Conflicts in two community forestry user groups at Kaski District, Nepal

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The implemention of operational plans and the sharing of benefits are such activities which normally bring about conflicts amongst forest users. Social heterogeneity is an important factor to aggravate such situation.The present paper therefore, attempts to find out major conflicts found in two different types of user groups one having social homogeniety in the form of castes, wealth, educational attainment, etc. whereas the other having more heterogenous social markers. Various types of conflicts such as within user groups, between users and users' committee, between users and non-users, between primary and secondary users, etc. were found. The results indicated that the more homogenous the society, the less will be the conflicts.

Keywords : FUG, conflict resolution, Kaski District.

Community forestry has been a major forestry programme in Nepal since 1980s. Large forest areas are being handed over to communities for management. The implemention of operational plans and sharing of benefits are in process. At the same time this has also brought many social and technical problems. The reason for such problems is the improper, wrong, non-realistic and biased decisions made by users since the inception of community foestry programme in Nepal.

In the beginning, efforts were made mostly to hand-over the larger areas of forests so that the yearly programme of the Department of Forests could be met. This in turn overlooked the importance of community participation to investigate genuine forest users and forest area demarcation. Consequently this led to conflicts among users, and thereby became a hurdle on the programme's success. Resolving conflicts has, therefore become an important aspect for the better functioning of community forestry, and, these days, has drawn attention of many governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Decision making is a fundamental part in community forestry. The success and/or failure of community forestry is based mainly upon decisions made by user groups/committees. Failures of many community forestry programmes in Nepal are due to wrong decisions. The Koidim Community Forest of Tanahu and Khordanda Community Forest of Lalitpur Districts are such examples (DoF, 1996).

Community forestry involves programmes at different stages such as group identification, preparation and implementation of operational plans, etc. Conflicts arise while making final decisions, when someone's interest is not considered or fulfilled or when others interests are encroached upon. In Nepal's community forestry programme such conflicts can be seen within a forest user group, between two users

group and between users groups and District Forest Offices (government).

The heterogenous nature of Nepali society could also be an important reason for having conflicts. Five major factors which causes heterogeneity in the society or in the community are:

- Age/Sex differences
- Economical conditions
- Educational status
- Political views
- Ethnic/Cultural norms

These factors seem to have divided Nepali society into two groups, those who dominate and the other who are dominated. In this connection, the present paper attempts to point out the major conflicts between two different types of forest user groups of Kaski District. Attempt has also been made to assess through statistical tools, the role of social heterogeneity in raising conflict.The common conflicts resolution process have been described.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Paudel Ban (forest) of Lahachowk VDC and Mul Ban of Nirmal Pokhari VDC of Kaski District. The user grpups of Paudel Ban of the Lahachwk VDC was comparatively less heterogeneous than that of Mul Ban. The reason for more and less heterogeneity in the community are listed below :

significance for heterogeiniety. In such types of groups adults usually lead the society.

In most cases, ethnicity determines wealth, educational and social status of the people, for the people of the higher caste are usually more wealthy and educated than those of the lower castes.

Methods

Appraisal methods such as direct observation and triangulation were used to collect data in the field. To collet more information that might have left during the process, group meetings were also organised. The degree of conflicts were divided into high, medium and no or low degree of conflicts.

Results

Statistical test to determine conflicts on the basis of social heterogeneity

A comparison of conflicts that occurred during decision making, between the higher and lower heterogenic users groups was done through the chi-square test.

Higher conflict

Voting system in decision making is used where there is more conflict (Make it clear!)

Medium conflict

Decision made through majority after long

Paudel Ban, Lahachowk	Mul Ban, Nirmalpokhari
- same ethnic group (all but one Paudel) -less wealth heterogeneity	- diverse ethnic groups such as Giri,Chhetri, Brahmin, Pariyar, Rayamanjhi, etc - greater disparity in economic status
- identical educational status	- different educational status

The ethnicity was a major criteria of the societal heterogeniety. If users were from the same ethnic groups, the other components (except age and sex) seem to have less

discussions

Low conflict / no conflict

Decision made after some measure was proposed before the society and then accepted.

Contingency Table

The table shows the level of conflict in the less heterogeneous (Poudel Ban) and more heterogeneous (Mul Ban) communities.

Expected " " low " = 100x95/200 = 47.5
Expected " " no decision = 100x7/200 = 3.5

For more heterogeneity :

Expected value of high conflict = 100x26/200 = 13

Heterogeneity	Decision with				total
	High conflict (%)	Medium conflict (%)	No/low conflict (%)	Chance of no decision	
Less heterogeneity	8	30	60	2	100
More heterogeneity	18	42	35	5	100
TOTAL	26	72	95	7	200

Results

Following hypotheses were set before calculating the expected values.

i. Null hypothesis (Ho)

It indicates that there is no significant role of social heterogeneity in decision making and for raising conflicts.

ii. Alternative hypothesis (Ha)

Society heterogeneity plays a vital role in decision making and for raising conflicts.

Calculation
Calculation of expected values

Expected " " medium " = 100x72/200 = 36
Expected " " low " = 100x95/200 = 47.5
Expected " " no decision = 100x7/200 = 3.5
The tabulated value at 90% confidence level from the chi-square table for degree of freedom (4-1), (2-1) = 3 is 6.251 and the calculated value is 13.68 .

