

Community Forest: March Towards Secondary Phase

~ Manoj Adhikari¹

Abstract

Nepal has been fighting a battle against deforestation and enables to restore major of its forest. Forest conservation is possible through the practice of the concept of community forestry. However conserved forest is only able to supply basic amenities to users. The vast timbered and non timbered forest products, which could be the major source for income has been shadowed. This study was conducted to assess, and understand the problems and prospectus of secondary development of community forest among users' group management committee members and to understand problems and prospects of secondary development of community forest. The study was done using both the research methods i.e. primary and secondary data collection. The major finding of the study shows that user groups have knowledge about secondary development of community forest .Major problems for secondary development of community forest are lack of research and development in forestry, along with the lack of resources with users' groups. The prospects for secondary development of community forest are that they have been endowed with both timbered and not timbered forest products.

Key words: *community forest, secondary development, non timbered forest products*

1. Background of the study

Forest is one of the important components of ecosystems, which is self-perpetuating and protective of the environment. It is an integral part of farming system of mountainous country like Nepal. Forest is not only fostering the agriculture system but also one of the sources of the basic need of the rural people. Since long time forest of Nepal were managed and utilized in traditional way in the form of Kipat (communal Land Ownership), Raikar (State land lordship), Guthi (lands used for temples and charity) and Birta (state land grants to the priests, military personnel and nobility). This system relied on locally accepted rules through which a clearly fixed group of beneficiaries regularized forest use and excluded outsiders. These local systems were recognized by the Rana period under the feudal system. Whether it was the Kipat system or the Raikar or Birta, forest resources were held under the control of Subba, Jimmawal, Talukdar who were not only the land revenue collector of the Government but also used to maintain law and order at the local level. The Panchayat and Panchayat Protected Forest (Community Forest) was handed over

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to the locally elected political body of the same Village Panchayat. This approach of management highly benefited the elite classes of the village than general people. This practice was also impractical because the regulations were not clear and only isolated small patches of forest could be handed over. The local leaders took this program as a government program and they used the program simply to employ their people as forest watcher. The government field staffs concentrated on the reforestation of degraded lands because raising seedling and planting were easier than to work with user groups. Assessment of performance was also based on planting targets rather than on user group formation. Critical situation was faced by Nepalese forest sector. To address these issues and find a good solution in protecting and increasing forest land, the Master plan for Forestry Sector (MPFS) was published in 1988 as a concrete forest policy supporting the people's participation concept. This MPFS adopted the concept of Forest User Group for the management of forest in local level irrespective of political boundary. The regulations were subsequently revised after the change of the political system in 1990 and then the Forest Act- 1993 and Forest Policy-1995 was approved following the norms of MPFS. Thus, the name of Panchayat Forest and Panchayat Protected Forest was changed to Community Forest. Community forestry (CF) Programme, a forest management system in which management system and utilization rights of forest product is officially handed over to local people.(Shrestha, 2015)The Community Forestry is a participatory approach. It necessarily recognize the involvement of local user from the beginning (from identification of users until the implementation in which Forest User Group is responsible to manage, utilize and protect the forest while Government officials involve as a catalyst or facilitator to provide technical knowledge and other relevant support. The government supports to prepare constitution of the user group and management plan of community forest. During the formation of Community Forest process, there is provision for recognition of social arrangement and their need .

As the concept of community forestry evolve and gets implementation at national and community level, forests of Nepal started regenerating its form . Community forestry program had supported rural population as well as nations environment in numerous ways. Basically those three decades of practice of community forestry was focused on preservation and household use of forest only . Vast economical potential of forest of Nepal remain unexplored. Assessment, exploration, and proper utilization of economic potential of Nepalese forest is yet to be done. Conservation and household use of community forest should be considered as primary phase of community forestry development, now its time to attain secondary phase of community forestry development i e explore and utilize economic potential of Nepalese community forest. Which will ultimately help in economic and over all development of rural areas as well as nations development.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Community forestry programs initiation is participatory and inclusive in nature and it contributes to improve the livelihood of poor people. The country has gained name and fame in the world for successfully pioneering the initiative (Shrestha, 2015). Unfortunately economic exploration (secondary development) of Nepalese Community Forest is not obtained. More than three decade of battle against deforestation has now reached a stage from where the forestry must be guided towards another level of innovation .New method of forestry should be induced among community forestry stakeholders. Community forestry has played a vital role and it has to play similar role ahead in forestry sector of Nepal. Only conservation is insufficient. Various sectors of forestry like development and implication of structure of regularity of forest management, enhance capacity of users group, enhance pressure groups mainly federation of forestry user group Nepal (FECFON) are bases of attainment of secondary goals for secondary phase of development. Also, community forest user groups are real stakeholders of the secondary development of community forestry their willingness to change contemporary forestry practice, know bouts on economic potential of their forests and various problems and prospects should be analyzed. The research is furthermore centered on research issues like.

