



# Discussion Paper

## **Towards Pro-Poor Institutions: Exclusive Rights to the Poor Groups in Community Forest Management<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Summary**

In spite of the widely accepted success of Community Forestry in reviving degraded land, it is still seen as being unable to provide tangible benefits to the poor. This paper illustrates that through continuous sharing, deliberation and negotiation among the poor and non-poor members of Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs), management of community forests can be made far more equitable than the usual scenario. Drawing from the experience on the processes and outcomes of Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP), this paper brings empirical evidence of how facilitation support has enabled the poor to have more equitable access to community forests. Three key pro-poor institutional arrangements resulting from the facilitation process include: a) establishing special use rights arrangements within CFUGs for the poor, b) pro-poor silvicultural practices, c) and equitable forest product and benefit distribution mechanisms. The paper suggests changes in policy and practice to institutionalize these outcomes.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Community based forest management institutions are considered effective solution to the problems of sustainable management of commons. However the current community based forest management institutions are often unable to provide a significant contribution to the livelihood of poor and marginalized people due to their limited influence in addressing broader socio-economic and distributional issues (Branney & Yadav 1998). Though the community forestry has been widely accepted as being successful in reversing the past trends of deforestation in the hills of Nepal (Kanel 2004), the needs of the poor have often been neglected and hence there are limited livelihood impacts (Dev *et al.* 2003). Moreover, the amount of forest products harvested at present is insufficient to meet the needs of the users (Malla 2000). In addition the equitable use of forests products within the community has not been clearly demonstrated (Branney & Yadav 1998). The issues of equity and poverty within community forestry have not been adequately addressed (Timsina and Luintel 2003). Therefore, streamlining the benefits from forest towards livelihood enhancement (particularly poverty alleviation) and strengthening good governance for equitable performance are the key areas for improvement (Kanel 2004).

Equity, in general term entails fair distribution of resources, rights, opportunities and wealth among people over time (Agarwal 2001; Kothari 1999). The management approaches of natural resource management, which seek equity and social justice, must be devised to allocate more resources to disadvantaged groups so as to make the system equitable (Timsina and Paudel 2003).

This paper illustrates that through continuous sharing, deliberation and negotiation among the poor and non-poor members of Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) management of community forests can be made equitable. It is demonstrated by drawing from the experience of Livelihood and Forestry Programme (LFP) particularly from bringing cases of few districts and some community forest user groups. We provide empirical evidences on the process and outcome of how facilitation support enabled the poor to have more equitable access to community forests. We discuss a particular form of institutional innovation that entails assigning exclusive use right to the identified groups of poor within the CFUGs, pro-poor silvicultural practices and equitable rules for forest products distribution and benefit sharing. Methods used for data collection include: literature review, informal discussions, field visits and case study.

The paper starts with introduction giving brief overview of policy and programme highlighting equity as a means to reduce poverty and facilitation process to achieve equity. Second section of the paper provides the findings of the paper on equitable innovations in CFUG through land allocation, pro poor forestry and silvicultural practices and equitable rules for forest product

distribution and benefit sharing mechanism. It also discusses the overall findings and ends with conclusion with key issues and policy feedbacks.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Based on Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulations 1995, the government transfers responsibility to CFUGs for managing part of the national forests. The transfer of rights includes the right to use forest products in a sustainable way with the ultimate policy objective of improving livelihoods of rural communities (HMGN 2002). CFUGs have been recognized as social institutions, legal entities and self-governing autonomous bodies which have legal rights to formulate their constitution and to take decisions regarding CF management (Adhikari 2001). They hold the legal right to claim support services from the DFO, and are also free to collaborate with other organizations (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003b).

Master Plan for Forestry Sector (MPFS) have emphasized Community forestry (CF) programme as one of its six primary programmes soliciting active participation of individual and communities in developing and managing forest resources to meet their basic needs (MPFS 1988). The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) which is also the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) has three key strategies: (a) broad-based economic growth, (b) social sector development, and (c) targeted programmes for the backward and vulnerable groups. PRSP explicitly states that "broad-based economic growth benefits poor, but there are specific groups of people, who if left on their own, will either be unable to escape the poverty trap or take an unacceptably long time to do so. These groups could be hard-core poor, asset-less people, disadvantaged groups, indigenous people, and people living in remote or isolated areas, female-headed households or women. PRSP aimed at promoting the community forestry programmes with enhanced participatory natural resource management for sustainable production system and expanded pro-poor employment opportunities in rural areas (Singh 2004).

