

## Editorial



Issues relating to improving rural livelihoods and conservation of forest resources have been recognized more than ever before. Development and forestry practitioners are both looking at how their efforts can be combined to benefit the livelihoods of many deprived and poor people. Policies and programs are also shifting their focus towards this end. More importantly, the subjects of development have started to come forward more fiercely than ever before, challenging the unfavorable elements of policy, programs and society in general. Federations of forest users, associations of forest product harvesters are some of the examples in this regard.

The dimensions of forestry and livelihoods are many, and no single perspective, strategy and sets of actions can address it fully. We all still have to learn and act together. We should reflect, review, and share what we have learned in different times, contexts and interventions. We should do this at various levels – from local to global, as livelihoods and communities are increasingly affected by a wide array of forces. **Journal of Forestry and Livelihoods** is an initiative designed to promote the sharing of learnings on how best the lives of poor people can be improved through the management of forests. In attempting a more holistic approach we have identified 4 broad themes for discussion: **Forest Management; Institutions and Social Processes; Policy and Governance; and Livelihoods, Economic Opportunities and Equity** as all these collectively determine how forests relate to local livelihoods. We wish to retain these, explicitly or implicitly, as key elements of the Journal.

Forest Resources Studies and Action Team (ForestAction) will use the Journal as one of its critical interventions in the forestry sector. This, together with others, is expected to contribute to improved rural livelihoods through sustainable, efficient and equitable management of forests in Nepal. Department for International Rural Development (DIRD) of the The University of Reading, UK has joined with us in launching the Journal sharing its technical expertise.

This is the first issue that we conceived some six months back. We faced hard times in collecting articles, and we knew this is a challenge to many similar journals too. We hope for more active participation by our valued readers and contributors after the first issue. We will also explore what we can do on our part to ensure the acquisition of quality contributions.

We have been able to cover several dimensions of forestry and livelihoods in this issue. The **Forest Management** section highlights lessons for moving towards active forest management (Robin's article), experiences of integrating community forestry with wider natural resource management system (Damber's article) and options for innovating less costly protection arrangements (Basundhara's article). In the same section, volume and income loss due to an absence of thinning in pine plantation forest are estimated, and thinning regimes suggested for better utilization and development of forest stands (Steve's article).

In the **second section**, authors throw light on the prospects and challenges of forest based livelihoods. The first article outlines community forestry contributions to various elements of livelihoods, in terms of capital assets, organizational and policy reform and social change (Bharat's article). In the second, it is revealed how increasing commercial values of non-timber forest products interact with unfavorable policy arrangements, complex social and market structures to yield inequitably low incomes to the poor (Hemant's article). Bhim has reviewed theories on community heterogeneity and collective action, and has identified different theoretical perspectives on problems and prospects of equity in resource management in a heterogeneous community structure.

Some key issues within the institutional and social aspects of forestry and livelihoods are raised in the **third section** which focuses on monitoring, and adaptive and collaborative management. Krishna and his colleagues provide a critical review, identifying gaps in monitoring in local level forest management, and put forward an approach to developing self and collaborative monitoring within and between local forest stakeholders. Cynthia illustrates how adaptive collaborative management can be facilitated – fostering effective collaboration among stakeholders, taking all actions as experiments for conscious social learning, and generating feedback to make adjustments.

In **Policy and Governance**, we could not cover much this time. We sense that at present in Nepal, there is a policy crisis emanating from conflicting interests (hidden and expressed) of expanding groups of stakeholders – Government, local communities, civil society and the forestry enterprises sector. Krishna has examined the role of civil society in strengthening local rights in the forestry sector in Nepal.

Together, all authors come to a point that while many attempts are underway, a lot has to be learnt and done in making forestry sector really work for local livelihoods. An overarching concern is that a diverse spectrum of services should be possible through a wide array of stakeholders or actors.

Finally, we would very much welcome your comments and suggestions. We greatly encourage you to contribute written outputs from your wide experience for subsequent issues of the Journal.

Editors

*Opinions and views expressed in the articles are of authors, and not necessarily those of ForestAction or any other organizations collaborating with production of this Journal.*