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**Socio-economic Condition of Guhele Chhopnarayan Community Forest
on Rural Livelihood of Bhojpur Municipality-3, Gupteshwor, Dawan**

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship of community forest with livelihood of rural people. Basically, social, economic and management aspects of the community forest have been discussed in this study. This article is based on primary and secondary data and it follows descriptive research design and quantitative approach. There is two-way relationship between community forest and livelihood of rural people that has been sustained for long time. Rural people apply different techniques to grow forest products and they also use forest products for the fulfillment of their needs. The user groups of this forest have been taken some direct advantages from forest products and also benefitted socially and economically through various forest management activities. Rural people mainly depend on the community forest for firewood, animal fodders and timber products that supports their livelihood. This article focuses on how the well management of community forest is taking place according to the national policy.

Keywords: rural livelihood, user group, fire-wood, leaf litter, timber.

Introduction

Nepal's forests are essential for the wellbeing of rural communities who depend on them for supplies of fuel, wood, poles, timbers, fodder, leaf litters and other products. The forest products play a vital role in the rural livelihood (HMG, 1997).

Community forests are the forests protected, managed and utilized by local forest user groups. A Forest User Group is a group of people having rights to manage, use and protect an area of forest or an area of land for growing trees. A certificate signed by the district forest officer confirms these rights. Such a protected area is called community forest. Community forestry program is the program by which government through the department

of forest makes community forest a reality for rural communities. Forestry sector plays an important role in country's economic development. The concept of Forest User Group is the central focus of community forestry. The user group legally recognized group of people consisting of all members of a community that frequently use a particular forest area for various kinds of forest products or who has been using and managing forest area traditionally. The Forest User Group has to make consensus decision regarding the management and utilization of forest products (Gurung, 2004).

Community forest which as part of the national forest, the district forest officer hand over to the user groups for development, protection, utilization and management. The user groups freely the price of the forest products.

Especially, the hill farmers of Nepal are mostly dependent on the forest for firewood, timber, fodder and leaf litter for daily household use. Community forestry is now the major program within the government of Nepal's Master Plan for the forestry sector. As such, it has become the major strategy for implementing forest development which is aimed at increasing the supply of forest products to the rural communities of Nepal. In the master plan for the forestry sector, as the major strategy by which most of the country's forest can be sustainably managed to entrust the protection, management and utilization of the forest to the communities that currently use is that if the user are given the responsibility to manage their forest resources, then they will ensure that the forest are widely managed to meet their current and future needs (Bartlett, 1991).

Forest provides most of the basic goods like timber, fire-wood, wood, fodder and herbal medicines; it is one of the major revenue earners of the country contributing about 15 percent share of Gross Development Product (GDP). Nepal is one of the few countries in the world where people are to a large extent, dependent on the forest resources for their sustenance. It also generates livelihood assets like financial, human resources, social network to the local people who are dependent on it. The majority of people have to use forest products for shelter, food, cooking, heating, livestock feed and for compost manure. It is best achieved by development of the country's natural resources. Forest is one of the highly potential resources for the economic as well as livelihood development of the people in the country (Poudel, 2004).

Forest of Nepal has great importance in fostering the agricultural system and in protecting hilly and fertile land of Nepal. Community forest helps to Forest User Groups (FUGs) in the case of socio economic change, environment protection, pollution control etc. The community forest program has been recognized as major strategy for the development and management of forest resource of Nepal through the user group approach. This approach has been reported to be quite effective and sustainable for meeting needs of the people for a variety of products and also restoring the forest resources

in the middles of Nepal (Sharma, 1997).

Community forest and livelihood of rural people have dependency between each other. Rural people cannot be existed in their society without forest resources. They need forest resources day by day for their livestock feeding and fuel and timber consumption. They need to protect forest for sustainable use of forest resources. Thus, community forest is also protected by the appropriate use and management through rural people.

