

# **Improving forestry governance through advocacy: evidences from Nepal**

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Abstract: Nepal is promoting community-based forest management approach known as community forestry as a promising option to fulfill the demands of basic forestry products and to reduce environmental degradation. Presently about 1.2 million hectares of forest is under the control of above 14 thousands forest user groups. Nepal's community forestry program is a classical example of successful decentralization in managing common pool resources.

However, emerging evidence indicates that forest user groups are organizationally weak in governance and equitable management of resources. The community forestry groups tend not to have proportionate representation of poorer and disadvantaged households and women, poor fund allocation to women and poor related development activities, there is low awareness of policies and regulations, low advocacy capacity to claim their rights to natural resources resulting in little accountability or transparency in transactions, and a lack of predictability. This paper is based on the findings from six forest user groups implementing a program in 24 districts aimed at strengthening governance at the local level through increased women's participation and increased advocacy skills and capacity of selected civil society groups.

The paper highlights the issue and policy influences process and outcomes at three levels namely local forest user group, sub-regional/district and national level. The activities implemented include advocacy training, workshops, media advocacy, constituency building through mobilizations of advocacy forum, issues based discussions, public auditing, budget analysis and exchange visits. The paper presents the process to improve governance and describe policy influences process and changes made. The findings suggest that there have been several arenas where policy influences have taken place as a result of advocacy. The findings note difference in funds allocated for social and community development activities, improved transparency in decision making, adoption of public auditing and public hearing, improvement of their internal governance capacity, formation of more inclusive structure of forest user groups committee to address the issues of poverty and social equity in Nepal.

**Key words:** Advocacy, forest user group, governance, Nepal

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## **BACKGROUND**

Nepal identified community forestry (CF) as a devolution tool to rehabilitate degraded hills and to provide basic forestry products to the rural people. Under the community forestry framework, it is the local people who make decisions regarding the forest management, utilization and distribution of benefits. Community forests provide a range of products such as firewood, timber, fodder and services for human use. It is well documented that community forestry is successful in rehabilitating degraded sites, in forming local level institutions for resource management, in improving the supply of forest products to farmers and in improving the environmental situation of Nepal. In addition, community development works in rural areas of the country have begun with funds generated through the voluntary involvement of forest users in the management of forest resources.

Nepal's CF program is a classical example of successful decentralization in resource management. Empirical evidences indicate that CF activities are very much successful in mid-hills and other places of Nepal. Recent database indicates that about 1,225,993 hectares of state managed forests have been handed over to 14,389 community forest user groups (CFUGs) benefiting 1654,529 user households (DoF database, May 2008). The CF occupies about 35 percent of the potential community forest area of Nepal. It has been assumed that the extensive implementation of CF would make local users self- dependent in forest products, improve bio-diversity and minimize pressure on the government managed forests (Acharya, 2002; NPC, 2002; Kanel, 2004).

The CF programme has received the highest priority within the forestry sector in Nepal. It is regarded as one of the most successful development program in Nepal because it has resulted in rehabilitation of degraded forest areas and have increased supply of forest products (GoN, 1989, Springate-Baginski et al. 1999; NPC, 2001). However, at the same time, many believe that CFUGs is captured by wealthier and upper caste men, while the interests and concerns of poor women and Dalits<sup>3</sup>, who depend more on common property resources for their livelihood, are not well addressed (Acharya, 2002; Agarawal, 2001; Adhikari and Lovett 2006; Adhikari et al 2004, Bhatta and Gentle, 2000, Gentle 2000; Graner, 1997; Iverson et al 2006; Nightingale, 2002; Tiwari, 2002; Warner, 2000). The decision making role dominated by relatively wealthier households have guided forest management strategy towards producing medium to long term commodity production such as pole and timber. As a consequence, the communities are getting sub-optimal benefits (Gilmour and Fisher 1991, Branney, 1996; Chhetri and Pandey, 1992; Karki, Karki and Karki, 1994; Sowerine, 1994; NPC, 2001; Shrestha, 2001; Acharya, 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> *Dalits* are defined as "historically and traditionally, socially discriminated so called "lower caste" or "untouchable" according to Hindi caste division system.

