



*Invitation for open discussions on*  
**Foresters, community forestry and NGOs: challenges and perspectives of forestry profession in Nepal<sup>1</sup>**



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The purpose of this note is to provide some ‘food for thought’ to all interested to reflect upon the changing scenario (roles, perceptions and challenges) of forestry profession in Nepal and share and innovate new ideas that enhance the quality and contributions of forestry profession to the sustainable management of forest resources in Nepal. This note will be circulated in the Web to facilitate discussions all interested.

Forestry profession has been known more for its political influence than its professional expertise in Nepal, as may be the case in most other countries in the world. This is because foresters by default have been placed in Government departments with a potential to exercise statutory power over the control and management of forest resources. The use, and sometimes misuse, of forestry power has led to a number of contentious issues around the forestry profession. In the past two decades or so, however, the gradual changes in policy and practices of forestry, with a consistent trend of involving increasing number of forest stakeholders in forest management, have dramatically changed the roles of foresters and the way they are seen by the society. From a traditional policing role, they have become partners of many forest stakeholders in collaborative management of forests. These changes are discernible at both national as well as global scales, and some, if not many, innovative foresters themselves have been the pioneer to vision the future like this now.

In Nepal, the emergence of community forestry policy has provided a unique opportunity to foresters working with Government to reorient a traditionally constructed vertical relationship among themselves as well as with forest dependent rural communities. The role of a forester and perceptions of forestry profession have changed further as an increasing number of foresters have been diverted to NGOs and private sectors. As increasing number of foresters are working beyond traditional structure and boundaries, several issues related to the roles, adjustment and positioning of foresters have emerged, and many new are expected to arise in the years to come. There is a scope of further enhancing contributions of forestry profession in the changing contexts by facilitating critical reflections, and sharing of relevant knowledge among and between foresters and other experts working in forestry issues. Some of these issues include:

1. **Values and satisfaction of foresters:** Are there any real changes in the values and achievement parameters of foresters in the Government? How do foresters outside the government define achievement? How do those in the Government service view others working in the NGOs and other non-government agencies? What is the level of professional satisfaction at both sides? What are the critical factors affecting their performance?
2. **Relationship between government and non-government foresters:** What is the major working interface between government and non-government foresters? What kinds of experiences and cases prevail in relation to interaction between Government and non-government foresters? What factors contribute to healthy interface?
3. **Legitimacy of professional works done by non-government foresters:** How far the works of non-government foresters are recognized? Why or why not? What policy, institutional and other factors promote or hinder recognition of non-government foresters’ works?
4. **Crosscutting jobs of foresters, social scientists and others:** How do foresters, both in the government as well as outside, interact with other professions such as social scientists, anthropologists, botanists, statisticians etc? How do foresters have developed

multidisciplinary skills and how the boundaries of forestry profession are reformulated? How can synergy be enhanced among multiple professions involved in addressing forestry issues?

5. **Consultancy industry:** What is the status of forestry consultancy industry in Nepal? How do employers hire the forestry services? What factors hinder or promote the contributions of forestry consultancy industry in Nepal?
6. **NGOs demand of forestry services:** How far NGOs involvement in forestry activities increased? Why? How far is the government prepared to enhance involvement of (or even work in partnership with) NGOs in the forestry sector? What is the current status of forester employment in NGOs sector? What about self-employment initiatives of foresters?
7. **Educational institutions:** How do foresters as well as employers in Nepal judge the quality of forestry training? How far foreign training and education contributed to the quality and output of forestry professions in Nepal? What area of forestry expertise are the most demanded in the future and how do training institutions assess and incorporate these areas in the forestry curriculum?