The issue of equity has been recognized by several national policy documents and different international conventions agreed by Nepal. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reflect the multifaceted nature of poverty, with each goal illustrating a different aspect of poverty. The MDGs are an attempt to operationalise the multidimensional approach to poverty, focusing on selected indicators. Since use of biodiversity is directly linked with poverty, a focus on using biodiversity equitably and sustainably is fundamental to strategies and actions to eradicate/reduce poverty and to achieve sustainable development (Pisupati and Warner 2003). Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) focuses on conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biodiversity (Pisupati and Warner 2003). To meet these three major objectives, Nepal has developed and endorsed its Biodiversity Strategy in 2002. The Nepal Biodiversity Strategy Implementation Plan (NBSIP)

aims to implement this strategy (HMGN/MFSC 2006). In addition, the main programs related to biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction as planned in the 10<sup>th</sup> plan explicitly give importance to scientific forest management and increasing access of the disadvantaged groups, women and marginalized people to community forest resources. The protection and promotion of the rights and interests of socially and economically disadvantaged groups will be improved by enforcing the laws related to eliminating discrimination and by undertaking additional measures in accordance with its pledge to ensure the protection and promotion of these groups' rights (NPC 2003).

Nepalese society is socially, economically and culturally diverse. This heterogeneity has created deep inequities within the society that are manifested in unequal power relations, which are defined by caste, class, gender and regional settlement (Bista 1991). These inequities are further compounded by the inadequate support of government, gap in policy implementation, and poor governance at the community level. However, there are some good innovations too. In CF management pro poor initiatives like assigning exclusive use rights to the poor by giving land on lease, pro poor focused silvicultural practices and equitable distribution of benefits are some of the mechanisms to enhance equity.

Community forestry is contributing to livelihood promotion in many ways, one of which is providing access to the forestland for additional income or employment. For example, as a pilot program, the users groups in Ghorlas of Myagdi and Jhauri of Parbat are making sub-groups of the poorest of the poor, who have no alternative employment or income opportunities. These sub-groups are given exclusive access to community forests to produce NTFP or medicinal plants and are allowed to share the income generated by these activities (Kanel et al. 2005). These arrangement provide opportunities for the poor to benefit through community forest management. Poor people rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihood. Moreover, they reside around the forest. Since over 10.6% of the Nepal's total land area (NBS 2002) consists of shrub land which is legally referred as forest (Forest act 1993), there is an enough space to provide the shrub land under land allocation provision to the poor. Thus allocation of community forestry land to the poor for Income-Generating Activities appears to have the potential to improve their livelihoods (LFP 2004).

Nepal's community forestry is a well established management form in the country as it is three decades old in practice (Pokharel 2008). Targeting poor and disadvantaged groups within the community forestry programme has always remained the main strategy for its further reform. The interventions needed to promote pro-poor CF include: provision of package programmes to these groups in an integrated manner; promotion of pro-poor enterprises with marketing facilities; intercropping of NTFPs including MAPs; adaptive and collaborative forest management; and monitoring the impacts of CF projects and programmes at macro-level (Kanel 2004).

Today, Nepal's community forestry has moved beyond its original goal (fulfilling basic forestry needs) therefore to contribute to the national agenda of poverty reduction by increasing income generation opportunities through decentralized and sustainable management of forests (Pokharel 2008; NPC 2007). Moreover, the objectives, targets and strategies are well focused towards reducing poverty and achieving sustainable forest management for which community forestry is the right example (NPC 2007). The livelihood of the poor and deprived groups, need to be supported through the management and sustainable development of forests (NPC 2003). Since, all the users within the CFUG do not belong to any particular wellbeing category, benefit distribution mechanisms based on equality may not fulfill the requirements of the poor groups. Malla et al. (2001) found that wealthier households appear to benefit more, in terms of forest product distribution and community forest management, than the poor. This is because most CFUGs distribute products equally between households even though richer households may never previously have collected items such as fuelwood from communal land, and poorer households are forced to make up their requirements from other, generally the more distant government managed forests.

There are several projects and programmes to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the poorest and vulnerable sections of society. In this ground, Livelihood and Forestry programme (LFP) is a Department for International Development (DFID) funded bilateral programme implemented in fifteen districts of Nepal aims to reduce vulnerability, improve livelihoods of poor and excluded rural people through the financial, social and technical intervention. From 2001, LFP is providing its support to develop forestry sector and accordingly improve livelihoods of people in the selected district: Dhankuta, Sankhuwasaba, Bhojpur and Terhathum of Koshi Hills; Baglung, Parbat and Myagdi of western Dhaulagiri zone; Rupandehi, Nawalparasi and Kapilvastu of Terai Lumbini zone; and Salyan, Rukum, Pyuthan, Rolpa and Dang of Mid-Western Rapti zone.

