

Socio-Economic Status of Women After Establishment of Community Forest: A Case Study of Taarku Community Forest, Lamjung

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Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Community forests undertake the concept of both the utilization of forest resources as well as its conservation and it is why community forests are open to individuals in regular gaps of six months to a year depending on the rules and regulations of a particular community forest. Many women members in a society who used to spend a lot of time in the collection of forest resources, their access will be limited after conversion of the forest to community forest. Because of this, in the spare time they will be involved in doing business works. This research is based on a comparative survey analysis of 120 women (60/60 each) who chose to do some business and those who did not. The research was done in Gahate, Lamjung, Nepal and the method of data collection was open and close-ended questionnaires, key informant reviews, Focused Group discussions, and field observation. Results indicate that women were doing businesses of incense sticks, dairy farming, and a lot more. It was found that the ones doing business were financially independent. Thus, it is recommended that all the women in the area should be involved in doing business works to utilize their spare time properly.

INTRODUCTION

Nationalization of forests in 1957 transferred the ownership of forest to the state regarding forests as important source of national economy, as not only private but also public goods (environmental functions and watershed value) were produced from forests. Nepal is a mountainous, landlocked country rich in natural resources that located in the heart of the Himalayas in South Asia, between 26°12' and 30°27' north latitude and 80°4' and 88°12' east longitude, and is surrounded on three sides by China and India ^[1]. Forests and agriculture are intertwined in Nepal's farming methods

Basic household necessities such as feed, fuelwood, and Construction materials are heavily reliant on forests [2]. However, forest depletion and deforestation could not be controlled as the state could not enforce rules regarding the management of forests [3]. As a result of institutional failure, a newer concept of participatory forest management was introduced in Nepal and local people got their space created in forest management only during 1970s with a view to mitigating forest cover loss. During the early 1990s, the government had realized the importance of long-term forestry planning. The MPFS was prepared during 1986-88 and approved by the government in 1989 [4]. Community forestry is a participatory forest management system in Nepal that was started in the late 1970s. Gilmour and Fisher defined community forestry as the control, protection and management of forest resources by rural communities for whom trees and forests are an integral part of their farming systems. The Community Forest Act 1993 gives local people significant control in the management and harvest of forest resources [5]. Because of this progressive act, community forest hand over process has speeded up rapidly during these nine years period. Bhatta reported that about 850,000 hectares forest areas have been handed over to eleven thousand forest user groups. This case study is done so as to study effects of community forestry in income of woman member, to know about the status of gender equality at Gahate, Lamjung and to estimate the socio-impact caused by self-employed women on the family members especially children [6].

CASE PRESENTATION

Community forest activities increase the contributory burden of poorer households for forest protection and management [7]. Nepal is a developing country where agriculture is the primary source of income for around 65.6 percent of the population [8]. Forestry is the country's primary land use system, with forests covering 29 percent of the area, shrubs 10.6 percent, and grassland 12 percent [9]. As a user, every household, whether rich or poor pays an equal amount as monthly membership fee. In addition, poorer households also buy forest products based on rules and regulations written in the forest operational plan. Shrestha and Sapkota reported that the forest users of Dhading, Kaski, Baglung and Partbat districts of Nepal pay money for fuelwood, timber, cut grass, resin and stone gathered from community forest areas. Forest products that are commonly sold in Sindhu Palchok and Kabhre Palanchok districts are sawlogs, round poles and green fuelwood [10]. Most forest user groups spend their income on different activities such as buying stationery, salaries for forest watchers and school teachers, irrigation canal improvement, school, community building and temple construction, road and foot trail improvement, electricity systems, soil conservation works, drinking water schemes, school furniture, nursery and plantation. These activities have little or no impact in meeting the needs of poorer households. The reason for this is that the poorer households often need to generate income for their day to day life [11]. Can the gender make a difference in forest conservation and regeneration in a local forest management group? Despite a significant literature on women's representation in public decision-making, this seemingly basic subject remains mostly unanswered [12]. Activities like salaries for school teachers, irrigation canal improvement, school, community hall and temple construction, electricity systems, school furniture, etc are not income generating activities for the benefit of poorer households. Hunt et al. reported that not all user group members benefit from the group community development activities, raising questions of equity in forest user group decision making. Climate change's impact can also lead to major changes in agricultural and forestry production in the twenty-first century [13].

