



APFNet Forest Enterprise Focus

With support from Asia Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet), Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) is launching programs to develop forest enterprises

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepal's community forestry has successfully maintained forest resources, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal has been launching a major program for sustainable forest management under the support from Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet).

Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) was established in 2007. Proposed by China and co-sponsored by Australia and the United States, it was agreed by the 15th APEC economic leaders meeting in September 2007 in Sydney. It was incorporated in the Sydney APEC leader's declaration on climate change, energy security and clean development to enhance capacity building and strengthen information sharing on sustainable forest management in the forestry sector in the region.

APFNet has been supporting Nepal since 2010 in three different themes. They include sustainable forest management and bio-diversity conservation, forest governance at local level and green enterprise at local level to generate green employment.

"The projects use all tools and technologies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. This will help maintain the supply of forest products. The good governance component promotes the governance concept at the community level and also encourages democratization of the user groups. The forests can generate the human resources, forest product resources and economic resources. With this, community level enterprises will be established that can ultimately generate the green employment," said Subhas Devkota, project manager of the project.

With support from APFNet,

FECOFUN has been implementing the programs in 21 districts across the country. The districts are from eastern, central, western, mid-western and far western regions. From early stage of conservation, Nepal's over 19,000 user groups are now waiting for programs for sustainable forest management.

Since the launch of the Network, activities have been designed to promote capacity building and information sharing on sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the Asia Pacific Region. FECOFUN was chosen to launch the project because of its successful mobilization of community in sustainable forest management.

"We are successfully launching the project in the country. Our experiences have shown that this APFNet model will help to transform Nepal's community forestry movement. We have already made progress in protection and now we want to learn sustainable management for the economic uplift of the people involved in conservation. APFNet is very useful for us," said Devkota.

As a pilot program, the project is covering 105 community forests all over the country. Under the program, the project has already launched schemes like how to manage the forests sustainably, and bio-diversity conservation.

"We have been organizing training, workshop as well as helping groups to restructure their organizational status to accommodate the issues like bio-diversity conservation and sustainable forest management. As long as the user groups do not follow the practice of good governance making their transactions transparent and their programs do not target the marginalized and poor population, sustainable forest management is impossible."

At a time when Nepal's community user groups are gradually moving ahead from successful management of forest, the tools they are getting in good governance including public hearing and public auditing through APEFNet are very useful. ■

Greening Jobs

-GANESH KARKI

GANESH KARKI, general secretary of Federation of Community Forestry Users' Nepal (FECOFUN), is a well known person in the community forestry movement. Karki, 48, has spent more than 15 years to establish the rights of the community over the forests. As Nepal's bio-diversity is under threat, Karki spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

How are forest users groups contributing to conserve Nepal's bio-diversity?

Look, once you protect the forests, you conserve bio-diversity. After the community's involvement in the forest protection and management, you can see a lot of changes, including the revival of many extinct plant species as well as wildlife animals. The number of leopard, wild boar and deer has increased drastically in the hill areas because of preservation of the forests. Similarly, many plants which were virtually in the process of extinction are coming back. Fifteen years ago, our mountains were barren and landslides were a common phenomenon. Protection of forests supported regeneration and harvesting of plants. The trees and plants in the government forests are in the process of disappearing. However, the situation is very much different in community forests.

Community manages over 25 percent of country's forest-covered areas and there are over 17,500 community groups around the country. More than 1.6 million households, with about 10 million population, are involved in them.

What is green employment?

In the first phase, community forestry focused on conservation. Then came various models of management. The issues related to governance dominated the third phase. Now, the focus is on sustainable forest management and enterprises. Local people cannot take benefits by just protecting it and expanding it. There is need of a sustainable forest management. We need to utilize the protected forests by sustaining them. One forest and one industry policy is directed to this —

whether the forest is related to natural herbs industries, timber industries or other products. For the improvement of the livelihood and economic situation of the local people, there is the need to utilize the forest products. Green employment means generation of employment opportunity by green industries.

How can Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation can help your scheme?

