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### Editorial

ForestAction Nepal has brought a new initiative of providing speedy information to the wider audience on forestry sector policy process through an electronic media: Quarterly E-Newsletter. Initiated from the beginning of 2010, the 'Forestry Watch', has aimed at enhancing deliberation in the policy process by providing analytical and critical civil society perspective backed by scholarly research. The e-newsletter team have received overwhelmingly encouraging response on the first issue (January-March) which has supplied motivation to bring this issue. Similar to the previous issue, this issue also covers key events, news, policy updates and publications.

The E-Newsletter team from ForestAction is enthusiastic and committed to up keep this initiative. We believe this issue will contribute to serve the goal of providing timely, rapid and efficient flow of information in the forest sector in Nepal and beyond.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the readers and visitors of our website. We do welcome comments, feedback and contribution from readers, researchers, policy makers, professionals, journalists and activists.

*Enjoy reading forestry "updates"*

**The Editorial Team**

### Forest Policy Processes

#### Forest sector interim strategy underway

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) is developing an interim Forestry Sector Strategy. The Ministry has formed a high level 'Task Force' that would follow a multi-stakeholder process including government officials, civil society organisations, and donor agencies. The MoFSC has sought a democratic and inclusive process to develop the strategy by involving diverse stakeholders in different platforms to access their political advisory support and technical inputs. Three different bodies have been formed for the purpose: i) Advisory Committee; ii) Multi-Stakeholder Forum; and iii) Core Team. The Strategy development process may be informed by the diverse views and perspectives of stakeholders primarily through regular meetings of these bodies, consultation meetings at national and regional levels and through experts inputs in the writing.

However, there are also concerns that the seemingly multi-stakeholder process is likely to end up in a very strategic and manipulative process in its essence. The actual write up team is composed of seven MoFSC officials. It is obvious that the document will merely go beyond the official view of the government in defining problems in forestry sector and crafting future strategies. Though there are two multi-stakeholder bodies, they are largely dominated by the MoFSC representatives, where as only a few civil society members are invited. There may be only a couple of meetings during the whole process of strategy development, which may be too short and may exclusively focus around technical issues. Consequently, stakeholders would have very little opportunity to actually contribute to building the content of the Strategy. Thus, ensuring genuine participation, contribution and influence of stakeholders to the content of the strategy is a real challenge. Such challenge as not only in this particular process but also applied to several other multi-stakeholder initiatives in Nepal.

#### Civic Attention drawn over multimillion Euro 'Forest Resource Assessment' project

The 5.58 million Euro project, is a bilateral cooperation between Nepal and Finland government, which has duration of 5years (2010-2014). A dozen of civil society organizations (CSOs) working in Nepal's forestry sector drew the attention of the Forest Ministry and the Finish Embassy over the "Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) project. Civil society position paper submitted to the project authorities states that the 'FRA project has completely ignored space and role of CSOs and undermined the past roles and ongoing engagement of various CSOs in the forestry sector. This is a regressive step that has overlooked the local communities and the wider civil society'. The CSOs stated the concerns around these claims i) The project governance is non-inclusive; ii) The

proposed methodology is focused on a national forest resource assessment ignoring different forest management regimes; iii) need to adhere local technical knowledge and human resources; iv) Participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and local government; v) Capacity building at local level and not limited to the central government officials and vi) creation of forest resource information systems.

The chief technical advisor of the project in a letter addressed to FECOFUN on 23 April provided responses on enhancing 'multi-stakeholder engagements'; encouraging forestry related NGOs in the project steering committee; relevance of 'basic forestry inventory data' and related information up to the district and community level. The project is expected to produce a national level forestry related data for forestry sector planning and decision making.

### Forest Policy Seminar Series Initiated

Seven key academic and research based organizations in Nepal have jointly initiated the 'Forest Policy Seminar Series' with the purpose of facilitating a scholarly debate and reflections on forest policy and governance in Nepal. The researchers have solicited their findings with policy implications in Nepal's forestry sector. The key focus of four seminars revolved around the issues of PES, democratization of forestry sector, forest management and equity outcomes of the community forestry in Nepal. Researchers who delivered the seminar include Mr. Dil Bahadur Khatri, Dr. Thorsten Treue and Bishwa Nath Oli, Dr. Indra Prasad Sapkota, Dr. Maheshwor Dhakal, Dr. Manohara Khadka.

