

**The Barriers to Community Forest Management: A Case Study of
Community Forest User Groups in Palpa**

コミュニティ森林管理の障壁の解明：
ネパール・パルパのコミュニティ
森林ユーザーグループの事例研究

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Abstract

Community forest (CF) refers to the forest maintained and managed by a group of people with a common interest. The critical feature of CF involves residents who have a substantial role in decision-making, which is affected, in a real scenario, by various factors such as geographical location and demographics of the CF user group (CFUG). This research was designed to understand the community forest management program in a typical mid-hill village of Nepal by taking up 199 households in three community forests in Madanpokhara VDC of Palpa district. Different socio-economic factors affecting the management of the community forest were studied. It was found that, although public participation in overall CF



activities such as protection and distribution of forest products was good, their role during group meetings and operation planning was found to be below. The socially respected people made most of the decisions about community forest. In two community forests, the participation of females in the executive committee was lower than the value set by the Government. Other factors such as the attitude of community forest users towards CF meetings, their participation frequency, their motivation was observed. This study concludes that community forestry is playing an important role in people's livelihoods. For the proper management of the community forest, the inclusion of all socio-economic groups and active participation of all the users is paramount. Special provisions should be made in operational plans about residents in community forestry and the inclusion of females in the executive committees. The local committee members should be given full autonomy for decisions. NGO/INGO and development agencies, which are working in community forestry, should encourage residents to participate in such programs more positively.

要約

コミュニティ・フォレスト (CF) とは、共通の関心を持つ人々のグループによって維持および管理される森林のことである。CF 管理の重要な特徴は、地理的場所や CF ユーザー・グループ (CFUG) の人口構成など、実際、さまざまな要因による影響がある中で、意思決定に大きな役割を果たしている住民と連携していることである。本調査は、ネパール国パルパ郡のマダンボカラ VDC にある 3 つの CF199 世帯を対象に行われ、ネパールの典型的な中山間村の CF 管理プログラムを理解することを目的として計画された。CF 管理に影響を与えるさまざまな社会経済的要因が研究されている。そこで判明したのは、森林生産物の保護や流通などの CF 活動全体への住民参加は良好であったが、グループ会議や運営計画策定における彼らの役割は、より低度のものであったことだ。社会的に敬意を払われている人々が、CF 管理に関するほとんどの決定を下していたのである。2 つの CF では、実行委員会への女性の参加は政府が設定した目標値よりも低かった。CF ミーティングに対する CFUG の

態度には、参加頻度、動機といった他の要因の影響が観察された。この研究は、地域林業が人々の生活に重要な役割を果たしていると、結論付けている。CF を適切に管理するためには、あらゆる社会経済グループが含まれ、すべてのユーザーが積極的に参加することが最も重要である。CF 住民に関する、そして実行委員会への女性参加に関する実践的計画には、特別な規定を設ける必要がある。地方委員会のメンバーには、決議のための完全な自治権が与えられるべきである。地域林業に取り組んでいる NGO / INGO と開発機関は、住民がそのようなプログラムにもっと積極的に参加するよう奨励すべきである。

Keywords: Community forest, User group, Nepal,

キーワード: コミュニティ・フォレスト, ユーザー・グループ, ネパール

1.Introduction:

Nepal is an agricultural country, and most Nepalese depend upon agriculture. According to the USAID (United States Agency for International Development), 34% of Nepal's national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is from agriculture. About 68% of the Nepalese people are engaged in agricultural activities. Most of the forested river basins in Nepal are gradually converted to settlements and farmland due to the increasing pressure of population growth. The forest resources have a significant contribution to the country's economy and the livelihood of the rural population. In the Nepalese context, the forest is the primary source of timber, firewood, fodders, and herbs. It is estimated that fuelwood accounts for more than 85% of the total energy consumption, 8616 tons of oil equivalent (TOE), by the residential sector in the country (MOF, 2006; CBS, 2011).

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) forestry division established a community development plan for forests and coined the word 'community forest' in 1975. FAO defined 'community forestry' as "any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity. It embraces a spectrum of situations ranging from woodlots in areas that are short of wood and other forest products for local needs, through the growth of trees at the farm level to provide cash crops and

the processing of forest products at the household, artisan, or small industry level to generate income, to the activities of forest-dwelling communities” (FAO, 1978).

The forest provides local villagers with natural fertilizer for cultivations, fodder, livestock, and wood and non-wood forest products for domestic use in Nepal. Thus, proper forest management is necessary for rural populations to sustain their livelihood. However, the villagers who actively undertook the responsibility of forest management reacted negatively to the nationalization of forests in 1957, and this traditional management system stopped working. The nationalization of private forests aims to ensure adequate protection, maintenance, and utilization of the forests throughout the national territory. However, this administrative control of forests did not work due to the lack of preparation and diminished local responsibility for forest protection. To overcome this, the government has collaborated with various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) since 1975 to protect forests. The need for a community forestry program was further highlighted in Nepal’s National Forestry Plan in 1978 (NNFP 1978). Community forestry has several positive impacts on communal life in rural areas, as the same individual is involved in managing and utilizing the forests. Further, it directly influences nature conservation, as seen with the return of various wild species to their original habitats.

People’s participation is an essential feature of community forestry in Nepal. Thus, the principal aim of community forestry in Nepal is to involve people in all stages of participation, from decision making to benefit sharing. A genuine participatory approach is essential for the effective implementation of a community forestry program in Nepal. This study deals with the issues of community forest management and utilization efficiently considering social/cultural issues as the primary influences. This study further explores the issues related to gender, financial and socio-economic issues influencing CFUG members’ participation in community forest management practices. This study will further settle the problems associated with CFUG members’ participation at the level of policy implication and other hindrances to effective management.

