



Editorial

We are pleased to present the seventh issue of the Journal of Forest and Livelihood. This issue focuses on the problems and opportunities of the forest-dependent poor in Nepal and in Asia, wherein a total of eight articles are included. Often, there are problems in identifying and acting upon the linkages between natural resources and their management to the expectations of the poor in contributing to their livelihoods, their daily lives being exceptionally dependent upon such resources. There has been a key challenge in addressing how natural resources can contribute to the livelihoods of the poor. In this issue, we have been able to capture the problems faced by the forest-dependent poor, spell out the causes underlying those problems, present empirical evidences on pro-poor approaches for addressing those problems, and analyze the linkages between the pro-poor objectives in governance and community-based natural resource management.

In the recent debates on how poverty reduction could be linked to natural resource management, particularly through participatory forest management, we expect that this issue will contribute by bringing issues, innovations and insights together, with the hope that this will be able to help policy-makers, academics and development practitioners to devise policies and action strategies to increase the effectiveness in approaching the agenda of poverty reduction. Though major focus of the article is on the problems and innovations from Nepal, we have included one article with a broader, regional perspective on the potential of community-based forest management, proposing ways forward to harness its full potential in addressing poverty reduction.

Two articles included herein demonstrate that questions remain, pertaining to who defines the problems of the poor and who develops the strategies enacted to address them. In the first article, Harisharan Luintel and Basundhara Bhattarai present the problems of low-income and forest-dependent poor, as revealed by the poor themselves as well as by the support institutions that are working closely with them. In the second, Krishna Paudel and Balkrishna Kattel discuss the impact of the armed conflict on the livelihoods of the forest-dependent poor and demonstrate that the conflict has aggravated their problems in maintaining and improving their livelihoods.

Many believe that transformation in the concepts, skills, attitudes and behaviors of both actors and the existing structures are crucial to poverty reduction. Mani Ram Banjade and his colleagues propose a more inclusive and interactive process of transformative learning within the community forestry programme so as to facilitate and support pro-poor governance practices. In a similar vein, Bimala Rai Paudyal and her colleagues present that strategic moves are needed within support organizations and community organizations to address inequity and social exclusion issues. They present cases wherein facilitation has successfully encouraged forest user groups to allocate sections of community forests to the communities' poorest households for their direct benefit.

Another article by Murari Joshi and his colleagues present a process called 'Livelihood Improvement Process', used to help in shifting the focus of concerned stakeholders towards holistic, livelihood-based pro-poor and inclusive planning processes within the community forestry framework. Likewise, Bharat Pokharel and his colleagues present a model of community forestry-based enterprise management wherein the poor can gain improved access to both decision-making processes and the sharing of benefits.

Ram Chhetri reviews Nepal's forest policies and practices from the perspective of pro-poor livelihood support and identifies a need for appropriate policies, laws and practices to create an environment to enable the poor to have better access to resources.

At the regional level, Sango Mahanty and her colleagues provide a broad-based Asian outlook, linking community-based forest management with poverty reduction initiatives. They argue that, though there is much to be done yet, community-based forest management has the potential to help the poor to cope with or even to move out of poverty. They propose that improvement in governance, enterprise development and integrated approaches are some of the areas upon which focus should be placed.

The overall lesson that runs through this collection of articles is that there is a need for a fundamental restructuring of thought in both policies and practices to create more equitable impact on the lives of the poor.

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