



The First Year of ForestAction in 'Action'

Annual Report 2001

Forest Resources Studies and Action Team (ForestAction)
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Introduction

About the Report. Established in late 2000, Forest Resources Studies and Action Team (ForestAction), has completed one full year of action – 2001. This report summarizes the progress of ForestAction in all aspects of its life—organizational, project activities, networking and alliances, financial, and the possible future directions. This is aimed at communicating the experiences with a range of stakeholders, who are committed to sustainable management of natural resources and enhancement of livelihoods in Nepal. We anticipate feedback and suggestions in exchange, and hope to strengthen our alliances with people sharing similar visions and concerns.

What is ForestAction? ForestAction is an NGO in the field of forestry and livelihoods in Nepal. It is a not-for-profit, self-governed civil society organization. This was established by a group of professionals having substantial experiences in research, facilitation of local actions, policy processes and technical aspects of forest resource management. It is legally registered with district administration office of HMG/Nepal, and associated with a consortium of NGOs called Bikalpa. Although ForestAction believes that change is a political process, we are not aligned to any political organizations.

Forest Action has a vision of poor and marginalized community groups taking active role in, and equitable share from, the sustainable management of forest and natural resources. Our mission is to accelerate the process of change in this direction through policy, institutional and technical innovations. We focus on processes, both at micro and macro levels, which could lead to improved livelihoods through sustainable, equitable and efficient management of forest resources. ForestAction believes that devolution of power, democratization of institutions, and participatory governance are the preconditions for sustainable, efficient and equitable management of natural resources.

The Results We Strive to Achieve

ForestAction strives to bring concurrent changes in three major components: policy, institutional capacity and forest management technology. Policy conditions for stakeholders, response and hence no changes in forest or livelihoods can be thought of without connecting the development processes with the policies. Institutional development at different levels across all segments of society is a precondition to facilitate and sustain the changes. Similarly, technical innovations in resource management are needed to improve productivity and benefits. We consider all of these as vehicles of change. Based on this understanding, ForestAction team has prioritized the following themes in the forestry sector as the current focus of interventions:

- Institutional strengthening and effective governance in forestry sector

- Improved linkages between forest resources and livelihoods
- Participatory Forest Management
- Participatory Biodiversity Conservation

Activities and Progress

Our key activities in the 2001 include: research, training, publication of scientific resources, networking and alliances building, and strategic planning. These activities are briefly outlined below:

Research

We have conducted several research studies on key issues of forestry and livelihoods using participatory action research approach in collaboration with several research/academic institutions. These include:

Participatory Action Research (PAR) on development of monitoring process and indicators of forest management In Nepal. Taking four forest user groups (FUGs) and a non-FUG community from Kushmisera area of Baglung district as local partners, ForestAction engaged in a process of collaborative research with The University of Reading, UK and Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP). The purpose of the study was to develop a monitoring process and indicators for forest management at FUG level, integrating forest resource, livelihoods, social and policy and legislative aspects. Local, District and national level workshops were held to share preliminary findings and generate critical feedback. The final version of the report is expected to be available shortly.

Participatory Research on adaptive collaborative management (ACM) of forests. The study is part of the wider research on adaptiveness and collaboration in forest management, which is being conducted by CIFOR in collaboration with a number of institutions in 14 countries around world. This part of the study (led by ForestAction) is designed to complement the on-going CIFOR studies in Kaski and Sankhuwasabha districts of Nepal to draw more generic conclusions on adaptiveness and collaboration in forest management in Nepal. Comparative Case studies were designed to expand the research base of the ACM project by increasing the number of sites and districts. The outputs of the study will be fitted into the findings of ACM Main Case Studies (PAR) (in Kaski and Sankhuwasabha districts) to draw lessons on adaptive collaborative management in Nepal.

Community forestry monitoring system. Building on the lessons of PAR conducted in Baglung and the insights gained during ACM studies, ForestAction and CIFOR jointly explored the need for reviewing the monitoring systems at local as well as program and policy levels, and finally undertook two studies: a) review of local level monitoring system, and b) review of monitoring system of

community forestry as a means of two-way communication between local communities/FUGs, and various layers of Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. The first study has almost been completed, and the report is expected to be available shortly. The second study is expected to complete in April.

Promoting Community Action for Biodiversity Conservation. With financial support from Whiteley Awards Foundation, UK, a pilot action research project is being set up in two community sites in Baglung district. Building on the lessons of previous research with the University of Reading, this study seeks to ensure a follow up on the former, while also seeking to evaluate links between biodiversity and livelihoods. Three expected outputs of the project include: a) improved biodiversity plans and practices of communities incorporating the values of economic and non-economic plants, b) development of guidelines to assist field facilitators to incorporate biodiversity issues in forest management operational plans, and c) identification of policy issues and options as regards incorporation of biodiversity in community forestry.

