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CONFLICT BETWEEN BANKARIYA AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE USE OF FOREST PRODUCT

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Abstract

Socio-culturally and economically every rural community of Nepal are associated with forest for their livelihood and identity but simultaneously governmental policy for the protection of forest is not in the favor of people, which has been creating conflict between people and other stakeholder including governmental organization. This research tries to know the causes and consequences of conflict between Bankariya and other stakeholders. This research was carried out between the period May to December 2013. According to nature of the problem descriptive research design has been applied. Handikhola VDC of Makwanpur district has been selected as an universe purposively. Both primary and secondary sources of data were applied in this study. Case study, key informant interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods were applied for primary data collection. The findings shows that the living condition of Bankariya has changed after the government has provided them 6 hectors land for 40 years at Mushedhap. Still date forest based products are extremely beneficial for the enhancement of their livelihoods. The major problems faced by Bankariya community regarding to use of forest based resources are; not having their own permanent land for settlement and agriculture purpose, provision of present rules and regulation, and attitude of other elite persons/groups for dominating them. Forest resource based conflicts of Bankariya is mainly related with local people and other forest user group committee members as compared to Parsa Wild Life Reserve and District Forest Office of Makawanpur.

Key words: Forest resource, Conflict, Dependency, Livelihoods, Bankariya community

Introduction

Land, forest and water are the most important resources for the economic development of Nepal (Upreti, 2004). Conflict is common in the use and management of these resources. Therefore, management of conflict is crucial to achieve sustainable use and management of natural resources (Upreti, 2002). Many people believe that interest is a major factor in forming a conflict (LeVine, 1972). Conflicts emerge in different forms such as grievances and disputes (Walker and Daniels 1997). Conflict will always exist to some degree in every community, but it can often be managed and resolved. If not managed properly, can escalate into violence, cause environmental degradation, disrupt projects and undermine livelihoods (Upreti, 2005).

Conflicts over natural resources at the community level have many causes and occur in different forms and levels of severity (USAID, 2006). In the context of natural resources, the perceived inconsistencies between people about acquired rights, incurred obligations, or contradictions of two or more jurisdictions lead to conflict (Oli, 1998). According to (FAO, 2000) natural resource conflicts are disagreement and dispute over access to, and control and use of, natural resources. Resource conflict involves investigating almost all aspects of human activity and interactivity ranging from behavior of individuals to group characteristics concerning governance of environmental services (Upreti, 2004). Resource conflicts produce both positive and negative consequences and alter existing social relations (Buckles 1999). Therefore, resource conflict is interconnected with broader socio-political issues and their implications to environment, society and process of agrarian change.

Forest is important natural resource for economic and social development (Upreti, 2006). Forest resources directly fulfill forest-related subsistence needs of women, poor and backward people as well as commercial needs of well-off people (Upreti, 2004). In Nepal during 1964 forests covered more than 45 percent of the total area of the country, this being reduced to 39.6 percent by 1998 (MPFS, 1998) and 20.4 percent in Terai (FRA Nepal, 2014). The productivity of the forest is decreasing due to migration and encroachment, smuggling, illegal hunting, grazing, forest fire, and lack of active forest management, poor political commitments and lengthy bureaucratic working procedures (Upreti, 2004).

Community Forestry started in the late 1970s, when the development strategies of the 1950s and 1960s that focused on industrial development were being criticized for overlooking rural development and not meeting the basic needs of the rural poor (Warner, 1997). Likewise since the 1990s the concept of co-management has gained prominence in the world (Fisher, 1995).

Protected areas (PAs), especially those in the Terai, have been a source of conflict with communities living inside and adjacent to the parks for decades (USAID, 2006). In the case of Bankariya groups; they are one of the minorities' indigenous groups who recently become social being from tribe form and solely dependents on forest products for their daily lives (Magar, 2004 and Moktan, 2007). Due to government policies regarding to forest management practices and elite groups attitude in local levels their general ways of living has been rehabilitated (Gautam 2013). A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and

global assets on which livelihood depends, and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. In contrast to Nepali context, ethics and responsibility (providing basic livelihoods to the burgeoning population) do not drive natural resource management objectives; rather they are driven by the accumulation of wealth and power (Upreti, 2004).