2. Literature Review:

Community Forestry Program started with a trendy slogan, “Hariyo Ban Nepal Ko Dhan” (Green forests are the wealth of Nepal). The formation of community forest registration of CFUGs is a major advancement in Nepal’s forest policy which provided legal access to forests for the locals. After establishing community forests, several researchers, including the Government of Nepal, have focused their studies on the community forests of Nepal. However, in the Nepalese context, although several studies have been conducted in a few locations, there is a clear lack of a direct and comprehensive study of the subsistence impacts of community forestry across a large number of sites. Further, the recent researches conducted in the limited area mainly tried to identify the success of the community forestry and the user groups.

The Government of Nepal surveyed in 2013 to discuss the results of the thirty years of community forestry in Nepal (Government of Nepal. 2013). This survey covered 137 CFUGs in 47 districts and 2,068 households of the user group. The study concluded that major structural problems, particularly those associated with social exclusion and inequity, continued to exist.

Elvira Graner (1997) studied the political ecology of community forestry in Nepal. The research, conducted in 1997 and based on the Sindhupalchok district, looked into the implementation and effects of forest policies, primarily in community forestry projects. Up until then, 140 forest user groups were registered to the forest office of the district. However, this study could not analyze the details of the user group composition because most of the operational plans submitted only mentioned the total household member number. The research further investigated 40 operational plans which had the name details of the members and found that membership was common among so-called high caste groups. Hence, the study concluded that bigotry against lower caste and poor people was responsible for the lack of community forest resource sharing among the members of the society. Further, community forest management has failed to benefit the poor than the rich households. Examining community forest as a crossing-point of politics, ecology, and economy, this study provided noteworthy original insights to the debates of social inclusion, administration, and forest conservation. It made the following

conclusions (Graner, 1997:256):

1. Members in the decision-making position are predominantly from economically advantaged groups.
2. Economically deprived groups are often excluded from membership.
3. Economically deprived groups may be restricted from vital resources.

The research further determined the need for strategic association among forestry groups and other civil society institutions, and this will reinforce the participation of the socially marginalized segments of the population. This, as a result, will improve the accountability of the government towards the needs of poor people, such as an adequate and efficient supply of local fuel and unconstrained access to common resources.

Moreover, another research performed to study the impact of community forestry on equity based on the findings of participatory action research with four forest user groups in the western hills of Nepal and identified six key factors affecting the ways by which benefits from community forestry are generated and distributed as (Neupane, 2003:55).

1. Inadequate assistance from the DFOs (District Forest Office)
2. The limited flow of information to the committee members
3. Poor CF management techniques
4. Poor access to the marginalized people in the decision-making process
5. Biased distribution of forest products
6. Reduced focus on forest management

Although the community forestry program of Nepal is considered a highly successful program, the success of community forestry in Nepal has been questioned in the more recent literature which implies how most of the benefits are directed towards local elites (Thoms, 2008; Malla et al., 2003; Malla, 2000). To highlight the price the low-income families are paying for the protection of forest in Nepal, Thoms (2008) debated that community forestry is lacking in enhancing rural livelihoods. The study points out that the huge wealth disparities between community forest members remain and these differences have hindered access to low-income families to forest products. Another important finding from this research was the striking power disparities within the CFUGs and policy and practice

reinforce these. Thoms further surmises that Nepal requires a policy change that guarantees inclusive local decision-making to counteract these problems.

The problem of inequitable distribution of forest products has been further highlighted by Malla (2000), who found that although the requirement of forest products would be different depending on households: the wealthy will need less forest product and the poor will need more. However, the distribution of the forest products was the same for all economic groups. This unfair distribution of forest products will result in disparity leaving poor households with less forest product than their need. Thus, Malla suggests a need to reconsider the community forestry approach that addresses the socio-economic need of the society, thus creating a more balanced approach to community forestry policy that considers both the demands at the household and subsistence level.

Various scholars have further discussed the disparity among the elite and low-income families in community forest program implementation in Nepal. Agrawal and Gupta (2005) used the data from protected areas in Nepal's Terai to analyze the involvement in the environmental decentralization programs. They observed that expected benefits depend on wide participation in the programs that the government introduces. Moreover, they discovered that the plausibility of participation is greater for economically well-off families. Not to the surprise, they observed a negative correlation between education levels and level of involvement.

Adhikari et al. (2004) indicated that in the forest-dependent areas of developing countries like Nepal, product collection from community forests is reliant on different socio-economic parameters like caste, household economic status, land ownership, and livestock holdings, and education. They conclude that the poorer households have limited access to community forests.

The participation of women in the management of community forests of Nepal has been examined by Leone (2013). The study associated how and whether increased female participation in the executive committee of forest user groups affects the protection of forests and the number of forest products collected by each household. The study discovered that with the increase in the number of females in the management committee amount of firewood collection decreased for each of the forests observed. As firewood collection is one of the causes of deforestation,

these results hinted that the effectiveness of forest management depends on gender composition, and the active role of women in forest management can serve and make a difference in forest conservation. In line with Leone, Agarwal, (2001) also mentions how social institutions such as CFUGs can marginalize equally important sections of the society, such as poor people and women.

Further, several investigations showed that the success and importance of community forestry programs in Nepal rely on inclusive management, impartial distribution, and shared responsibility in decision-making regardless of gender and caste. Even though female participation in the committee has increased remarkably, the primary drawback reported by all the authors was the inequitable distribution of forest resources and underrepresentation of poor and marginalized communities in the executive positions. Moreover, the review of the literature shows that comprehensive analytical studies regarding the impact of community forestry in mid-hill areas like the Palpa district are lacking. In this study, considering three community forests, the impact of public participation in forest management will be analyzed. Also, this study will deal with the issues of community forest management and utilization pragmatically by considering the effect of socio-cultural issues. This study further explores the issues related to gender, social status, and economic issues influencing CFUG members' participation in managerial tasks and policy implications. Hence, observations of this study can help formulate policy measures for continuing community forest management and making it more efficient.