The collaborating institutions of this initiative include ForestAction, Nepal Foresters Association, Institute of Forestry, College of Development Studies, Kathmandu Forestry College and National Policy Learning Group. The organizers are exploring possibilities of such seminars outside of Kathmandu in places such as Pokhara and Hetauda.

### Nepal's Progress in REDD Readiness Process

Following the international move, Nepal is also preparing itself for Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and enhancement of carbon stock (REDD plus to be implemented after 2012. Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) through REDD Forestry and Climate Change Cell had prepared a REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) with the involvement of diverse stakeholders working in and around the forestry sector. It was submitted to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of The World Bank on 19 April 2010. The RPP went through the review process in June. The revised version was presented by the ministry during the FCPF board meeting held in Guyana in June and later resubmitted to the FCPF. There is an optimism among the forestry stakeholders on the approval of R-PP that is already approved and Nepal is ready to pilot REDD related activities from 2010.

### REDD debated at the grassroots

Series of grassroots discussions on REDD and its benefit sharing mechanisms in the three pilot districts (Chitwan, Gorkha and Dolakha) of NORAD REDD project being implemented by ICIMOD, ANSAB and FECOFUN between the period of April and May, 2010 unravelled both scepticisms and optimisms among community forest user groups. Although there are local concerns about restrained access to forest resources once REDD is implemented, there is a general perception about potential local benefits to REDD. Nevertheless, how far that perception comes from and understanding of REDD and its benefit sharing mechanism is still debated. Also, equitable benefit sharing is still a contentious issue and locals demand for pro-poor REDD benefit sharing mechanisms. There is also a high level of pessimism at the community level on the actual transfer of REDD funds from the centralized government. Debates on REDD has gained momentum lately, nevertheless, uncertainties with it is still pervasive. There is dire need of clarifying the role and space of local communities, indigenous peoples, women and other relevant stakeholders while crafting benefit sharing mechanism for REDD. FECOFUN and ForestAction are jointly working to develop civil society strategy on potential REDD benefit sharing mechanisms in Nepal.



Figure 1: Members of a CFUG in Boch VDC watching video on climate change and REDD

### Events

#### National Network of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) in Nepal pledged for collective action

Around three dozens of local people representing the Himalaya, hills and Terai (lowlands) of Nepal assembled in the capital city, Kathmandu on June 5-6, 2010 to discuss on the common issues facing indigenous people and local communities involved in conservation of biodiversity through diverse initiatives and institutional forms across Nepal. They collectively pledged for formation of a national network to advance their rights and gain,

greater recognition and respect from the state. Some of the issues surfaced during the gathering were: i) the diversity and richness of areas collectively conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs); ii) their persistent contribution in conserving landscapes, critical wildlife and flora, sustaining cultures and traditions, enhancing local livelihoods, and maintaining ecological functions; and iii) contradictions with the state authorities, legislations and policies. The two days national gathering of ICCAs was jointly organized by ICCA Network Nepal and ForestAction Nepal.

### Forest Caravan concluded with a mass meeting in the capital city

Thousands of community forest user group (CFUG) members took out mass rallies from different corners of Nepal and convened in Kathmandu to held citizen assembly on April 13, 2010. It marked closing of the campaign 'Ban Yatra' (Forest March), organized by the Federation of Community Forest User, Nepal (FECOFUN). 120 representatives of CFUGs marched some 10 days and organized rallies, assemblies at regional level and dialogues at the grassroots covering around 68 districts of Nepal. They voiced out the demands for timely drafting of the new constitution with the agenda- 'Campaign for inclusion and good governance in community forestry!, People's right in natural resources and recognition of communities in the new constitution' were the key slogans during the campaign. Renouncing declaration of new protected areas, undue exploitation and poaching of valuable NTFPs in Himalayan region, corruption and party politics in CFUGs, alarming forest encroachment, deforestation and degradation; and recognition of communities managing natural resources as commons in the new constitution etc were some of the pressing issues vehemently raised during the assembly.



