



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Community Forest Management: Lessons from Nepal Community Forest Management



EfD Funded Peer Learning study



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Study Team Composition

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Introduction and Background

- The study tour to Nepal was one of the activities of EfD Forest Collaborative Peer Learning Project on Community Forestry.
- The main purpose of this visit was to deepen the understanding on community- based forestry management in addition to sharing ideas and experiences regarding forestry among the participant countries.
- This study was timely given the current efforts by Ugandan government to increase the forest cover to 24% by 2040.
- Whereas the people of Nepal have been able through community forest management have been able to increase their forest cover to 45% currently from 29% in 1992, Uganda's forest cover reduced from 24% in the 1990 to about 13% in 2019.

Forest trends in Uganda (1990 – 2019)

Status	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019
Forest Cover	4,933,730	3,786,547	3,604,219	2,199,309	1,938,990	2,505,266	2,707,266
Woodlands	3,974,498	2,834,730	2,778,044	1,448,869	1,201,985	1,239,176	1,739,958
Subsistence farmland	8,401,550	8,916,053	8,847,640	9,772,224	10,275,557	10,483,258	10,607,875
Land Area	20,465,767	20,474,477	20,448,880	20,466,001	20,405,110	20,409,126	20,454,009
Forest % of land area	24%	18%	18%	11%	10%	12%	13%

Study tour activities



- The study tour involved meetings with the different stakeholders, field visits in some of the community forests and experiencing the Nepalese culture through visiting religious and cultural sites.
- The 5 days program was under the guidance of the Forest Action – Nepal and coordinated by Professor Randy.
- The tour started with the visit to Kalopani Community Forestry User Group (CFUG), which is in a mountainous site in Kavre District.
- We visited a second CFUG on the way to our meeting with the Kavre Divisional Forestry Office, which has jurisdiction over Kalopani CFUG.
- We also held discussions with the Dean of the Tribhuvan University Institute of Forestry.



Community Forestry Management

- Community Forests are part of the National Forests handed over to the traditional users for its conservation, utilization, and management. This is guided by the Forest Act, 2076(2019), Forest Regulation 2079(2023) and community guideline 2071.
- Nepal Department of National Parks and Wildlife conservation oversee the community forest user groups – An equivalent of NFA.
- Nepal is rich in medicinal plants. Mapping of medicinal plants was done in 2017 to determine the medicinal plants to be planted on private land.

The department . . .

- Facilitation is done through formation of forest user groups and implementing biological diversity conservation and climate change adaptation related activities.
- Legal support through identifying, developing, and managing potential forest areas in accordance with the prevailing laws, rules and policies, Community Forest user group registration and Community Forest handover. The department also supports on forest crime control and regulation of community forestry.



Department . . .

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- Technical support through forest management operational plan and constitution operation, supporting in forest management activities i.e., silvicultural, and cultural operations.
 - Financial support to forest activities, public awareness programs related to conservation and development and community mobilization in various trainings and seminars.
 - Monitoring and supervision to ensure CFUGs are working in accordance with the operational plans, prevailing laws and regulations and providing feedback to communities.

	Indicator	Status
1	Nepal land area	147,181 Square Kms
2	Nepal forest area	6.16 Million ha (41.7% of the country land)
3	Forest area under community forests	2.4 million ha (MoF, 2023) which is 39.34% of total country forest area.
4	Number of CFUGS	22682 (MoF 2023)
5	Number of households with CF and benefiting population	3.0 million (MoF, 2023), benefiting the total population of about 50%.

Key uses of community forest management in Nepal

- (i) Contributes to forest restoration by making it easy to mobilize the community to ensure that degraded forests are restored.
- (ii) Contributes to community infrastructure and livelihood benefits. CFs are used as a vehicle to community development.
- (iii) Contributes to ecosystem functioning and protection.
- (iv) Contributes to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This is largely due to the maintenance of forests that absorb carbon but also regulates temperature.
- (v) Contributes to household income generation through the sale of forest products in a sustainable way.
- (vi) Inclusive leadership. We noted that at least half of the leadership of the user groups are female.



