

It is our pleasure to introduce you the special issue of Journal of Forest and Livelihood (JFL) on Protected Areas and People. This special issue brings diverse lessons and insights from field experiences on various aspects of Protected Areas (PA), conservation and communities in Nepal.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed drastic changes in thinking, understandings, policies, discourses, actors, management and governance of PAs and conservation of biodiversity in general. Multiple values and roles of official PAs and 'other effective area based conservation measures' are both prominent and critical in the face of global challenges of conservation, development and humanity. Nepal, a country that witnessed a national thrust towards creation and institutionalisation of modern PAs since 1970s, now has a comprehensive legislations, policies and strategies to nurture a vibrant national system which includes PAs of varying management categories and governance types that are representative of diverse socio-ecological systems. As we have stepped into a second decade of twenty first century, in the changed socio-political-ecological contexts and dynamics, it is meaningful and timely to revisit and reflect upon the experiences, initiatives, innovations and pressing challenges of PAs management, governance and biodiversity conservation in Nepal.

Production of a special issue of JFL on PAs can capture some of the lessons and insights from the field. We envisage this special issue of JFL as a platform to deliberate and articulate socio-cultural, institutional, political and human dimensions of PAs and biodiversity conservation in Nepal. This issue comprises of seven articles that synthesizes and analyses various aspects of PAs management and governance in Nepal. The first article by Joshi presents opportunities and challenges pertinent to community based conservation in Nepal with a specific focus on Chitwan National Park and its buffer zone situated in the Terai Arc Landscape. Likewise, the second article by Paudel exhibits the trade-offs between the actual benefits and associated costs of PA based tourism in Nepal. In doing so, the article stresses on the need for transformation in PA governance in order to fully realize the potentials of PA based tourism in Nepal. The third article by Thapa investigates the intersectionalities of conflict in natural resource governance between the state authorities, indigenous Tharu and Sonaha people in general and women in particular in the buffer zone of the Bardia National Park in Nepal. The fourth paper by Thapa and fifth by Sedai and Adhikary explore the local people's perception towards PA in general and buffer zone management in specific in Nepal. In doing so, the former assesses the attitude of local people towards PAs taking a case of Parsa Wildlife Reserve, while the latter inquires on the local people's perceptions on impacts of rhino and various adaptation measures adopted in the buffer zone of Chitwan National Park of Nepal.

The sixth paper covers a slightly different dimension of conservation in wetlands, critical ecosystem beyond the conventional boundaries of PA. It sheds light on the cross-cutting issues of wetland governance in Nepal in addition to the highlighting the recent developments and implications for the future. The final article by Biswokarma, Thing and Paudel explores the political ecology of Chure region, an important socio-ecological and geological terrain outside PAs. It primarily analyses discourses of two major actors actually favoring and opposing the Chure management decision of the Government of Nepal with respect to a case of Chure Environment Protection Area.

We believe that the articles published in this special issue will certainly add value to the current debates on PAs and contribute to critical social scientific understandings on issues of conservation and communities in Nepal. Finally we would like to express our sincere thanks to all the authors, reviewers and contributors for their contribution and support towards this publication. We look forward to feedback and suggestions from all our readers and partners so that we can perpetually contribute to new knowledge.