Demonstration of Sustainable Forest Management with Community Participation in Nepal

APFNet

FECOFUN: an Executing Organization

Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), established in 1995, is an umbrella organization of more than 17,500 Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUGs) which are functioning locally towards the sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. FECOFUN is the pioneer civil society organization of natural resource management sector of Nepal which has 75 district level and about 900 local level federations. The strength of FECOFUN lies in its grassroots level network which forms a core for advocacy of community rights over forest, improving forestry sector governance and influencing in policy making.

The primary goal of FECOFUN is to develop means of livelihoods by generating opportunities to reduce poverty through sustainable forest management and utilization of resources abiding by the approach of consensus in decision making and to emphasize the participation of all sections of community and ethnic groups in policy decisions and its implementation through CFUGs by upholding the values of good governance, empowerment, self-respect, self-reliance and consensus building. (*Revised Constitution: 2067*)

Project Overview

The project *"Demonstration of Sustainable Forest Management with Community Participation in Nepal"* was initiated to promote participatory sustainable forest management with good governance practices and enhance livelihood of forest dependent people by establishing green enterprises from locally available resources as well as to develop local human resources capable of facilitating in the process. This is the first project funded by **Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)** in Nepal that was jointly launched by FECOFUN and APFNet through an inception workshop in Kathmandu on 1st November 2010. APFNet has been actively exploring the models and policy measures to promote sustainable forest management in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since project's inception in November 2010, various activities at community, district, regional and central level have been completed. The project has successfully built a common understanding on sustainable forest management through various workshops at regional and district levels. It has promoted good governance practices through Participatory Governance Assessment (PGA) and Public Hearing and Public Auditing (PHPA) at community level. Coupled with this, the project is moving ahead with establishment of enterprises through formation of forest enterprise management committee, preparation of business plans and similar ground works for establishment of green enterprises. The project has strengthened the coordination among different line agencies like DFO, NGOs and local level organizations by promoting the habit of working through consultation with relevant stakeholders. It has spread awareness among the local communities about the potentialities of poverty reduction through sustainable use of local resources under well governed community enterprises. It however has realized some challenges in terms of sustainability of community enterprises, marketing and quality assurance of the products.

Community Forestry Status

® *Community Forestry started since 1978 but handing over accelerated only after promulgation of Forest Act 1993*

® *Throughout Nepal 17,685 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) have been formed (September 2011)*

® *A total area of 1,652,654 hectares of forest have been handed over as community forests that counts 25% of Total Forest Area*

® *A total of 2,177,858 households have been benefited (35% of population)*

Scope of the Project

Since the conception of community forest, the local and indigenous people have mostly been involved in forest management and conservation with only a little support to their livelihoods. Forest management is still not production oriented and reaping benefits by optimal utilization of forest resources is not yet realized. The community forest managers have inadequate knowledge regarding transformation of ecological resources into economic resources. Taking into consideration the above gap, FECOFUN joined hands with APFNet generating following scope for the project.

® Develop community level Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Criteria and Indicators based on local needs and practice and establish five SFM demonstration sites.

® Work on good governance tools to promote transparency, accountability, participation and visioning

® Enhance capacity of local resource persons and facilitators to support in enterprise development for sustainable forest management

® Establish forest enterprises and create green jobs to support livelihood of forest dependent poor

® Document the process and influence in the policy for enterprise development through the community forest resources mobilization

