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Is Community Forestry Beneficial for Poor? : impact Analysis of Community Forestry on Livelihoods of Forest Users in Nepal

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Abstract

The critical role of CF for fostering social and economic development in Nepal has been widely recognised. It has also been argued that CF programme is essentially a strategy adopted to bring about socio economic change and development in rural areas. According to community forestry framework in Nepal, Community Forest Users Groups (CFUGs) are entitled to collect revenues from the forest products. Funds generated by CFUGs have been used not only for the management of their forests, building village level infrastructures such as rural roads, small water supply schemes, irrigational canals and schools; but also for conducting income generating activities for the users. This indicates that CF holds potentials for rural development as well as poverty alleviation in Nepal.

This study was conducted to explore the impacts of CF on livelihood of Ranipani CFUG, Tanahun, Nepal. The indicators observed to assess the impact of CF were based on different assets viz. Physical, Natural, Human, Social and Financial. The CF contributions were compared in terms of forest product supply situation, number and feeding techniques of livestock, forest products availability and time required for collection of the products. The participation and perception of users in decision-making have been assessed with respect to different well-being categories.

The results show that CF contributes to user livelihood by meeting the basic needs for forest products, easy availability of forest products by reducing the time for collecting forest products, encouraging to adopt productive livestock and stall-feeding, and this all leads to improved living condition of the users. The study observed that the time required for collecting fodder was reduced by 56 % and fuelwood by 50 % in the year 2003 compare to the base year 1996. Similarly, livestock unit has been increased by 24 % per household. Study suggests that 60 % of the CFUG members adopted stall-feeding shifting their open grazing practices.

The research concluded that the present practice of Ranipani CF plays a fairly significant role in capital formation, environmental sustainability, institutional development and its sustainability, in the process of community empowerment and social change and the reduction of vulnerability.

Keywords: Community forest user group, community forestry, livelihood, Nepal