



Editorial

It is our pleasure to present the eighth Issue of the *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*. The widespread moral support, material contribution and enduring interest shown by a wide range of academicians, professionals and activists have encouraged us to put more resources and efforts in it. We sincerely anticipate suggestions, comments and feedback from all the readers, advisors, anonymous reviewers and contributors in the days to come. We further expect their continued support and encouragement.

The use and management of forest resources are being increasingly discussed within the broader context of forest governance that includes the range of institutional mechanisms, and arrangements for power and resource sharing at international, national and local levels. The main issue of forest governance is primarily related to how stakeholders define their roles, responsibilities and authorities in the management of forest resources. The forest governance both in terms of structures and processes have direct implications on benefit sharing between stakeholders and forest sustainability. However, there is still a gap in the understanding of the institutions, actors and the processes and their influence in shaping the outcomes of forest management. Understanding the existing barriers and exploring action-verified innovative approaches and strategies to address those barriers may help increase the capacity of these institutions in formulating appropriate policies, better delivery of services and equitable and sustainable management practices.

Nepal's forests are being managed under different institutional arrangements involving diverse stakeholders at local, district, national and international levels. The relationships among these diverse stakeholders are being extremely complex due to widening gap between: a) developed and developing countries; b) state bureaucracy and the general public; and c) local elites and the marginalized. Developing countries have to increase their capacity to effectively participate and benefit from international environmental negotiations so that they get adequate compensation for their contributions to environmental conservation. Similarly, application of principles of deliberative governance may help transform policy process that provide environment conducive for decentralised and participatory forest management. Introduction of learning-based planning and implementation and capacitating marginalised sections of local communities may help institutionalise equitable and sustainable management of forests. There have been various attempts towards these ends, which have generated useful lessons, insights and knowledge. The papers in this Issue bring some of such lessons and insights from different domains of forest management such as carbon trading, timber rents, and national, meso and community forest user group governance.

Ojha et al. analyse Nepal's forest governance, particularly the citizen-state relations, in the context of forest policy process. They analyse 15 policy decisions which range from parliament-endorsed laws to executive decisions of the government that were made over the period 1998-2004. They highlight the dominant role of forest science and bureaucracy, and weak links between civil society and elected political leaders as the main factors that limit democratic deliberation in the policy process. **Dhungana et al.** explore the avenues for carbon trading from existing and potential afforestation and reforestation activities under the Clean Development Mechanism. After a comprehensive review of the existing provisions and arrangements in this area, they highlight the potential earnings through carbon trading and suggest a number of strategies, including strengthening legal basis and establishing broker institutions. Taking a deliberative democracy perspective, **Bampton and Cammaert** discuss the problem of limited timber rents in Nepal's forest management, especially in the context of community forestry in the Terai. They explore several ways, especially through governance reform, that may help realise the full potential of timber rents that would ultimately contribute to poverty reduction. Drawing lessons from the adaptive collaborative management approach, **Banjade et al.** highlight the importance of meso-level governance in the management of common property resources. They further explore avenues for improving micro-macro link that result in enhancing social, economic and environmental outcomes of the commons. **Gentle et al.** identify weak capacity of the communities as the key governance problem in Nepal's community forestry programme and identify some advocacy strategies and activities that are useful in promoting good governance. While participatory approach to development is being increasingly tempered with criticisms, **Paudel et al.** bring empirical lessons drawn from participatory action research on the application of these approaches to natural resource management. They also draw valuable lessons on overcoming the socio-political as well as institutional constraints to participation at the local level.

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