



Targeting resources management for livelihoods outcomes - challenges and opportunities

We are pleased to bring the second issue of the Journal of Forest and Livelihood despite some delay. What we have learnt through the experience with the first and the second issue is that producing a Journal of this quality from a country like Nepal, where there is a poor information infrastructure, is a daunting task. The challenges lie in all aspects of management: getting quality articles, getting the time of quality reviewers and editors, and finally getting serious readers who are willing to pay for the journal. We hope to cope with these challenges with stronger collective action, through increased number of serious editorial advisors, readers and contributors.

We left the areas of articles open, and got more number of articles this time, compared to the first issue. There were a few articles from outside Nepal also, but our editorial policy, which has a focus on Nepal based empirical articles, did not allow us to consider them. One important element of the editorial policy that we would like to reiterate is that this journal is not completely theory based, comparing data globally, but focuses on generating evidences from Nepal which may help prove or disprove, compare and contrast certain theoretical propositions. In this sense, it falls in-between the theory based highly. academic journals and free-style issue-based writings.

This Issue presents articles covering four key aspects of Nepal's forestry sector - community forestry, Terai forestry, non-timber forest products, and protected area management. All the articles concentrate on institutional and policy aspects of community livelihoods and the sustainable management of forest resources, both at micro and macro level decision-making.

Some of the papers have a focus on the issue of the impact of community forestry on livelihoods of the poor, women and marginalized groups, presenting evidences of impact and exploring policy and, institutional implications. *Bhim Adhikari* analyzes the socio-economic attributes of households that determine labor allocation decisions for forest product collection activities, which contributes to our understanding as regards who benefits from the management of forest and how. Similarly, drawing upon the experiences of far-western hills of Nepal, *Andrea Nightingale* argues that power relations are crucial in community forestry decision making process, and therefore a focus only on gender is insufficient. Other form of social difference, particularly caste and kinship are important determinants of how decisions are made in community forestry process. *Netra Timsina* puts forward a debate on the impact of community forestry program in Nepal, especially around the program's potentials for empowerment and risk of marginalization of the poor, women and disadvantaged groups. He suggests an effective policy monitoring systems and inputs to promote more democratic exercises within forest user groups. *Ravindra Roy*, analyzing the case of a forest user group from the hills of Nepal, shows two specific effects: reduction in the workload of women and household dependency on imported chemical fertilizer. *Him L Shrestha* and his colleague highlight an innovative case of forest management, in which small pieces of forest areas are distributed to individual user households for exclusive cultivation and management of grasses and fodder, thus indicating a policy challenge in aspect of property right arrangement within common forest resource management.

Management of Nepal's Terai forest has remained a contentious issue for the past several years. *Jagadish Baral*, based on the observations drawn from Siraha district, highlights some of the complexities involved in the management and use of Terai forests, and argues that a more inclusive type of participatory forest management approach is needed that engages stakeholders beyond the immediate vicinity of forest in the process of management. *James Bampton* has briefly outlined the ways through which newly launched Livelihoods and Forestry Programme is

involved in planning and designing forestry intervention to address the complex issue of Nepal's Terai forest in some selected districts.

Non-timber forest products have been recognized as an important resource for both livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Yet, several unresolved challenges exist in aspects of policy, marketing and resource management. *Krishna H Gautam* and his colleague identify challenges and analyze the forestry policy and community forestry case studies in Nepal to demonstrate the existing gaps between national and local perspectives on the values of non-timber forest products. He suggests that policy guidelines be based upon local perspectives in order to realize the potential contribution of non-timber forest products to sustainable forest management and the national economy. Drawing upon the recently collected field data, *Harisharan Luintel* analyzes sustainability issues related to harvesting of several commercially important Himalayan medicinal herbs, and identifies some options for sustainable management of the resource base. In a more optimistic case, *Shambhu Dangal* presents the results of a community initiative being supported by the Nepal Australia Community Resource Management Project for sustainable production, management, harvesting and marketing of non-timber forest products, with a view to creating alternative sources of income for rural households. In another specific case, *Shyam Paudel* and his colleague highlight bamboo research and development activities as well as prospects for future in Nepal.

Protected area management, which still seeks to separate people from nature, is one of the highly contested issues in Nepal. *Nay a Sharma*, drawing upon his several years of works with local institutions around Royal Chitwan National Park, argues that the forceful separation of the two inextricably linked elements - nature and people - has resulted in several conflicts between the conservation authorities and local people. Highlighting the fact that this conservation approach may not be justified in view of the enormous social cost, he suggests the social ecology perspective to promote holistic approach to conservation and livelihoods.

Finally three research briefs are presented. *Hemant Ojha* et al present highlights of a recent research on adaptive collaborative management of forest conducted in several community forestry sites in Nepal, and conclude that in order to enhance the livelihoods impact of forest management in a sustainable way, more conscious way of collaborative learning and adaptive management need to be integrated with stakeholder actions at all levels. *Krishna Paudel* and his colleague highlights the findings of a review study on monitoring systems and practices in community forestry, in which they point out a need to recognize need to develop mechanisms to facilitate communication, cross-learning and interactive reflections.

Developing and communicating appropriate technologies to assist resource users and managers has always been a challenge. *Hari Neupane* and his colleagues present the highlights of a recently conducted research on scaling up processes and pathways of soil management practices in the hills of Nepal, and identify factors that determine the ways in which improved technologies can benefit men and women of various wealth classes.

The overall impression one could get from reading the articles is that the community forestry's impact on livelihoods is not as intended, and there are a number of policy and institutional challenges that have to be addressed. It also presents some innovative approaches that are being tried in different areas, under different institutional contexts. The future of community forestry and its impact on sustainable livelihoods hinge on the ways through which all legitimate stakeholders engage in mutual collaboration and learning.

Hemant Ojha, Bharat Pokharel, Krishna Paudel