



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2010, Zurich

“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

Analyzing Community Forestry Internal Governance: Evidence from Western Nepal

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Abstract

There has been a rising interest in common property institution such as community forestry in natural resource management in developing countries. Among developing countries, Nepal has proved a keen leader in experimenting with participatory systems of forest governance. However, there are key problems like elite domination in decision making and misappropriation of group fund which do not allow well functioning of institutional governance of community forest in reality. This paper aims to analyse the internal structure and status of governance in community forest user group level. It tries to evaluate the main achievements and challenges of community forestry governance and provide options for future policy. Five major characteristics of governance: participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law and inclusion/equity are used and these characteristics are analysed on the basis of gender, and wealth (poor, rich and medium) status. The presentation builds upon empirical work in three community forest user groups located in Banke district of western Nepal. The data collected in this study were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. One day workshop was conducted in each group separately to find the empirical evidence of five major dimension of governance. The set of indicators explaining each governance dimension were developed before the workshop and matrix ranking was used to rank each indicator according to the set of criteria. Questionnaire (structured and semi structure) was used for household survey interview and check-list was used to get expanded data from focus group discussion, in-depth interview, and community forest user group's meeting observations. The data collected from questionnaire survey were coded and analysed by using Statistical package for social science (SPSS, version. 16.0). The main findings point to the differences in user's participation on decision making process, transparency of information and group fund, accountability of users and inclusiveness even though they were getting same support from the state and Non government organisations. This paper concludes that success of good governance depends on user's awareness' level, commitment, attitude and leadership of the group

Keywords: Accountability, community forestry, governance, inclusiveness, participation, transparency