3.Methodology:

This study is a case study research in Palpa's Madanpokhara's three CFUGs that were selected to get in-depth information on the status of good governance at the management level of the community forest.

The study is mainly a micro-level study dealing with the participation of local people in community forestry and its effects on the management of community forests. The study has tried to analyze the existing level of involvement of residents in CFUGs. Besides, the study has attempted to describe the socio-economic conditions of local populations and the significant problems associated with them. Similarly, the studies have described the original composition and history

of community forests based on a detailed research design. Three community forests were selected based on the history of CFUF's varied cast groups and forest conditions. The fundamental units of analysis in this study are households and community forest user groups (CFUG). The data includes both qualitative and quantitative information collected from primary and secondary sources. The initial plans were to survey all 295 households (100%) in the three case study sites, but due to the unavailability of a few households were interviewed finally.

Table 1 Number of CFUG Households in the Case Study Villages.

Community Forest	Village	Total Households	No%	Surveyed
			CFMG	CFMG
Mulgura C F	Madanpokhara VDC. Ward ¹ No-9	75	100(100)	51(68%)
Barandikohol C F	Madanpokhara VDC. Ward No-7	130	100(100)	83 (63%)
Badkhola C F	Madanpokhara VDC. Ward No-7	90	100(100)	65(72%)
Total		295		199(67%)

a. Selection of the Study Area

This study has been conducted in 3 CFUGs located in Madanpokhara VDC located in Palpa district and its adjoining areas of western hills of Nepal. Three CFUGs of this region of Nepal were selected for the present study because of the following four reasons.

(1) These CFUGs represent the CFUGs of the Western area of Nepal regarding broad socio-economic, cognitive, ethnic, cultural, and physiographic conditions. As different ethnic groups (viz. Gurungs, Magars, Newar, etc.) with their indigenous knowledge, cognition, indigenous system, skills of forest management, technology,

¹⁾ Ward: Smallest administrative unit, usually each VDC has got 9 wards.

arts, beliefs, culture, tradition, and religions (viz. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam). They have been living in the rugged hills of these regions for centuries with Brahmin and Chettries, the dominant groups; it will be easy to analyze the participatory trends of diverse groups in Community Forestry Resource Management practices.

(2) The Community Forestry Program has been underway in these regions for more than seventeen years.

(3) Palpa district is one of the highly literate communities in Nepal. Here the people's consciousness for Community Forestry is widespread and hundreds of registered CFUGs are active in these regions.

(4) The Community Forestry program of Palpa district is one of the large-scale Community-managed Forestry Projects in the whole Western development region of Nepal.

i. Study Area:

Madanpokhara VDC is one of 65 VDCs in the palpa district. The Kaligandaki, Tanau, Ridi, Nisdiand Purwa are the major rivers in the district while Satyawati, Parvash Lake, and Sita Kunda from the main surface water features.

Figure 1 Map of Nepal Showing Districts (Sampled Palpa District)



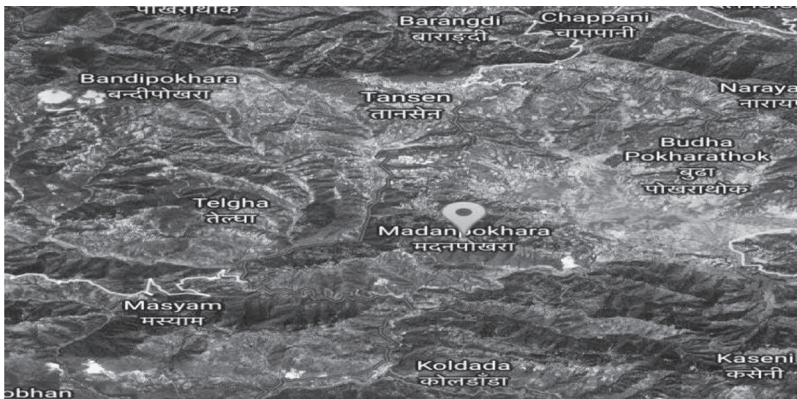
Source: RAOnline 2005

Palpa district is one of the areas in the western hills of the Lumbini zone in the western development region of Nepal. It is in this district that sampled CFUGs are

located in Madanpokhara VDC.

Madanpokhara VDC is located at an altitude of 560-1240 m above sea level with a total area of approximately 1800 ha almost 40% of which lies below 1000 m. The landscape consists primarily of Middle Mountain, Churia foothills, and flood plains. Agricultural land is situated along Mandi plant valley and is surrounded by the Mahabharat hills in the north and Siwalik Hills in the south (Moench et al., 1999)

Figure 2 Picture of Madanpokhara VDC and surrounding zone.



Source: Google Earth, 2016

Forest is the main natural resource of the Madanpokhara VDC. There are two types of forest private forest and community forest. The forest has covered about 32.52% area of the Madanpokhara VDC. There are six community forests. Sal, Khayer, Chilaune, Bakaino, Sisau, Tuni, Simal, Katus, Mauwa, Harro and Barro, etc are found in these forests.

Below is a summary of the three case study community forests and their major characteristics (Table 2).

Table 2 Description of Three Case Study Community Forest.