## EMERGING ISSUES IN CF

The weak attainment of forestry governance is related with the emerging issues at different level. The fourth national workshop has identified good governance, sustainable forest management and rural livelihoods as second generation issues in community forestry (Kanel 2004). However, the segregation of issues at different will provide elaborated opportunity to address such issues in managing forestry. The community forestry management issues can be visualized at three different levels as macro level issues- at national level, meso level issues - at district/regional level and micro level issues at - CFUGs level. The Joint Technical Review Committee (JTRC) 2000, has identified eleven different issues at national level (JTRC 2000). A closer look on these reveals that these issues are emerged due to lack of governance in the CF from different stakeholders at different level (table 1).

Table 1: Issues of community forestry at national level

1. Protection versus active management	7. Income, taxes and subsidies
2. Basic needs versus commercialisation	8. Livelihoods, equity and gender
3. Income generation and NTFP management	9. Community forestry in the Terai
4. Support services	10. High altitude forest management
5. Governance, monitoring and evaluation	11. Policy and legal frameworks
6. Partnership and autonomy	

(Source: Joint Technical Review Committee 2000)

The federation of community forest users, Nepal (FECOFUN) reported following issues (Table 2) as district level issues based on information from 24 districts implementing community forestry advocacy program, 2005-07 in partnership with CARE Nepal (Acharya, 2006)

- Delay/slow Operational Plan renewing process
- Existence of double hammering system
- Complex CF inventory system
- DFO not approving Operational Plan and constitution prepared by LRPs
- DFO interference on CFUG autonomy
- Requirement of permission for releasing bank funds
- DFO's restriction in CFUG fund mobilization
- Extension of protected area systems with out consultation with stakeholders
- Unscientific taxing system on CF products
- Restriction imposed on collection and distribution of forest product in CF
- Suspended CF handing over process in Terai
- Encroachment of CF area by free labor and squatters
- Interference of resin tapping companies on CFUG autonomy in selling resin
- Interference on CF by government security agencies and rebels
- Complex transportation system of NTFPs outside the districts
- Contribution of revenue of NTFPs in economic empowerment of local people in high hills
- Formation of District Forest Coordination Committee

- Frequently transfer of DFO staff

It has been reported that CFUGs have limited technical, organizational and advocacy capabilities to follow and influence the policies and guidelines and to manage the resources in an equitable and sustainable manner. The CFUGs tend to have low participation of women, poor and disadvantaged group; poor accountability of duty bearers towards the rights holders, the general users. The financial transactions and major decisions are not much transparent to general users, resulting in poor predictability and their internal governance (Acharya 2006, Gentle et al 2007). The CF process comprises several technical and social processes. The facilitation service provided by government and other service providers is inadequate compared to increasing demand (Acharya, 2003). Several second generation issues have emerged including the good governance (Bhatta and Gentle, 2004; Kanel, 2004). The prevalent issues at CFUG level are:

- Lack of transparency in forest user groups
- Decision making process is not inclusive
- Elite dominance in committee and decision making, poor and marginalized are not represented
- Fund mobilization is not transparent nor is favorable to poor
- Community development priorities are not poor oriented
- Low level of women participation
- Benefit distribution is not favorable to weaker section of the society
- Weak predictability
- Wealthier controlled forest products price and fixing system
- Exclusion of poor and marginalized
- Exclusion of distant users
- Forests are protected and not managed actively

### ***Underlying causes for emerging issues***

Nepal's community forestry has received increasing problems and issues at different levels. A closer looks on these issues clearly indicate that many of the issues are emerged due to weak governance practices during policy formulation to implementation at different level. The policy formulation and implementation issues can be visualized at three components such as:

1. Absence of policies in favor of poor and marginalized: The weak or unfavorable policies towards poor and marginalized communities are due to historic hierarchical structure, feudal society based on class, gender and caste. In addition, role of stakeholders in policy formulation process is not recognized and the process is opaque.
2. Updating of policies: The policy updating process is not institutionalized. There exist several contradictions among policies hampering benefits to poor and such policy amendments/updating process is not regular.

