

Relationships in community forestry: WHO HAS INFLUENCE AND WHO IS BEING AFFECTED?

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*The community forestry development process involves diverse actors with different interests who may have a history of relationships that are either positive or negative. Although there are methods for research on the role and status of stakeholders, there are few tools to assess the power, interests and legitimacy of actors from the **point of view of the stakeholders themselves**. The Social Analysis CLIP method of the Social Analysis System (SAS2)² was developed for this purpose. This paper shows the results of using this method with community forestry stakeholders in 6 CFUGs in the Eastern Hills. The purpose was to visualise the stakeholder structure in terms of power, interests and legitimacy in relation to a specific situation or course of action. It also examined the history of relationships among the stakeholders in these areas and classified the various Self Help Groups, Government Agencies and NGOs in terms of the extent to which they are dominant, forceful, influential, dormant, respected, vulnerable or marginalised actors in the specific situation. By visualising the stakeholder structure, the process facilitated an actor-based analysis relevant to policy level and other development facilitators. It suggests that this tool can help to enhance synergy and analytical thinking through collaborative inquiry involving stakeholders.*

Background

The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (1989) identified an effective lack of the capacity within the Department of Forests (DoF) to protect and manage national forests and indicated a return of forest to the control of traditional managers - the local communities. This policy of decentralised forest management was given priority among other forest management strategies and it promoted forest users as managers of their nearby forest resources. The Forest Act (1993) gave rural communities assured access to local forests through the legal right to form Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and recognised these as autonomous bodies with legal powers to develop, manage and utilise their forests. This provides unparalleled opportunities for community forestry to make a major positive contribution to the livelihoods strategies of rural poor. The community forestry guidelines (2001) addressed some second generation issues with community forestry by incorporating lessons and learning from over one decade. A more recent set of guidelines also integrates third generation e.g. social inclusion, ensuring active participation and increased acceptance of women, poor and dalits in decision making processes and is explicit in its approach to poor and socially excluded people etc.

Community forestry is recognized as a successful programme in terms of rehabilitating forest condition. Most of the proponents of community forestry also believe that it has been also been contributing to community development at local level. Moreover, community forestry is

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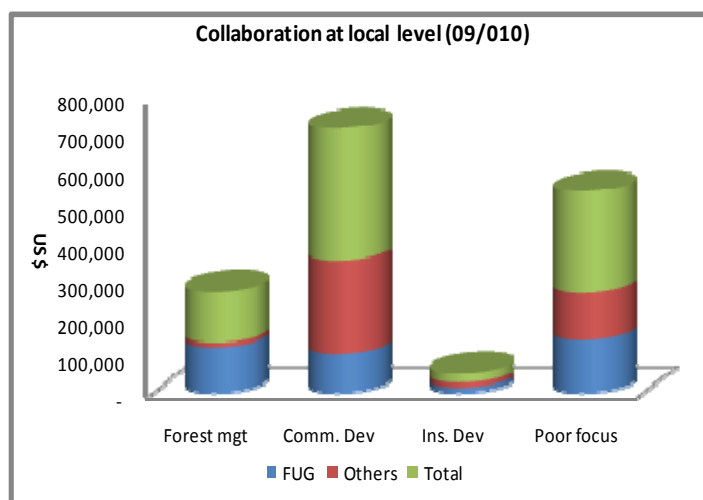
emerging as a means to enhance effective collaboration between local actors that can contribute to reducing rural poverty. CFUGs have already shown themselves to be sustainable local institutions with potential for planning and implementing wider development activities.

The Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP) operates in four hill districts of the Koshi Hills using CFUGs as an entry point for wider development processes. After 6 years of implementation through the Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project (NUKCFP), LFP was designed taking into account lessons learnt from NUKCFP. Nowadays 1,400 CFUGs in the Koshi Hills cover more than 86% of the total households and are managing 42% of the forest.

