 6564/- will not be distributed among farmers, but will be used to lay a pipeline from the tubewell of the temple to the woodlot plantation so that the trees can be saved. This work was successfully carried out and the trees have been saved. The VRMC replanted 3000 trees which had dried up in winter and incurred an expenditure of Rs. 1140/- from its own resources. Ten percent additional households paid their membership fee during the current year. The VRMC will continue post-project if the inactive members are replaced by social minded people who are available in the village. As the people are well disposed towards forest protection, the tree plantations are likely to continue. The committee members are aware of the benefit distribution system contained in the tripartite agreement, but are not sure how the provision will be actualized.

Village Bharaf: Struggling against odds

The President of the VRMC unfortunately expired about four months ago, but no replacement has yet been made. There was not a single meeting in last four months. Most members feel that as the project is nearing its end, the VRMC does not have any more role to play. During village entry, the VRMC has purchased 10 sewing machines, which were used by village women initially. The lady Vice President of the VRMC, who is also a Panchayat ward member, was given the responsibility of taking care of the machines and to open a tailoring training centre. In the meantime, the lady left the village and on demand of the VRMC she returned eight machines, those too in an unusable condition. The VRMC is actively considering to open a training centre at the Chetna Kendra. The VRMC has appointed a protection watcher to guard trees in the woodlot. The VRMC wants to undertake replantation of existing area after final harvest.

Village Kotia: Farm forestry incentive for common good

The current President of the VRMC, who is also the Sarpanch of the village, actively supports the VRMC but is not able to devote much time, due to which the other members also do not take much interest. Still there is good unity among members and excellent coordination with the Panchayat. The farm forestry incentive, through unanimous agreement, was used to repair the temple gate. The current year's incentive will also be used for common needs.

The three HCFP SHGs in the village are functioning very well. The Forestry Day was celebrated in a grand manner on 16th September 2007, jointly by the Panchayat, VRMC and SHGs. Each member of these institutions planted one sapling and resolved to protect all trees in the village at all cost.

Village Gudha: Poor coordination with Panchayat

Except the President, Secretary and Link Worker, all other members are inactive. The lady Link Worker made several attempts to form SHGs in the village, but was not successful. The coordination between Panchayat and VRMC is not at the best level. The Panchayat made an attempt to build a road through the woodlot, causing damage to the trees, but stopped the work at the intervention of the VRMC. The Panchayat does not extend much cooperation in forest protection. Against all odds, the VRMC has been able to raise Rs. 1055/- through fines against those damaging trees. The continuance of the VRMC after project exit is doubtful.

Village Chelawas: A VRMC on the verge of collapse

The Chelawas VRMC is a collapsing institution. Meetings take place only on paper, with only the President and Secretary being present. The woodlot and tree grove trees have died due to frost in winter and they have not been replaced. The nine sewing machines acquired as an entry point activity were taken over by the Panchayat in the name of opening a tailoring training centre, though the centre has not yet begun. The only bright point is a successfully functioning SHG.

Village Bawa: Sins of omission outweigh commissions

Though the relation with the Panchayat is good, it cannot be said that this VRMC is playing any useful function. The grass grown in the woodlot is auctioned every year for about Rs. 30,000/- by the Panchayat. The latter even asked the VRMC to take up the responsibility and keep the auction amount. But the VRMC did not come forward to take up the responsibility. The only plus point is that meetings are held regularly, in which most members attend and it has a corpus fund of Rs. 70,181/- for resource management. Recently the VRMC has spent Rs. 3000/- to replant damaged trees. The VRMC also wants to replant the existing woodlot area after final harvest.

Village Palh: Model of self-help

This active VRMC, having excellent rapport with the Panchayat, takes active interest in both resource management and social development activities. All village disputes are settled through the joint forum of VRMC and Panchayat. All minor repair works are done through joint efforts of villagers. For cases they cannot handle at local level, they jointly approach concerned government agencies. The lady Link Worker has played an exemplary role in uniting women through SHGs. The VRMC has a corpus fund of nearly Rs. 50,000/- and is taking every effort to protect trees, is willing to replant the area of woodlot after harvest, and is confident of sustainability beyond the project period.

Village Rattanthai: By the grace of protection watcher

This inactive VRMC is not even able to convene monthly meetings. It has not yet distributed the farm forestry survival incentives to farmers. As the protection watcher is still in place, much harm has not come to the woodlot plantation. The VRMC intends to continue the services of the protection watcher through the accumulated corpus fund of Rs. 61,170/-.