3. Weak enforcement of policies; Good/ pro-poor provisions are made but not implemented. The policy statement includes dubious statement such as can do, which are selectively not implemented for the benefits poor and marginalized and also against the "rule of law". The provisions have included due to political leaders which may not receive adequate supports from bureaucratic structure eg CF handover in Tarai. Largely political instability and transition in the country is also contributed for the weak implementation of policies.

### **ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

To address the issues prevailing in CF, innovations have been initiated at different levels. The paper is based on information from field case studies at CFUGs level supported by district level and national level policy influences evidences. Following the selection of CFUGs, the following methods were used to generate information.

- Reviewing secondary information
- Focus group discussion
- Interview with committee members
- Individual interviews

The table 2 summarized the intervention at different level and key activities organized to influence policies in favor of poor and marginalized and increase governance at all levels. The description of each of the activities are reported earlier elsewhere eg Acharya 2006.

Table 2: Policy influence intervention at different levels in community forestry

<b>Level</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Community/local	Empowerment of marginalized, community Interaction	Community level advocacy training Advocacy literacy, cross visits, RBA workshops  Joint meeting, plan development, discourse
District	Involvement of civil society  Media advocacy	Formation of advocacy forum, policy discourse through issue based workshops, Audio-visual program, cross visit of media professionals
National	Policy analysis Policy discourse	Policy makers visit Seeking political commitment Use of parliament and judiciary

### **Case studies**

The local level findings are based on six community forest users groups implementing the good governance and advocacy program from Nawalparasi and Bardia which were assessed by the authors in 2005 and are now reassessed in 2008. The users groups were selected based on the following criteria.

- A mature group (> 2 years of formation)
- Accessibility of the group by location

- At least one woman in key position
- Heterogeneous group in terms of wealth status and caste
- Relatively stable community in terms of both inward and outward migration.

Table 3- A glimpse of the selected groups

SN	Name of the CFUG and district	Year CF handed over	Number of Households in CFUG	Total population	CF area (ha)
1	Chautari, Nawalparasi	1997	618	4000	354.70
2	Lakhana, Bardia	1998	149	1077	80.25
3	Sundari, Nawalparasi	1998	1032	7224	384.75
4	Amar, Nawalparasi	2000	1300	9100	384.00
5	Ram Nagar, Bardia	2001	40	240	10.25
6	Chandanpur, Bardia	2003	213	1618	125.00

Source: Field survey

While some additional districts such as Dang, Lamjung were studied for district level policy influence and national level influence were observed by the authors during the process in various capacities involved during the process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Improved governance at local level*

The advocacy activities resulted in the adoption of public hearing and public auditing practices within the CFUGs. The practice of public audit has contributed in recovering misappropriated/misused funds in CFUGs. Similarly, it has significantly contributed in reverting executive committee's decisions, where the decisions were not in favor of general users. For example:

- The Lakhana CFUG of Bardia recovered NRs. 42,000.00 from the former executive committee members and utilized the recovered money in the construction of an office building.
- The Sundari CFUG provides free membership to new households who were excluded and would like to join CFUG and mention a woman as household head.
- Chautari CFUG provides a subsidy if a new household would like to register its name and mentions a woman as household head. Following this provision, 37 woman-headed households registered in the Chautari CFUG in 2006.
- The Chandanpur CFUG in Bardia has decided to invest 25 percent of the CFUG's total budget in pro-poor income generation related activities. The CFUG initiated their support to poor households in pig and goat farming.
- The Ram Nagar CFUG in Bardia allocated about NRs 20,000.00 to support income generation of poor women members through goat and pig farming.
- Likewise, Sundari CFUG in Nawalparasi identified 150 poor households through a participatory well being ranking process and 30 households among them are supported in goat farming. The CFUG also made a provision to prioritize widow

women while selecting poor households for income generation programs. The poor households selected for income generation activities are also trained in advocacy and rights based approach to development.