### **3. LFP's ANIMATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR PRO-POOR INSTITUTIONS**

Proper facilitation and delivery of services to the CFUG on time in a simple way stands as a main strategy to bring pro poor governance reform (Pokharel and Niraula 2004). To adopt decentralized decision making, participatory management of resources, and equitable sharing of benefits; and accountability of government, non-government and private sector agencies is essential. In this context, Animation and Social Mobilisation (A/SM) activities are implemented by LFP as a part of its mainstream programme with government and NGO partners by mobilizing trained Local Resource Person (LRP) as animators. A/SM aims to mobilise and empower community members to more effectively participate in community activities, strengthen the functioning of FUGs, and improve the livelihoods of poor & excluded people

whose needs and aspirations are often marginalised in the decisions of CFUG Executive Committees (ECs). A/SM implements LFP's Pro poor and Social Inclusion (PPSI) Strategy to the grass root level.

For more equitable benefit sharing, LRP, animators /social mobilisers work with groups and individuals from different socio-economic groups by influencing elites who control local resources and empowering the poor and excluded. The development and mobilisation of the LRPs, animators who are currently supported by LFP and communities, and have received training in forest management techniques and basic social inclusion issues, has been effective in dealing with the increasing demands from user groups for technical services. Presently, CFUGs are much more empowered and have started to demand their recognition as service providers and many CFUGs have collaborated with agencies other than forestry for many services they require. NGO service providers are increasingly becoming important service providers even in conflict situation (Hayu and Pokharel 2004).

### **Process and Activities for A/SM of Community Groups**

The process of A/SM involves four main phases:

#### *Phase One: Building awareness and confidence*

- Support poor and excluded people to understand their rights and voice their needs
- Sensitize and convince local elites and key CFUG leaders who are open to change
- Facilitate CFUGs to hold assemblies and meetings
- Facilitate community assessments through well-being ranking
- Create opportunities for open discussion of problems and needs for plan preparation.

#### *Phase Two: Organising groups and preparing or revising plans*

- Facilitate the formation of tole (hamlet) / interest groups and P&E focused planning
- Facilitate the CFUG to allocate resources to the P&E
- Support amendment of Operational Plans and Constitutions to make them P&E sensitive
- Support preparation of action plans based on Operational Plans (OPs), and
- Support preparing Constitutions so that interventions are more systematic and P&E-focused
- Facilitate planning based on the needs of tole /interest groups
- Provide training on record-keeping, accounting, leadership, and forest management.

#### *Phase Three: Providing tangible benefits and assets*

- Support and facilitate the CFUG to implement the plans, OPs, and Constitutions
- Seek funding opportunities for community infrastructure as an entry point to encourage the participation of the whole community
- Support creating increased assets and opportunities for P&E.

#### *Phase Four: Building sustainability and linkages*

- Recruit and train volunteer animators
- Create linkages to services for community development and livelihoods opportunities

- Create linkages to technical forestry service providers, such as LRPs and Range Posts
- Make the animation programme the responsibility of VDCs facilitating local resource mobilisation.

Source: LFP 2007 (a)

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Creation of special use rights arrangements within CFUGs for the poor & excluded groups (Land Allocation Mechanisms)

Forest policy need to support the livelihood of all users, including the poor and deprived groups through sustainable management of forest (NPC 2003). A/SM activities provide poor and excluded an opportunity to benefit through common property resource management by facilitating to create special use rights i.e. through land allocation within CF land. The purpose of land allocation mechanism is to improve the socio-economic condition of the poor and excluded groups who are below the poverty. It promotes better land use for the economic and ecological regeneration; and creates environment for participation of P & E in community forestry.

The key strength of CF Land Allocation lies in promoting the effective management of barren land and increasing its productivity thereby improving the livelihoods of the poor, women and dalits. The process involves regular monitoring of the situation to ensure that the land is used appropriately and effectively which is very essential for user to make Land Allocation concept a reality. Moreover, it includes series of process for the selection of beneficiary group with the implementation of the programme.

Through Land Allocation program, poor people have managed and harvested fodder, grass, NTFPs. The poor people have developed self-confidence and are actively engaged in collective activities to improve their economic status. Moreover, they feel that they are well integrated into the larger community. This ultimately has increased the feeling of ownership in Community Forestry Process. This results in an increased participation in community forestry processes. Consequently, a Community Forest will have less pressure on the land with forest cover and therefore, contributing in an effective use of the bare land.