Background of the Study

Gupteshwor is ward number 3 of Bhojpur Municipality, Bhojpur district in Koshi province. It is located in western part from Bhojpur district headquarter. Geographically, it lies between 27° 00' to 27° 15' north latitude and 87° 00' to 87° 15' east longitude and the study area is roughly about 1400m. altitude from sea level.

There are in total eight community forests in Gupteshwor, Dawan. Among them, Guhele Chhopnarayan Community Forest is one of the important forests in Bhojpur Municipality 3, Gupteshwor, Dawan. This community forest has been established in 2051 BS. In this community forest, there are 120 households in the user group. It covers 4.43 hectare area which is 1.68% of Gupteshwor and 0.01% of Bhojpur district. There are different types of vegetation, animals and birds in the forest. Uttis, Salla, Paatle, Lakuri, Chilaune are the major tree species.

Statement of the Problem

Community forestry development is an approach that enables community or more exactly user group to establish and manage their local forest for their own benefit. Guhele Chhopnarayan Community Forest of Gupteshwor is one of the 419 community forest user groups in Bhojpur districts and 8 community forest user groups in Bhojpur Municipality-3. Community forests are more related with rural people and many people are achieving forest products to fulfill their own basic needs. On the other hand, rural people themselves are managing and protecting of the community forests.

There are various types of management systems to conduct and develop to the community forest. Such as sub group formation of community forest user groups from main group of community forest user groups, motivation program, training and participation of community forest user groups on community forest activities like nursery preparation, thinning, cleaning, etc.

All of the user groups are attracted towards community forest development and they have received more benefits from community forest. Therefore, there are interrelationship between community forest and its users. However, there are some questions those should be answered for better understanding the interrelationship of community forest and livelihood of rural people. They are stated below:

- What is the socio-economic condition of community forest users?
- How community forest is managed?
- How community forest resources can be interrelated to rural livelihood?

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyze inter-linkage between forest resources and livelihood of people in the study area. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify socio-economic condition of community forest users.
- To explain community forest management system.
- To analyze relation between community forest resources and rural livelihood

Literature Review

This study strives to conclude the condition of community forest, management system, and relation of community forest resources on rural livelihoods.

Singh and Kafle (2000) have concluded that the community forestry in Nepal is a partnership between the government, which owns most of the forest land, and the communities which utilize forest resources on a daily basis. The primary partners are the forest user groups, often represented by user committees and the district forest officer and range posts.

Yadav (2003) has concluded that there is very good institutional strength and decision making capacity within and between the forest user groups. The overall impact of community forests seems very positive and encouraging. The forest biodiversity status (flora and fauna) is also increasing after the establishment of community forest management.

Thakur (2001) concluded that the poor and disadvantaged groups must be encouraged to participate in different community forest management activities. The community based organization should be involved in community forestry to manage the poor and disadvantaged people at the user group level.

Fisher and Malla (1987) discuss on the topic *Forestry Work: in Villages*: community forest is one of the most important participatory approaches to human being. It means all participants get golden opportunities and lessons from this activity easy preparation of nursery, plantation, group discussion, money exchange, investment, about good environment, importance of forest from this activities.

Methodology

Nature and Sources of Data

The present study is based on the primary data. Other ancillary data are also

acquired from secondary sources such as reports, books, and newspapers.

Method of Data Collection

For the purpose of primary data collection 47 percent or 56 households from 120 households of Guhele Chhopnarayan Community Forest Users Group have been selected. The sample households have taken from the lottery system of random sampling method from the user groups.

Primary Sources of Information

Sample household survey: To fulfill the proposed objectives, a sample survey was conducted. A survey questionnaire was developed and administrated to the head of sampled household.

Semi-Structured Interviews with Informants: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the key informants, such as the chairperson of community forest user groups, local teachers, and local leaders especially in the case of history of this community forest, management practices, role of community forest resources on rural livelihood, changing condition of community forest, and formation of executive committee.

Focus group discussion: In total four focus group discussions were held among the member of forest user's groups, sub groups of this community forest. Focus group discussions mainly covered the present condition, rules and regulation, management and economic activities of the community forest user groups of community forest.