Challenges

- (i) Elite capture of the user groups making it hard for the entire community to benefit.
- (ii) Law enforcement. It is still a challenge to leadership of user groups to effectively enforce laws.
- (iii) Private sector interference such as construction of hotels, cable cars in the forests, among others.
- (iv) Expansion of national forests that reduces community forests.
- (v) A challenge of tax on user groups that reduces income meant for community developments.
- (vi) Reducing interest in the forests and switching to other activities including migration to other countries for jobs in cities.

Lessons learnt from study tour on Community Forestry in Nepal

- The existence of a legal body, (FECOFUN- Federation for Community Forestry Users, Nepal) has enabled voicing the rights of community adjacent groups.
- The CSO has played a very important advocacy role on the rights of women, elders, and marginalized groups. It has also played an important role of influencing forest related policies in Nepal.
- UNETCOFA a CSO was established in Uganda in 2006, to unite CFMs but lacked legal backing and has not done much work in relation to CFM networks. The lesson learnt is to involve the Ministry of Water and Environment to revive UNETCOFA.
- FECOFUN has created a strong network with the CFUGs, and this enables the groups implement their roles and responsibilities which has minimized noncompliance to the operational plans of the community forests.





Lessons . . .

- Commitment by the CFUGs households to protect, restore and conserve forests has largely been informed by previous calamities like earthquakes and floods which is not the case for Uganda.
- Value addition on forest products like timber, fodder and herbs has increased the income and created some jobs for the CFUGs.



Lessons . . .

- Improving livelihoods where forest conservation meets the demands of local communities provides an overall incentive for sustainable conservation including safeguarding essential ecosystem services.
- Having a dynamic, diverse, and respected leadership within community groups increases chances of success as is the case for some CFUGs in Nepal.
- Involvement of women in use of forest resources recognizes the importance of having women represented in decision- making and giving women a voice has allowed them to actively participate in conservation activities.

Lessons . . .

- Benefit sharing through wealth ranking to target the poor for support is very key and can minimize elite capture. In addition, sharing of benefits/ income accrued from sale of forest products in percentages for instance 25% is invested in forest management was a key lesson to learn.
- CFUGs coordination with local government to put up infrastructural development like schools or road construction from the income attained from the sale of forest resources was a key lesson learnt.
- Community Forestry has contributed to ecosystem functioning through provision of fresh water supply to the households and for agricultural purposes.
- Most forest adjacent communities in Nepal access piped water from the forest for both domestic uses including watering animals and irrigation of crops. **This has enabled conservation of water sources and regulation of waste discharge.**
- Alternative energy/ biomass source in Nepal is at 60%. People are increasingly using LPGs, electricity, petroleum gas etc. This has decreased fuelwood usage in Nepal. **The lesson is GOU need to reduce costs of gas and electricity to enable less dependency on fuelwood from forests.**



Conclusion

- Nepal provides a **practical example** of how the community can be organized and empowered to manage forests and significantly contribute to the growth in general forest cover in the county.
- The leadership of the forest user groups also act as training ground for the national leadership and as a result, the national leadership also participates in the sustainable utilization of forests.
- The landscape in Nepal also provides another opportunity to locals to ensure that the green cover is protected.
 - It is thus interesting to see how perceived spoilers of forests in Uganda are the ones at the forefront are of protecting forests in Nepal.
- Therefore, the experiences from Nepal should act as the guide to successful forest management in other countries including Uganda



Conclusion . . .

- Sharing of knowledge with colleagues from USA, Nepal, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania was relevant and we looked forward to share these lessons so that some of the lessons learnt in Uganda.
- Lastly, we appreciate EfD Global Hub for funding the tour and Professor Randy for coordinating this tour.
- We than Forest Action Nepal for organizing all the visits in the different offices and CFUGs, community forests and cultural sites.
- We thank the National forestry Authority Uganda for funding one participant but for also allowing participants to attend this wonderful study, We hope they will implement some of the lessons!

Thank you for listening!



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