#### *Process for land allocation*

- Identification of poor family through well being ranking during the time of constitution preparation along with identification of suitable land area is the first step followed by the official request with the CFUC to allocate land within community forest.
- Discussion takes place among committee members upon the request and presented in assembly after the acceptance. Based on the consensus of the community, a sub group is



formed of the poor and marginalized (active targeting) identified by participatory well being ranking.

- As the CFUC is the combination of peoples having different views, it is necessary to change the attitude of those people who do not favour land allocation. They must develop the understanding that CF land allocation is one of the several poverty reduction mechanisms to be employed by the CFUGs. At this point of time proper facilitation is required for which tole (hamlet) meeting and group discussion may be the better way of resolving such dispute.
- Identification and selection of bare land, i.e. generally forest having crown density less than 20%, suitable for land allocation within CF. The delineation of such land is done by Range Post (RP) staff and/or LRPs. Note that it is better to mention provision of land allocation in OP/Cons.
- After identification of poor family and suitable land for Land Allocation, an agreement between CFUGC and sub group (coordinated by District Forest Office) is made. An agreement is signed by CFUG Committee and sub group. Generally, the provision of land allocation is mentioned in OP/Con; if not it should be informed to DFO.
- The process has the potential to raise the awareness of both elite and poor members of the CFUG, which usually discusses and documents the following points:
  - ⊗ names and selection criteria of the beneficiary group ,
  - ⊗ selection criteria of the land to be allocated,
  - ⊗ objective of the CF Land Allocation and its duration,
  - ⊗ area, boundaries, and description of the land,
  - ⊗ acceptable uses of the land and limitations to the use of the land,
  - ⊗ systems to share the costs and benefits between the poor users, CFUG, and other stakeholders,
  - ⊗ process of withdrawing the allocated land,
  - ⊗ system for marketing the product of the land,
- The land is provided to the interested group.

### ***Identification of poor group***

The selection of poor household is an important step for land allocation. The household are selected through well being ranking. Since there may be a large number of poor families than the land available for the lease, appropriate facilitation is required to make common understanding. Table 1 provides general criteria for CF land allocation.

**Table 1: Criteria for CF Land Allocation**

Selection of Forest Land	Household Selection	Selection of Plantation Species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Forest land without trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorst households in wellbeing ranking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should give tangible benefits and a quick return on investments within a short span</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable condition and area for cultivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disadvantaged people: poor Dalits and women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linked to livestock raising</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible to beneficiary group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate number of households for the land available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linked to market demand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities for the cultivation of species: water and shelter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiaries should reside closely together and be able to function as a group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linked to capabilities of beneficiary households</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 1 ha/ 4 households</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must not be annual crops, but can be perennial species, such as asparagus or fruit trees</li> </ul>

Source: LFP 2004

### **Case study**

Tarepahar CFUG of Dhanbang VDC covers 47 HHs. Among them, 9 HHs belong to rich category, 10 HHs medium, 10 HHs poor and 18 HHs in very poor category defined by well being ranking. With the facilitation of DFO and LFP staff, the users agreed to allocate CF land for the poor (letter of contract between land allocation group and CFUG Committee is given below). For this 20 HHs identified as poor formed Saunepani cardamom production group and are given 2.26 ha of CF land. They now have planted cardamom in the allocated land.

**Tarepahar Community Forest User Group**  
**Dhanwang-3, Kapurkot, Salyan**  
**Contract Letter**

This agreement is made today 2064/03/11 B.S., between Tarepahar CFUG (hereafter referred as “First Party” and Saunepani Cardamom Cultivation Group (hereafter referred as “Second Party”) to provide Community Forest area to the group for cultivation of Cardamom as decided on 2064/02/26. The group agrees on abiding by terms and conditions mentioned hereunder:

*Terms and Conditions:*

1. Saunepani cardamom production group will be remained as subgroup of Tarepahar CFUG.
2. Saunepani cardamom production group can build network between district and local level for coordination and marketing, if desired.
3. The first party should provide its forest area to 20 households of second party to conduct income generating activities like cardamom cultivation and pear grafting on male plants for 10 (ten) years in rent.
4. The first party will provide 2.26 hectare on block no 2.
5. The second party can use the hundred percent of goods produced/profit made while conducting income generating activities in forest area for 5 years. And will then deposit 15% of the total revenue in the account of first party from 6<sup>th</sup> year.
6. After 10<sup>th</sup> year first party can either continue or discontinue the agreement based on consensus and mutual agreement, however, the sovereign right to continue and discontinue depends upon the first party only.
7. The second party shall include poor, dalit and disadvantaged groups as its member if any of the households submit a written statement they cannot continue, informing and with necessary recommendation of the first party.
8. Whatever mentioned in this agreement letter, both the party shall follow the rules and regulations set by the government.
9. First party shall have the full rights over all the rest NTFPs, wild plants etc that exist inside the forests.