### ***Increased women participation***

Low participation of women in executive committee and key positions of CFUGs was identified as one of the key issues in most of the CFUGs. So that efforts were made to bring women in key positions (chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer) and monitoring the process and results. The increased participation of women in key executive positions of CFUGs has significantly influenced several decisions in favor of women and marginalized people. The provision has also been institutionalized through the incorporation of such provision in the constitution of CFUGs. The table clearly shows that number of women in executive members have increased and maintained in all studied CFUGs. It is also noted that numbers of women in key positions have increased in all the CFUGs.

Table 4: Representation of women members in CFUGs

Name of the CFUG	Number of women in executive committee					
	Member			Key positions		
	2004	2005	2008	2004	2005	2008
Chandanpur	0	2	3	1	2	3
Ram Nagar	0	3	4	0	2	2
Lakhana	3	4	4	0	1	2
Amar	2	5	4	0	1	1
Chautari	0	4	5	0	1	2
Sundari	0	2	5	0	1	2

Source: Field Survey

### ***Availability of CFUG funds to poor households***

The CFUGs have tremendous potential to contribute to poverty reduction through equitable and sustainable management of natural resources and proper utilization of group funds. However, in most CFUGs the group funds have not been utilized in an equitable manner. Many CFUGs had initiated such practices and some of them incorporated such provision and practice in their constitution and Operational Plan. The Chautari CFUG has organized weaving training and materials for 25 poor women members and allocated funds to support treatment and medicine costs of poor women during their delivery. The Amar and Sundari CFUGs supported three ultra-poor households for construction of their houses. The CFUG's fund is being utilized in both the formal and none formal education sector. The table below highlights the trends in changes in expenditure patterns of the CFUGs.

Table 5- Expenditure patterns in six CFUG by percentages

Year	Administration	Community development	Forest development	Pro -poor activities	Empowerment	Total expd. USD in 2008
2003	79	16	3	1	1	12,500
2005	51	23	7	10	9	16,512
2008	27	21	33	10	9	30,000

Source: CFUG records

The table provides following key observations:

- Expenditure trends observed changes over the time
- Administration cost is the only components where significant expenditure has decreased. However, the cost component stands still a huge amount. A closer look demonstrates that meeting and other allowances to executive members and monthly allowances to chairperson and secretary is about 5 % of total budget. As resource value increased and income increased- difficulty in finding time – opportunity also emerged to poor and marginalized- when no more voluntary work.
- Community development expenditure pattern have changed- from temple, irrigation construction to ambulance, health, community biogas, school support program.
- Forest management cost have increased significantly- no more voluntary work- going through contractors- for harvesting, transportation etc.. is main single reason, further new areas of expenditure- such as nursery, fire line, legal mandatory is 25%
- Pro-poor have increased but is only one tenth of total budget,
- Expenditure on capacity development of community people have increased.

Annex 1 presents more specific achievements of studies CFUGs in three areas of issues namely forestry governance, sustainable forest management and improves livelihoods.

### ***Policy influences outcomes at district level***

One of the most common advocacy issue identified by majority of CFUGs is to increase access to and control over by marginalized community (poor, women and Dalits) over resources. As a result, many marginalized household members are getting access to natural resources like community forestry products to fulfill their basic needs and rights, increased access to funds. The increased access to resources by poor, women and Dalits, increased transparency, and improved distributional systems can be taken as indicators for improved accountability



towards general users/right holders. The access to resources has been increased through providing group membership to marginalized community, allocating financial resources to address their needs and concerns as well as lowering the service fees and prices of products. Such provisions also contributed in peace building process through enhanced income and employment opportunities and social inclusion of marginalized community. The followings are few examples:

- The accountability has also shown by the government agencies towards autonomous CFUGs rights established by Acts and regulations. For example the PAF in Lamjung continue advocacy to return all illegally confiscated hammers of the CFUGs by the DFO across the district. The DFO of Lamjung returned all hammers of the CFUG captured (2 years ago) in the past to the CFUGs in a public meeting. According to the Forest Act, selection of auditor for CF fund auditing is under the CFUG's responsibility.
- After disagreements of the CFUG with District Forest Office (DFO) in extracting Khair from Ajambari CF, Chaulaihi– 2, Lamhi, Dang. DFO intentionally retain the registration of CFUG with the blamed of encroachment. The concerned CFUG including FECOFUN district chapter arranged the campaign and complained to Regional Directorate Office Surkehet, against the illegal actions of DFO. Due to the campaign and delegation regional directorate decided in favor of Ajambari CF and canceled the DFO illegal decision
- Resin tapping is one of the valuable income sources of CFUG in Salyan. The district development committee was collecting 10% tax of resin from the CFUGs since past few years. The FECOFUN district chapter arranged series of the campaigns on the issues. As a result, the DDC has dismissed the decision and agreed to return the collected amount of money to concerned CFUGs.
- In Dang district, 22 CFUGs under Tulsipur Range Post, have collectively decided to amend the constitutions of all CFUGs assuring allocation of at least 25 percent of CFUG funds to support economic development activities of poor and marginalized people.
- District Forest Coordination Committee (DFCC<sup>4</sup>) Dang made a decision to encourage all CFUGs to invest at least 25 percent of their group fund on poverty reduction and mention that provision in their operational plan and constitutions. The dissemination of such initiative at the national level is now crucial to influence the national policy to make such provision mandatory in all CFUGs.

The activities of the project had initiated dialogue and negotiation as a tool to resolve advocacy issues. It was for the first time since the establishment of FECOFUN 10 years back that a formal negotiation at central level FECOFUN

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<sup>4</sup> DFCC is a committee formed under the Local Self Governance Act and chaired by District Development Committee and participated by concern agencies and Civil Society Organizations for the forestry sector planning and co-ordination of all district level agencies.

and the line ministry (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, MoFSC) took place. Eight point's agreement (Annex 2) was signed between the Ministry and the FECOFUN to resolve CF related issues. Similarly, FECOFUN is taking active participation in a task force formed by the MoFSC in resolving forestry related issues. It can be expected that such initiation of dialogue to solve problems will help to prevent confrontation and will change the understanding and belief that advocacy means confrontation. In addition, dialogue has helped to develop common understanding and joint action on the issue.

The key features of the eight point agreement includes recommend to abolish 15 % tax imposed on certain forest products (no 3); the removal of double hammering practices and multiple permission (no 4); removal of security base camp inside the community forests (no 5); recommendation to concerned authority to include natural resources (Forests, water and land) to recognize local people's rights over these resources (no 6); stopping Phulchowki and Chandragiri conservation areas declaration process and extension of protection areas and buffer zone (no 7) and understanding to respect CFUGs autonomy and rights and assuring that government will not interfere with the bank account. However, there was a controversy on the agreement point 1 and 2 related to abolition of collaborative forest management process and guidelines and unconditional handover of Terai forest as community forests. Nevertheless, the hand over of the Terai forest to the local community as community forests has been started except existing CFM areas.

Bardia district FECOFUN took a lead role to fix minimum price of Khair (*Accacia catechu*) in the district namely to increase revenue and to improve financial transparency within the CFUGs. This will enhance improved internal governance and increased funds to the CFUGs in the district.

In addition, the forest act authorized the DFO to approve community forests operational plan prepared by the concerned CFUGs facilitated by the technicians. However, there is no specific requirements that operational plan should be prepared by the concerned forest rangers. The DFOs were not accepting (except in Surkhet) quality operational plan prepared by the LRP and the extent of support by the rangers was limited causing delay in renewal of existing and preparation of new operational plan. Finally, The Department of Forests agreed to accept quality operational plan prepared by the LRP to facilitate CF development process.