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to find the major causes and consequence of conflicts between Bankariya community and concerned institutions like; Parsa Wild Life Reserve (PWR), District Forest Office of Makawanpur, neighboring Buffer Zone Community Forest, other forest user groups, and local community; in the course of forest resource management. Along with this; the research was focused to identify the living conditions of Bankariya community, their social compositions, and means of livelihoods. Beside these the research was focused to formulate policy recommendations for improving the efficiency and sustainability of forest for sustainable livelihoods of local people.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The study area is situated in the hilltop of Twanrakhola community (Ward number 7) of Handikhola Village Development Committee (VDC), inhabited by the Bankariya community (Figure 1).

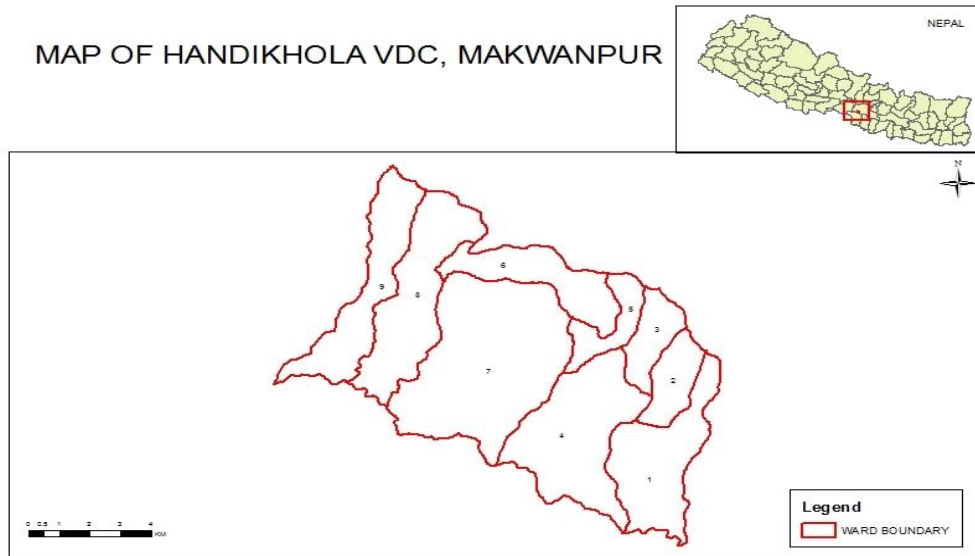


Figure1. Map showing location of study area

Handikhola VDC belongs to Makawanpur district located in Narayani Zone of southern Nepal. It has an area of 106.6 square kilometer and borders with Manahari VDC to the west, Padampokhari VDC to the east, Basamadi VDC to the north and dense forest of Parsa Wildlife Reserve (PWR) to the south. The total household in this VDC is 3676 with having total

population of 18415 (CBS, 2011). The 'Bankariya' ethnic group was not even mentioned in the population census documents of Nepal till 2001 (CBS, 2001 and 2011). The total population of Bankariya is 73 at present.

This VDC is drained by the Rapti River through the rivulets like Twangra khola, Masine khola, Handi khola and Thado khola. The climate is sub tropical in nature with having three seasons; cold season, hot season, and rainy season. Average annual rainfall and relative humidity of this district are 2274 and 73.5% respectively (DHM, 2013). The forests of this VDC are natural forest. *Shorea robusta* is the dominant species followed by *Terminalia alata*, *Lagerstroemia parviflora*, *Semecarpus anacardium*, *Careya arborea*, *Schima walichii*, *Terminalia bellerica* as co species. Some of the wildlife found in these forests are; *Panthera tigris*, *Axis axis*, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, *Sus scrofa*, *Panthera pardus*, *Hystrix indica* (Gautam, 2013).