Village Dharoli: Annual membership fee drive

This VRMC is quite active, though some members do not attend meetings. This is one of the few VRMCs collecting annual membership fees. During the current year, 50 percent of the village households have paid membership fee. Both Link Workers are doing exemplary work. Woodlot plantations are well protected through the active support of the Panchayat. The VRMC has a corpus fund of Rs. 55,242/-, which will be used for resource management purposes. Last year, the VRMC caught two persons stealing wood from the forest and fined them Rs. 2800/-. This vibrant VRMC will be sustainable even without external support.

Village Dhanonda: A model VRMC

With a very active President and empowered women members, this VRMC has created its own identity in the village. It has the good practice of intimating meeting agenda to the members in writing at least one day before the meeting. Membership fee is collected every year and at the time of the assessment 50 percent of the households had paid the fee for the year.

If any shepherd is detected grazing his sheep in the woodlot, written explanation is demanded and he has to present his case before the VRMC. Suitable fines are levied.

Once some villagers dug a canal through the woodlot, causing damage to 464 trees planted between 2004 and 2006. The VRMC called a Gram Sabha meeting, which imposed a fine of Rs. 21,000/- on the offenders. Though two Panchayat members and the son of the lady ward member were involved, they had to pay the fine. The amount was utilized to replant the trees.

Village Sihor: Both social and resource development activities

Six out of 11 members are active and participate in monthly meetings. The VRMC takes interest in religious and youth activities. It donated Rs. 1100/- for religious activities and Rs. 3900/- for sports goods. The VRMC and the Youth Club together closed the liquor shop of the village after approaching the Deputy Commissioner. A person who had cut down a kikar tree was reprimanded in a meeting and the person agreed never to repeat such acts. The lady Link Worker is quite active and vocal. The male link worker was removed recently by the VRMC. The trees are being saved only because the writ of this VRMC runs the village. But the VRMC is not quite sure whether it will continue to function after the project period.

Appendix

SUB-INDICATORS FOR 2007 VRMC CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

Indicator 1: VRMC gathers and appraises information from the project and outside

Sub-indicators:

1.1 Are you as VMRC reading the HCFP extension literature? (yes/no)
1.2 Has the VRMC or other villagers updated some of the PA data? (yes/no)
1.3 Have you used the monitoring board to explain the PA data to the villagers? (yes/no)
1.4 Has the VRMC information on other Government development schemes? (yes/no)

Question:	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	Total
Scoring:	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10

Rating: 0 - 2.5 = Weak, 5 = Moderate, 7.5 - 10 = Good

Indicator 2: VRMC plans their own microprojects

Sub-indicators:

2.1 There are no disagreements in the village over the Microplan contents (yes/no)
2.2 Is the Microplan contents known by VRMC? (yes/no)
2.3 Has the VRMC used the Monitoring Board to explain the Microplan targets to the village? (yes/no)
2.4 Has the VRMC discussed the Microplan with: a. Panchayat (yes/no) b. BDPO (yes/no)
2.5 Has the VRMC adjusted/updated the Microplan through a participatory process? (yes/no)
2.6 Has the VRMC paid an active role in realising project related Microprojects? (yes/no)
2.7 Has the VRMC paid an active role in realising non-project related Microprojects as per Microplan? (yes/no)

Question:	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	Total
Scoring:	2	1	1	0.5 + 0.5	1	2	2	10

Rating: 0 - 5 = Weak, 5.5 - 7.5 = Moderate, 8 - 10 = Good

Indicator 3: VRMC resolves conflicts over the natural village resources

Sub-indicators:

3.1 There is consensus over common land use as planned in Microplan (yes/no)
3.2 Conflicts are resolved in a participatory manner by the VRMC (yes/no)
3.3 VRMC leaders are respected by all social groups in the village (yes/no)
3.4 There is a smooth relation between VRMC and Panchayat (yes/no)
3.5 Rights and obligations of the Tripartite Agreement are respected (yes/no)
3.6 Villagers see the VRMC as a local forum that is able to resolve issues in the village (yes/no)

Question:	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	Total
Scoring:	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	10

Rating: 0 - 4.5 = Weak, 5 - 7 = Moderate, 8 - 10 = Good

Indicator 4: VRMC is effectively managed

Sub-indicators:

4.1 There is a proper registration and legal status of the VRMC (yes/no)
4.2 The VRMC rules and regulations for managing the committee are in place and known to members (yes/no)
4.3 Cash book has been maintained by the community properly in past year (yes/no)
4.4 VRMC meetings with sufficient quorum (2/3 rd) are held at least 6 times a year (yes/no)
4.5 VRMC highlights natural resource management issues during its meetings (yes/no)
4.6 VRMC has held election for new members after three years of operation (yes/no)
4.7 Link workers have been hired by the VRMC and are useful to VRMC activities (yes/no)
4.8 The Chetna Kendra is used for other purposes than VRMC meetings and project training (yes/no)
4.9 The VRMC is generating yearly membership fees from at least 50% of the villagers (yes/no)

Question:	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	Total
Scoring:	1	1.5	1	1.5	1	0.5	1	1	1.5	10

Rating: 0 - 4.5 = Weak, 5 - 7.5 = Moderate, 8 - 10 = Good

Indicator 5: VRMC is raising sufficient funds and other resources to become sustainable after project exit

Sub-indicators:

5.1 VRMC is generating income from the natural resources on common lands (yes/no)
5.2 VRMC generates income (in cash or kind) from other village resources (yes/no)
5.3 VRMC generates income from external resources (yes/no)
5.4 VRMC finances and implements microprojects financed from non-project resources (yes/no)
5.5 Has the VRMC with plantations handed over to them sufficient funds available to protect the plantations? (yes/no)
5.6 Is the VRMC generating sufficient income to become sustainable after the exit of the project? (yes/no)

Question:	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	Total
Scoring:	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	10

Rating: 0 - 4 = Weak, 4.5 - 7 = Moderate, 8 - 10 = Good

Indicator 6: VRMC monitors the microprojects properly

Sub-indicators:

6.1 VRMC has reported Microplan progress to Gram Sabha or full meeting of VRMC members twice in the last 12 months (yes/no)
6.2 MMT reports deviations from Microplan and actual progress to VRMC in accordance with the guidelines in the Microplan (yes/no)
6.3 MMT involved in tree survival surveys, including link workers (yes/no)
6.4 Microplan logbooks are in use by VRMC (yes/no)
6.5 Logbooks are complete and up-to-date (yes/no)
6.6 VRMC ensures that Village Monitoring Board accurately shows Microplan progress (yes/no)

Question:	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	Total
Scoring:	1.5	2	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	10

Rating: 0 - 4.5 = Weak, 5 - 7 = Moderate, 8 - 10 = Good

Indicator 7: VRMC manages the common property resources properly

Sub-indicators:

7.1 VRMC manages woodlots and tree groves planted by HCFP on the commons in accordance with the tripartite agreement (yes/no)
7.2 VRMC has been promoting and implementing improved water management systems (yes/no)
7.3 VRMC manages all natural resources on the commons (yes/no)
7.4 Social fencing systems for protection of community plantations in place (yes/no)
7.5 VRMC is implementing a cut-and-carry system for grass collection from new plantations on common land (yes/no)
7.6 VRMC has received tree survival bonuses for good management (yes/no)
7.7 VRMC is already managing its woodlots by pruning and thinning the trees (yes/no)

Question:	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	Total
Scoring:	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	10

Rating: 0 - 4 = Weak, 5 - 6 = Moderate, 7 - 10 = Good

Indicator 8: VRMC promotes employment and income generating activities for the disadvantaged in the village

Sub-indicators:

8.1 VRMC provides, through the project, at least 50% of the labour from disadvantaged groups (women, scheduled castes, landless) (yes/no)
8.2 VRMC is actively supporting at least one SHG (yes/no)
8.3 VRMC has promoted at least one income generating or training activity for the disadvantaged group other than employment in plantation/protection (yes/no)
8.4 VRMC is giving priority to disadvantaged groups in sharing of benefits from common land plantations (yes/no)

Question:	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.4	Total
Scoring:	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10

Rating: 0 - 2.5 = Weak, 5 = Moderate, 7.5 - 10 = Good

Indicator 9: VRMC stimulates the interchange of knowledge and skills among the community and between villages

Sub-indicators:

9.1 In accordance with the HCFP training plan VRMC trainees have shared skills with other members of the community (yes/no)
9.2 As part of the Microplan VRMC members have provided land for demonstration of agroforestry techniques (yes/no)
9.3 VRMC members and/or progressive farmers promote new techniques and other skills to villagers from the demo plots yes/no)
9.4 VRMC has organised its own training activities for villagers (others than above) (yes/no)
9.5 There is regular interchange with at least one other VRMC (yes/no)
9.6 The VRMC has promoted the concept of Community Forestry to at least one other village (yes/no)

Question:	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.6	Total
Scoring:	2	1	2	1	2	2	10

Rating: 0 - 4 = Weak, 5 - 6 = Moderate, 7 - 10 = Good

Summary of the number of indicators and sub-indicators for VRMC capacity assessment:

Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Sub-indicators	4	7	6	9	6	6	7	4	6	55

Overall Capacity Index, OCI

As the various sub-indicators carried different possible maximum score in the previous system, OCI was previously calculated as follows: Each sub-indicator was given the rating 'weak' = 0, 'moderate' = 0.5, 'good' = 1. The sub-indicator rating score was then added up, giving OCI rating: 0 – 3 = 'weak', 3.5 – 6 = 'moderate', 6.5 – 9 = 'good'.

As total possible score for each sub-indicator is always 10 in the new system, the OCI will now simply be calculated as the average of the individual sub-indicator scores, with following rating:

- 0 – 4 = weak
- >4 – 7 = moderate
- >7 – 10 = good

Positive responses by VRMCs to sub-indicators in 2005 and 2007

Sub-indicator, VRMC Capability Assessment	% positive response	
	2005	2007
VRMC reads HCFP extension literature	91	85
VRMC has updated PA data	22	20
Monitoring board PA data explained to villagers	74	61
VRMC has information on Government schemes	87	83
Full village agreement on microplan contents	88	93
Microplan contents known by VRMC	81	72
Monitoring board microplan targets explained to villagers	68	55
VRMC has discussed microplan with Panchayat	95	81
VRMC has discussed microplan with BDPO	43	19
VRMC has updated/adjusted the microplan	17	40
VRMC has realised project related microprojects	86	90
VRMC has realised non-project related microprojects	33	32
Consensus on common land use as per microplan	97	93
VRMC resolves conflicts in a participatory manner	97	77
VRMC leaders respected by all social groups	88	87
Smooth relation between VRMC and Panchayat	98	89
Rights & responsibilities of tripartite agreement respected	95	75
Villagers see VRMC as an able forum to resolve conflicts	57	52
Rules & regulations for VRMC management in place	79	70
Cash book is properly maintained	72	86
VRMC meetings with quorum held at least 6 times a year	84	93
VRMC highlights resource management in meetings	90	83
VRMC had repeat election of members after 3 years	19	26
Link workers hired by VRMC and found useful	67	92
Chetna Kendra used for other purposes than training/meetings	59	77
At least 50% villagers contribute VRMC membership fees	46	42
VRMC generates income from common land	15	16
VRMC generates income from other village resources	14	25
VRMC generates income from external resources	15	3
VRMC realises micro projects funded by non-project resources	6	13
VRMC has sufficient funds to manage plantations	46	55
VRMC generates sufficient income to become sustainable	40	27
VRMC reports microplan progress to full village meetings	32	15
Village monitoring team reports progress to VRMC	70	66
Village monitoring team involved in tree survival surveys	94	89
Microproject logbooks are in use by VRMC	91	97
Logbooks are complete and up-to-date	72	63
VRMC ensures that monitoring board shows accurate progress	58	40
Woodlot management is in line with tripartite agreement	93	86
VRMC implements improved water management systems	13	31
VRMC manages all common land natural resources	85	76
Social fencing for protection of community plantations in place	80	63
Cut-and-carry system for grass collection is implemented	66	89
Tree survival bonus for good woodlot management received	74	93

Pruning and thinning of woodlots is implemented	39	69
VRMC provides >50% of labourers from disadvantaged groups	87	94
VRMC actively supports at least one Self-Help Group	34	24
VRMC has promoted a non-plantation activity for disadvantaged	23	17
VRMC gives priority to disadvantaged in plantation benefit share	87	87
VRMC trainees share skills with other community members	78	79
VRMC members provide land for agroforestry demonstration	43	51
Demo plots imbue new techniques and skills to villagers	12	22
VRMC has organised other training activities for villagers	6	7
Regular interchange with at least one other VRMC	67	74
VRMC has promoted community forestry to another village	85	80