Scope of collaboration

Community forests are major component in rural livelihoods by providing income, construction materials, energy and animal feed (Gilmour *et al.* 2005). Nepal has an agricultural-based economy and needs to develop and manage its forest resources to achieve the national goal of poverty reduction (HMG, 2002). Community Forestry is a common-property forest management model, primarily initiated to conserve forests and meet the basic needs of forest products through local people's participation. The belief that community forestry should contribute to livelihoods enhancement of forest-dependent poor people has been felt for several years. Community-based natural resource management programmes, including leasehold and community forestry are heavily focused on subsistence-oriented resource management (Bhattarai and Dhungana, 2005). Collaboration is viewed as a set of competencies and methods that leads to better and faster completion of work. Collaboration only takes on meaning when embedded in solving specific problems. Collaboration can encompass a variety of behaviours, attitudes and results, including communication, information sharing coordination, cooperation, problem solving, and negotiation. Likewise, a collaboration effort allows people, teams and organisations to leverage and build upon the ideas (Richman 2001). Collaboration can contribute to tackling important and complex problems and generate innovative solutions.

Figure 1: Levels of local collaboration between actors



68% of CFUGs have been able to leverage financial resources from other organisations whilst current monitoring records show that 55% of their total investment is going into sectors other than forestry (FUG Monitoring, 2009). In Financial Year 2063/64, community forests nationally generated about US\$ 10 million which is higher than the annual budget of the Department of Forest and is almost 42% of the annual budget of the

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (Kanel and Niraula 2004) even though there are generated from less than 25% of the total area of national forest..

In the Koshi hills, monitoring in 2009 showed that community forestry provides wider development benefits to more than 38% households of those involved in it (both poor and non-poor). An additional 14% of the poorest households are getting income generating activities annually with nominal interest rates. The mean annual income per year per CFUG is NRs 986,842 and expenditure areas in wider development activities is about 74% of this. About 55% of this income comes from other organisations including LFP (via DFO/NGOs). Moreover, CFUGs generate about 280,000 person days employment per year in different development areas as either partial or full-time.

Major stakeholders

A. Government line agencies

The District Forest Office (DFO) is the main partner for delivering technical forestry activities e.g. joint planning, implementation, monitoring, preparation of technical guidelines, creation of a collaborative environment and encouraging other organisations to work with CFUGs as an entry point. DFOs also support sustainable forest management, technical capacity of CFUGs and have a legal role in handover of government forest to CFUGs.

Another government line agencies is the Cottage and Small Industry Development Board (CSIDB) which is a key collaborator for delivering skills development training on forest and non-forest based enterprise development. The District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) provides veterinary services to CFUG members who are practicing animal husbandry for income generation. The District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) and the District Soil Conservation Office act as collaborators to provide technical assistance and subsidies for agricultural based income generation, small irrigation and water resources protection activities carried out by CFUGs and their networks. LFP has been supporting the development of linkages among these agencies.

B. Local Government:

LFP has been working with the District Development Committees (DDC) and Village Development Committees (VDC) to develop networks at district and VDC levels that ensure co-ordination among partners and collaborators. The main role of these local governance structures are as coordinating bodies to support the preparation and integration of local plans; to build institutional capacity and growth; to make policies at local level; and to ensure effective people's representation and high accountability in decision-making.

C. FECOFUN

The main roles of the forest user group federations are as representative institutions of CFUGs, advocacy, lobbying, networking, planning, review and coordination. More than 80% of CFUGs belong to these networks. They provide an opportunity to mobilise CFUG resources and ensure proportionate representation at all levels.

C. NGOs

There are more than 20 NGOs in the 4 districts although very few are involved in development activities. The animation programme in community forestry is delivered via NGO partners who are mainly responsible for social and technical forestry services in community forestry delivered through local resource persons (LRPs). These carry out joint planning, monitoring and review, ensure coordination among various partners for collective effort, build capacity, and ensure accountability to communities. LRPs facilitate access to different organisations and streamline wider livelihoods perspective into institutional arrangements etc.

D. Networks/ CBOs

The HIMAWANTI, VDC-network (an FUG network formed at VDC level) and active CFUGs are also delivering the LFP programme particularly on conflict management, network formation and strengthening, focus group formation and literacy programmes for empowerment. LFP is forming and strengthening a Forest Development Fund by providing financial, facilitation and technical inputs aiming to sustain good practices at local level for the future.