Figure 2: Community forest user group members leading the Forest March in Kathmandu.

### National Conference on Forest and People

A 'National Conference on Forest-People Interaction', organized by the Institute of Forestry, Nepal was held during June 6-7, 2010 in Pokhara, Nepal. The conference aimed to disseminate outputs of forestry and natural resources based research, and to share the knowledge and ideas among wider audience including policy

makers and planners. The conference convened and discussed many of the evidence-based research around several themes ranging from community based forest management and livelihood strategies, biodiversity and environmental services, forest and tree management practices, to forest policy, management and governance. Despite the sweeping range of research results, a dearth of linking these results for better policy dialogue and decision was evident. Nevertheless, this conference can be seen as an initiative to foster stimulation amidst stakeholders on key topics such as community forestry versus collaborative forest management, deliberative politics on community forestry and role of action research in policy processes.

### Workshop on Reducing Emission from All Land Use (REALU)

ForestAction in collaboration with World Agroforestry Centre and ICIMOD organised a half day workshop on REALU on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2010 to develop a shared understanding of potential prospects of including all land uses beyond forests, in the current debate of REDD. The workshop convened experts from forestry, agriculture, environment and other relevant sectors to foster discussion about issues related to REDD and REALU. Presentations and follow-up discussions during the workshop provided a comprehensive converse about the concept of REALU, REDD and existing status of REDD implementation in Nepal, role of agriculture in emission reduction and synergy between mitigation and adaptation in the context of climate change. The emerging issues from the presentations were discussed in a panel discussion, with an explicit focus on the potentials, challenges and knowledge gaps related to REDD and REALU in Nepal. The workshop provided an opportunity to explore bridging of mitigation and adaptation on one hand and forestry and agriculture on the other. For many, it was the first platform of this kind that sought to resolve the dichotomy between climate change mitigation and adaption which should inform the resources management strategy in an agrarian economy like Nepal.

### Potentiality of PES in Western Terai landscape

Carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation in community forests; water quality and quantity from irrigation canals originating from the watersheds; aesthetic beauty and clean environment have been identified and assessed as potential environmental services for piloting of Payment for Environmental Services (PES) in the upstream Macheeli Khola Watershed (in Kailali and Kanchanpur district) and the downstream Mohana-Kailali Industrial Corridor (Kailali district). The study was carried out by Environmental Resource Institute (ERI) and Green Governance Nepal, with a financial support from Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP). The study was conducted during April to July, 2010 on the potential and prospects of PES mechanism in the Western Terai. Based on the findings, the team has identified the service providers and service buyers, and has recommended payment mechanism for the environmental service.

## Commentary

### Barriers to innovation in community forestry

- Kalpana Giri, PhD

Reducing poverty through innovation system is an action and learning based initiative of Research into Use (RIU) program of DFID. The project aims to strengthen the community institutions (e.g. community forest user groups – CFUGs, their federation), and enhance the access of the users, particularly the poor and marginalized groups in forest resources, mainly related to market, governance, and networking. The project uses “innovation system perspective (IS)” with its emphasis on strengthening long-term capacity for learning and change.

With its unique perspective, the challenges to capture and use innovations in community forestry are manifold. Some specific barriers are as follows:

Though the democratic space and devolved rights to community forest user groups (CFUGs) are often reported as instrumental benchmarks for economic innovation, our experience suggests that these do not automatically lead to economic innovation in CFUGs. Our reflection indicates that CFUGs, despite their motivation and preparedness, do not have the autonomy for economic innovation. The state still controls the ideas and decisions concerning economic innovation in CFUGs. Moreover, our (the project) reflection also indicates the likelihood of increased bureaucratic pressures from the state, when an opportunity for economic innovation exists. Thus, for CFUGs the hurdles to economic innovation are manifold. Firstly, CFUGs do not have sufficient right and power to exercise economic innovation due to control by the state. Secondly, even after an enterprise is set up, continual bureaucratic control over the functioning and benefit sharing can not be expected to lead to equitable economic benefits. Such mechanisms can ruin the previously functioning equitable mechanisms and good governance practices in CFUGs.

