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Community Forest Management in Nepal for Achieving Millennium Development Goals

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Abstract

Since 1990 and onwards, the Government of Nepal has placed the community forestry programme (CFP) as major thrust in forestry sector. Started with the handing over the patches of National Forests particularly degraded areas to community forest user groups (CFUGs), CFP has significantly contributed addressing millennium development goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, particularly MDG 1– eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; MDG 7– ensure environmental sustainability; and MDG 3– promote gender equality and empower women. The objective of CFP was broadened with the increased success of CFUGs to conserve, manage and protect their community forest resources. The CFUGs also succeeded to generate cash income by managing the excess timber and other forest products. Such fund is invested to undertake different types of conservation and development initiative at community level.

Both qualitative and quantitative aspects of CFP’s real contribution, types of activities, decision making process and the beneficiaries were frequently raised. Hence, this study tries to explore the answers of these aspects and analyses how they contribute to achieving MDGs. Different participatory tools such as focused group discussion, informal discussion with executive committee, and general members, and key informants interview were employed. Field work was conducted in 2004 in two selected CFUGs in the western Terai of Nepal.

The study depicts that CFUGs invested about 88.2% of their group fund on road construction and micro-credit (MDG 1) in the study area. Such activities helped the forest users to execute different income generation activities and increased access to the markets. The women and poor users’ participation in decision making processes of CFUGs affairs is significantly increased by 65% (MDG 3). Illegal logging in community forest is drastically decreased and the species of flora and fauna increased by 19 species from 1997 to 2003 (MDG 7). Thus, it can be concluded that though CFUGs activities are not strategically planned to address MDGs, community forest management largely contributed in achieving MDGs in Nepal and the role of community forestry in achieving the MDGs has to be strategically set up defined under the framework of community forestry program.

Keywords: Community development, community forestry, empowerment, micro-credit, millennium development goals

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