Methodology

Four social analysis system (SAS) tools were tested in Bokhim VDC of Bhojpur, Diding and Khandbari VDCs of Sankhuwasabha District and Oakjung VDC of Terathum district. The tools used were:

1. Network dynamics: to assess the network of trust that exists between stakeholders involved in a core problem or situation
2. Problem domain: to examines how people view existing problems or actions using words and characteristics that participants themselves choose and define and to negotiate their views of problems or actions across social and cultural boundaries.
3. CLIP (Conflict, collaboration, legitimacy, Interest and power): to create profiles of the parties involved in a core problem or action based on four factors: (i) power, (ii) interests, (iii) legitimacy, and (iv) existing relations of collaboration and conflict. Another objective was to describe the characteristics and relationships of key stakeholders in a concrete way and to explore ways to resolve social problems (such as building trust or empowering marginalized groups).
4. Level of Misunderstanding and Understanding

A network of trust is a set of connections where people show confidence in other parties and rely on them to provide support, to behave in appropriate ways, and to do what they are expected to do. During the rating process, people answer questions such as "to what extent does this

stakeholder (name the row stakeholder) trust that stakeholder (name the column stakeholder)?” The resulting matrix provides an index for trusts others (vertical axis) and an index for those trusted by others (horizontal axis) (table 1).

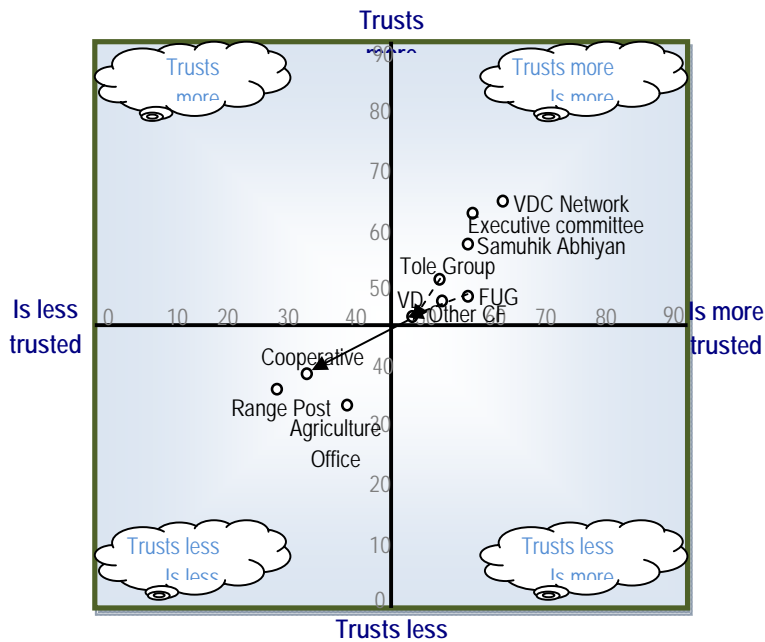
Results

As a result of the assessment, members of the Samuhik Abhiyan team, who are responsible for social mobilisation, have gained new insights into the situation and roles of local stakeholders.

Table 1: Rating of how local stakeholder groups trust other groups and how each stakeholder group is trusted

Stakeholders	Exe. Committee	CFUG	Tole Group	VDC	VDC Network	SA	RP	Cooperative	Other CF	Agr Office	Trusts others	
Exe. Committee	X	9	10	7	8	8	5	6	7	3	63	7.00
CFUG	6	X	7	3	6	8	3	4	8	4	49	5.44
Tole Group	9	10	X	3	6	6	3	2	7	5	51	5.67
VDC	6	4	3	X	8	7	2	5	5	4	44	4.89
VDC Network	9	7	5	10	X	10	4	4	9	6	64	7.11
Samuhik Abhiyan (SA)	9	7	8	8	9	X	3	2	8	4	58	6.44
Range Post (RP)	6	4	3	4	7	4	X	2	4	2	36	4.00
Cooperative	4	6	6	7	6	2	2	X	2	4	39	4.33
Other CF	6	5	4	4	7	7	4	4	X	6	47	5.22
Agriculture Office	3	4	5	3	4	5	2	4	4	X	34	3.78
Trusted by others	58	56	51	49	61	57	28	33	54	38	485	53.89
	6.44	6.22	5.67	5.44	6.78	6.33	3.11	3.67	6.00	4.22	53.89	5.99

Figure 2: Trust matrix



The VDC network was found to be one of the key stakeholders that trusts and is also trusted by others. Likewise, the CFUG executive committee and Samuhik Abhiyan were rated highly on both kinds of trust. The cooperative, Range Post, and Agriculture Office were deemed to not be adequately supporting community forestry process as expected by the local community members. Participants clearly flagged that the cooperative group was not functioning in line with the interests of most people in the local community since the cooperative does not focus on the truly poor households.