Community’s conception of and participation in conventional development project often makes it difficult for them to understand and engage with innovation processes. In many instances, the ‘delivery’ mechanisms in development projects have made the local communities much tuned to perceive development as more money and resources. Thus, it is much more challenging to localize exploration and location of innovative lessons in their everyday practices, that can in turn, lead to long-term benefits. Indeed, in action and learning management research, development is not pre-defined; rather it is more of adaptation as the local conditions demand. Pre-defined methodology may not work everywhere, and might need to be adapted over time and specific to contexts. There is a need to devise and match methods with problems, as they appear in any action and learning based projects. Such matching will become an increasingly important element of all research, extension and development approaches and the lack of it can hamper innovation processes.

Partnership and collaboration are found to be more complex than initially assumed in the project, especially because different partner organizations have different capacities, different working modalities, staff motivation, and organizational hierarchies and sometimes, have quite different approaches to development and innovation. Our experience indicates that despite having similar political will, motivation and common synergy to work for the collective benefit of local forest users in the innovation process by multiple partners, partnerships and collaboration do not tend to function as initially expected. As an example, one of the partner organization, which at national and international level, is lauded for their work in representing and augmenting the voice of CFUGs, was found to have its own internal governance problems of networking, communication and accountability.

## Publications

**Volume 8 (1) of Hamro Ban Sampada (Journal in Nepali)** is based on important lessons learnt from the experiences of six modalities of community based resource management practices over three decades in Nepal that includes community forestry, collaborative forestry, leasehold forestry, integrated conservation and development, buffer zones and watershed management.



**Rediscovering Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) in Nepal** is an introductory publication that highlights concept of the ICCAs in the shifting paradigm of protected areas, discusses international discourse and policy processes on the ICCAs; provides snapshot of diversity of the ICCAs in Nepal, analyzes the policy spaces for the ICCAs in Nepal and crafts a future debate for support and recognition to the ICCAs.

**Natural Resources and Community Rights in the new Constitution (in Nepali)** presents an analysis of the politics of constitution making processes in Nepal, community rights and the draft concept papers of Constituent Assembly (CA) thematic committees.



**The Constitution Making Processes, Achievements and Challenges in Nepal (in Nepali)** highlights the constitution making processes in Nepal and the institutional engagement of ForestAction (FA) Nepal in these processes through its efforts to share the research learning, findings and knowledge on natural resources governance and management along the debate of federalism and constitution making. It also informs readers about the achievements of civil society organizations in their struggle for community rights advocates in natural resources in Nepal.



**State Restructuring and Natural Resources Management: An Analysis of Civic Discourses (in Nepali)** focuses civil society discourse on natural resources in federal constitution of Nepal. The analysis is based on some of the featured articles on federalism and natural resources published in several newspapers and magazines in Nepal.



**Interface between Community Rights and Local Government in Natural Resource Management (in Nepali)** An Issue of New Constitution Making is a workshop proceeding focusing on the issues of community rights to natural resources. It highlights key contradictions and commonalities of community rights and local government in (proposed) new federal Nepal.

### Policy Briefs (available at [www.forestation.org](http://www.forestation.org))

Authors	Titles
Ojha, H and Rai, J.R 2010	"Federalism or Local Democracy?" (in Nepali)
Luitel, H; Jana, S; Subedi, R; Rana, B and Pathak, B 2010	Restructuring of Forestry sector: A strategy (in Nepali)
Rai, J.R and Poudel, K 2010	"Community Rights on Natural Resources in New Constitution" (in Nepali)

## Links to Key News Articles

### Articles

#### Law of the jungle

(<http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/06/30/oped/law-of-the-jungle/317525/>)

#### The old man and the lake

(<http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/06/08/oped/the-old-man-and-the-lake/315935/>)

#### The centralising onslaught

(<http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/04/27/oped/the-centralising-onslaught/313158/>)

#### Beyond the fence

(<http://www.ekantipur.com/2010/04/13/oped/beyond-the-fence/312250/>)

#### Climate change: Impact on agriculture and food supply

(<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Climate+change:+Impact+on+agriculture+and+food+supply&NewsID=245946>)

#### Office launched to monitor REDD in Nepal

(<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Office+launched+to+monitor+REDD+in+Nepal&NewsID=249920>)

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