Research Methods

This research was based on descriptive and explorative because of its nature. The information's were collected by means of both primary and secondary source of data. The secondary source of information comprised of research reports, books and documents published on the issues of conflicts regarding to use of natural resources by caste, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion by various types of governmental and nongovernmental organizations as well as the writings published by individual scholars while for primary source of information field survey was carried out between periods of May to September 2013. For primary source of information, micro level analysis of forest resource based conflicts; in-depth-interview with respondents, non-participants observations, ethnographic notes of Bankariya community, key informant interviews, and focus group discussion were applied. In this research non probability census household survey of Bankariya community was purposively selected based on their dependency on forest based resources. Likewise for key informant interview, non probability judgment sampling was done to the respondents comprising from different institution like from governmental officials; (Parsa Wild Life Reserve, District Forest Office of Makawanpur (DFO), and Handikhola Village Development Community), NGO/INGOs staffs, teacher and member of civil society who are directly or indirectly linked with Bankariya community. Similarly for collecting views of the various people; focused group discussion (FGD) was conducted with targeted population from different communities proportionately. Altogether 13 household survey of Bankariya, 13 key informant interviews and 2 FGD were conducted for this research. Information collected through household survey, focused group discussion, key informant interviews, and ethnographic notes were transcribed and summarized. Data obtained were triangulated to ensure reliability and validity. For quantitative nature of data; Microsoft Excel was used for further analysis.

Results and Discussion

At present time, total population of Bankariya is 73 inhabited in 13 households. Out of this population, percentage of male with female is 41:59, which indicates that female percentage is greater by 7.5 percentages than male as compare to 48.5:51.5 ratios in population census of Nepal (CBS, 2011). The age composition shows that their population is higher (31.51 percentages) between age group ten to twenty years followed by 20.55 percentage between age one to ten. These age groups indicate that there is possibility of high population growth in near future due to their reproductive age as they tend to marriage between age group eighteen to twenty three. The household composition shows that 23 percent live in joint family while 77 percent live in single family indicating preference of single family. Although education is one of the backbones for the development of nation, none of the members in Bankariya community has passed the SLC exam till date. Still date, in Bankariya community, 12 percent are uneducated and could even read and write their name, while 16 percent of Bankariya can simply read and write their names.

Bankariya is one of the highly marginalized indigenous communities of Nepal inhibited in Handikhola VDC of Makawanpur Districts (NEFIN, 2005). In previous days they spent their whole life in the jungle and don't want to be social life. They tend to live in jungle in tribe form and eat from wild (killing of wild animal and searching of wild edible foods). Due to these activities later they are called as Bankariya (Moktan, 2004). The stability of the Bankariya people was ensured after the place was provided to them for 40 years through the cabinet meeting during the former Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai's tenure after his one-night-stay in the settlement to take stock of their experiences and their difficulties.

The economic condition of Bankariya has been drastically changed within decade after the supports from different governmental and non-governmental organization. The living condition of Bankariya has changed after the government has provided them 6 hectares of land at Mushedhap. Since the agricultural production is sufficient only for 6-9 months on their total food consumption, still date they are immensely dependent on forest based products. Wild mushrooms, roots, tubers, fruits, buds, wild animals and birds are used as supplementary food for their daily needs which covers one to two months on average on total food consumption value. Beside these they collect grasses, handicrafts and other accessory materials needed for household activity and graze their livestock on surrounding forest. Now day's social security incentive (66.21%) is major source of income followed by income from labor (15%), job (13.75%), and livestock selling (2.42%) (Figure 2). Livestock farming is increasing day by day and they are following commercial farming of fishery by making their own pond.