CFUG and Tole (hamlet) groups are not highly trustful of VDCs, whereas VDCs only feel trusting toward the cooperative

Due to the bridging role that Samuhik Abhiyan plays between the local community and other district level line agencies, the Range Post, a permanent Government unit responsible for technical forestry, now sees itself as being isolated from other stakeholders in the community. Likewise, due to lack of coordination between the Ministry of Forests and other Government of Nepal agencies, the Government Agriculture Office sees itself as detached from other stakeholders. The VDC network is a parallel institution working at the local level. It is parallel to the CFUGs, and the local community likes to get support on problems beyond forestry from the CFUG, not from VDCs. This raises a challenge for policy-makers and other government channels seeking to balance the demands of the local community.

Table 2: Rating of how the actors perceive the key issue of fund mobilisation to poor and excluded

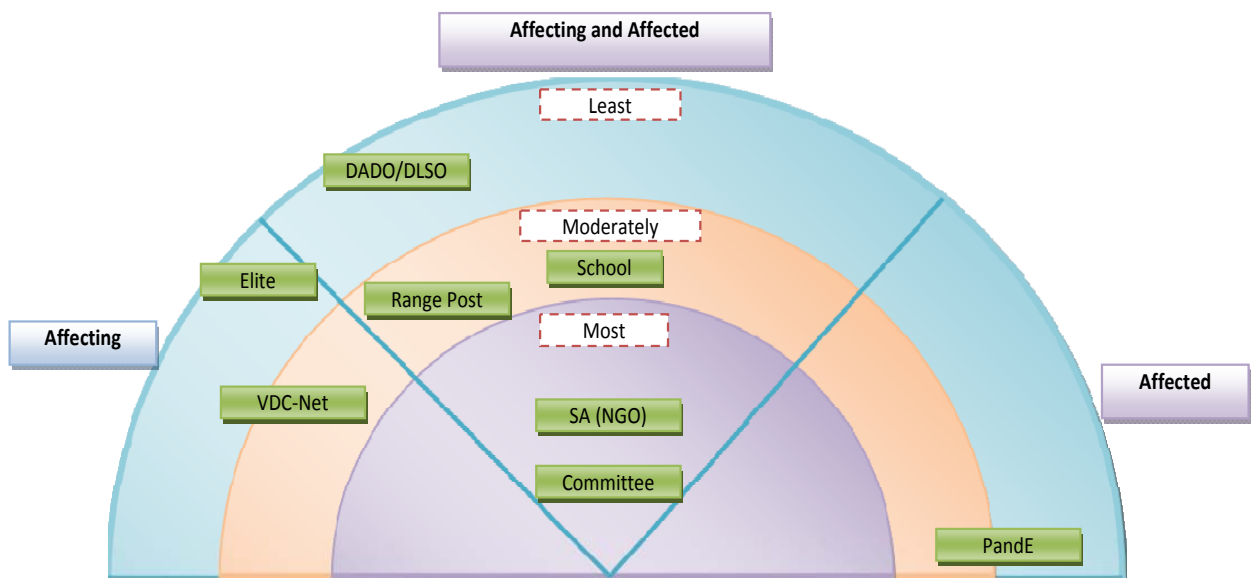
Characteristics	Elite Domination	Bios/ Partial Decision (Committee)	Less Confident	Non-acceptance of Poor	Less awareness (Poor)	Limited Fund	Total
Internal (1) External (5)	3	3	4	2	4	4	20
New (1) Old (5)	5	4	5	3	5	2	24
Easy (1) Difficult (2)	4	2	5	2	4	2	19
Takes Less Time (1) Takes More Time (2)	3	2	4	3	5	3	20
Internal Skill (1) External Skill (5)	4	2	1	2	4	2	15

Low Priority (1) High Priority (5)	5	4	3	5	5	2	24
Less fund (1) High Fund (5)	2	1	2	2	3	5	15
Total	26	18	24	19	30	20	137