Community Forest	Village Name Location	Estb. Year	Area (Ha)	Forest Type
Mulgura C F	Madanpokhar a Ward No:9	2048 BS/ 1992 AD	13.4 5	chilaune,(Schimawallichii) and Katus (Castanopsis indica). Sal
Barandikoh ol C F (This community forest also has a plot of grafted pears. The users all have received training on grafting techniques).	Madanpokhar a Ward No:7	2052BS / 1996 AD	16.5 5	chilaune, (Schimawallichii), Katus (Castanopsis indica), tuni (oak) and medicinal plants such as sarpagandha (Rauwolfia serpentina), kurilo(Asparagus), Pipla, Cheurietc.
Badkhola C F	Madanpokhar a Ward No:7	2050 BS/ 1994 AD	12.3 2	chilaune,(Schimawallichii) and Katus (Castanopsis indica). Sal

Source: Community Forest File

b. Primary Data Collection

For the primary data collection, field observation, personal interviews, and group discussions were conducted. Pre-testing of questionnaires was done in neighboring CFUGs to find out any complications, or inadequacies in the interview schedule. Additionally, the pre-testing helped to check whether the tools to be used for data collection needed any modification to make it more realistic to the situation. Collected data was cross-checked through triangulation, which helps to improve the reliability of results obtained from the different methods and sources.

i. Direct Observation

Direct observation is a reliable method for primary data collection often in cases

where people do not respond to certain topics. Any information collected during such inspection is also useful for triangulation. I employed direct observation while researching in the villages. The major events I observed were community forest meetings. During the community forest meetings, I listened carefully to how people talked about the benefits and costs of different activities and observed the governance procedures of CFMG. Direct observation is a good way to supplement other data collecting methods, not only to see how one data set informs another but also to develop a more informal and relaxed relationship with community members.

ii. Interviews

Interviews were held with individual members of community forest management groups (CFMG) as well as their leader, a member of the executive committee. (Appendix 4) Additionally, I interviewed households who are members of those community forests. The primary method was a semi-structured questionnaire designed for Community Forest Officers and community forest members. (Appendix2). The questionnaires were pre-tested and revised and then administered by myself through face-to-face interviews; besides, I also interviewed Palpa District some political leaders in Madanpokhara.

iii. Group Discussions

Group discussions were conducted with homogeneous groups of both the CFUG and SPs to understand their perception of the role of SPs in improving the situation of good governance in the CFUG. Such discussions provide an opportunity to express and share participants' views more freely (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). They are also fruitful to triangulate the reliability of results obtained from other methods. For this study, separate discussions were held with each group (consisting of 5 to 8 people) from the executive committee, advisory committee, women, and different well-being categories in the CFUG.

c. Secondary Data

Secondary data from published and unpublished sources such as office records, reports, and statistics were gathered. Secondary data was also collected from

operation plans and the constitution, annual audit reports, minutes, and other documents of the CFUG's progress report and other documents of DFO (District Forest Office) and relevant information from other forest organizations within the district and the capital. The Forest Act (with its different amendments), Forest Regulations, the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector, Five Years Periodic Plans, and other policies of Nepal. Information concerning focus programs and activities in the study area was collected from their annual work plan, progress reports, and other relevant documents. Besides, relevant sources were reviewed in detail to gather valuable information.

d. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to determine CFUG members' participation and the socio-cultural and cognitive factors influencing their participation in CFR management practices. Data collected through various means, methods, and sources by using different data collection instruments have been presented. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed, categorized, and tabulated according to the objectives of the research study.

4.Data Collection and Analysis:

Key findings of this research are on the role of community forests in livelihood strategies of Community Forest Management Group (CFMG) members, the reason for joining a CFMG, and opportunities and constraints in each of these community forests. The information tables and diagrams are given below. The collected data from the field were analyzed and are presented under separate headings with the help of the tables.

a. Gender Distribution in Three Community Forest User Groups

Of the 199 respondents surveyed, 107 were male, and 92 were female (Table 7.1). In this study area, the average family size of the household was 4.08 and females outnumbered males. Within the study population, in Mulgaura CF, perhaps more males moved outside for work than females (Table 7.4), thus limiting the responsibility to females. Overall, in Madanpokhara VDC, the number of males

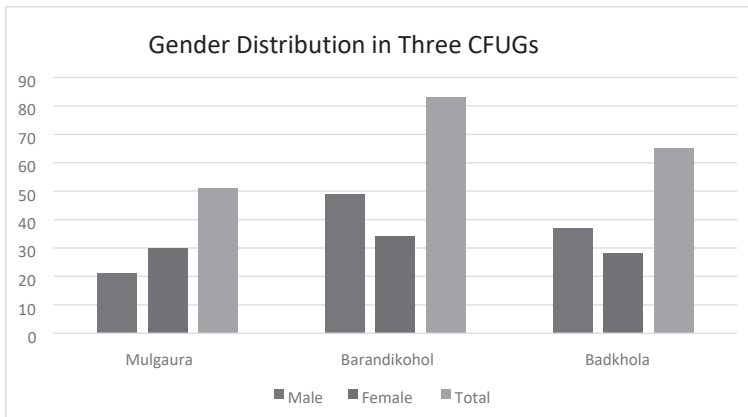
moving out for work is higher (CBS, 2011).

Table 3 Gender Distribution in Three Community Forest User Groups.

Community Forest	Gender		Total
	Male (Committee Member)	Female(Committee Member)	
Mulgaura	21	30 (11)	51
Brandikohol	49 (7)	34 (4)	83
Badkhola	37 (6)	28 (5)	65
Total	107 (13)	92 (20)	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

Graph 1 Gender Distribution in Three CFUGs.



Source: Household survey, 2016

Nepal is said to be a male-dominated society, and more women are uneducated compared to men. Most of the women work as a housewife and rarely participate in social activities outside the home. However, the community forest program has helped them to empower themselves by taking part as a committee member of the CFUG and taking the decision-making and leading role. It was found that among

the total Eleven-committee members of the CFUGs, four, five, and eleven were women in Barandikohol, Badhkhola, and Mulgaura community forest, respectively. p, There exists no doubt that education is an important attribute for the development of human personality and leadership skill so that to work in any development or management works including Community Forestry.