APFNET is actually related to sustainable forest management. Under this program, FECOFUN is now trying to introduce some projects to help address climate change and promote economic and social development. This scheme will help increase the employment opportunity by enhancing the capability of the forest user groups. Some of our user groups have already established Nepalese paper industries with the participation of marginalized women groups. If we can establish small forest industries within the area of community forestry close to forests, it will transform livelihood of millions of Nepali. We have already pushed some enterprise programs.

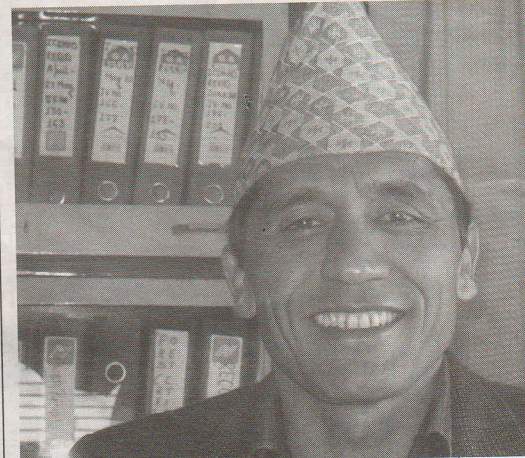
What is the stage of APFNet?

We are now in the process of implementing it. Under this project, a community user group will be given necessary support to establish forestry-related enterprises. As Nepal has already shown a successful way for forest conservation, the APFNet's support is very important as it will help our user groups learn how to grasp the opportunity through forest related enterprises.

What does APFNet do?

APFNet promotes transfer and sharing of experiences and expertise in sustainable forest management and rehabilitation. It also helps address climate change and promote economic and social development. Proposed by China and cosponsored by Australia and the United States, the APFNet was agreed by the 15th APEC economic leaders meeting in September 2007 in Sydney.

What are the challenges of community forests now?



Political instability is one of the major problems of the community forestry management. Due to political instability, there is a frequent change in the forest policy. The government is also curtailing the right of community forestry groups. The forest sector is now without policy as the tenure of twenty-years master plan has already lapsed. There are good laws, and policies but there is always a problem in their implementation.

How do you look at the role of user groups?

There is no doubt about the need of good governance in all sectors. There must be the rule of law. There are certain lapses in the process of handing over the forests to user groups.

What is REED?

Reed is one of the components to support the conservation efforts. We have to look at various aspects of REED which are related to global warming. Forest is one of the major factors to reduce the global warming. The forest has no alternatives. We cannot reduce the global warming without forests. Other factor to contain global warming is renewable energy which includes micro-hydro, solar, improved stove, bio-gas. Nepal has two important factors. We have been launching pilot programs in Gorkha, Chitwan and Dolakha. There are challenges ahead. The rich countries are puffing a lot of pollution. Community forestry is a major element to reduce the global warming. I don't think Nepal can benefit from carbon trade. ■

For One Forest, One Enterprise

SUVAS CHANDRA DEVKOTA

At a time when Nepal's community forestry has successfully maintained forest resources, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal has been launching a major program for sustainable forest management under the support from Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet). SUVAS CHANDRA DEVKOTA, project director of APFNet, spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to APFNet. Excerpts:

For how long has APFNet been supporting Nepal?

APFNet has been supporting Nepal since 2010 for a project. The host country of this project is China government. This net is managed by Chinese government. It has been supporting Nepal in three different themes. They include sustainable forest management and bio-diversity conservation, forest governance at local level and green enterprise at local level to generate the green employment. The projects use all tools and technologies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. This will help maintain the supply of forest products. The good governance promotes the governance concept at the community level and also encourages democratization of the user groups. The forests can generate the human resources, forest product resources and economic resources. With this the community level enterprises will be established that can ultimately generate the green employment.

What is the status of the project at this juncture?

