



A Brief Accomplishment Report of the Training on **Community Forest Management: Resources Assessment and Planning**

1. BACKGROUND

A ten-day residential course on **Community Forest Management: Resource Assessment and Planning** was conducted at Thimura, Narayangarh on October 13-22, 2000 by Forest Resources Studies and Action Team (ForestAction/Bikalp) in collaboration with Asia Network for Sustainable Bioresources (ANSAB). The field-based training was an attempt to enable field based forestry workers in Nepal to tackle existing practical challenges of sustainable, efficient and equitable management of community forests. ForestAction organized this type of training in response to increased needs for intensive management of community forests to meet livelihood and conservation goals.

The main purpose of the training was to enable participants to understand the concepts, approaches and techniques of community forest management by analyzing specific social, ecological and political contexts that influence communal forest management decisions and actions. The training covered a wide array of issues in both social and technical aspects of forest management, and the participants have enhanced their capacity to facilitate effective management of community forest resources.

2. COURSE CONTENTS

Four clusters of topics around community forest management were covered (see Box 1). First, contexts that influence the whole process of community forest management was reviewed in terms of what it is today and the trend over time. Second, basic concept and overview of how community forest management works was discussed. Third, the approach and process of community forest management was covered. Lastly, tools and techniques for forest resource assessment and social analysis were discussed.

Box 1. Contents of the Forest Management Training

a. Contexts of CF Management

- Social
- Policy
- Ecological/forest resource contexts

b. Concepts of CF Management

- Overview of community forest management process
- Resource assessment and planning
- Silvicultural options in community forestry
- Knowledge and learning systems in forest management

c. Approach, Strategies and Process

- Facilitating participatory forest management
- Forward looking approach: assessment of best practices and developing vision
- Sustained yield regulations through space and/or volumes control
- Forest inventory
- Operational Plans

d. Tool and Techniques

- Participatory Resource Assessment
 - ◆ Mapping
 - ◆ Sampling
 - ◆ Measurement
 - ◆ Data analysis
- Socio-economic Analysis
 - ◆ Socio-economic profile of community
 - ◆ Interest group analysis
 - ◆ Need analysis and visioning techniques
 - ◆ Facilitating OP Development
- Matching socio-economic and resource information
 - ◆ Drawing management prescriptions
 - ◆ Contents of operational plan

e. Wrap up, Action Plan Preparation and Follow up

3. PARTICIPANTS

This training was attended by 22 participants who included forest rangers (10), NGO and project professionals (5), and FECOFUN activists and FUG leaders (7). Participants were from 18 different organizations from 17 hills and Terai districts from Mechi zone in the east to Mahakali in the west. While most of them had some experiences in social or technical aspects of forest management, a few were new to the process. Facilitators had to respond to the challenge of variation among participants by adjusting facilitation schemes and strategies.

4. METHODOLOGY

Training flow and facilitation schemes

After reviewing the contexts in the two initial days, the concepts of CF management were discussed in the third day. Social analysis and forest resource assessment was discussed in the next two days. Two-day field exercise was then conducted, followed by analysis of social and resource data, discussions on silvicultural options, facilitation techniques, and operational plans.

Additional concepts and theories were integrated with field observations and exercises, and facilitation schemes allowed participants to move to and from concepts, process and tools of forest management

throughout the training sessions. Facilitation scheme was interactive, challenging to learners, involved the use of examples, stories and cases, relevant energizers. Resourceful participants were encouraged to contribute to the specific themes of their expertise to enhance their confidence.

Residential venue and informal interactions

The residential venue allowed for unlimited sharing and interaction among participants, and between participants and facilitators beyond planned sessions. Additional themes (such as point sampling) were also covered in the evenings as per the interests of specific groups of participants.

Group works and assignments

Around 10 group assignments were completed through the training. Homogeneous as well as heterogeneous groups were formed depending on the contents and facilitation methods. Group outputs were typed and distributed as handouts.

Training aids

Use of audiovisuals was done to enrich the learning process. Two films related to PRA tools in community forestry and lessons from Laddak on physical concept of development were showed and discussed as part of the training topics. Over 100 useful publications and reports were made available to participants for reference during the training. Precise field equipments were used in forest survey and inventory.

Field exercises and Reflections

Field exercise was conducted at Shaktikhor VDC located at 16 km north of Tandri, Chitwan. The Community was in the process of preparing operational plan with support from an SEACOW (an NGO working with Chepang communities). Participants worked in groups to develop an integrated understanding of the community's social, economic, political and ecological contexts of forest management. They got an opportunity to visualize the entire process of operational plan preparation by doing social analysis as well as forest survey and forest inventory. Social as well as forest resource data collected were analyzed, and the forest products demands of the community and supply potential of the forest was also compared. Possible objectives and strategies of forest management and appropriate silvicultural options were also explored, and implications for external facilitation support were drawn with respect to specific issues identified. All the outcomes of resource assessment and social analysis will be carried over by a SEACOW ranger who also participated in the training.

5. ACTION PLAN AND FOLLOW UP

Towards the end of the training, participants prepared action plans to put new learning into action, and to generate new knowledge with additional questions. The salient features (detailed individual action plans are also accessible) of the action plan are as follows:

- Sharing with the organizational teams
- Design and conduction of forest management trainings to CBOs and FUG
- Preparation and/or revision of community forest operational plans balancing social and technical processes and use of innovative tools and techniques.
- Social analysis using innovative PRA tools
- Establishment of permanent sample plots in community forests
- Establishment of trial plots in community forests to evaluate silvicultural options

A two-day follow up workshop will be organized in Chaitra (April 2001) in Kathmandu. By this time participants are expected to have gained substantial experiences in facilitating community forest management as per their own action plans in their respective fields. This is designed to provide

participants an opportunity to share experiences, reinforce learnings and help to create coherent cross-context learning group that may continue to interact and share beyond the workshop.

6. EVALUATION

At the end of the training participants were asked to fill anonymous evaluation form. The analysis of completed forms shows (see Box 2) that the training was a useful experience, and the only thing that needs to be improved is logistics. The venue was deliberately selected in an isolated location (yet within a few kilometers from Narayangarh-Kathmandu highway) to avoid distraction.

Box 2. Summary of evaluation of training by participants

- **Overall response: Very good 75%, good, 15%, Not so bad 10%**
- **Course content: good 100%**
- **Tools and techniques: participatory 90%, usual 10%**
- **Role of facilitators: empowering, efficient, coordinated, perfect relations with participants**
- **Participants: diverse but well adopted the situation very soon, perfect relations among each other**
- **Training materials: enough but need to be provided in advance**
- **Flow of content and connection: natural and lively**
- **Most useful contents: forest assessment and social analysis techniques (participatory tools)**
- **Topics not covered as per the design: nothing**
- **Training and time frame and duration: efficient use of time but still inadequate**
- **Weakness of the training: lodging, transportation and communication**
- **Future clients of the same kind of training: DFO staff, CF workers and users**
- **Training fees: sufficient 75%, not enough 15%, costly 10%**
- **Major learnings: conceptual clarity on CF process and practices; exercises**
- **Overall impressions: closeness with participants and facilitators, learning environment and coverage of the content**

7. TRAINING FACILITATORS

Krishna P Paudel (10 days), Hemant R Ojha (10 days) and Shambhu Prasad Dangal (9 days) jointly facilitated the training. The three resource persons together had needed expertise in social, economic, political, ecological and technical dimensions of forest management along with required facilitation, analytical and managerial skills.