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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Contribution of Community Forestry in Reducing Rural Poverty in Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal is one of the pioneer countries in the world for modern kind of community forestry (CF). CF has proved successful in recovering the degraded forest lands and fulfilling the public demands. Since it has completed its first generation aimed mainly for restoration of once heavily degraded forests, has now shifted its target to achieve sustainable development, rural livelihoods and good governance as the so called second generation issues.

The roles of CF into the reduction of rural poverty has yet to be fully analysed, however the preliminary results in many cases seemed quite encouraging with some exceptional externalities.

Nepal has the 5.5 mio ha (39.4 %) of natural forest out of which 61 % (3.5 mio ha) can be handed over to community as the community forests for the protection, management and utilisation of forests. Presently, about 1.65 million households or 35 % of the population of Nepal is involved in CF management program. To date 14,337 community forest user groups have been formed of which 778 are composed of women only as the committee members. A total of 1,219,111 ha of national forest has been handed over to community. This highly prioritised participatory programme has been widely acclaimed as a successful forest management approach. It has resulted in rural farmers gaining increased access to forest resources, together with the improvements in biodiversity and landscape values.

The CF has been providing almost all the production factors to the community. The CF Programmes could be suitable mode that provides land, labour, capital and enterprises factors and opportunities. In the society like Nepal, where problems of unemployment and under employment is rampant, CF in many places supplies land for timber and non timber production, capital to establish entrepreneurships, the NTFP cultivation, and establishment of cooperatives and so on.

Furthermore, varieties of forest products are collected, used or sold by User Groups and generate fund that is spent mainly on forest and community development activities. It has been estimated that CFs had earned about NRs. 747 million (at user price) and NRs.1.8 billion (at market price) from different sources in a single year 2003.

Keywords: Community forestry, forest user group, Nepal, poverty reduction