Field observation: Observation visits by the researcher was made for the present condition and management practices of community forest, local settlement partners and system of using the forest resources. There were different kinds of attitudes and perceptions among community forest user groups of study forest. There were so many noticeable things and noticed on field note in the period of field visit. These observations were recorded on notes and photographs. The researcher involved in the meeting of community forest users' group and discussed with them about community forest management, activities, advantage and others and visited on sampled household for interview and observation.

Secondary Source of Information

Secondary data were collected from different sources such as operation plan of community forest, journal, books of district development committee and books of division forest office and reports.

Results

Socio-Economic Condition of Community Forest Users

Most of the people of Gupteshwor are depended on agricultural occupation. They produce different types of crops such as paddy, millet, wheat, maize, barley, potato in different seasons. Mainly, paddy is the important crop in this area. A few households also depend on government job, business, and wage labor.

Population

A total of 330 people have surveyed among community forest users in the study sample. There is 51% male and 49% female and age and sex composition of the study area is shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Distribution of population by age and sex

| Age Group | Sex | | Total (%) |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) | |
| 0-14 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| 15-39 | 34 | 36 | 35 |
| 40-59 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Above 60 | 11 | 9 | 10 |
| Total | 100 (n=168) | 100 (n=132) | 100 (n=330) |
| | 51 | 49 | |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

There is 40 percent children age less than 15 years in this study area. Similarly, 10 percent are in the age group 60 years and above. The distribution of male and female population is almost similar.

Ethnic Composition

Table 2

Caste/ethnic of the sample

| Cast | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total (%) |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Newar | 42 | 47 | 44 |
| Rai | 33 | 30 | 31 |
| Chhetri | 11 | 9 | 10 |
| Brahmin | 11 | 8 | 10 |
| Otherrs | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Total | 100 (n=168) | 100 (n=162) | 100 (n=330) |

Source: Field Survey, 2079.

Table 2 shows the caste/ethnic composition of the community forest users. Newar

are the dominant group with 44% share among the community forest user group followed by Rai 31%. Brahmin and Chhetri have 10% share each other. The community forest has included all kinds of caste/ethnic groups residing in that area.

Family Composition

Mainly, the family size depends upon the economic, cultural, educational status of people. Generally, lower the economic condition, higher the family size. Culturally, some people have large family size and educated people have no large family size and uneducated people have large family size. However, the family size of the study area is given below:

Table 3

Family size of sampled households

| No. of family members | Percentage of households |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 0-4 | 25 |
| 4-6 | 43 |
| 7 and more | 32 |
| Total | 100 (n=56) |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 3 presents the family size of the sampled households in the study area. There are 25% households having up to 4 family members, 43% households have 4 to 6 family members and 32% households have 7 and more family members.

Religion

Table 4

Religious status of sampled households

| Religion | Total Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Hindu | 37 | 66 |
| Kirant | 17 | 30 |
| Buddhist | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 56 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Above table shows mainly three types of religions such as Hindu, Kirant and Buddha. Hindu is the most dominant and it takes 66%, Kirant 30% and Buddhist 4% in the study area.

Education**Table 5***Educational status of population in sampled households*

| S.N. | Educational Level | Male | % | Female | % | Total | % |
|------|-------------------|------|-----|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| 1 | Literate | 21 | 13 | 19 | 12 | 40 | 12 |
| 2 | Illiterate | 19 | 11 | 39 | 24 | 58 | 18 |
| 3 | Primary Level | 43 | 26 | 40 | 25 | 83 | 25 |
| 4 | Lower Secondary | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 2 |
| 5 | Secondary Level | 36 | 21 | 40 | 25 | 76 | 23 |
| 6 | SLC and above | 45 | 27 | 22 | 13 | 67 | 20 |
| 7 | Total | 168 | 100 | 162 | 100 | 330 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 5 shows the educational profile of the sample population. There are 25% people with primary level of education. This table shows that the larger share of population has primary level of education. There are 18% people who cannot read and write.