Although the recent government policies have facilitated the inclusion of females in the executive committees, actual inclusion ultimately depends on individual community forests and members of the forest user groups. Furthermore, in Nepalese society, women are mostly responsible for collecting firewood and other forest products. Furthermore, given that most families have a male as the head of the household, the participation of women in community forest-related activities further requires the approval of the male members of the household. Although it is hard to predict the reason behind women participation in community forest activities or executive committees, based on the interviews with the members of the society, the following points can be raised:

1. Males are the bread earners of the household and have to leave the house for work-related duties. These include overseas work and even temporary relocation of the male worker to another part of the country, and thus the sole responsibility of family goes to females. In Madanpokhara, the data from the 2011 census indicates that of the 907 people who left home for job or education, 854 were male, thus making 94%. (CBS, 2011). Even in this study, the maximum members of Mulgaura community forest were involved in foreign employment, thus increasing the number of females in the executive committee.
2. Some of the community forests user groups are proactive in developing themselves as model forest user groups. In such a case, the members of the Mulgaura forest user group said that they wanted to show that even women could manage the forest effectively education on the status of the family decides gender-wise wise participation in community forest activities. In this study, it was found that in Mulgaura, more than 40% of the respondents have completed high school, the maximum among the three community

forests, thus increasing the women's participation.

In summary, the Government of Nepal has set the rule that at least 50% of the executive members should be female. However, women's participation was much lower than the standard set by the government for both the Badkhola and Brandakohol community forests. Moreover, there is a general trend that females do not move forward to take a leadership position, partly because of lack of education and lower self-confidence level, thus limiting the number of women willing to participate in the executive committee.

b. Caste/Ethnic Distribution in Three Community Forest User Groups

As the research area was located in the middle hilly area, there are different caste/ethnic groups. The majority of the population of user groups consisted of the Brahman population with sparse Magar and Kumal (cast of the peoples) populations. Moreover, these groups consisted of a few other castes such as Newars, Kami, Chettri. This group distribution had no visible impact on group dynamics and working order.

From a point of view of caste/ethnic groups, Madanpokhara VDC is a multi-caste/ethnic user group that comprises different caste/ethnic groups such as Brahman, Magar, Kumal, etc. The following table shows the different caste/ethnic groups in the study area.

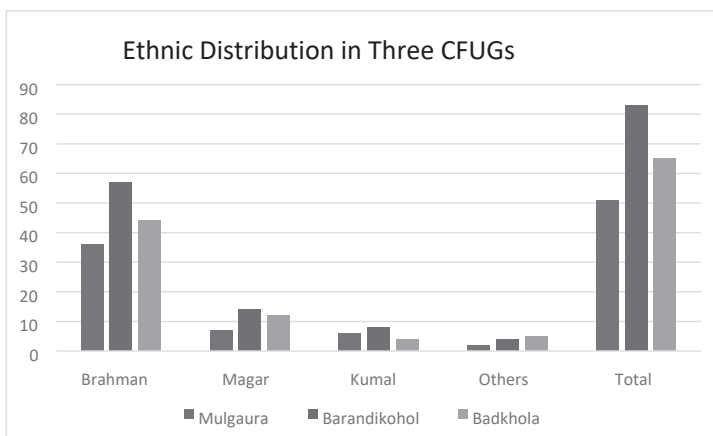
According to the table, out of 199 respondents, 137 households are Brahman, 33 households are Magar, 18 households are Kumal and the remaining 11 households are other casts/ethnic groups. Therefore, it is quite clear from this table that the majority of the respondent's households are the barman community, which is the major community in the surrounding zone.

Table 4 Caste/Ethnic Distribution in Three Community Forest User Groups.

Caste/Ethnic Distribution in Three Community Forest User Groups				
Caste/Ethnic	MulgauraCF(Committee Member)	BrandikoholCF(Committee Member)	BadkholaCF(Committee Member)	Total/No%
Brahman	36(7)	57(5)	44(6)	137(69%)
Magar	7(2)	14(3)	12(3)	33(17%)
Kumal	6(2)	8(3)	4(2)	18(9%)
Others	2	4	5(1)	11(5%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

Graph 2 Ethnic Distribution of Three CFUGs.



Source: Household survey, 2016

Recent political movements in Nepal have brought about changes in the power distribution scenario even in villages. The people in these three community forests are acting mutually with the same effort to their organizations, and the data shows that the participation of lower caste people in decision-making has gradually turned upwards. In this regard, we can observe equal participation of all the ethnic groups in the executive committees. This has also been facilitated

by the government rule that requires the proportional participation of all ethnic minorities. In a sense, this looks like a very positive finding. However, based on the interviews with the executive members of under-represented ethnic groups, it was found that the formation of the executive committee is under the power of a few reputed (socially respected) persons, and they oversee the forest activities. Further, it was hinted that the people from a lower caste, although on the executive committee, have lower power during the meetings, and their voices are not taken up for discussion.

c. Attitudes of Three Community Forest User Groups

199 respondents were asked about their feeling/impressions about community forests. It was found that only 6% had a negative attitude about community forests. The overall positive impression of community forests is a predictive marker of their development and utilization.