Almost all actors were not satisfied with fund mobilisation activities. The exercise was carried out among the actors described above. The findings (table 2) show that due to lower awareness of poor and excluded people, the fund is not adequately mobilised as expected or according to the demands of poor and excluded. Similarly, decision makers and executive bodies are not confidently aware that the loan will be utilised by poor and excluded people as per the agreed time-frame. Moreover, it is observed that at executive there is no consensus that the loan provided will be invested in a productive way. Lastly, due to lack of representation from poor and excluded in decision making bodies they might have room to perceive the decision is not favour with them, even though decisions made are in their favour. Therefore, knowingly or unknowingly, the problems have been the result of elite domination.

Consequently, it is necessary to take actions to empower excluded and poor groups to raise their awareness of provisions in CFUG constitution in their favour. Moreover, whilst it is their observed desire to engage in activities to enhance their economic conditions, it was found that about 50% of the total poor households they don't know that the CFUG is providing loans on a nominal interest basis (possibly due to awareness of high interest rates which richer people set within their community). A major issues is that whilst financial auditing process are implemented as expected by service providers, most of poor actors do not understand these. In general, poor and excluded are not aware of the specific provisions made for them in their constitution.

Figure 1: Relationship between different stakeholders and the CFUG



The role of Samuhik Abhiyan, the organisation responsible for delivery of the social mobilisation programme with financial and technical support from LFP, may be withdrawn in the absence of LFP in future. Dependency on Samuhik Abhiyan is high in terms of institutional support, planning, monitoring and implementation whereas Government has a more limited role. In the same way, local NGOs have an influencing role in enhancing an effective acceptance environment between the Range Post and CFUGs. Due to lack of ownership in planning other responsible Government agencies such as DADO and DLSO also need to play their role by integrating their power, interest and legitimacy with those of CFUGs.

Table 3 shows that there is a level of misunderstanding between A to B whereas in the priority issue of fund mobilisation there is still misunderstanding between the service providers and CFUGs. In terms of fund mobilisation by Samuhik Abhiyan, the level of misunderstanding between Samuhik Abhiyan and CFUGs and between CFUGs and Samuhik Abhiyan found to be 47% and 19% respectively. Samuhik Abhiyan believes that less than 50% of activities are being delivered by CFUGs as expected whereas CFUGs perceive that the NGO is facilitating fund mobilisation with 80% of what is expected by the community.

Table 3: Misunderstanding and disagreement

Activity	Priority of SPs (A) (i)	Priority of CFUG (B) (ii)	Difference (A-B) (iii)	Perceived by A on B (iv)	Perceived by B on A (v)	Misunderstanding of A (ii-iv) (vi)	Misunderstanding of B (i-v) (vii)
Fund mobilisation to poor and excluded	1	2	1	1	1	1	0
Skill development training	3	3	0	3	3	0	0
Office management	5	1	4	6	2	5	1
Teachers' Salary	6	7	1	7	6	0	0
Drinking Water	4	5	1	4	5	1	3
Forest Management	2	4	2	2	4	2	2
Cultural Activities	8	6	2	8	8	2	0
Loan to others with high interest rate	7	8	1	5	7	3	0
			12			15	6

There were strong debates during the exercises e.g. concerning institutional development of CFUGs where it was found there were more difference in understanding. Samuhik Abhiyan

perceives that they have already worked more than 4 years focusing on institutional development while the CFUG have managed their official arrangements well and are thus categorised as an active CFUG in terms of their institutional development. Conversely, the CFUG perceives that their institutional development is a never-ending process which guides all their activities and that the NGO should still consider supporting their institutional development.

Table 4: Stakeholder interest, power and legitimacy

Stakeholders	Power			Interest			Legitimacy			Category
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	
FUG Committee	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	PIL
Poor and Excluded	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	I
NGO (SA)	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	IL
Range Post	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	PIL
FECOFUN/VDC Network	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	IL
School	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	I
Elites	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	PI
DADO	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	P
DLSO	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	P
DDC/VDC	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	L

After discussing for hour the difference came to only 3 i.e. they were agreed on 75% of the conditions. In some cases, CFUG does not know about the implications of this and in the same way the NGO does not understand the field reality and the community's expectations.