Economic Condition Households**Table 6***Main income source of households*

| S.N. | Income source | Respondents | Percent |
|------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| 1 | Agriculture | 36 | 64 |
| 2 | Government job | 7 | 12 |
| 3 | Business | 7 | 12 |
| 4 | Others | 6 | 11 |
| 5 | Total | 56 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

The table 6 shows that agriculture is the main income source in this study area. Where, 64% of the households have agriculture as main income source. Then after, government job, business and other sources account for 12%, 12% and 11% share respectively.

Occupation**Table 7***Distribution of population by occupation*

| Occupation | No. of population | Percentage |
|-------------|-------------------|------------|
| Study | 173 | 52 |
| Agriculture | 91 | 28 |
| House wife | 29 | 9 |
| Business | 14 | 4 |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| Government job | 8 | 2 |
| Others | 15 | 5 |
| Total | 330 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

The table 7 shows to the population distribution by occupation. The table presents different types of occupation like study, agriculture, house wife, business, government job and others. The number of student is 173 (52%). Agriculture includes 28%, house wife 9%, business 4%, government job 2% and others 5%.

Livestock

Livestock domestication is a major allied occupation of the people in the study area which is combined with agriculture and supports to the households income. The aim of the domestication of livestock is to get meat, milk, cash, manure and even cash. Those things are obtained from the cow, goat, sheep, buffalo, oxen. Oxen are used for ploughing in the field. Using oxen for ploughing is not only a traditional technique but also a compulsory way to prepare land for growing agricultural products in the study area. The number of livestock kept by the respondents is as shown in the following table:

Table 8

Distribution of livestock population

| S.N. | Livestock | No. of livestock | Percentage |
|------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Cow | 70 | 19 |
| 2 | Ox | 44 | 12 |
| 3 | Buffalo | 55 | 15 |
| 4 | Goat | 200 | 54 |
| 5 | Total | 369 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Above table shows the number of animals that presents different kind of animals like cow, oxen, buffalo and goat. According to this table, the number of goats is very high and its percentage is 54. Thus, the percentage of cow is 19%, 15% of buffalo, and 12% of ox in the study area.

Social activity

Social activity is one of the most important activities which help to co-operate each other among community people. Such activities create unity, harmony, and prosperity in the society. The following table shows the community forestry related social activity in the study area:

Table 9*Social activity in the forest user group*

| S. N. | Particular | Time |
|-------|--|--|
| 1 | Meeting of executive committee of community forest | 15 th day of every month |
| 2 | General meeting | 15 th Magh (every year) |
| 3 | Fund investment | 15 th Mangsir and 15 th Jestha |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 9 shows that there occurs monthly meeting of executive committee of community forest, an annual general meeting, and a biannual meeting for fund investment.

Community Forest Management System

Forest has a great importance in the study area in order to maintaining rural livelihood. There are maximum numbers of livestock so that there is high demand of fodder and bedding materials. Better forest products can be obtained from better use, protection and management of community forest. Community forest reduced different types of disasters such as fire, landslide, hunting, killing, wild animals.

People's Involvement in Community Forest Activities

Nowadays, people are interested towards the community forest. All Users have been benefitted by community forest. They get different types of forest resources and they fulfill their own basic needs such as firewood, timber, poles, leaf litters and many more. However, the table shows the method of community forest management in the study area.

Table 10*Methods of community forest management*

| Methods of community forest management | Involvement of people from household (by sex) | | Total Percentage |
|--|---|--------------------|------------------|
| | Male members (%) | Female members (%) | |
| Nursery preparation | Not available | Not available | 0 |
| Seedling plantation | Not available | Not available | 0 |
| Thinning | 55 | 45 | 100 |
| cleaning | 54 | 46 | 100 |
| Taking care of forest | Not available | Not available | 0 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 10 shows the different types of forest management activities such as nursery preparation, thinning, cleaning and taking care of forest. Community forest user groups have no participated in other three activities like nursery preparation, seedling plantation

and taking care of forest. Nursery preparation and seedling plantation had been completed by district forest office. Male and female seems to be almost equally involved in forest management activities like thinning and cleaning.