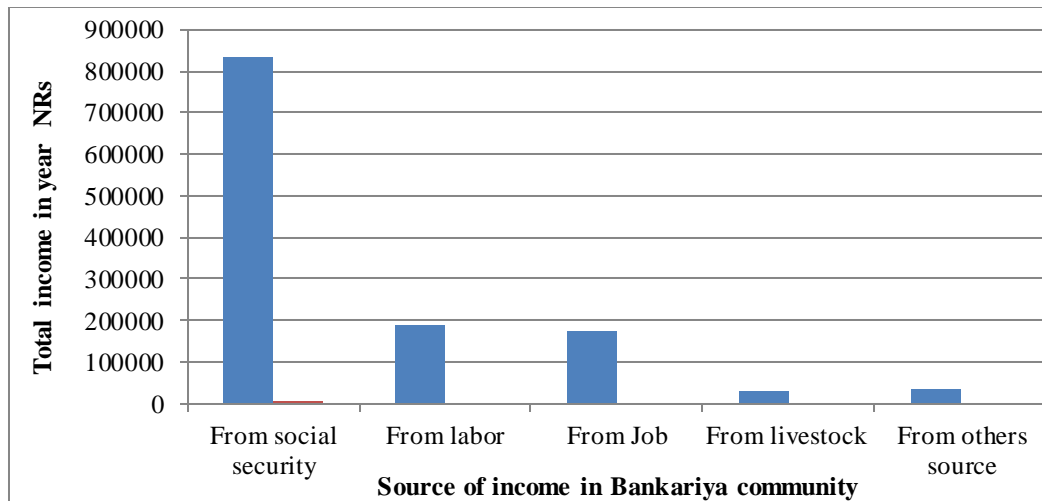


Figure 2. Bar diagram showing different source of income in Bankariya community

Now they are spending their life as being social life as like of other community. Due to this, they have to interact and tackle with other institution and community in several ways. They have inhabited in Mushedhap area, buffer zone area of PWR provided by cabinet decision for their settlement. On forest rules and regulation there is no provenance for establishment of settlement in forested areas, due to which there is contradict of Bankariya with other community and other institutions. Now Bankariya are using nearby forest in the form of leasehold forest and buffer zone forest. The study area is rich in floral and faunal diversity. Due to establishment of Parsa Wild Reserve and handover of surrounding forest in the form of buffer zone community forest and leasehold forest, forest coverage area is not decreased drastically in recent days. The perceptions of respondents about availability of forest based products (wild edible plant and animals, non timber forest wood products, and medicine) within last decades are shown in figure 3 below.

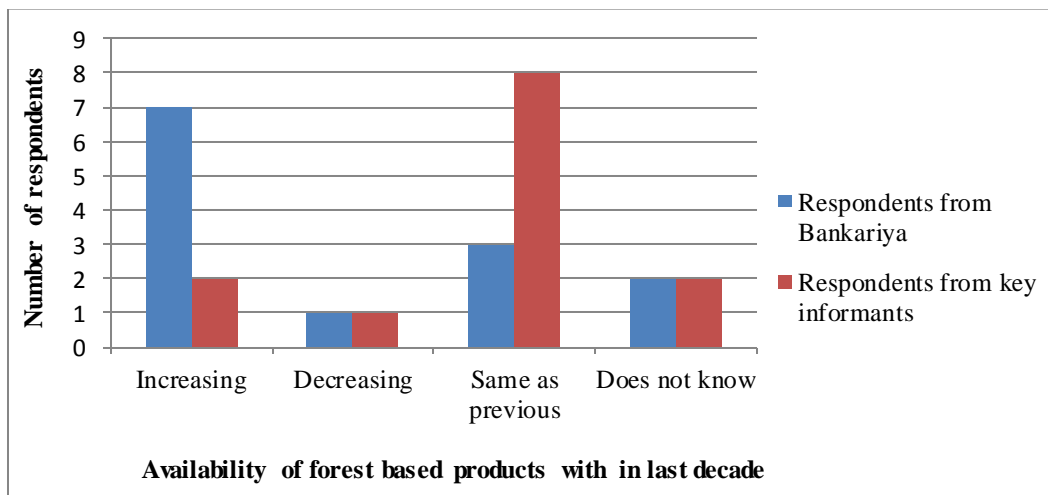


Figure 3. Multiple bar diagram showing availability of forest based products (wild edible plant and animals, non timber forest wood products, and medicine) within last decade

Majority of respondents saying increased in forest based products within last decade in the study areas might be due to less dependency of Bankariya community on forest products and strictness of PWR.

