

Editorial

In this issue of the Journal of Forest and Livelihood, we introduce research articles around community forestry that focuses on landscape restoration, ecological resilience, and livelihood improvement and shed light on how they may lead to sustainable resource management.

The first article by Staddon starts off on a broader conceptual approach. Taking macro-political considerations when discussing resilience, she challenges the dominant narratives with thoughtful commentary on the role of care ethics in moving the conversation away from narrow technocratic understandings towards more politically engaged approaches.

Similarly, Feiersinger *et al.* critically reviews the effectiveness of community forestry operational plans in influencing forest cover dynamics in two community forestry user groups (CFUGs) of Nepal. They found that the outcome of CFUGs depends more on how communities engage with management rather than what is written in the operational plan. This suggests that written plans alone are not sufficient, as actual implementation, local engagement, and socio-ecological factors significantly influence outcomes.

Further exploring institutional and governance dimensions, and reflecting on the importance of local level institutions in restoration, the article by Dahal discusses the significance of community-based forest management in effective forest landscape restoration. He analyses the overall situation of forest landscape restoration, taking the context of the Asia region as a reference case with quantitative data. The findings indicate a strong relationship between successfully restoring degraded and deforested land areas and adopting community-based forestry models.

Rural villages in the hills and mountains face significant challenges regarding water availability for drinking and irrigation. In response, the Government of Nepal has been implementing ecosystem-based adaptation projects in Nepal to reduce climate vulnerability. Khanal *et al.* presents learning from the project on how ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) strategies have enhanced water availability and maintained soil moisture in the hill districts of Nepal. Their findings on the participatory approach and gender sensitivity show the possibility of EbA for local resilience.

The fifth article by Rajbhandari *et al.* studies the impact of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) on rural livelihoods, with a specific focus on the Sishnoo powder enterprise and investigate the enhancing roles NTFP-based micro-enterprise can play in a nation's sustainability by economically and socially advancing rural communities.

From a biodiversity and ecological risk perspective, invasive alien plant species (IAPS) pose significant threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions like Nepal. The sixth article by Shrestha *et al.* investigates the distribution and ecological impacts of IAPS across altitudinal gradients in the Jajarkot district. The article underlines the impacts of invasive plant species on indigenous biodiversity and supports specific interventions and effective management.

Finally, Nepal's rich biodiversity makes NTFPs a vital part of its economy, providing for people's needs without causing degradation. However, their availability is increasingly threatened by climate change and human-induced pressures. Noting this issue, the final paper by Adhikari *et al.* studies the status of NTFP availability and

local perceptions of climate-related changes in the forest-dependent communities in Khare village, Dolakha district. The findings indicate the need for stronger regulatory mechanisms, sustainable harvesting guidelines, and community-led restoration efforts to safeguard NTFPs and strengthen rural resilience in Himalayan landscapes.

Some of the articles in this issue have been drawn from the presentations during the International Conference on 'Revitalising community forestry in the era of socio-environmental crisis' held on March 2024 in Kathmandu. This issue offers a broad and integrated perspective on the approaches, obstacles, and opportunities for reaching ecological sustainability and improved livelihoods through community forestry in Nepal.