Involvement of Community Forest User Groups in Community Forest

Guhele Chhopnarayan Community Forest established in 2051 BS. And 40 households of the sample were member users at the time of establishment. Then after, additional households became member of the community forest user groups in different years. Number of households added in community forest programme over the years is given below:

Table 11

Number of community forest user groups household

| Year | Number of member households added | Percentage |
|------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 2051 | 40 | 71 |
| 2052 | 1 | 2 |
| 2053 | 2 | 4 |
| 2056 | 5 | 9 |
| 2058 | 1 | 2 |
| 2059 | 4 | 7 |
| 2063 | 3 | 5 |
| | 56 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Distribution of Forest Products

There are different types of forest resources such as fire wood, fire-wood, fodder, timber, leaf litter. Some products have not been distributed. Fire wood is the main product that is distributed once a year. Forest products are distributed by the executive committee of community forest.

Table 12

Forest products used by forest user groups

| Forest products | Time | Cost | Distribution |
|-----------------|----------------|----------|---------------|
| Fire wood | Magh to Falgun | Rs.20/- | 10 bhari |
| Fodder | Restricted | 0/- | 0 |
| Herbs | Restricted | 0/- | 0 |
| Leaf litters | Magh to Falgun | Free | Free |
| Timber | Magh to Falgun | Rs.500/- | 50 cubic feet |

| | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-------|---------------|
| Bim | Magh to Falgun | 500 | 50 cubic feet |
| Poles | Magh to Falgun | 500/- | 50 cubic feet |
| Fencing poles | Restricted | 0/- | 0 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

The table 12 shows the distribution of different types of forest products for users in the village. Mainly, fire-wood is the most essential product that is collected during Magh and Falgun of each year. The average fire wood is 10 Bhari (500 kg.) per household has been collected in a year. Entry fee is stated Rs. 20 per household for fire-wood collection. At that time, leaf litters are also collected which is free of cost. There is no limitation in the case of leaf litters collection. Then fodder and fencing poles are not allowed and timber, beam and poles are distributed to the member households in special need like the situation when house is damaged by disaster.

Community Forest and Rural Livelihood

Sources of fire wood

Fire-wood is the most important source of cooking fuel to the rural people. They collect fire-wood by different ways as given below:

Table 13

Source of fire wood

| Sources | Respondents (%) |
|--|-----------------|
| By cutting trees of own land | 11 |
| By cutting trees from community forest | 7 |
| By using agriculture residues | 64 |
| Other sources | 18 |
| Total | 100 (n=56) |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 13 shows different types of sources of fire-wood as stated by sample households. There are 64% respondents who obtain fire-wood from agriculture residues. Only 7% households obtain fire-wood from community forest.

3.3.2 Active members of community forest user groups to collect forest products

Community forest user groups need forest products to maintain their basic needs. Therefore, to fulfill those basic needs, some family members must be active to collect forest products otherwise; they cannot fulfill their basic needs such as fire wood, fodder, leaf litter, etc. table 14 shows in details:

Table 14*Active members of community forest user groups to collect forest products*

| Particulars | Active members (%) |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Daughter | 13 |
| Daughter in law | 9 |
| Son | 18 |
| House wife | 39 |
| Husband | 21 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 14 shows the distribution of the active members who collect forest products from the community forest. House wife seem to be the most active member in the house to obtain forest products (39%) and daughter in law is lowest active member with 9% share in this community forest user groups to collect forest product.