**Saunepani Cardamom Cultivation Group**

Name:

Designation:

Signature:

Date:

**Community Forest User Group**

Name:

Designation:

Signature:

Date:

After the completion of the agreement between CFUG committee and beneficiary group, given plot of land is divided among each household. In some cases, the users take a group approach rather than dividing the land amongst the individual households, with all the members contributing and sharing the benefit equally, which also amplifies the feeling of harmony. The most common use of the land is for grass and fodder for livestock. However, in some cases they plant broom grasses, NTFPs like kurilo (*Asparagus racemosus*), seto musli (*Chlorophytum borivilianum*) for long-term benefits.

#### **4.2 Empowerment of Poor and Excluded (P and E)**

Social mobilization aims to empower the disempowered and voiceless to enable them to demand for their rights, understand responsibilities and receive equitable benefits from the programmes implemented in their areas. Therefore, facilitation is necessary to change people's behavior and enable them to act proactively to empower P & E. Since P & E people typically lack access to land, they often depend more on community forestry resources for their livelihoods. In view of the fact that empowered community forestry users negotiate more equitable and mutually beneficial forest use and demand their rights, different awareness raising and empowerment activities are conducted which includes household visit, well being ranking, formation of sub group/ interest groups, pro-poor and social inclusion trainings etc through social mobilization. The process has been found empowering poor, women and disadvantaged members to get organized to raise their voice collectively in influencing way to change policy at different levels.

#### **Case study**

Gangawoti Mahatara, a member of Saunepani cardamom cultivation group of Tarepahar CFUG, Salyan says "The community forest had some barren land and we have very limited land to survive. The CFUG provided us land for ten years for our income generating activities whilst also protecting the forest. This has given us a feeling that we are no longer landless." The participation of P & E members has increased in the group and committee meetings after the excluded people realised that their voices will be heard only through their presence. Initially there were no provisions for economic support to poor households.

#### ***Practice of land allocation***

Started mainly for the production of fodder as a silvo-pastoral model of agroforestry system, land allocation in later years has been used for NTFPs and other cash crop cultivation, and thatch grass production etc. In eastern hill districts of Dhankuta, Terhathum, Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur land allocation has been practiced for cash crop such as cardamom cultivation. It has also been practiced for complementing supply of raw materials to local forest based enterprises such as lokta and argeli cultivation for paper enterprises in Sankhuwasabha and Terhathum district, citronella cultivation for supplying citronella to the locally established citronella distillation plant at Leuti Phedi of Dhankuta district. Similarly, in some areas commercially valuable NTFPs such as Kurilo, Chiraito, Seto Musali, Kalmegh, Timur, Lapsi, Ritha etc has been cultivated.

In LFP project area 698.02 ha of community forest land has been allocated under land allocation scheme to carry out different income generation activities. 7317 households in 621 CFUGs are benefitted. Among them 7123 HHs (97% of total land allocated HHs) belongs to poor and very poor category (table 2). If this mechanism is replicated on a large scale, there is a tremendous potential for community forests to improve the livelihoods of poor people in Nepal.

**Table 2: Land allocation**

SN	Area	No of FUGs	Allocated CF area (ha)	Total HH
1	EAST (4 district)	274	336	2305 (Dalit 346, Janajati 1151, and Others 808)
2	WEST (3 district)	95	168.13	865 (Dalit 453, Janajati 162, and Others 250)
3	Terai (3 district)	19	30.57	374 (Dalit 92, Janajati 197, and Others 85)
4	Midwest (5 district)	233	163.32	3773 (Dalit 633, Janajati 2247, and Others 893)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>698.02</b>	<b>7317 (Dalit 1524, Janajati 3757, and Others 2036)</b>

Source: LFP 2008 (a)

### **Case study**

In FY 2062/63 total 59 CFUGs have allocated 26 hectare of land to 853 households in Dang district. 107 households of dalit, 542 households of disadvantaged janajati and 166 households of other category are benefitted. Among them 728 (85%) households belong to the poor group (table 4). These groups are now harvesting their products.