In addition, a study on **scaling up of natural resources management practices** is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Reading, UK .

Training

Four trainings were provided by ForestAction, and two of them had national scope. A unique feature of the national level trainings was that the full cost of the training was recovered from the participants or their organizations. A brief description of these trainings are given below:

Community Forest Management and Planning. ForestAction organized this training on October 2000 for both Foresters and non-foresters at Thimura, Chitawan. Altogether, 19 people representing Government, I/NGOs and CBOs' participated in the training, from different parts of the country. This training was followed by 2 days' follow up workshop after six months of the completion of the training. The main purpose of the follow up was to enable participants reflect upon the new experiences, synthesize the new leanings, and clear confusions.

Community Based NTFP Management. ForestAction organized this training on October 2001, for field based workers who are already involved in NTFP related work and/or have plans to work on this. There were 20 participants from 16 different organizations ranging from Government, I/NGO and FUGs from different parts of the country. Like the first training, participants themselves shared the cost of training. Training fee was waved for some participants demonstrating financial constraints to attend the training.

Participatory Action and Learning (PAL) at Baglung. This training was jointly organized by ForestAction, The University of Reading, UK and Livelihood and Forestry Programme (LFP), Nepal on April 2001. The participants were the frontline community forestry workers from LFP area (Dhawalagiri).

Participatory Action and Learning (PAL) at Thimura, Chitwan. This training was facilitated by ForestAction and organized by Forest Right Programme (FRP) of Community for Agro-Ecology and Development (CAED) on August 2001 for representatives of NGOs and other local stakeholders of Siraha, Saptari and Udaipur districts.

- Donor forestry projects (such as LFP and others)
- Donors (DFID)
- I/NGOs and civil society (FECOFUN, ActionAid Nepal)
- A dozen community groups across country (mainly Forest User Groups)

Key activities conducted to familiarize ForestAction to these institutions include: personal visit, joint actions, exchange of information resources, internet, and workshops.

ForestAction participated in two international events this year. Hemant R Ojha participated in the International Steering Committee Meeting (of CIFOR's Adaptive Collaborative Management of Forest research program) in October 2001 in Manila, The Philippines. Krishna P Paudel participated in the writing workshop in November 2001, which was also organized by CIFOR in Bogor, Indonesia.

We have received feedback that ForestAction has had strong presence in the web with critical and useful information. Our main internet based actions include: facilitation of discussions on forestry profession, Journal abstract in the web sites, participation in the web based discussions and seminars and resources sharing such as articles and reports.

Publications

- Journal Forestry and Livelihood (first Issue)
- A joint research report of ForestAction, Nepal and University of Reading UK on Development of Monitoring Process and Indicators for Forest Management, Nepal (draft)
- A joint research report of ForestAction Nepal and CIFOR on Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) in Community Forest Management in Nepal (under production)
- A joint report of ForestAction and CIFOR on Review of Local Level Community Forestry Monitoring Systems, in Nepal (draft)
- A brief report on Community based NTFP Management Training.
- A brief report on Forest Management and Planning Training
- A training completion report on Participatory Action and Learning (PAL).

Technical support to NGOs

ForestAction has supported to strength the technical capacity of Forest Right Program of CAED on the establishment and development of community forest user groups in three Terai districts: Siraha, Saptari and Udayapur.

Networking

Since this was the first year of the organization, a substantial amount of time was spent on establishing links with a number of institutions and stakeholders both within and outside the country. Key institutions interacted include:

- International research organizations (Such as CIFOR)
- Government agencies (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal)
- Universities (The University of Reading, UK, The University of Oxford, UK,)
- Grandmaking foundations (Whiteley Awards Foundation, UK)

Office Management

Initially, ForestAction's office was at Purano Baneswor, Kathmandu. It has now moved to Ekantkuna, Lalitpur. Key features of office system include: four computers and two printers, working space for 10 people, library with unique collections of forestry and development related publications.

