



Editorial

The third Issue of Journal of Forest and Livelihood 2 (2) is now at your hand. You will find an interesting breadth and depth of current policy and institutional landscape in Nepal's forestry sector. The 10 articles of varying lengths link current realities with on-going theoretical and policy debates in the respective sectors. Key issues dealt with include: current forest policy discourse including devolution and micro-macro linkages (monitoring), multistakeholder initiatives in Terai forest management, leasehold forestry contribution to the livelihood of the poor, factors determining poor's access to benefits from community forestry, and a survey of policy-induced problems (forest inventory). In addition, short commentaries on FECOFUN as a civil society, and limitation of protected area model of conservation in times of crisis are also presented.

This Issue unfolds with a short article by **Don Gilmour**, who has shed light on the past trends and future prospects of community forestry in Nepal as a long term observer of Nepal's community forestry from both inside and outside, with particular reference to the need for innovating new modalities in changing socio-political context.

Several authors have treated forest governance as a critical factor for effective resource management, and enhancing livelihood outcomes. **Netra Timsina and Naya Sharma Paudel** have argued that current forest policy discourse in Nepal has largely undermined the internal differentiations both within the state and community, as it divides all actors into state versus community debate, assuming them to be homogenous and monolithic. They contend that this binary focus is theoretically weak and practically less useful, leading to confusions and stagnation. Likewise, **Ganga R Dahal** observes that community forestry as a devolution policy has been distorted during implementation because of poor governance and weak institutional structure. Making a forward looking review of micro-macro community forestry linkage in Nepal, **Hemant Ojha and his colleagues** have recognized the need for having learning element in the governing process, suggesting continuous monitoring systems at different levels.

James Bampton discusses recent initiatives on Terai forest management, under a DFID-funded bilateral project. His ideas and analysis present an interesting process of multistakeholder collaboration, which was a consistently missing element of all endeavors of Terai forest management in the past.

Policy instruments in forestry can have profound unintended consequences, and two articles are devoted to dig out the consequences of forest inventory guideline and leasehold forestry program. **Narayan Dhital and his colleagues** have highlighted the various problems relating to the Community Forest Inventory Guideline based on the findings of a recent survey conducted in 40 districts in Nepal. Similarly, **Christopher Thoms and his colleagues** have critically analyzed the potential of leasehold forestry arrangement to contribute to the livelihood of the poor, and argue that leasehold forestry should be redesigned to gain better synergy with community forestry.

Relatedly, **Hari Neupane** explores the reasons why poor forest users have not often been able to get equitable benefits from community forest management, based on a recently completed intensive participatory action research project in the hills of Nepal, and discusses six key factors determining distribution of benefits from community forestry.

Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) is considered a large civil society institution of forest users to advocate their rights. **Netra Timsina** provides a commentary on the

functioning of FECOFUN, and raises some issues as regards the ways in which it represents the common forest users, its governing structure and the resources it depends upon, indicating a need for the review of FECOFUN's current policies, strategies and activities in order to better represent the interests of the poor and disadvantaged sections of society.

Nepal's conservation efforts have been principally based on the strict protection model, using a network of protected areas across different ecological regions. **Prabhu Budhathoki** reviews the current conservation status within protected areas in Nepal, with particular reference to the worsening security situation.

Reading these articles, you may realize that the institutional and policy challenges in Nepal's forestry sector are growing in terms of complexity and diversity, and find several new insights and ideas put forward by authors for tackling these challenges. A common policy perspective emerging from these analyses is that the role of civil society in shaping policies and providing services should be strengthened, while refocusing the role of government agencies in monitoring of policy implementation. Such a process of redefining power and roles require even more conscious social learning and collaboration on the part of the stakeholders.

In the next Issue, we are planning to cover more on Terai Forest Management, with an article of Frank van Schoubroeck and his colleagues and solicit more in depth articles on FECOFUN. In addition, we welcome articles analyzing contemporary policy issues in forest/natural resources management. The Journal seeks to inform policy in forest and livelihood sector in Nepal, including community forestry, watershed management, conservation areas, non-timber forest products, and forest product marketing. We particularly encourage articles that are guided by perspectives and insights from political economy, political ecology, social learning, and institutional theories, building on qualitative and quantitative evidences from Nepal.

Hemant Ojha, Krishna Paudel and Bharat Pokharel