### ***Advocacy outside NRM issues***

The communities have shown ability for addressing in multiple ranges of issues beyond natural resources through advocacy. Such activities include budget analysis of VDC and DDCs and advocacy for the release of women focused budget by development institutions. The last four years budget of selected DDCs and Municipalities, (Chitawan, Surkhet and Kailali) and VDCs were reviewed

from poor, women and marginalized group's perspective. A participatory and empowering process was followed in budget analysis. The women and Dalits themselves did the analysis and presentation after an orientation and making available last five years budget to them. The participants in the presentation of budget analysis were past and present representatives and officials of DDC, VDC and Municipality, leaders of political parties, government officials and CSO members including journalists.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The findings suggest that there have been several arenas where policy influences have taken place as a result of advocacy. The implementations of a range of right based advocacy focused activities have helped to enhance policy changes in favor of poor and marginalized communities. The increased awareness on rights and responsibilities facilitated to increase participation, improve transparency, and enhance accountability and also the ownerships of local people over the resources. The outputs of the policy influences process can be grouped in four different dimensions as policy dimension, capacity building dimension, good governance dimension and individual gain dimension.

There are several examples on change in policy, attitudes, practices and direction of resource allocation in favor of poor and marginalized community. The strengthening capacity and power of civil society through various advocacy processes for policy influence demonstrated that citizens can play effective roles in policy making and decision making. This is also linked with the concept of widening the constituencies in favor of policy.

Similarly, improving the accountability of those who lead and govern, and increasing the legitimacy of civil society participation in policymaking and decision making has enhanced the democratic functioning process thereby by contributing for good governance at various levels. The individual gain dimension is the most effective and useful in NRM related issues in community forestry. The increased awareness of the community with and improved quality of life as a result of policy influences are examples of individual gain dimension of advocacy carried out by the projects. Misappropriate money has been recovered and invested towards pro-poor program showing the advocacy as a means to achieve good governance. The activities of public hearing and budget analysis will strengthen democracy by fostering accountability, enhancing transparency and deepening participation and voice. The impacts fall into two principal categories: changes in fund allocation policies and changes in the fund expenditure process. The process of advocacy was built on past experiences, logical and systematically planned. For example women have reached to key position in CFUGs showing that there is potential for this or potential was realized but also the threat was realized. One of the major lessons realized is that the project contributed towards the capacity building of women and other stakeholders to provide an enabling environment for bringing more women into leadership positions, but it did not provide adequate attention to the capacity building of

elected and potential women leaders to enhance their knowledge, skills, courage and confidence.

Therefore, CFUGs organized capacity development activities to the women reached in key positions. The increased participation of women in key positions has occurred, however, challenges remain for the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The threats needs to address may be due to external factors such as resistance from family, colleagues and traditional power holders. In contrast, internal factors could be experience and knowledge on legal, administrative and procedural matters and confidence in leadership roles. However, within the scope of key positions, the majority of women were elected to the Vice Chairperson or treasurers, which are relatively less influential in comparison to others. For example: Acharya (2006) reported that in a study, out of 1076 elected women representatives in all of the CFUGs, the distribution of positions is: Chair Person, 17 percent; Vice Chairperson, 40 percent; Secretary, 17 percent; and Treasurer, 26 percent. Realizing this, Bardia district FECOFUN has started an innovative structural adjustment in the CFUGs that half of key positions should be gender balanced and either secretary or a chairperson and vice-chairperson or treasurer should be allocated for women.

The inclusive approach and collaborative tools of advocacy contributes towards respectful negotiation among the different interest groups within the community. As a result of the inclusive decision-making process, marginalized communities have influenced CFUGs decisions on their own behalf. The inclusion and empowerment process has also enhanced women's and marginalized communities' ownership and ensured the accountability of users' committees towards general users.

Media advocacy played a key role to highlight the community level issues to wider audiences at district and national level. The television, radio, and print media play a significant part in advocacy, both by influencing policymakers directly and by changing public opinion on an issue. The experience has shown that local level leadership has developed through the advocacy process.