Most actors that are emerging in community forestry development have different interests. Community forestry has emerged as a successful programme that creates livelihoods opportunities. Table 4 presents the categories of major stakeholders who are directly/indirectly influencing and are influenced by community forestry development.

Table 5: Interpretation

Stakeholders Categories	Stakeholders
PIL	Dominant Actors CFUG Committee and RP
PI	Forceful Actors Elites
PL	Influential Actors VDC-Net

P	Dormant Actors	District Agriculture and Livestock Office
L	Respected Actors	District/Village Development Committee
IL	Vulnerable Actors	Samuhik Abhiyan (Local NGO)
I	Marginalised Actors	Poor and Excluded

The Range Post has a responsible for enhancing technical forestry capacity and Samuhik Abhiyan is responsible for social mobilisation of CFUGs. Samuhik Abhiyan is specifically responsible for strengthening the forest development fund by providing financial and technical assistance. Consequently, both these actors fall under the category of dominant actors. Likewise, although the activities of DSDO and DLSO are directly linked with the annual plan made by CFUGs through the general assembly, the actors fall under the dormant category as they are still not approaching CFUGs as an entry point to get local level outcomes and work through other mechanisms. For example, more than 60% of the households are engaged in IGAs with livestock and the CFUG provides opportunities for fodder for feeding livestock. However, there is inadequate collaboration between the DLSO and CFUG especially for technical support. Consequently, DLSO is not represented during decision-making and in other forums. Besides these development initiatives, the CFUG has also emerged as a vehicle for enhancing leadership. Therefore these actors are categorised as forceful actors in terms of community development. Elites within CFUGs are still categorised as being forceful actors even after a changed and more positive approach towards poor and excluded issues.

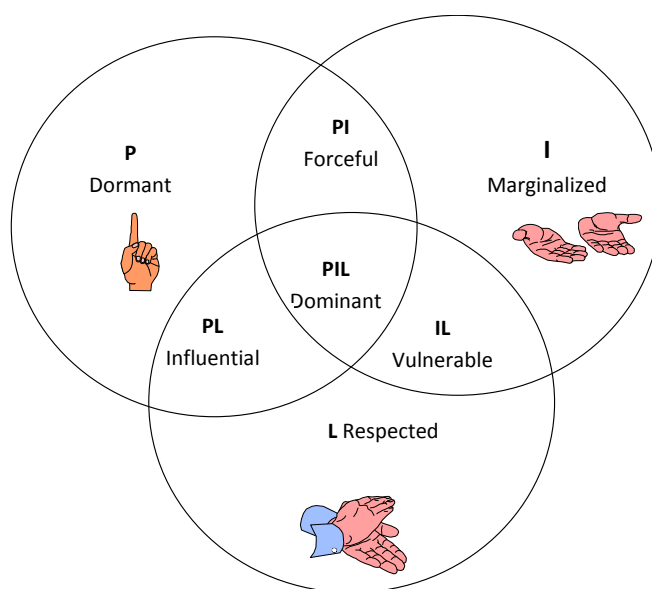


Figure 4: Categories of stakeholders

Discussion

Trusting environment among the actors

The cooperative institution which was set up to improve the economic conditions of targeted groups is dominated by elites and is implementing activities in favour of them rather than the poor. A big question raised by the assessment is that CFUGs have a high level of dependency on Samuhik Abhiyan. This may have an impact on LFP's plan to shift the management of social aspects of its programme to the VDC-net level by 2010.

CFUG members and Samuhik Abhiyan understand their strengths and understand what needs to be done to make the community forestry development process stronger. They agree that they should initiate a strategy that will support interdependency with others. This will involve preparing an annual plan by coordinating with other government agencies working at local level beyond the forestry sector, such as the Agriculture Office, Livestock office, etc. Likewise, the CFUG should make it a high priority to incorporate its annual plan into the VDC's plan.

Two stakeholders the CFUG and the Range Post feel that their relationship is weak. Range Post staff should consider increasing their level field activity and participation in CFUG meetings and assemblies. Likewise, Samuhik Abhiyan should commit itself to increasing acceptance of government offices by the local community. To achieve this, it needs to decrease those activities that might be creating dependency by the local community on its services.