Since calculated value is greater than critical value (tabulated value) the Null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation

There is a significant role of societal heterogeneity in decision making. Conflicts in community forestry depends upon societal heterogeneity and it shows that increasing

Calculation of chi-square value

Observed value (oi)	Expected value (Ei)	(Oi - Ei)	(Oi - Ei)^2	(Oi - Ei)^2/E
8	13	-5	25	1.92
30	36	-6	36	1
60	47.5	12.5	156.25	3.28
2	3.5	-1.5	2.25	0.64
18	13	5	25	1.92
42	36	6	36	1
35	47.5	-12.5	156.25	3.28
5	3.5	1.5	2.25	0.64
			Total	13.68

For less heterogeneity :

Expected value of high conflict = 100x26/200 = 13
Expected " " medium " = 100x72/200 = 36

societal heterogeneity causes increasing conflicts in community forestry and vice-versa.

Types of conflict prevalent in the study area

i) Conflict within users group

This type of conflict was found during meeting. In a heterogeneous society, while making final decisions, more than one ideas and views were expressed by different people over a single issue thereby leading to conflict. Mul Ban community forestry users groups showed the example of such conflicts. Users were of different openion for determining the actual date, season, etc. of harvesting, plantation and silvicultural work.

ii) Conflict between users committee and users

Conflict of this catagory is raised if committee members are biased in distribution of benefits or do not follow the predetermined rules and regulations. This type of conflict was not found in the study areas but according to users, it had occurred in neighbouring community forestry users group.

iii) Conflict between users and non - users

In the Lahachowk VDC, conflict of this type is more serious because of unidentified forest users. Most of the people living around the forest have no authority to use forest resources. Only those who are related to birta (In the past, during Rana ruling time Govt. authority used to give a patch of forest to the individuals) are identified as the genuine users. In Nirmalpokhari such conflict is not significant. Here the users are classified as primary, secondary and tertiary on the basis of the distance they live from the forest, village boundary, responsibility (how reponsible the users are for the protection of forest) and use pattern (quantity and kinds of forest products they use).

iv) Conflict between primary and secondary users

This type of conflict is found where there are categorized users as primary and secondary, especially for benefit sharing. In Nirmalpokhari, although there are primary, secondary and tertiary users, the conflict among them is not so serious.

v) Within the members of users committee

This type of conflict is generally found in the committee meeting while a member of committee biasly favours to the individual or group of users. This type of conflicts was found in the Mul Ban CF where a committee member representating secondary and tertiary users wanted to increase forest use right as primary users.

vi) Conflict between Forest Department and users

Conflicts between users and the forest authorities take place over forest management techniques, delegation of authority to users and forest types and areas given to the users. No such conflicts were found both in the Lahachowk and Nirmalpokhari VDC.

Conflicts found in various stages of community forestry

Forest boundary declaration

Conflicts between the users groups and forest department, private forests and other users groups arise for disputed forest bondaries. None of such conflicts was found in the study areas.

Users identification phase

This type of conflict is found in the Lahachowk VDC where only those peoples who are from the same ethnicity or who were related to the Birta system were identified as the members of users groups whereas the others who could be the users of the forest are not identified as the users.

Conflict in selecting executive members of the committee

The types of conflict found in both the areas while nominating the executive member of the users committee, are:

- Representation of different castes
- Representation from different geographical areas and
- Representation from secondary and tertiary users (as in Nirmalpokhari)

Conflict in implementation

In the implementation phase, conflicts are found over labour contribution (number of people from each household corresponding to family size), benefit sharing for primary, secondary and tertiary users, date for management works, etc .

Conflict for boundary demarcation

In Nirmalpokhari, the Rayamajhis (one of the family names in Nepal) who are the primary users of Mul Ban community forest, wanted to separate that forest from that community in order to make it a separate users group, which the others did not agree. It ultimately lead to conflict.

Resolution

Following are some general methods adopted in the study area to resolve conflicts:

- Dictated
- Motivated
- Resolution by the decision of majority

Dictated Resolution

Conflict is resolved here by dictatorship of the people who influence the other by any means. Also sometimes the district forest office imposes the technical know-how to the users even if the latter are no willing to accept them.

Motivated

Conflicts sometimes arise due to misunderstanding between the users. Such misunderstanding is eliminated with the help of some elderly people, the school teachers and the officials of the district forest office.

Decision of majority

When conflicts arises due to varied opinion of different people, then decision of the majority of the people is followed.

Resolution processes

The general processes of resolving conflicts in the study areas are:

i) Identifying the topics of conflicts

First of all the actual issue which caused conflict among or between the users group members are identified

ii) Identifying unsatisfied group

The genuine users (individuals, certain groups of people, certain caste, etc.) who are unsatisfied for various reasons (benefit sharing, the working system of the committee, etc.) and are causing conflicts, are first of all identified followed by the main causes of conflicts.

Once the unsatistified group and the reasons for conflict are identified, the group is asked by the user committee, to give opinion for solution.

Conclusion

The whole users group or the users committee may accept or reject the solution put forward by the unsatisfied people. If the group accepts the solution then that would be the final decision; if not, then they use any of the above mentioned resolution keys.

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