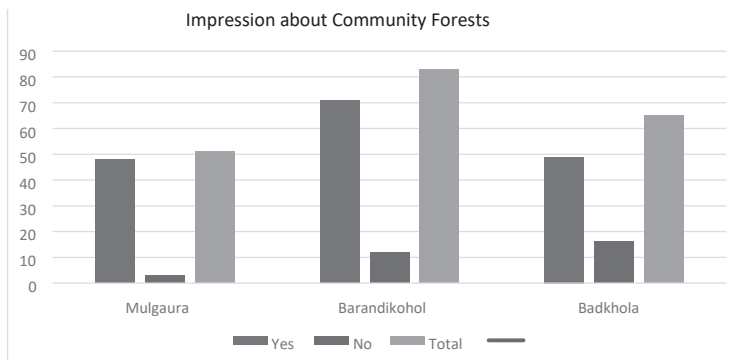
Table 5 Attitudes of Three Community Forest User Groups.

Impression about Community Forest				
CF Name	Mulgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	Badkhola CF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Positive	47(11)	77(11)	62(11)	186(94%)
Negative	4	5	3	12(6%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

(): Committee Member

Graph 3 Attitudes of Three Community Forest User Groups.



Source: Household survey, 2016

Among 199 responses, 186 responded that they had a positive impression of community forests, and only 12 responded negatively. All the people who were on the committee said they had a positive impression. From this table, it is evident that more residents are positive about community forests. Most of the individuals who had a negative impression cited a lack of time for participating in the discussions and meetings. In addition, the increased number of wild animals like monkeys created difficulties to go to the forest and collect forest products.

d. Familiarity with Community Forest Executive Members of Three Community Forest User Groups

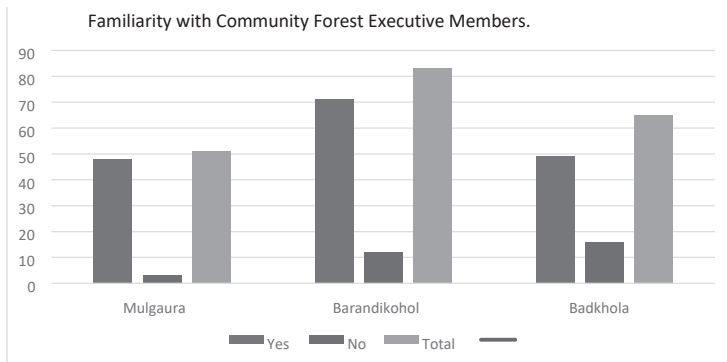
Participation in community forests depends upon how much they are familiar with the executive committee members. So, it is necessary to identify how many of the respondents are familiar with the executive committee members and how many are not. This is shown in the following table.

Table 6 Familiarity with Community Forest Executive Members.

Familiarity with Community Forest Executive Members				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol (Committee Member)	BadkholaCF (Committee Member)	Total/No%
Yes	48(11)	71(11)	49(11)	168(84%)
No	3	12	16	31(16%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

Graph 4 Familiarity with Community Forest Executive Members.



Source: Household survey, 2016

The above table shows that 168 respondents out of 199 respondents are familiar with their community forest executive members and the remaining 31 respondents are not familiar with their community forest executive members. From this table, it is clear that many are familiar, but the community forest executive members should communicate and interact with all community members.

e. Informed Meeting of FUG and FU Committees

Regular participation in the meeting helps to identify the situation of the whole community forestry. The level of community member participation can be affected

by several factors. The following table shows informed meetings.

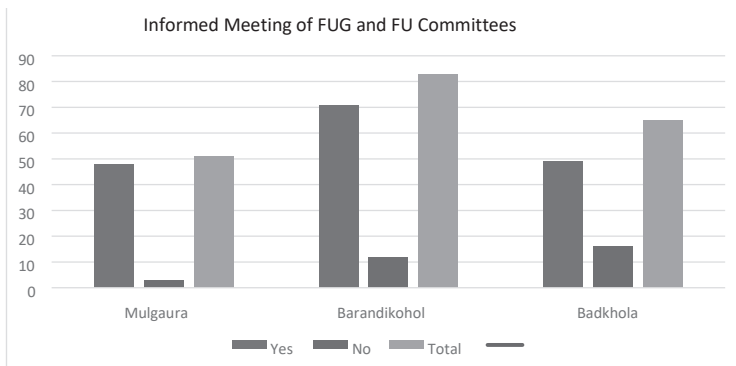
Table 7 Informed Meeting of FUG and FU Committees.

Informed Meeting of FUG and FU Committees				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	Badkhola CF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Yes	45(11)	73(11)	54(11)	172(86%)
No	6	10	11	27(14%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016 ():

Committee Member

Graph 5 Informed Meeting of FUG and FU Committees.



Source: Household survey, 2016

According to the above table, 172 respondents out of 199 respondents answered that they were informed of all meetings from the executive committee, and the remaining 27 respondents answered that they had not been informed of any meetings from the executive committee. This reflects a lack of communication between the committee members and forest users.

f.Participation in Group Meeting during the Operational Plan

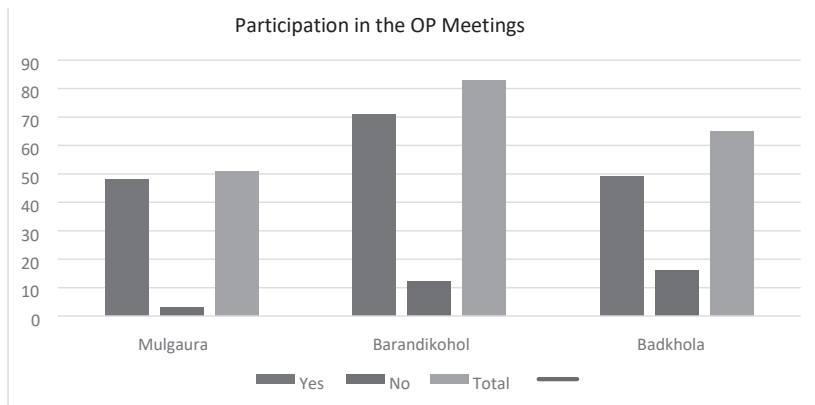
Participation of local people in regular group meetings helps to know the situation of residents in the whole community forestry. The following table has presented their participation in group meetings during the operational plan.