Financial aspects

January 1 to December 31, 2001

INCOME	
Sources of fund	Amount (NRs)
Before Jan, 2001	6,10,000
Reading University/DFID	1,00,000
CIFOR- ACM	7,07,250
CIFOR-Monitoring review	3,03,600
LFP (PAL training)	158982
NTFP Training	98,000
FRP/CAED	1,30,758
Forest Management Follow up Training	12,000
Sales of Publications	2000
Whitely Awards	5,49,150
CIFOR- CF Monitoring Systems from Micro to Macro and Back	11,91,000
Reading University-Case Study on Scaling Up	2,22,500

Human resources at ForestAction

Persons	Position
Krishna P Paudel	Team Leader – Forestry Institutions and Governance
Hemant R Ojha	Team Leader – Forest Resources and Livelihoods
Basundhara Bhattarai	Training Coordinator
Hari R Naupane	Team Leader – Participatory Forest Management
Shambhu P Dangal	Team member (volunteer) - works with Nepal Australia Resources Mgt Project
Him L Shrestha	Forest Research Officer
Hima D Upretry	Forest Research Officer (till Dec. 31, 2001)
Tara Bhattarai	Office Manager
Bimesh Bhattarai	Legal worker in forestry

In addition, around a dozen short-term consultants have worked with ForestAction in various activities.

Friends of ForestAction

Various persons who assisted ForestAction in different ways include:

Dr. Yam Bahadur Malla. Currently, he is working at DRID, The University of Reading, UK. He has provided his intellectual inputs to ForestAction to analyse the institutional gaps, development of organizational strategies and establishment of linkages.

Mr. Keshav Gautam. Currently he is working with ActionAid, China. He has supported ForestAction in analyzing the political and institutional environment of ForestAction, development of organizational strategies and establishment of external linkages.

Cynthia McDougall. She is a research fellow at Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Indonesia. She has contributed to ForestAction in research program development and international networking.

Dr. Bharat Pokharel. Dr Pokhrel is senior officer at Training Division of Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Nepal. He has supported ForestAction in the area of Research program development and sharing of expertise and experiences.

Dinesh Paudel. Currently he is an employee of Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project. He has contributed to ForestAction in expanding networks and strengthening organizational structure.

Richard Barnes. Mr Barnes has supported us in research activities, and editing of some articles of the first Issue of the Journal of Forestry and Livelihood.

Anna Lawrence. Dr. Lawrence is affiliated with Environmental Change Institute of Oxford University, UK. She has supported ForestAction in research program development and international networking.

Naya Sharma. He is currently doing PhD on political ecology of conservation in Royal Chitwan National Park. He has contributed to the organizational development and international networking of ForestAction.

Netra P Timsina. He is currently doing PhD on political economy of forest management. He has contributed to the organizational development and international networking of ForestAction.

Many other colleagues have supported us in various ways. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of them, and hope to continue receiving the same level of support and encouragement for the cause of natural resource conservation and livelihoods in Nepal.

Key activities for the Year 2002

Planned as well as possible activities include:

Participatory action research

- Community forestry monitoring systems at different levels, across various institutions - with a focus on both downward and upward accountability, organizational learning and adaptive management
- Biodiversity and livelihoods – developing methods of biodiversity monitoring, assessment and sustainable use at subsistence as well as commercial levels

- Policies that work for forests and people – citizen participation; linkages among micro, meso and macro level processes; participatory governance at different levels; equity oriented, gender sensitive, and pro-poor policy provisions and processes.

Field actions

- **Nawalparasi and Chitwan:** Support to district level resource management institutions (such as resource users' federations, associations of indigenous peoples, federations of Village Development Committee, and CBOs and local NGOs) in
- **Chure region:** support to local institutions in addressing conservation and livelihoods issues
- **Various locations in the country:** Community forestry technical assistance, trainings, and other support services

Policy advocacy

- Policy briefs on various aspects of forest resources and livelihoods
- Civil society networking at different levels
- Cross-institutional strategic alliances
- Issue based sharing meetings and workshops
- Participation in national and international events and processes

Trainings

- NTFP resource assessment
- NTFP training of trainers (TOT)
- Forest resources analysis and planning
- Forest management and silviculture
- Participatory Action and Learning (PAL) in forest management
- Analysis of forest resource & livelihoods systems
- Participatory action research (PAR): concepts & practice
- Diploma course in participatory forestry (needs assessment)
- Gender Analysis and planning in natural resource management

Publications

- English Journal of Forestry and Livelihoods
- Issue based discussion papers
- Case studies
- Nepali Journal on Forestry and Livelihoods
- Manuals and guidelines (monitoring and adaptive management of forests)

Consulting services

- ForestAction may be interested to provide specific consultative services by mobilizing extensive networks of consultants, provided the activity has a potential to enhance learning and exposure of the organization, make significant financial contributions to the organization, or has some strategic influence such as in terms of creating policy impact.

Visuals

- A video is being finalized that makes a critical assessment of community forestry in Nepal. Posters, slides and other forms of visuals are also of immense interests to ForestAction.
- Posters on contemporary forestry and livelihoods issues

Networking

- Participation in national and International events and processes
- Continue interactions with relevant institutions