Conflicts between Bankariya and other community regarding to use of forest products

The importance and dependency of Bankariya community on forest products is still very high. Out of 13 respondents of Bankariya; 31 percent told forest resources are extremely beneficial, 54 percent told beneficial while 15 percent told not beneficial to uplift their livelihoods. The survey showed that there is inter-dependency of Bankariya community on forest resources in their livelihoods.

Regarding to the accessibility on nearby forest for Bankariya; 22 percent of total respondents told easily accessible, 57 percent told moderate accessible, and 21 percent told not accessible. The opposition on wide access to nearby forest is due handover of these forest as buffer zone community forest and leasehold forest on neighboring community. In spite of strictness of PWR and other community, they had quite access to use and collect of forest products. But the sceneries might be changed due to existence of new armed post near to their settlement, and they thought that there would be greater conflicts between PWR and them on using forest based products. On using nearby forest products; 69 percent of Bankariya and 54 percent of key informants told there is equal opportunity between them, 23 percent of Bankariya and 31 percent of key informants told there is not equal opportunity while 8 percent of Bankariya and 15 percent of key informants told they do not know (Figure 4 below).

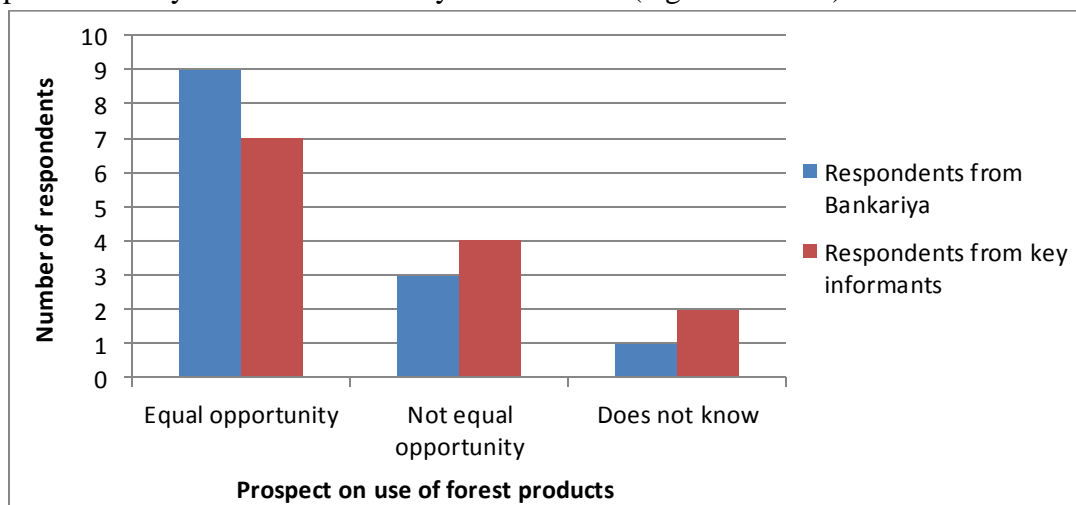


Figure 4. Multiple bar diagram showing prospect on use of forest products between Bankariya and other community

On regards to distribution of compensation measure between Bankariya and other community related to forest products; 62 percent of Bankariya and 70 percent of key informants told there is equal opportunity, 15 percent of Bankariya and key informant told there is not equal opportunity, while 23 percent of Bankariya and 15 percent of key informant told they did not know. Still date 23 percent of respondent from Bankariya and 15 percent from key informant do

not have idea about compensation related to forest products, which explains the lack of proper awareness in these community.

There exist many problems during utilization of forest products in Bankariya community. Out of 13 respondents of Bankariya, seventy seven percent told they attained many problems while twenty three percent told did not attain on using forest based products. Due to their interdependency on forest resources and behavior of other institution to control forest resource, there is existence of conflicts between Bankariya and other institution. The major problems faced by Bankariya community regarding to use of forest based resources are; not having their own permanent land in spite of the government decision to give this land for 40 years, provision of present rules and regulation on forest resource conservation and management like establishment of PWR, not proper access on nearby forest due to handover of these forest as buffer zone community forest and lease hold forest to neighboring community, attitude of other elite persons/groups for dominating them etc.