Historical background of forestry in Nepal

Community forestry policy has been the most successful and important program in forest sector of Nepal [14]. Prior to 1957, inhabitants in the area managed their forest to meet local demands for firewood, fodder, poles, and lumber. The management system was founded on indigenous resource preservation and management methods. The forests were nationalized in 1957 under the Private Forest Nationalization Act, and it is widely assumed that massive deforestation occurred in the years after the nationalization since people thought their forest had been taken away from them [15]. The Community Forestry (CF) phase, which began with a review of the forestry industry and the relationship between the population and Nepal's natural resources, runs from 1978 to the present. The Forest Act of 1993 gave consumers complete control over forest resource management, and it can be seen as one end of a co-management spectrum between the government and forest users. It acknowledged the primary role of local people in decision-making and laid the groundwork for forest management to benefit local people [16]. Community Forest User Groups (CFUG) were community institutions that represented forest users and were legally able to make management decisions [17]. Over the last two decades, Community Forest Management (CFM) has been recognized as a viable strategy for achieving forest sustainability [18]. There is mounting evidence that effective Community Forest (CF) governance is a key factor in CF success [19].

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Sampling design

Total of 60 Woman members' households who used community forest resources and total 60 woman members who did not use community forest was asked. Total people surveyed were 120.

Data source

Both primary data and secondary data source.

Questionnaire

All three types of questions viz. Closed question, open question and contingency question.

Statistical analysis of research parameters

The parameters taken were statistically analyzed using IBM Spss Statistics 23 (Figures 1 to 5).

RESULTS

Figure 1. Based on type of fuel sources used.

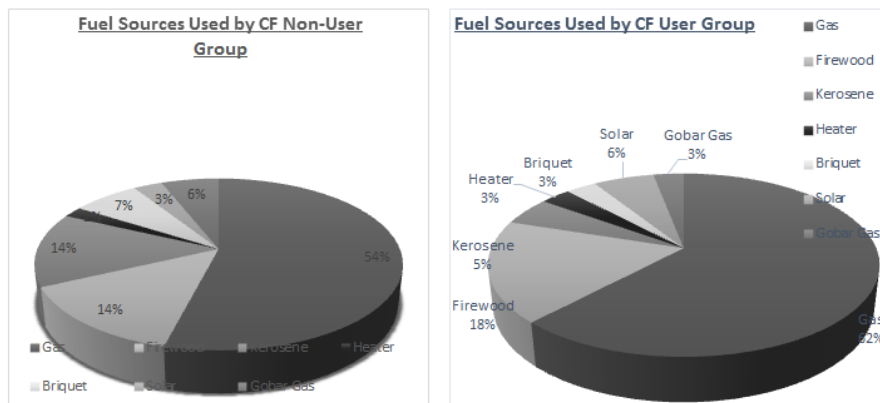


Figure 2. Based on purpose of forest resources.

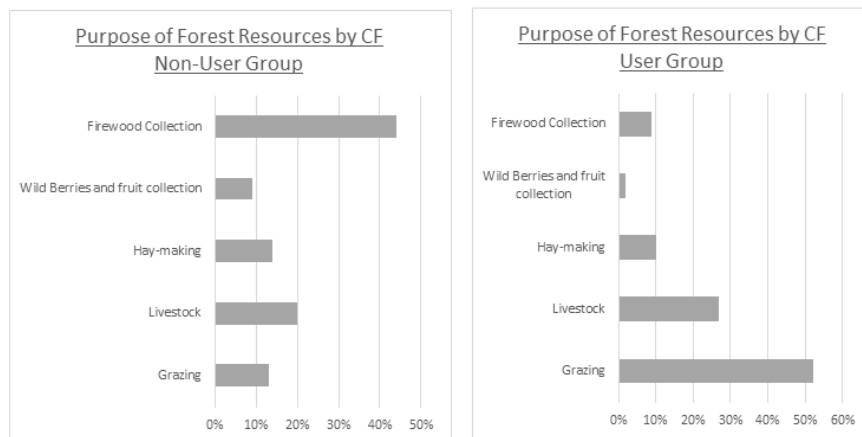


Figure 3. Based on personal leadership skill evaluation.

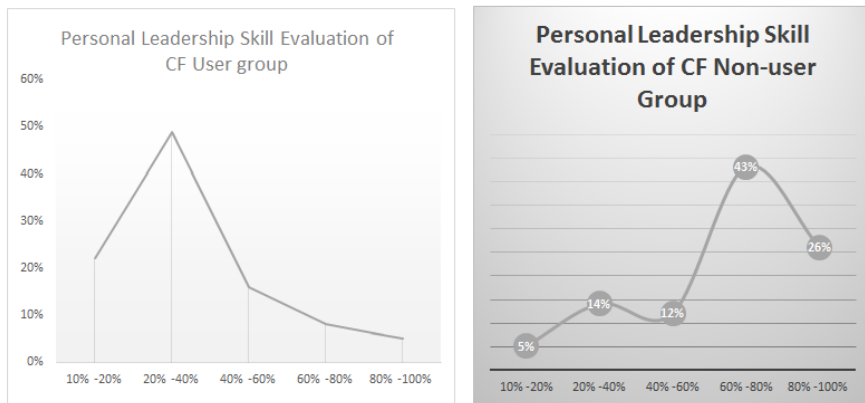


Figure 4. Based on respondents' evaluation of the significance of forest resources.