Dependency with local NGO

Samuhik Abhiyan is responsible for delivering social mobilisation through the financial and technical support of LFP. It falls under the category of a vulnerable actor as this programme might be withdrawn in the absence of LFP. They are increasing their dependency in terms of institutional, planning, monitoring and implementation whereas a government agency should come in their place. Therefore local NGOs must have a role in influencing and enhancing an effective acceptance environment between the Range Post and CFUG. Due to lack of ownership during planning other responsible government agencies e.g. DADO and DLSO also need to enhance their role by integrating their power, interest and legitimacy.

Use of participatory tools before implementing developing activities

It is evident that if there is no interaction between the target groups and service providers at local level the proportion of our claimed achievements will be only one-third of real needs, voice and demand (Chapagain, et al 2008, as a result of SAS tools). It is therefore necessary to explore the future options and the nature of partners and to analyse real needs and demands before initiating any collaboration between partners. Use of such tools e.g. CLIP, Problem Doman and Social Domain analysis in the Koshi Hills has shown that the understanding level between partners can be increased from 20-75%. As a result of the tools the acceptance level can be increased even if

the same resources and strategy and used. This is an example of creating synergy from collaboration efforts. After using the tools both parties agreed to come to agreed outcomes. From the facilitators side, the tools provide helpful increases in acceptance levels largely between the target group and the service providers with the same resources and support strategy.

Elite domination: After rolling-out the PPSI (Pro-poor and Social Inclusion) strategy for the last 4 years, it has been observed that the elites have moved into positive approaches towards poor and exclusion issues. However elite domination of respective organisations can still be considered from two angles i.e. Are the executive committee and targeted community aware, inclusive and self dependent even though elite domination still exists? If so, then both decision making bodies and targeted communities still not fully aware and then elite domination still exists.

Economic enhancement of poor and excluded: There is widespread appreciation from national to local level that CFUGs have emerged as a bank for the poor. They are allocating 40% of their total expenditure for income generating activities with nominal/free interest rates. However marginalised actors in community forestry (poor and excluded) are not found to be able to influence local level policy as most (about two-thirds) of the marginalised actors do not know about the provisions mentioned in constitution. It is therefore of concern to service providers that this should be addressed as well as providing financial support.

High expectation from CFUGs: The community has emerged with demand such as “we have got all the opportunities in regards to education, infrastructure, forest products, loan etc, but we also even want to get citizenship from the CFUG”. Although this message has come after positive discrimination through community forestry it is a very challenging issue for them to address due to presence of two parties i.e. VDC-net (a local level wing of FECOFUN) and the VDC (a local government body responsible for wider development at local level)

Institutional Development: This kind of support should not be taken as a separate programme like forest management and livelihoods opportunity as the outcomes and results are mostly based on the degree of institutional development (FUG monitoring 2009 and SAS tool discussion on Bhokhim VDC, Bhojpur district). If it is planned to deliver any activity it must think about institutional development in line with the degree of outcomes and result.

CFUG as an entry point: To enhance the same outcomes and results the government agencies have been forming/strengthening other mechanisms to implement their programmes even though CFUGs cover almost the entire population. Due to engaging same persons in different groups, duplication of programme and high transaction costs is a barrier to getting synergy through collaboration. Questions raised at local level about who should initiate i.e. ministry, district or at local level need to be addressed. The ministry of forests and soil conservation has 2 departments (DFO and DSCO) who even through falling in the same ministry, do not have a mechanism for joint planning, implementation and monitoring.

Dormant Actors: CFUGs are not aware of how to integrate their programmes with those of government agencies such as DADO and DLSO due to their financial resources and autonomous status and their level of support from local NGOs. Consequently CFUG are missing out on the opportunity for additional benefits through more effective collaboration.

Conclusions

CFUGs have made encouraging achievements in terms of their contribution to wider development activities beyond forestry. However, greater possibilities can be seen through better collaboration with other agencies. The conclusions of this study are that whilst CFUGs may be the best institutional model for achieving desired outcomes (especially in terms of benefits for poor and excluded households) significant shifts are still needed for making more effective collaborative efforts at local level. The analytical tools tested here are examples of how this might be done.

For details of the tools visit www.sas2.net.

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