**Table 3: Land allocation managed during FY 2062/63 in Dang district**

SN	Type of Spp.	Scientific name	No of seedling	Plantation area (ha)
1	Aswogandha	Withania somanifera	22,000	26
2	Kalemegh	Andrographis paniculata	15,000	
3	Kurilo/satabar	Asuparagus racemosus	7,38,028	
4	Sarpagandha	Rauwolfia serpentina	6,000	
5	Seto musli	Chlorophytum borivillianum	416 kg seeds	

### ***Rehabilitation of degraded, waste and barren land***

As a result of providing degraded land within CF on lease to poor people; degraded, waste and barren land has been converted into productive land. Due to regular irrigation, composting and other cultural operations it is observed that the degraded barren and the waste lands have been

rehabilitated with regeneration of some of the valuable species. Now it generates incomes and contributes to royalty as well.

### 4.3 Pro Poor Forestry and Silvicultural Practices

In practice, the users seemed to be protection oriented and on the other hand the service providers had not been able to provide required services to the Forest User Groups (FUGs) as per their needs and management objectives as they lacked practical experiences in community forest management. The traditional protection oriented forest management practice was prevalent in most of the community forests. The communities manage CF mainly to secure their right. Quite often the everyday need of fuelwood and fodder was fulfilled from nearby national forests. Now FUGs are effectively moving towards more active forest management. It is the outcome of external intervention for last several years. Field based training/ coaching on Active Forest Management (AFM) along with regular silvicultural operations are now practiced in most of the CF. The main objectives of adopting AFM are: to ensure regeneration; to maintain forest diversity; to increase supply of forest products; and to optimize forest resources for the improvement of livelihoods of poor users through sustainable NTFP management, land allocation, and forest and non-forest based IGA and enterprise development.

Most of the FUGs are practicing forest management activities such as thinning, pruning, removal of mature and unwanted species for the plantation and natural regeneration of important species, block forest management, demo plot establishment etc. Since forest activities in place users are getting more forest products and also initiated an equitable distribution of forest products. the situation is getting changed with the intervention and support of LFP, DFO and partner organization staff through A/SM activities. The process of active forest management was initiated since last four years in five district of Midwest area (Salya, Rukum, Rolpa, Pythan and Dang). From the table mentioned below, total area of forest handed over as CF is 195033.53 ha and is managed by 1730 FUGs.

**Table 4: AFM in Midwest areas**

	Dang	Pyuthan	Salyan	Rolpa	Rukum	Total
<b>FUG ( No)</b>	437	324	345	318	306	1730
<b>Area handed over as CF ( ha)</b>	90999.96	38581.57	30114	23410	11928	195033.53
<b>FUG involved in Management</b>	265	181	255	165	120	986
<b>CF area Managed (ha)</b>	7221	2000	2640	389	837	13088
<b>Mgt. area / FUG</b>	27.25	11.05	73.91	51.89	39.22	56.99
<b>FUG involved in Management (%)</b>	60.64	31.10	52.60	9.97	42.10	40.26

Different awareness raising activities from household visit to onsite coaching of active forest management crafted awareness among communities accompanied by positive changes in

thinking and working modalities and a move towards active forest management, away from subsistence forestry. Recently, there are evidences that CFUGs are slowly moving towards active forest management (Khanal 2002; Singh 2002; Wagle 2002; Neupane 2000; Kanel et al 1999; Dhital et al 1998).

### **Case study**

Traditional protection mechanism was prevalent in Naulobikas CFUG of Garpa VDC, Salyan, "It was very difficult to me to make them understood about the importance and advantages of forest management which took long time" says Kamala Gharti, LRP in Garpa VDC. The communities have protected their forest for many years. So they did not agree to fell trees with the misconception that this will create deforestation. For this household visit was done to raise awareness about forest management. "I first convinced CFUG executive committee to carry out silvicultural operations in their CF then those committee members convinced other users". After performing thinning, pruning, and weeding operations in the particular block of forest, regeneration began on the bare areas. Apart from this users obtain fuelwood from silvicultural operations. Silvicultural practices also saved the time for fuelwood collection because they have to go adjoining forest for fuelwood collection which took long time in the past. "Forest is like an agricultural crop, we should remove unwanted weeds and diseased trees to create favorable condition for the regeneration" says Mr Ganesh Budamagar, President of Naulobikas CFUG.

**Table 5: Forest management practices adopted by CFUGs**

SN	Before A/SM	After A/SM
1	Protection oriented.	More production oriented.
2	Protection of unwanted species.	Removal of unwanted species.
3	Protection of matured and deformed trees.	Removal of matures trees .
4	Harvesting of dead and fallen trees.	Harvesting of all types as per sustained annual yield.
5	No/less practice of NTFP management.	Many initiatives for NTFP management.
6	No programme for land allocation.	Land allocation within CF for IGA support to P&E.