We are now implementing it in 21 districts across the country. The districts include eastern, central, western, mid-western and far western region. We are monitoring mid-western region with the center in Kathmandu. The district includes Sindhupalchok, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Kavre, Dolakha and Sindhuli. This is the center of these districts. Biratnagar is the center of the eastern region. The eastern region covers Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Ilam. Dang is the center for mid-western region which covers Dang, Pyuthan, Salayan, Rolpa and Jumla. Dadeldhura is based in the far western region. Dadeldhura covers Darchula, Dadeldhura, Baitadi, Bajhang and Achham.

How is the program doing?

We are successfully launching the project in the country. Our experiences have shown that this APFNet model will help to transform Nepal's community forest movement. We have

already made progress in protection and now we want to learn sustainable management for the economic uplift of the people involved in conservation. APFNet is very useful for us.

What is the coverage like?

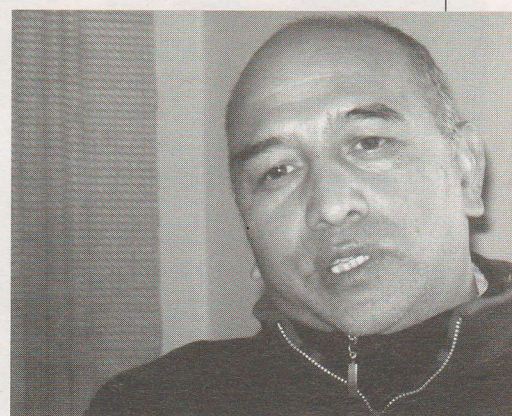
We have not been covering all user groups in the district as we have targeted five community forests. We have 105 community forests all over the country. In these community forests, we have been launching programs like how to manage the forests sustainably, bio-diversity conservation, etc. We have been organizing training, workshop as well as helping them to restructure their organizational status to accommodate the issues like bio-diversity conservation and sustainable forest management. As long as the user groups do not follow the practice of good governance making their transactions transparent and their programs do not target the marginalized and poor population, sustainable forest management is impossible. We have applied various tools of good governance including public hearing and public auditing. We have invited all stake holders. We have also the criteria and indicators for good governance.

What is the difficulty?

Due to lack of financial and forest resources, we cannot establish only one forest enterprise for all the user groups in the district. We are working to build a cooperative among the user groups. By this, we are pulling the financial and forest resources in one place to establish the forest enterprise. We have already completed the business plan and we will establish at least 10 enterprises by end of February.

What is the main thrust of APFNet?

One forest and one enterprise is the slogan. This is tied up with APFNet. We cannot practice a sustainable forest management without optimally utilizing the community forests. I don't think the livelihood of the people can be uplifted without commercialization of forests. If one forest one enterprise is impossible, we can make enterprises pulling many forests in one place. This is our thrust. FECOFUN is a pioneer organization which introduced the concept of green employment. Nobody wanted to listen to this in the early days. Now everyone is chanting the slogan of green employment. It is a pride for us. We have now 17,685 User Groups. This is just a pilot project. What we want is the sustainability of green employment. Many concepts die once projects



wrap up. But APFNet's concept is different as it aims for longer and sustainable schemes in green employment.

What are your working models?

We are not imposing user groups to follow us: what we have been doing is proposing to them various models. It is up to user groups to decide what they want. Our support will be to enhance the capacity building and strengthening information sharing on sustainable forest management. It is the user groups that have to take the decision whether they want to follow the cooperative model, the company model or another model. User groups have to take a decision looking at their own situations. This is just a small pilot project and we cannot support them in all the aspects. As long as user groups do not take the initiative, the project cannot do anything. We have identified 12 enterprises. Out of this 75 percent of the investment will be user groups. Our support will be for the technical capabilities for those marginalized and poor. If this pilot project is picked up at the national level, it will really generate green employment throughout the country.

What is your experience so far?

We have visited some parts in China under the program. We saw bamboo plantation in the community level. The user group sold this bamboo through national level cooperatives. Even our user groups can form a national network among the forest enterprises. The tragedy is that the government mechanism has not been supporting us. Last year more than 100 million rupees, which was allocated for green employment, froze. APFNet is stressing for cooperation among all different sectors including community, private sector, donors and government. We cannot sell the products without the help of private sector as they have the expertise and know the market. ■