The advocacy contributed towards more equitable governance and strengthening objectives defined by the poverty reduction strategy papers and the tenth plan. The findings indicate that in the context of rural Nepal, the implementation of a collective action program which concentrates only on participation without focusing on empowerment and capacity building is insufficient. The influences could have been much higher than is obtained. The main reason is the stumbling of policy formation process created by unfavorable political environment created by the autocratic King's regime.

The policy advocacy process has shown that there is a need for advocacy for the effective implementation of existing good policies which are never implemented by the service providers or by the CFUGs. Similarly, there are few policies and

practices which need amendment to make more favorable towards poor and marginalized. And there are several areas which need to be covered by the formulation of new policies.

The advocacy process observed to influence policy in community forestry in Nepal observed can be presented as a following process.

Figure 1: Level of policy influence and corresponding features of advocacy in community forestry in Nepal

Level of policy influence	Level	Stakeholders		
		Who advocates?	Who join the constituency?	Whom to influence?
<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Policy formulation</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Policy amendment</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Policy implementation</div> </div>	<b>Community</b>	Poor and marginalized user group members	FECOFUN, Dalit NGOs, LRPs, WAF, media, CBOs	Executive committee of CFUGs, Local elites
	<b>District</b>	People's organization, CFUGs, community federations such as FECOFUN	PAF, WAF, FECOFUN, Media, NGOs, Political parties	DFO, DDC, VDCs, DAO
	<b>National</b>	FECOFUN	AF, Political parties, Parliamentarians, Media	DoF, MoFSC

The following recommendations have been made for a better advocacy and policy influences process in future.

- The emergence of advocacy forum in district and central level to identify, prioritize and advocate district and central level issues have provided a common forum. The experiences until the project time reflects that such forum could emerge a common forum to all stakeholders to lobby in favor of poor and marginalized. However, more time is required not only to ignite advocacy of identified issues but also to observe the future prospects of such forums.
- The concept and strategies adopted by the project have demonstrated the way to bond meso-micro level linkages of issues. However, such effort will need adequate time to mature.
- The good governance requires activities to improve international governance within the CFUGs. There are few examples and there is potential to work for scaling up of good practices.

- It seems that present advocacy is more oriented towards the establishment and recognition of the CFUGs or federations compared to the benefits of poor and marginalized. The civil society organizations and activists should re-think approaches for identification and prioritization of advocacy issues realizing the rural Nepal situation and hardships. Future activities should direct to focus more on individual gain dimensions for poor and marginalized communities.
- The people based organization need to follow a more planned approach for advocacy. The controversial agreement without involving all stakeholders was observed in eight point agreement between the government and the FECOFUN.
- Advocacy project and activities should be based on issues rather than project or district based approach as has been adopted now.
- Long term commitments of the organization such as CFUGs and donors are required for policy advocacy process which requires considerably long time.
- The list of issues shows that a large number of issues were identified and advocated in the districts. It is recommended to priorities few focused issues for advocacy for effective results.
- It is necessary to follow the process of advocacy with adequate consideration to provide alternative policy for an issue identified for advocacy.

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## Annex 1 Annex 1: Highlights of the achievements by selected CFUGs studied