Table 8 Participate in Group Meeting during the Operational Plan.

Participate in the OP Meetings				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	Badkhola CF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Yes	38(11)	65(11)	47(11)	150(75%)
No	13	18	18	49(25%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

Graph 6 Participation in Group Meetings.



Source: Household survey, 2016

According to the above table, 150 respondents participated in the regular group

meetings. However, 49 respondents did not participate in the regular group meeting. So, there is a great need to increase their participation.

g. Frequency of Participate in Group Meetings

Participation of local people in group meetings helps to know the situation of residents in the whole community forestry. The following table shows their involvement in the group meetings.

Table 9 Frequency of Participating in Group Meetings.

Frequency of Participate in Group Meetings				
Community Forest	MalgauraCF (Committee Member)	BarandikoholCF (Committee Member)	Badkhola CF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Frequently	35 (11)	58(11)	39(11)	132(66%)
Moderately	11	12	7	30(15%)
Occasionally	5	13	19	37(19%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

(): Committee Member

According to the above table, 132 respondents frequently participated in group meetings, and 30 respondents have moderately attended group meetings. The remaining 37 respondents occasionally participated in group meetings. Among the three CFs, Malgaura CF had the most number of users attending the group meeting frequently. Still, there is a great need to increase their participation.

h. Participation in Forestry Activities of Three Community Forest User Groups

An Involvement in forestry activity helps to know the situation of local people in the whole community forestry. The following table shows their participation in forestry activities.

Table 10 Participation in Forestry Activities.

Frequency of Participation in CF Activities														
Community Forest	Malgaura CF				Barandikohol CF				Badkhola CF				Total	
Activities	H	M	L	N	H	M	L	N	H	M	L	N		
Protection*	25	15	8	3	62	14	5	2	43	8	11	3	199	
Plantation	25	14	7	5	56	21	3	3	35	15	13	2	199	
Distribution of Forest Product	35	9	5	2	67	11	4	1	45	12	0	4	199	

H= High, M=Moderate, L=Low, N=Never

Protection*= Pruning, Thinning, Bushes clearing and Singling

Source: Household survey, 2016

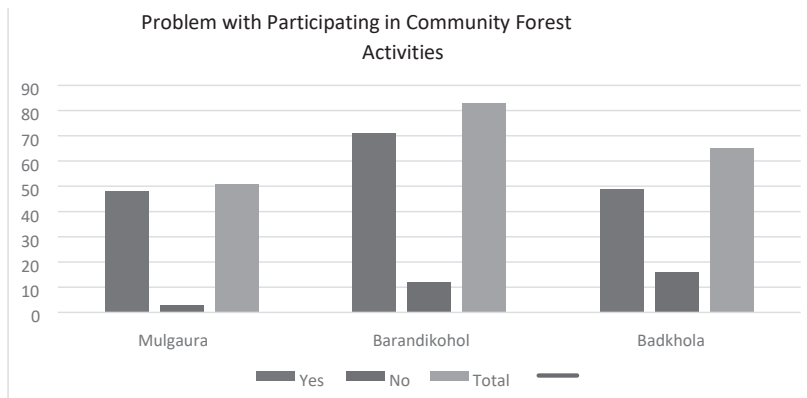
According to the above table, higher participation in the distribution of forest products is observed. However, participation in forest protection and plantation activities is low. As expected, a significant number of respondents indicated that they had a problem with participating in community forest activities.

Table 11 Problem with Participating in CF Activities.

Problem with Participating in Community Forest Activities				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF(Committee Member)	Badkhola CF(Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Yes	16(2)	23(1)	19(3)	58(30%)
No	35(9)	58(10)	46(8)	139(70%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

Graph 7 Problem with Participating in CF Activities.



Source: Household survey, 2016

Some families have to work a whole day to earn food for the day. Therefore, these families cannot attend all the activities of community forest works. Furthermore, some of the households were not willing to participate in protection and plantation activities. Thus, there is a great need to increase their participation.

i.Obstacles for Participating in CF

After understanding the problems with taking part in the CF activities, I asked the respondents to specify the problem that was hindering their participation. Nepalese society and cultural system have traditional values which interfere with the female involvement in different activities of community development, including community forest programs. They responded differently, which is seen in the following table.

Table 12 Obstacles for Participating in CF. (% in obstacle groups were calculated on the basis of the total participants who said obstacles existed)

Obstacles for Participating in CF				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	Badkhola CF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Big family size	6	9	5(1)	20(35%)
Lack of awareness	1	0	1	2(3%)
Poor economic status	5(2)	8(1)	10(2)	23(40%)
Gender bias	1	0	2	3(5%)
Occupation's nature	2	4	1	7(12%)
Others	1	2	0	3(5%)
No obstacle	35(9)	60(10)	46(8)	141(71%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

The above table shows that 23 respondents are facing poor economic status, 20 respondents are facing big family size. In every sector, there will be changes and impediments. Some people are unable to participate in the community forest activities, even if they want to do. Due to the housework, they do not have any spare time for participating in community forest activities.

Some people want to get involved in the community forest group, but their family does not allow getting into the group. Most women face such types of problems because of the male-dominated society. Furthermore, some of the committee members also said that they were from a poor economic background, and some respondents cited gender bias as a big problem with participating in community forest activities.

j. Encouragement to Participating in CF Activities.

Various methods were used to encourage a person to take part in community forest activities. In this study, some respondents were regularly seen to participate in the different group meetings and various activities. I asked those respondents about reasons which encouraged them to get involved in such activities. They put forth various factors such as family support, education, etc. In Madanpokhara VDC, respondents were found as follows.