These problems create many conflicts in Bankariya community. Among 13 respondents of Bankariya 77 percent told there is conflicts due to forest based products. The conflicts were mainly related with; local people (43 percent), other forest user groups (38 percent), PWR (14 percent), and DFO (5 percent) as shown in figure 5 below.

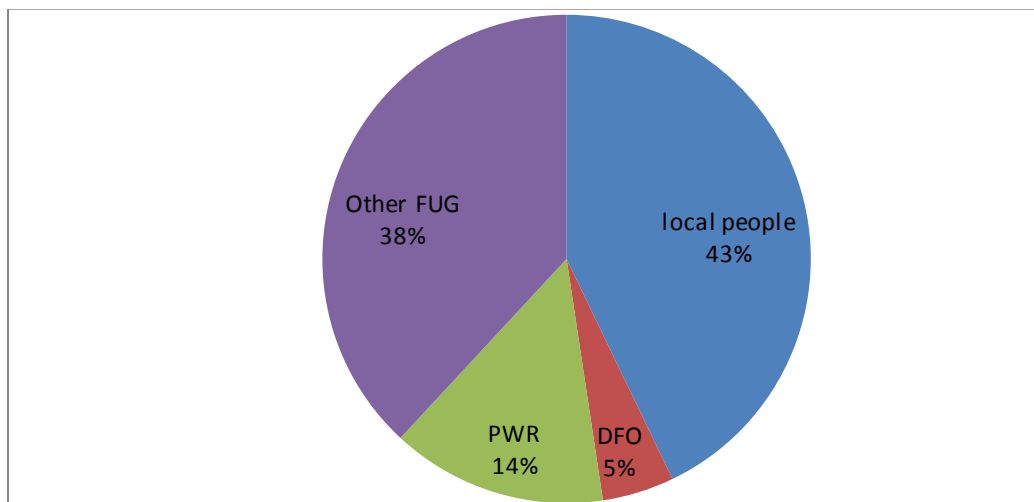


Figure 5. Pie chart showing conflicts of Bankariya with other institution on using nearby forest products

The finding of survey revealed that that forest resource based conflicts is mainly related with local people and other forest user group committee members as compared to PWR and DFO.

Out of thirteen key informants, thirty percent respondents told they have conflicts with Bankariya people regarding utilization and management of forest resources. Conflicts with Parsa Wild Reserve are due to their settlement in buffer zone area and attitude of Bankariya community to collect forest based products from Parsa Wild Reserve. While conflicts with local people and neighbor forest user committee are; due to government decision for giving land and social security allowance, for their community only, although many poor people are living there.

Beside this there is variation on land allocation for different community groups in the form of buffer zone community forest and lease hold forest. The provision made by forest user group committee to use their forest by their members only; has also created conflict in this community. Some time conflicts can create punishing conditions in society, but in Bankariya community there are not severe conditions. Out of total respondents 15 percent of Bankariya gets simple punishment and 30 percent of key informant gave simple punishment to Bankariya community.

Seventy seven percent of Bankariya and 23 percent of key informants told there is not variation in getting punishment while 15 percent of Bankariya and 54 percent of key informant told they did not know. Although there is prevalence of conflicts regarding to use of forest based products, none of the members of Bankariya community gets severe punishment like prison, giving of money as compensation etc. Taking off sickles, *namla*, *doko* etc from Bankariya community is common. Most of respondents told that there is not remarkable variation in getting punishment between these communities.

There are various governmental and nongovernmental organizations working in favor of Bankariya community. Out of 13 respondents; 54 percent told the role played by these organizations were highly appreciated to reduce conflicts while 15 percent told not appreciated and 31 percent told did not know. The respondents also told that the role played by governmental bodies were not highly appreciated (23%) as compared to other institution to reduce conflicts. There are different institutions like; local clubs, community based organization, NGOs/INGOs working in this society for the enhancement of their livelihoods. These institutions have played significant role to reduce conflicts between Bankariya and other community. Role played by civil society, local NGO/clubs are highly appreciated as compared to governmental institution.

