

Editorial

Community forestry is known to provide opportunities for economic development. Through small and medium scale enterprises, community forestry has generated income and employment to rural communities. However, it's the potential on generating income and scalable business models has not been fully realized. Similarly, majority of the lucrative forest-based enterprises, for instance timber enterprisers, are largely dominated by men whereas small scale enterprises, mainly non-timber forest products (NTFPs) based, have involved women and have generated opportunities in terms of income and employment. Yet, women face struggles in terms of registering forest-based business, finance their enterprises, and selling their products, which are relatively less examined. Thus, evidence-based knowledge generation for linking women to productive resource-decisions, and entrepreneur linkage to enhance community-based enterprises for climate and social resilience is crucial.

This special issue on forest-based enterprises presents seven papers focusing on community forestry and women's empowerment, barriers and reforms in women's access to resources, timber production potential and financial governance in CFUGs and success and challenges of community based enterprises.

Women and forest relationships are largely studied in community forestry in Nepal. However, there is a limited number of studies on women's empowerment level in the changed forest management regimes and progressive policies. The paper by Baral *et al.* adapts

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) tool into Women's Empowerment in Forestry Index (WEFI) framework in order to analyse the empowerment level of women. The second paper by Thakuri *et al.* highlight the case of community forests in Nawalparasi, examining how NTFPs can work as means to empower women. Group entrepreneurship among rural women has been found to be the effective means to offer collective solutions in overcoming barriers to create enterprises. However, the short timeline (1 to 1.5 years) for these group enterprises makes it challenging to assess their long-term sustainability. In such context, Bastakoti and Paudel highlight the need to not only focus on financial outcomes but also on social impact, particularly in community forestry in Nepal, where the social enterprise framework is still developing for sustained success.

Reflecting the matter of timber production potentials in Nepal, Dangi's paper focuses on exploring the historical efforts to boost timber production in the country, while analysing the role of different aspects (industries, taxes, and infrastructure) in shaping timber production and supply. While numerous studies have focused on the conservation aspects of community forestry, Bista *et al.* highlight unique matter of community forestry's financial governance by analysing the income and expenditure pattern of community forest user groups (CFUGs) to understand its economic contribution to local development. Utilising case study design and in-depth interviews, Nepal and Poudel, assess the current situation of women in

agri-entrepreneurship while exploring the motivational factors for women to initiate start-ups while also exploring the challenges and favorable policies for promoting women in agri-entrepreneurship. The last paper in this issue by Rai explores a different but important dimension of forest enterprises; cultural dimension. The paper focuses on the complementarities along with contradictions between the culture of people and forest-based enterprise interventions in Sawa village in Tyamke-Mayum Rural Municipality of Bhojpur district. The collection of the paper shows the diverse aspects of forest-based enterprises and women's empowerment in Nepal. While women's involvement and

participation in community forestry is well-documented, research on their empowerment under forest management enterprises and policies are limited.

We are hopeful that this Special Issue will contribute to understanding the multidimensional relation between forestry, women and community-based enterprises in Nepal. By examining the social, economic, cultural aspects of women empowerment and forestry, these papers offer valuable insights and learnings for forest management practices, policy frameworks, and enhancement of local forest-based enterprises for sustainable success and development.