



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2010, Zurich

“World Food System —
A Contribution from Europe”

Unintended Outcomes of Community Forestry Programme in Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal is one of the best known examples in the world for successfully implementing community based forest management system. It pioneered modern form of community forestry (CF) programme in 1978. Since then, CF is one of the single most prioritised programme in the country. The Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation allocates more than 60% of its development budget on CF programmes. Similarly, more than 75% of the human and capital resources of the Department of Forests and related national and international forestry development projects, has been regularly involved in the development of CF programmes.

There are remarkable positive impacts of CF programmes not only within the forestry sector but also within other development sectors in the country. It has been very successful in maintaining greeneries, averting deforestation, enhancing peoples' livelihood, creating harmonious relationships between governmental agencies and rural population and more importantly advocating people participation in all forms of development activities.

Despite of all these successes, we cannot turn blind, dumb and silent towards few visible unintended outcomes of the programme and its implementation. Corruption in public funds and in sale of valuable forest products, in-transparency, inequity, massive interferences from political parties, exclusion of nearby and indigenous people, shifting encroachment and illegal activities towards government managed forest, neglecting the traditional rights of disadvantaged groups and some nomadic communities can engulf the successes of the programme in the long run.

This study is very important and new in its kind as it was entirely focused on assessing the unintended outcomes and externalities of the CF programme, reverse of the trend to run towards seeking only for achievements and successes. The study was mainly based on key informant survey, onsite observation, analysis of the coverage on public media and secondary information available on governmental and non-governmental organisations. The study will be very helpful for the concerned stakeholder to eliminate the implementing errors and policy level shortcomings. The findings will be instrumental in achieving sustainable forest management, good governance and broad based equitable development.

Keywords: Community forestry, governance, livelihood, participation, stakeholders