The government of Nepal has made many Act, Rules, Regulation, and Guidelines for conservation and management of forest resources. On asking the questions regarding to favorites of present Acts, Rules and regulation thirty one percent of Bankariya and sixty two percent of key informant told these rules and regulation are in favor of Bankariya and fifty four percent of Bankariya and fifteen percent of key informant told not in favor of Bankariya, while fifteen percent of Bankariya and twenty three percent of key informant told they did not know about present rules and regulations (Figure 6 below).

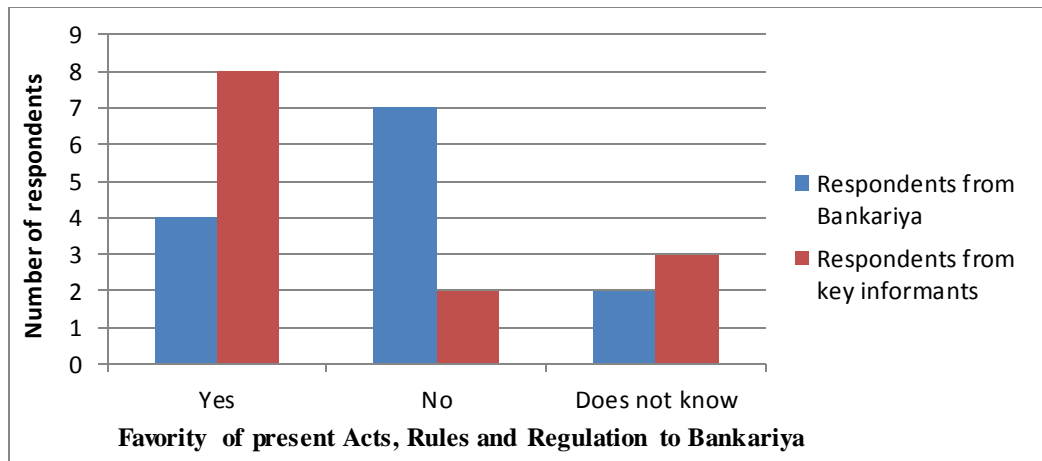


Figure 6. Multiple bar diagram showing favorability of present Act, Rules and Regulation to Bankariya Community based on respondent views

This view is also one of the causes for creating conflicts in this society. Similarly fifteen percent respondents from Bankariya and twenty three percent respondents from key informant did not have any ideas on present rules, regulation and policy regarding to forest resources conservation and management. This indicates the urgent needs of awareness program in this community.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Bankariya is one of the highly marginalized indigenous nationalities of Nepal inhabited in Handikhola VDC of Makawanpur Districts. In previous days they were solely dependent on forest based products for their daily life, but now the scenario has changed after they have permanent land for farming, housing and as there are many source of income. Still date forest based products are extremely beneficial for the enhancement of their livelihoods. They are using wild edible plants and animals as supplementary source of food which covered about 1 to 2 month on their total food consumption.

The major problems faced by Bankariya community regarding to use of forest based resources are; not having their own permanent land in spite of the government decision to give this land for 40 years, provision of present rules and regulation, and attitude of other elite persons/groups for dominating them. The provision of present rules and regulation on forest resource conservation and management like; establishment of PWR, not proper access on nearby forest due to handover of these forest as buffer zone community forest and lease hold forest to neighboring community. Forest resource based conflicts is mainly related with local people and other forest user group committee members as compared to PWR and District Forest Office of Makawanpur.

Based on perception of respondents and researcher views, the appropriate ways for the conservation and management of forest resources with reducing conflicts are as follows. Since they have changed their life styles from tribe form to social life, they should have sufficient land with their ownership for settlement and farming. Forest based dependency of livelihoods can be

reduced through appropriate program like awareness program, free education to kids of Bankariya up to higher education, adoption of biogas plant and electricity in each households, alternative source of food through commercial farming and livestock farming, income generation through employment opportunity etc. Besides this forest based rules and regulation should be implemented in collaborative approach rather than enforced ways. The indigenous knowledge of Bankariya community about biodiversity conservation, management and utilization should be preserved for proper conservation and management of forest resources.

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