Source: LFP 2006

In the past, the Constitutions and Operational Plans of CFUGs heavily focused on the protection. The revision and preparation of new operational plans for community forests has led to improvements in both process and content, with new plans containing comprehensive activities related to both technical forest and NTFP management practices and social issues such as gender, social equity and income generation. Several pro-poor provisions (Box below), are now instituted in the Constitutions and Operational Plans (OPs) of CF aimed at maintaining equity in community forestry

### A few examples of pro-poor and inclusive provisions in Constitutions and Operational Plans of CFUGs (PCR 2008)

- Subsidies in prices of forest products;
- Reservation for the poor, women and *Dalits* in Community Forest Committees and decision-making bodies;
- Special provision for the distribution of forest products to vulnerable groups (for example; charcoal to blacksmith), victim of natural disaster and during the social events, single women, conflict victims freely;
- Allocation of CFUG funds and low interest loans for IGA;
- Forest resource management with allocation of CF land to poor users;
- Scholarship to children from pro-poor family

With increased focus on P & E, women, and dalits, their participation has significantly increased in decision making forums. According to PCR 2008, 57% of the poor have participated in meetings and assemblies. "After partnership programme, we have been able to represent women and share our feelings in the committee meetings" says Harikala B.K., member of Naulobikas CFUG Committee.

### *Creation of employment through active forest management*

Based on data collected from 617 CFUGs from five district of Midwestern region, 742082 person days employment was generated to very poor and poor group unlike 6721 person days to other groups (table 6). There are opportunities of employment in CF as forest watcher, wage labor during various silvicultural operations. The CFUGs prioritize the poor as timber worker, nursery technician/ nursery naike, fuelwood seller, resin collectors and others.

**Table 6: Paid employment generated by FUGs in Midwest areas during 2064/65 fiscal year**

Types of work	Based on # FUG	Paid employment Person Days					Very poor & Poor	Other	TOTAL	Remarks
		Dalit	Janajati	Minority	Other	Total				
<b>Forest management</b>	370	117921	290028	11025	164242	583216	549260	33956	583216	
<b>Nursery management</b>	87	3375	44411	261	8364	56411	53930	2471	56401	
<b>Others</b>	160	57623	60452	0	68286	186361	138892	30994	169886	Resin and NTFP
<b>Total</b>	617	178919	394891	11286	240892	825988	742082	67421	809503	

LFP 2008(b)



#### **4.4 Equitable forest product and benefit distribution mechanisms**

CFUGs have devised benefit distribution mechanisms to respond to the differential needs of forest users of various well-being ranks. CFUGs adopt well being ranking and forest products are distributed to members accordingly. Households are ranked according to the CFUGs' own sets of criteria developed locally by the members: total amount land, financial status, education status and social standings, etc. In Tarepahar CFUG of Salyan, the households are categorized under four categories are as follows and it depends upon local condition.

- A. Rich (owns land and enough food for 12 months with surplus food, good education, high social status, good alternative source of income),
- B. Medium (food for 9-12 months from own land, good education, having alternative source of income),
- C. Poor (owns land and feed for 6-9 months, low education, no alternative source of income),
- D. Ultra poor (owns land and feed for less than 6 months, illiterate, work as wage labor for hand to mouth)

Benefits distribution mechanisms include the distribution of forest products at discount rate to the poor households. While forest products are provided on subsidized rate to poor families free access is given to poor single women and ultra poor families. In case of Mahila CFUG of Kalimati Rampur, forest products used to be distributed equally among the users for several years. Now they have decided to manage equitable distribution of forest products. Timber is sold at 50% of actual price to the user of D category, 65% to C category and free access is allowed for homeless users. Similarly, Ms. Parbati Basnet, member of Bhaiyadevi CFUG, Salyan said "It was very difficult for me to maintain hand to mouth and I must search for household work in other houses everyday. Now CFUG committee has made provision for collecting fuel wood on subsidized rate than others for poor household like me. I purchase fuel wood at Rs 10 per bhari and sell at Rs 150 per bhari in nearby market. I am now generating income from selling of fuelwood. Now I don't need to work in anyone's houses anymore ".