Community Participation

Participation is the act of taking part in an activity or event. Participation is an essential aspect in social works. It is necessary for the social development such as drinking water development, community forest management, bridge construction, etc. nowadays many people want to participate in different social works. Some activities which are operated in this community forest which are given below:

Table 15*Participation of forest user groups in community forest activities*

| Activities | Good (100%) | Fair (50-100%) | Less (<50%) |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Protection | 16 | 75 | 9 |
| Plantation | 14 | 73 | 13 |
| Meetings | 16 | 71 | 13 |
| Other communal works | 11 | 75 | 14 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 15 presents participation of community forest user groups in community forest activities. There are some activities such as protection, plantation, meeting and other communal works. It shows to positive thinking towards community forest activities.

Total Fire-Wood Products

Guhele Chhopnarayan community forest provides the amount of fire wood one time in a year. Community forest user groups take fire wood in the period of Magh and Falgun. The total collection of fire wood is given below.

Table 16*Amount of fire-wood*

| S.N. | Fire-wood collected per household in a year (in Bhari) | Respondents (%) |
|------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 3 | 6 | 14 |
| 4 | 7 | 13 |
| 5 | 8 | 48 |
| 6 | 10 | 16 |
| Average fire wood 7.63 | | |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 16 shows the collection of fire-wood in the community forest. There is 48% households those collect 8 Bhari fire-wood per year. The average fire-wood collected per household per year is 7.63 Bhari.

Livestock Feeding

Domestic animals need enough fodder, hay, grain for their living. Households use forest products for rearing and caring of their domestic animals. Table 16 shows types of products that feeding in a day (in bhari and in kg.)

Table 17*Products that feeding in a day (in Bhari and in kg.)*

| Forest products | (in Bhari) | (in kg.) | (%) |
|-----------------|------------|----------|-----|
| Fodder, hay | 205 | 9205 | 95 |
| Grain | | 81 | 1 |
| Others | | 384 | 4 |
| Total | 205 | 9670 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

The fodder and hay is the main feeding items for domestic animals in the study area. Sample households usually manage 205 Bhari fodder, hay and total 9670 kg. feeding materials in a day.

Distances between Community Forest and Residence of User Groups

Distance is one of the factors to use, protect and manage community forest. Wherever the distance between community forest and household's residence is shorter, the proper would be the use and manage of community forest. The following table shows the distance of community forest from user member's household.

Table 18*Distance of community forest from residence of user groups*

| Distance (in meters) | Households (%) |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Below 500 | 29 |
| 500-1000 | 33 |
| 1000-1500 | 37 |
| Above 15000 | 1 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2079.

Table 18 shows the distance of community forest from the residence of user groups. 29% households are near the forest and 1% household is far from the community forest. The large number of community forest user groups have found in the range of 1000-1500 meter.

Findings

- Community forest user groups and community forest have interrelationship between each other.
- Community forest user groups have fulfilled their basic needs from forest products such as fire-wood, leaf litters, timber, beam and poles.
- This community forest is very dense and greenery due to protection and management of user groups.
- User groups have socially and economically been benefitted.

Conclusion

Guhele Chhopnarayan community forest is one of the community forests in Bhojpur Municipality – 3, Gupteshwor. It covered by 4.43 hectare area. It established in the period of 2051 B.S. Mainly there are 120 households involved in this community forest and the community forest groups of this forest have positively participated in these community forest activities. There are mainly Newar, Rai, Chhetri and Brahmin as the major castes in the study area. They are basically dependent on agriculture. Their economic activities are subsistence farming integrated with livestock, business and government job and so on.

According to the field survey, there are some forest products which are provided to the forest user groups according to the law of executive committee of community forest. The forest products are fire wood, timber, poles leaf litters etc. fire wood is distributed annually and others are according to the situation of user groups. Community forest user groups totally depend on their private forest, agricultural residues for the fire wood, timber, leaf litters and so on. There is more restriction to take forest products without permission of management committee. Community forest user groups have positive

thinking towards community forest and its various aspects such as management, protection, and utilization of forest resources. They are more conscious towards community forest utilization. The aim of users is to make the forest greenery, dense populated in the forest coverage area in the sense of natural beauty and sustainable forest development.

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