<b>Areas of CFUGs' contribution</b>		
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Poverty reduction</b>	<b>Sustainable forest management</b>
<p>Public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan Free membership to excluded poor households Organized orientation workshop on rights based approach to development Provision to prioritize single women while selecting poor households</p>	<p>Poor households identified through a participatory well being ranking, House holds supported in Income generation activities such as goat farming. poor households supported in house construction</p>	<p>Effective implementation of OP Supported ultra poor households in the cultivation of asparagus,</p>
<p>Conducted public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan Provision to provide subsidy in issuing membership in women's name Placed hoarding boards in governance theme Conducted 16 weeks advocacy literacy class for women Single women's felicitation Conducted legal awareness campaign on CF Power relation analysis of stakeholders</p>	<p>Allocated 20 percent of CFUG funds in pro-poor program focusing women Provided weaving training for 25 poor women Decided to support poor women's treatment and medicine cost during delivery.</p>	<p>Effective implementation of OP Women leaders led campaigns against free grazing</p>
<p>Conducted public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan Provision to include both men and women's name as household representatives Recovered misused group funds Conducted 16 weeks advocacy literacy class for women</p>	<p>Allocated budget to support relief works like emergency medical costs, support fire victims Supported ultra poor households in house construction</p>	<p>Effective implementation of OP</p>
<p>Conducted public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan Recovered misused money from former executive members Decided to allocate five percent of group funds to support nearby primary school</p>		<p>Effective implementation of OP</p>
<p>Conducted public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan Formed women's watchdog group to monitor group activities Recovered group funds from members Invested income to conduct women awareness campaign Provided scholarship to poor girls attending primary and secondary school</p>	<p>Allocated budget to support poor women in pig and goat farming</p>	<p>Effective implementation of OP Planted/managed fodder trees to make production system equitable</p>

<p>Conducted public audit and hearing of financial details, policies, annual work plan</p> <p>Conducted 16 weeks advocacy literacy class for women Decided to provide CFUGs resources to nearby school for the coming five years Provided US\$ 1430 to upgrade the nearby primary school.</p>	<p>Decided to invest 25% of CFUG budget in pro-poor program</p>	<p>Effective implementation of OP</p> <p>Decided to provide subsidy to install a biogas plan to reduce the pressure of fuel wood and smoke hazards</p>
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Annex 2: Eight points agreements between the FECOFUN and the MoFSC  
(Unofficial translation)

**1. Immediate dismissal of the Guidelines for Collaborative Forest Management 2060 and District Forest Coordination Committee 2060.**

Existing CFM areas will be converted into model CF including all collaborative partners on the view community forestry. All initiatives and learning of CFM and CF will be incorporated and strategies will be developed as per need with direct involving concerned collaborative partners while managing model CF. Guidelines for Co-Collaborative Forest Management 2060 and District Forest Coordination Committee Formation 2060 will be dismissed from immediate effect.

**2. Handover all forest areas protected by local user in the Terai region**

The proposed CF resisted constitute in the District Forest Office till the agreement date will be regularly handover, CF constituent will be revised inclusive and transparent way compatible with context based on the existing forest law and bylaw With respect CF handover in the Terai and inner Terai, excess forest products (timber and fuel woods) will be taken on the auction after fulfillment of the forest products demand of concerned FUG and neighboring FUG and district respectively.

**3. Recommend to abolish the provision of 15% taxes imposed on the selling of certain forest products from community forest.**

Recommendation will be sent to authorize body for dismissing the exiting income tax provision that has taken from 15 % from the certain forest products.

**4. Stopping all kinds of interfere on CFUG autonomy such as double hampering, and multiple permission practices**

Regarding the forest products, double hammering and multiple permission system will be canceled and all the activities will be done based on the Forest Act 2049 and Forest Regulations 2051. The extraction, collection, transportation, trading and distribution pattern of the forest products such as timber, fuel wood, and NTFPs will be finalized and implemented in collaborating stakeholders.

**5. Immediately evacuation of the security camps from community forest areas**

Recommend to authorized body to evacuate the security force camp from the community forest and national forest areas.

**6. Include the provision as “people are the owner and manger of the natural resources (Forest, water and land)” in the Interim Constitution.**

Recommendation will be sent to authorized body for including the provision “people are the owner and manger of the natural resources (Forest, water and land )” in the Interim Constitution.

**7. Dismissed the all decisions that have made in regression period to expansion buffer zone areas, propose national park and protection areas.**

Expansion of the protection areas and buffer zone areas will be done based on the consensus of the concerned users. The declaration of Phulchoki and Chandragiri as protection area will be dismissed.

**8. Free all bank accounts of the CFUG immediately**

Ministry will be instructed to concerned district forest Offices to free the seized banks accounts of the CFUG.