Table 13 Encouragement to Participating in CF Activities.

Encouragement to Participating in CF Activities				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	BadkholaCF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Family' Member's support	20(3)	27(2)	18(4)	65(33%)
Education	15(3)	35(5)	22(2)	72(36%)
Self- motivation	12(4)	16(3)	23(4)	51(26%)
DFO Staffs	0	0	0	0(0%)
With request of general users	2(1)	3(1)	1(1)	6(3%)
Others	2	2	1	5(2%)
Total	51	83	65	199

DFO: District Forest Office

Source: Household survey, 2016

Based on the above table, we can say that education, family members 'support, and self-motivation are the main factors that encourage them to participate in CF Activities.

k. The offering of Opinions in the Meetings

This table shows the number of participants who actively participate and speak about their agendas in the CF committee meetings.

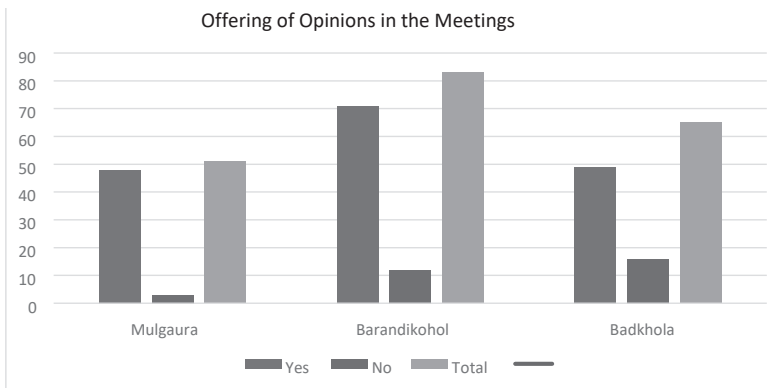
Table 14 Offering of Opinions in the Meetings.

The offering of Opinions in the Meetings				
Community Forest	Malgaura CF (Committee Member)	Barandikohol CF (Committee Member)	BadkholaCF (Committee Member)	Total/ No%
Yes	44(11)	73(11)	57(11)	174(87%)
No	7	10	8	25(13%)
Total	51	83	65	199

Source: Household survey, 2016

(): Committee Member

Graph 8 Offering of Opinions in the Meetings



Source: Household survey, 2016

The result indicates that the majority of participants speak in the meetings.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The community forestry program in Nepal was initiated assuming that local authorities and the public, who understand the problems, will actively participate in forest management since they know the problems and find the best solutions. Executive committees in these three community forests had mostly proportional participation of the public. However, the majority of committee members included senior people. Even though the legislation requires that at least half be female on the executive committee, two of the three community forests had the lower representation of women in the committee. Further, the rich had higher authority during decision-making at the executive committee meetings.

The findings show that the involvement of user group members at different stages of management and development of the community forests varies. All members of the CFUG need to be aware of the rights and responsibilities of their forests. Decisions should not be made based on the financial or social power of some members. In many cases, the executive committee is operated by a specific group of people with high social and economic status. However, the law stipulates the participation of lower class and ethnic minorities. Additionally, recent economic and social change has brought major changes in Nepalese society. Further, the regulations made decades ago, on the premise that all members of the community are equally dependent on forest resources and are responsible for the maintenance and management thereof, cannot deal sufficiently with the current changes in

This study result concludes that the involvement of user group members at various stages of CF management and development varies. In some states, participation is high, whereas, in others, participation is low depending on the complexity of stages and socio/cultural and economic background. In addition, it was found that user participation was not equally dispersed among different socio-economic groups in the sampled CFUGs. Moreover, the dependency on community forests has been declining among its users. Based on the general findings of the study and focus group discussion, the following recommendations have been proposed.

All the executive committee members of CFUGs should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding community forest activities. The decisions should not be made based on some member's financial or social power. The

participation of women in the decision-making process is below par level. To overcome this situation, females should be encouraged to take decision-making positions. In most cases, the executive committee members are decided by the particular group of people who have gained higher social status and respect. These people have the power to take over most of the decisions of the executive committee. The committees should be made genuinely autonomous so that they can decide for themselves.

Although the proportional participation of low caste and the underrepresented population is stated by law, the practice is different in the field. Even these decisions are also based on the persons who have social respect and power. The people who have social respect and power should not act as a guard of community forests. However, they should hand over their power or dignity and make the people understand the community forestry. Further, the recent political and social changes have brought about significant changes in Nepalese society. Thus, the rules that were made a few decades ago do not meet society's current needs. One of the major significant changes in the existing houses is mostly made of brick and rods rather than wood. So, to develop a sustainable forest, the older legislative frameworks should be modified.

This lack of autonomy in the CFUG executive committees has made them simply follow the decision made by some people and focus only on forest protection and utilization. However, based on the focused group discussions and other meetings, it was found that they lack effective forest management.

Further, the complete dependence on the public forest has reduced due to recent development, economic and social changes. At present, in addition to forest products, people need to generate revenue from the forest. To generate more income and better forest utilization, the land can either be utilized or rented to low-income people to plant the trees that generate quick cash, such as medicinal plants.

The recent lack of a working workforce and overgrowth of the jungle has made proper management difficult. Not all households can avail time at every activity related to community forestry. Community forest users should change themselves to a new role to use the generated fund to employ the unemployed population for forest-related work. Further, the distribution of forest products should be based on

the need of the family rather than equal distribution. For example, the families that utilize firewood as the primary energy source should obtain a higher quantity of firewood than those that use LP gas or biogas. Huge families, poor economic status, and poor education are the obstacles to community forest participation. So as far as possible, these barriers should be minimized, and other factors are encouraging public participation should be fostered.

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