- Could community forest practice pave the way for economic development for user group.
- Are there any possibilities of economic exploration of community forests.
- What are the problems of economic utilization of community forests.
- What role should local bodies play for economic utilization of community forest.
- Are the economic potential of community forest utilized.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This research studies and analyze the understanding of secondary development of community forest among Chakhandol Community forest user group and another one community forest user group.

This research analyzes the prospects and problem of achieving secondary development of community forests.

This research studies the current economic utilization of community forest.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Forest is one of the widely used natural resource in Nepal and one of the way of gaining livelihood in most of the rural areas of Nepal. Forest is also the only natural resource that has been well and sustainably managed with the policy of inclusion, and with immense probability to uplift economic and social strata of rural population in Nepal, this study will be beneficial for forest users, policy makers, decision makers, private sectors, industries, government officials, local bodies to formulate plans policies programs to utilize the economic potential of the forest. Further this study will contribute in the field of knowledge about forest and be the source of information for future researchers.

1.4. Limitation of the Study

This study is carried out using both primary and secondary sources of information ,the major limitations of the study are as follows.

The study area were selected nearby Kathmandu valley only the findings could only be limited or beneficial to these areas only.

Convenience sampling methods were used to select respondents for the purpose of interview.

The study focuses only on exploring economic potential of community forest.

2. Literature Review

Community Forest Program officially started in late 1970s in Nepal. All kinds of forest activities were run by the government before community forest program. Jungle areas were nationalized in 1957 A.D. Rural people were prohibited to use the forest production. There were strict rules, regulations and punishment systems to the miss-users of the forest. Rules, regulations and strict punishment systems could not stop forest degradation and wildlife trafficking. Therefore government planners, Scholars etc, became compelled to think about alternative management of the jungle. A 21 years long master plan was made in 1989 (2045 B.S), which gave the first priority to the Community forest. As a result "Sanu Ban Pande Goun" of Kavre district, Tukucha V.D.C.-1 was legally handed over in 2045 Asar 28th to the community. It was the first Community forest in Nepal. In the same year Community forest user group (CFUG) executive committee was formed in Dhankuta district. Thus Community forest laid the foundation stone in the history of forest in Nepal. After the provision of the community forests, many rural communities have been involving in the utilization and management of forest. We have very

famous proverbs like '*Hariyo Ban Nepal ko Dhan*' (Forest is the Wealth of Nepal) and '*Jahan Jungle Hunchha, Tyahan Mangal Hunchha*' (Shrestha, 2015). In addition the need of conservation was also supported by the reports like "Energy Sector Report of the World Bank ", which warned for disappearance of forest in Terai of Nepal within 15 years and that of hills within 20 years through the report published in 1987. (WB, 1987). All efforts were concentrated basically on conservation only, the fact forestry could be an alternative source for economic development of rural areas in Nepal was ignored. All the potentials of Nepalese forest sectors should be explored in a sustainable manner for its sustainability.

Secondary Phase of Community Forestry

This came into effect in the forest sector of Nepal for past 30 years. It should gain its secondary phase of development while benefiting and facilitating the community as well as nation. NTFP (Non Timber Forest Product) could be the best alternative for the protection and promotion of Community Forest in its second phase after its era of simply conserving and protecting community forest.

Main Reasons

Forest Cover

"Forest occupies total of 5.96 million Hectare which is 40.36 percentage of total area of the country. Other wooded land covers 0.65 million Ha. Which is 4.38 percentage forest and Other wooded land (OWL) together represents 44.74 percentage of the total area of the country. Out of the total area of forest 82.68 percentage (4.93 million Ha) lies outside protected area and 17.32 percentage (1.03 million Ha) inside protected areas. Within the protected area core areas and buffer zone contains 0.79 and 0.24 million Ha. of forest respectively. Out of the total area of forest 37.8 percentage lies in middle mountains physiographic region. 32.25 percentage in high mountains and high Himalayan region. 23.04 percentage in Churia and 6.90 percentage in Terai. In case of OWL, Terai, Churia, Middle Mountains and high mountains and high Himal physiographic regions share 1.47 percentage, 3.50 percentage, 9.61 percentage and 85.42 percentage respectively. (GoN/MOFSC,2015).

Biodiversity

A total of 443 tree species belonging to 239 genera and 99 families were identified in the sample plots. The number of tree species identified in the sample plots of middle mountains Churia, High mountains, along with high Himal and Terai region were 326, 281, 275, and 164 respectively. (GoN/MOFSC, 2015).

NTFP

Reasons for Promoting NTFP

Inaccessibility of market because of lack of road, per timber especially in high mountain area.

NTFPs are cost effective in comparison to timbers.