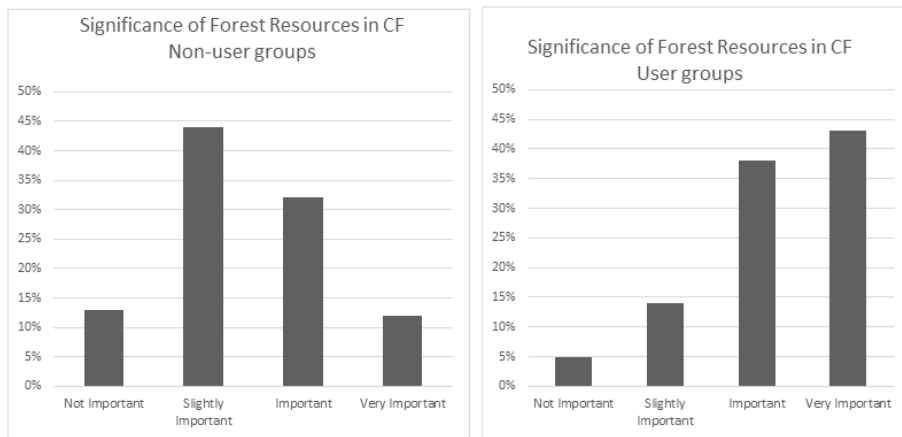
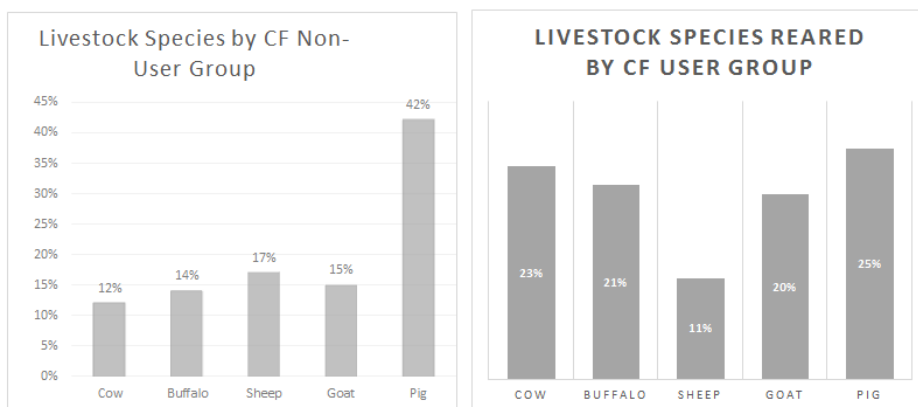


Figure 5. Based on species of livestock.



DISCUSSION

Comparison between the above two graphs of CF user and non-user group on the basis of personal leadership skill evaluation shows the increasing trend at the initials in CF User Group while the increasing trend is

observed at the ends of the graph in CF Non-User Group. This shows that the leadership skill and self-confidence is found increased before the establishment of CF as compared to times when CF was not established because women themselves involved in becoming independent and improvising their leadership skills as compared to women who invested huge amount of their time in Community Forest [20-23].

Another graph Showing Relationship between Community Forest User Group and Community Forest Non-User Group based on Respondents' Evaluation of the Significance of Forest Resources show that the dependence of forest resources on user group is high as compared to non-user group who have high purchasing capacity [24]. This further shows that after establishment of CF, the income generating activities will increase resulting in reduced dependency of household members on forest resources [25].

At the end, the Graph Showing Relationship between Community Forest User Group and Community Forest Non-User Group based on Species of Livestock Reared shows that CF Non-using Households reared less of such animals that relied more on pasture lands and twigs which are exactly opposite to the livestock species reared by CF user groups. This showed the reliability of User groups in Livestock as compared to non-user groups along with the increased financial status of non-user groups as compared to user groups. Furthermore, this shows that after the establishment of CF, the leisure could be more delivered to income generating activities and increasing the standard of living [26,27].

CONCLUSION

In Nepal, community forestry has emerged as the most important initiative for conserving, managing, and utilizing forest resources. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that, woman members, after the conversion of forest into community forest was still assisting their family in free time by investing their time on income generating activities. Many of the world's poorest people rely on forests for their survival, and their livelihoods are jeopardized by unsustainable forest management. Thereby, from this research, I recommend women with leisure time generated out of changes in daily routines that can be from the conversion of forests to community forest and other factors, such women should spend most of their time generating income and increasing self-reliance.

Conflict of interest

The author affirmed no conflict of interest.

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