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Centre. This publication would become successful if it helps the concerned people in their endeavour. The International

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Where is our Terai Community Forestry ?

Nepal's Community Forestry could be an exemplary policy to outsiders. "Nepal is way ahead, especially in the region in this growing area of concern". This is what has been written many times in many publications. Compliments are pouring in regarding Nepal's successful implementation of this policy. Visitors not only from the region but also from far away come frequently to learn and/or getting benefit from Nepal's experiences of forest management through peoples' participation. But, with the recent record of just 13% of the potential community forest so far handed over to the communities, is not it still premature to get overwhelmed with its success ?

The greatest achievements of the community forestry programme should be viewed in terms of having peoples active participation for forest management and other community development activities of Nepal. However, some success have been achieved especially in the midhills of Nepal in so far as reducing the state expenditure in forest management is concerned (one of my nearest friends was taking the other day that the great success of community forestry in Nepal is to refrain those other than the ordinary Nepali from taking undue benefit from forests. He is right, I believe.). But what about the terai ? The latter which corresponds to 13.6 percent of the total land of the country has 22 percent of the country's total forests which are commercially

important to the nation. But, these forests are shrinking day-by-day. And this is where the state needs to show its concern not only to halt encroachment but to increase the productivity of the terai forests. Community forestry, as in the midhills, could be one of its options. But the way the terai scenario is different than that of the midhills, the same model may not fit in here exactly. This is what our experiences so far gained from the terai community forestry have shown.

Major issues

A study done by a group of experts (namely J. C. Baral, B. R. Poudyal, R. Kafle, P. Lamsal, A. K. KC, B. R. Adhikari and A. R. Poudel) of the Department of Forests, has outlined a number of issues existing in terai community forestry. According to them the basic concept of community forestry in Nepal which evolved from the hills through many past experiences gathered by a number of forestry projects working in the hills have failed to address the specific conditions of the terai. The existing legislative provisions of community forestry also seem to be formulated in view of hills and mountains. Similarly the operational guidelines prepared with a view to address the hill conditions do not suit the terai.

In terms of management interventions the forests of the terai are classified into three forms. They are: Production forests, Protection forest and Potential community forest. The former is the one which has high

economic significance for the state. And the others, especially the latter could only be handed over to community as community forests. In places where Operational Forest Management Plan has not been prepared, the terai forests are handed over to communities on *ad hoc* basis without considering the above classification. There are such forest areas which are basically the production forests, but handed over to the communities. Harvesting timber by Forest User Groups (FUGs) through private entrepreneur may lead to undue carelessness thereby becoming a source of conflict. The FUGs so far formed with whatever area of forest handed over to them, are also not empowered as they should have been. Moreover, identification of users, and providing basic forest products to those living far away from the forest areas have not been addressed. All these complexities have made the commencement of community forestry in the terai a difficult proposition.

Suggestions

With these scenario, the study team suggests, for the time being, not to gear-up the existing pace of handing over forest area of the terai to the communities simply to fulfill the annual target of the district forest offices. It should be followed only on the basis of operational plans. Forests should also be reclassified into protection/potential community forests and production/community forest. The social

aspects of forestry being a very important one, involvement of social scientists during the preparation of operational plan is also suggested. The team emphasises the preparation of community forestry guidelines specifically for the terai and inner

terai.

The report which is the outcome of interactions done by a group of qualified and enthusiastic people with the experienced government and non-government professionals who

have served the Nepal's forestry sector since long, is expected to bring fruits in the future.

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Towards a new programme for Forestry Resource Management

In 1997, the International Development Agency (IDA) of the World Bank (WB) supported His Majesty's Government of Nepal to prepare a project proposal for the development of terai national forest, terai community forestry as well as biodiversity conservation in Nepal. And the task of making the proposal was given to the Forest Research and Survey Centre (FORESC) - a semi-autonomous government body. A group of experts selected from outside the FORESC took nearly one year to finalise this draft proposal which was handed over to the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation in August '98. Once implemented the present project is expected to make a significant contribution in Nepal's forestry resources management programme. The highlights of its basic concept are:

Holistic approach

The holistic approach that it has taken for forest management is indeed a welcome step. The project embraces the development of production forest, community forest, watershed management as well as biodiversity conservation, etc. This is expected to develop all subsectors at a time without hampering the other.

Coordination

Avoiding duplication through programme coordination at the

central level as well as at the district levels is one of its highlights. Also, this makes possible the use of a resource pool of a subsector by various other subsectors.

Peoples' participation

Emphasis given to the peoples' participation in national forest management is yet another good point of this programme. Through this local people could be involved as partners while preparing operational plans of production forests. Special involvement of women and the poor of the society is recommended to be put in the departmental guidelines.

The community and leasehold forestry programmes will also be given the responsibility of protecting the peripheral larger area of production forest. This will help control encroachment of the core national production forest.

Revolving fund

The one quarter of the revenue generated from the forestry resource is proposed to be put in a revolving fund to be used for the future forestry development activities.

Strengthening Regional and District Offices

The Technical Support Unit which is proposed to be

established in the high level regional forest offices will provide a technical know-how to the district forest offices in their endeavour of managing production forests, community forests and private forests. Strengthening of district forest offices will be done through the appointment of experts on related fields, for example, silviculturist for production forest management, social scientists in community forest management and agroforestry specialists in agroforestry, etc. The activities of Rangers who are over loaded, will be closely followed-up. Training of a large number of forest guards is emphasised. This is expected to relieve a certain portion of existing work load of rangers. All are aimed to bridge the gap of manpower currently existing in district offices.

Employment and income generation

Employment and income generating activities through the cultivation of medicinal plants and other non-timber forest products is emphasised in the current proposal. Establishment of demonstration plots of at least five species of potential NTFPs in each district is a positive step towards the promotion and sustainable use of this important, yet neglected area of forestry resource.

Some of the important activities proposed in the draft proposal