NTFPs harvesting is ecologically less destructive as compare to timber.

"Timber production needs relatively long time. It may take years and decades to harvest but NTFPs like those of herbs and shrubs origin and also of trees such as leaves, flowers, fruits exudation take shorter time to get the harvest."(Banjade & Paudel, 2008)

Diversity of NTFP

The Himalayan areas in Nepal are perhaps the only remaining source where so many NTFPs are still found in abundance .The community forests can preserve these precious biologically diverse resource(guess-estimated around7000 plants) and put them to good use.(IUCN/GoN, 2002)

The annual trade of NTFPs and Medicinal and Aromatic plants (MAPS)is huge in Nepal and are important to large number of collectors ,traders at all levels, exporters, manufacturers and consumers along the supply chain (Olsen,2005). In the mountain region of Nepal ,10-100% of households are reported to be involved in commercial collection of MAPs and NTFPs and in some rural hilly areas, it contributes upto 50% of total annual family incomes(Olsen & Larsen,2003). While forestry contributes about 15% to the Nepalese Gross Domestic Production(GDP), NTFP & MAPs make up about 5% ofGDP (DFRS, 2008)

However the vast economic potentiality of Nepalese forest is yet tobe explored .Since nature has endowed Nepalese forest with such a great verities and sources it should be explored in sustainable manner so that it will add some boost to the development of rural areas as well as over all development of Nepal.

3. Research Methodology

Descriptive research design (Descriptive research design is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation) is applied to conduct the research. Both primary and secondary data's is collected and analyzed using various statistical tools and techniques. Convenience sampling is used to collect first hand information's. Questionnaire is prepared and interview with the

members of community forest users group management committee members is conducted. Various other literature are reviewed to set up the theoretical background for the study as well as for secondary information required. Suggestions and recommendation are made based on the findings of data analysis.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Different perspectives from respondents regarding secondary development of community forest are presented and analyzed in this section.

Table-1: Sample Composition:

Description	Sample Size
Chakhandol Community Forest	4
Paluibari Community Forest	2
Salambu Devi Community Forest	4
Kapur Basa Community Forest	5
RajatUdhyan Community Forest	5
Panighat Community Forest	3
Bishamvara Community Forest	3
Total	26

Sample composition

Table -2:Area Covered by Community Forest Studied:

Description	Area(In Hector)
Chakhandol Community Forest	4.7
Paluibari Community Forest	20
Salambu Devi Community Forest	6
KapurBasa Community Forest	2.3
RajatUdhyan Community Forest	3.7
Panighat Community Forest	23
Bishamvara Community Forest	27
Total	86.7

Source: Field survey-2018

4.1 Awareness About Secondary Development of Community Forest

The table below shows the knowabout the secondary development of community forest. 26 respondent were asked if they know about the secondary development of community forest.The detail situation of responses has been presented in table-3 below.

Table -3: Awareness about secondary development of community forest,

Description (Know about secondary development)	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	24	92.3
No	2	7.7
Total	26	100

Source: Field survey-2018

From above statics, the majority (92.3%) of the respondents are found to be aware about the secondary development of community forest.

4.2 Community Forest could be the Source to Economic Prosperity

The table below shows the respondent view whether their community forest could be the source of economic prosperity for their community.

Table -4: Community forest as a source for economic prosperity

Description (Could community forest be the source of economic prosperity)	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	22	84.61
No	4	15.39
Total	26	100

Source: Field survey-2018

Above table shows that out of total respondent 15.39 % are found to be unsure that their community forest could be the source of their economic prosperity whereas 84.61 % of the respondent are confident that community forest and its secondary development could be the source for their economic prosperity.

4.3 Source of Income Generation from Community Forest

The table below shows the respondents view on what could be the source of income from their community forest hence the forest product are broadly classified into timbered and non timbered forest products respondents were provided these two choices.

Table -5: Source of income generation from community forest

Description (Source of income generation from community forest)	No of respondent	Percentage
Timbered forest products	20	76.92
Non timbered forest products	6	23.08
Total	26	100

Source: Field survey-2018

Above statics show that majority 76.92% are in favor of using timbered forest product as a source of income for community whereas 23.8%of the respondent are in favor of utilizing non timbered forest product as a source of income .

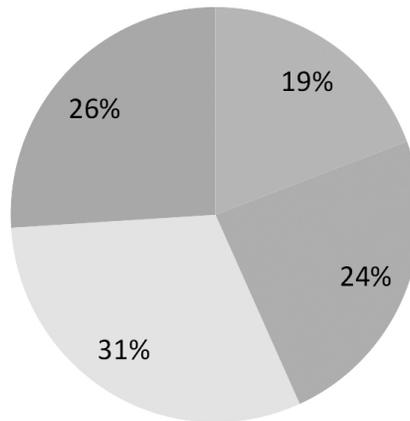
4.4 Challenges for Secondary Development of Community Forest

Community forestry has concentrated itself in conservation only . Respondents were provided four major challenges to select that were responsible .