In Salyan, Out of 20790 households, 15076 households were benefited from the newly introduced equitable benefit sharing mechanisms. This figure is nearly about 73% of the total households, of which 11% (2195Hh) rich, 20% (4054Hh) medium, 27% (5552Hh) poor, and 16% (3274Hh) were from very poor category. If we lump poor and very poor together as the poor, the benefit derived by category poor is greater than that of the rich one. The benefit received in case of grass and fuelwood is greater among the poor. The total bhari of grass received by the poor class is 8081 bhari per year; which is more than that of the non poor which is about 11% of the total bhari of grass received. Similarly, 45468 bhari more fuelwood is received by the poor than that of the rich, which is greater nearly by about 17% of the total fuelwood received by all four category (LFP 2008c).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The evidence presented in the previous section shows that through animation and social mobilization, it is possible to facilitate fairer and equitable negotiation of rules regarding forest management and benefit sharing. However the sustainability of this outcome in long run is still questionable. At least three issues are identifiable in this regard.

First, there is still a lack of enabling policy framework to promote pro-poor forest management. Whereas poor communities want benefit from the allocated land in short span by planting agro-forestry crops, the Community Forestry legislation does not allow the planting of annual crops on Community forest land. Poor users are encouraged by DFO staff to plant forest/ wild crops, which are not always preferred by and compatible to the poor. Section 49 under article 11 of Forest Act clearly states that no person shall attempt to deforest, plough, dig or cultivate in the land of forest area and to construct house or hut (See page no. 9 and 15 of Forest act 1993).

Some of the foresters working in the programme area even argue that plantation of NTFPs like cardamom on CF land reduces biodiversity. It is indeed an irony that broader government policy favors poverty reduction through Community forestry on the one hand, and in practice the poor are not allowed to cultivate agro-forestry crops which they prefer. Moreover, there is widespread perception among forest users that government retains authority (overriding the provision of Forest Action 1993) while giving the responsibility for the management of forest to communities.

Second, tenure security remains a critical issue in relation to providing sustained incentives to the poor to invest in the forest land allocated to them. Currently the tenure is defined through an agreement between the poor and the CFUG committee, but there is no regulatory provision for this. Given that there is high demand for forest land among the user households of all wealth categories, there are chances that such community level agreements with the poor and excluded groups are easily reverted back under local pressures and politics. The pro-poor innovation can sustain in the long run only when there is strong power built up in favor of the poor locally and district levels. The achievements mentioned above are the result of active facilitation support of LRPs, animators, supported through LFP. This has shown such pro-poor power is constantly built up to ensure sustainability of pro-poor innovations.

Third, there is lack of research to identify and develop agro-forestry models that are ecologically sustainable, as well as meet the needs of the poor. Before any meaningful policy dialogues can be initiated, there is a need to create and innovate some agro-forestry models on CF. In depth study to analyze the potential species for land allocation is lacking.

Fourth, Adhikari 2002 argues that poor users are not actually benefiting when all opportunity costs are accounted for in the assessment of costs and benefits of forest management. Creating equitable rules is a continuing challenge. Until and unless the balance between elite and the poor is managed, it is difficult to maintain equitable distribution of benefits.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This paper concludes that through continuous sharing, deliberation and negotiation among the poor and non-poor members of (CFUGs), management of community forests can be made equitable. We provide empirical evidence on the process and outcome of how facilitation support enabled the poor to have equitable access to community forests. Facilitation/ Social mobilization are essential to empower the disempowered and voiceless to come into mainstream. This has resulted in the creation of special management and use right to the poor and excluded groups. The special tenure lead to active management of forest accompanied by increased availability of forest products. However strong prop-up from policy level with clear guidelines is needed. Moreover, replication of the land allocation mechanism on a large scale, innovation of best practices in the field level and proper facilitation and service delivery to the CFUG on proper time and in simple manner are some of the basic requirement to fulfill.

The revision of existing Ops and preparation of new OPs for community forests have become more inclusive and equitable. Various provisions of package programmes including pro-poor enterprises to these groups are provided. Facilitation support provides some achievements including improvements of operational plans, awareness raising, field based forest management training and strong monitoring mechanism. There is a need to enhance how to support the communities to elaborate sustainable forest management plans and to establish clear, transparent, fair and simple benefit sharing mechanism.

This study also found that co-ordination among the different organizations and line agencies is an essential aspect of success for pro-poor community forestry process. Equitable forest product and other benefit distribution mechanisms can only be achieved if clear policy, provisions in acts and regulation, co-ordination among implementing agencies, favorable circumstances exist around community forestry. Overall the lesson learnt from this analysis is that benefit sharing at the local level needs to be improved by better understanding of the social structure of communities, providing a legal framework for community forestry committees, developing criteria and indicators to monitor benefit sharing, and development of effective conflict management mechanisms.

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