Figure-1: Challenges for secondary development of community forest

Challenges

- Lack of awareness among stakeholders
- Lack of government effort
- Lack of research and development
- Lack of resouces with user groups



Source: Field survey 2018

Analyzing above figure 31% of the respondent take lack of research and development in forestry as major challenge for secondary development of community forestry followed by lack of resources with user group 26 % , lack of government effort by 24% and lack of awareness among stakeholders by19%.

4.5 Role of local Government in Promoting Secondary Development.

With the establishment of federal system in the country local government and its role is important in any development activity in local level .Respondent were provided two types of role i.e. supportive or active that newly formed local governing should play for achievement of secondary development of the community forest . The table 6: below show the respondents view.

Table -6:Role of local government in promoting secondary development

Description (Role of local government in promoting secondary development)	No of respondent	Percentage
Active	7	26.9
Supportive	19	73.1
Total	26	100

Source: Field survey-2018

Above table shows that 73.1 % of the respondent wish their elected local government play supportive role where as 26.9 % of the respondent are in favor of active role of local government in achieving secondary development of community forestry.

4.7 Future Plans for Commercial Utilization of Community Forest

Respondents willingness to achieve secondary development in community forestry plays crucial role ,respondent were provided with the options whether they have any future plans to explore the economic potential of their community forest or not. Table 7: below show the respondents view.

Table -7:Future plans for commercial utilization of community forest

Description (Are there any future plans to explore economic potential of your community forest)	No of respondent	Percentage
Yes	16	61.5
No	10	38.5
Total	26	100

Source: Field survey-2018

Above statics show that majority 61.5%of the respondent have future plan to explore economic potential of their community forest where as 38.5% of respondent don't have any future plan to explore economic potential of their community forest.

5. Interpretation

Community forestry approach has been effective in fulfilling the requirement of local people and conserve the precious natural resource in Nepal , community forest management is one of the inclusive and an example of social equality in Nepalese context, as well it is renowned worldwide for its inclusiveness and common effort .Its contribution in preserving forest in Nepal is remarkable. Also the vast economic potential carried by Nepalese forest is its unexplored strength. Hence the study is to analyze the problem and prospect of Nepalese community

forest to achieve secondary development by recognizing its economic potentiality. Preservation of forest only is not sufficient for achieving economic development specially in rural areas its vast economic potential is yet to be explored .The study was carried out to know about the problems and prospects of exploring economic potentiality of Nepalese community forests. To achieve the objectives of the study primary data are collected through questionnaire . 26 members of management committee of 7 different community forest user group were interviewed. Different mathematical and statistical tools were used to analyze the questionnaire.

Some of the major finding of the research are the majority (92.3%) of the respondents are found to be aware about the secondary development of community forest. Out of total respondent (15.39 %) are found to be unsure that their community forest could be the source of their economic prosperity whereas (84.61 %) of the respondent are confident that community forest and its secondary development could be the source for their economic prosperity. Majority (76.92%)of the are in favor of using timbered forest product as a source of income for community whereas 23.8%of the respondent are in favor of utilizing non timbered forest product as a source of income .

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the analysis section this paper concludes that majority of the people knows about the secondary development of their community forest, they also have a point of view that their community forest could be the source of economic prosperity for their community. In addition to this majority of the population favor timbered forest product over non timbered forest product for income generation.

Similarly majority of the people take lack of research and development in forestry sector as major challenge for secondary development of community forest followed by lack of awareness among stakeholders, lack of government efforts and lack of resources with user groups, community forest user group seeks supportive role of local governing body for the achievement of secondary development of community forest.

Recommendation

Community forest is an integral part of rural livelihood it is also the source of energy, income and various amenities, if it is converted into the source of income generation in rural areas overall balanced and sustainable development could be achieved. Based on the findings following recommendation are made for secondary development of community forest.

- Members of the community forest user groups have information's about secondary development and it should be utilized in exploring the hidden treasure in community forest through empowering the user groups capabilities.
- Adequate research and development in forestry is essential for its secondary development. Government, along with the concerned agencies should realize

the fact that planned and proper investment on research and development in forestry is demand of today for secondary development.

- Government policies on forest resources related industries and forest productivity should be amended in promoting such industries.
- Community forestry has been an example of community mobilization not only national level but also in international level such mobilization should be diverted toward utilizing economic potential of community forest form just preserving forest.
- Pilot projects demonstrating conserving community forest along with its economic exploration should be formulated.
- Agro forestry related policies and projects should be formulated.
- Since newly formed local bodies are entitled with immense powers and authority they should be supportive in promoting secondary development of community forest.

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