Goal and Objectives of Project

Goal:
® To promote Participatory Sustainable Forest Management to improve the livelihood of forest dependent specially poor people
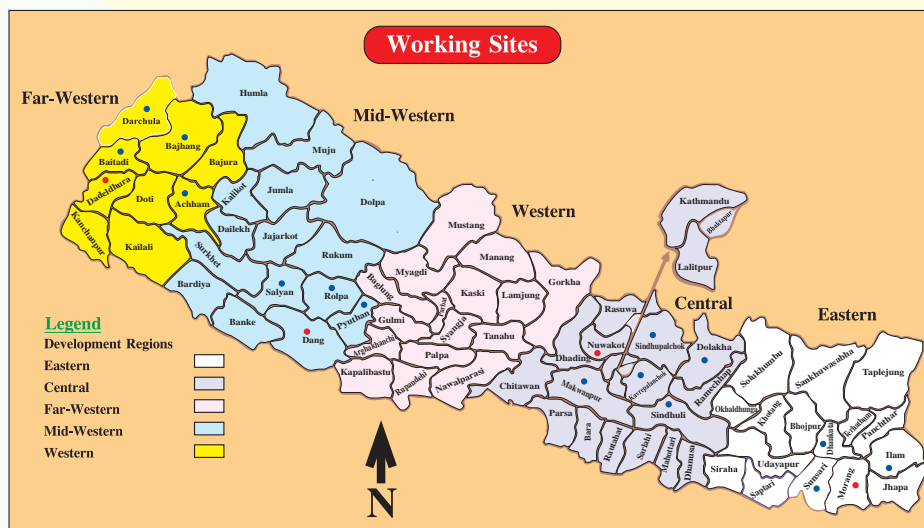
Objectives:
® To develop and implement the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management and good governance in community forestry.
® To improve the livelihood of forest dependent poor people through community forest based enterprise and green jobs.
® To document the best practices from the piloting and dissemination to influences the policy to support the sustainable forest management and promotion of community forest enterprises.
® To develop the human resources to support the sustainable forest management, livelihood improvement, community based forest enterprises and green jobs.
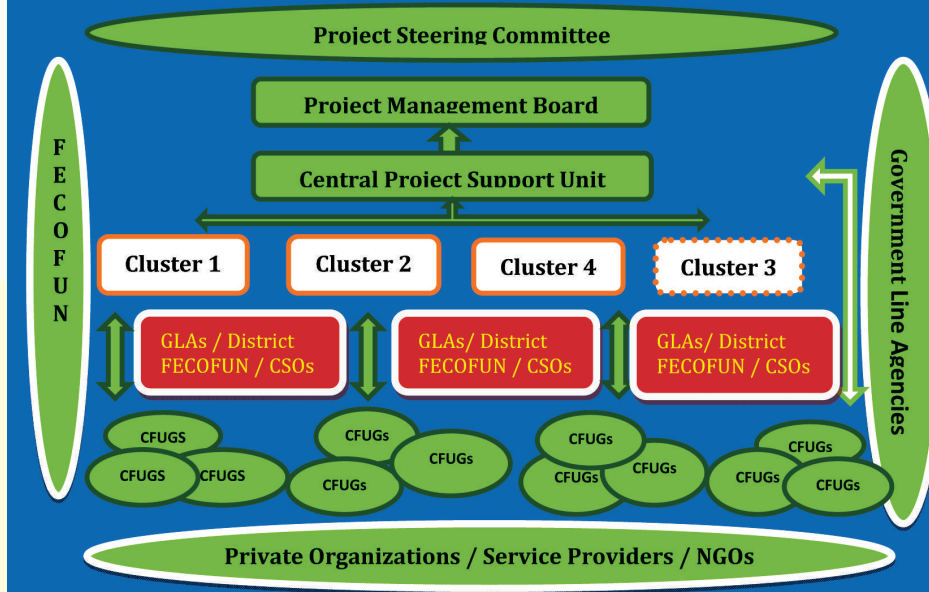
Major Strategies

® Develop the environment for mobilization of natural and financial resources of community forestry user groups

® Mobilize local resource persons and local institutions

® Coordinate and collaborate with government line agencies, stakeholders, and private sector in financial and human resource support

® Promote social inclusion of marginalized peoples' participation in decision making process

® Media mobilization for public awareness

Working Sites

Legend
Development Regions
Eastern
Central
Far-Western
Mid-Western
Western

4 Regional Clusters, 21 Districts, 104 CFUGs

Implementation Modality

- Project Steering Committee
- Project Management Board
- Central Project Support Unit
- Cluster 1 | Cluster 2 | Cluster 4 | Cluster 3
- GLAs / District FECOFUN / CSOs
- CFUGs
- FECOFUN
- Government Line Agencies
- Private Organizations / Service Providers / NGOs

Thematic Tools/Approaches

® *Sustainable Forest Management and Community Forestry Governance*

- Development of community level SFM criteria and indicators through establishment of demonstrate sites
- Community Forestry Guidelines 2065
- Good Governance Analysis Tools practiced by FECOFUN (PGA - Spider Web Diagram)
- Public Hearing and Public Auditing
- Media Mobilization

® *Community Enterprise Development*

- Identification of Poor/Marginalized group within the Community Forestry User Group (CFUG)
- Encourage mobilization of CFUG fund
- Seek fund/investment from key stakeholders
- Motivate forest users to invest
- Follow Rules and Regulations of government

Achievements and Progress:

i. Capacity Enhancement on Sustainable Forest Management and Community Forest Governance

® Conceptualization of sustainable forest management (SFM) and good governance (GG) tools in 104 CFUGs covering 28,622 Ha

® CFUGs are working on revision of forest operational plans incorporating the SFM and GG concepts

® Increasing involvement of women and other minority groups in project activities

® Increasing access of community representatives on local level funds of government and other organizations

® Growing awareness on allocation of CFUG fund for livelihood improvement of poor and marginalized groups

® Enhancing capacity of 21 LRP and leaders of 104 CFUGs

® Increasing access of marginalized people in decision making and benefit sharing

® Improving transparency and accountability within CFUGs

ii. Enterprise Development

® Processing to establish 12 enterprises through business plan development and registration as per government law

® Increased coordination and collaboration among multi-stakeholders (e.g. Basket Fund for Enterprise Development)

® Formation of Enterprise Management Committees in 12 districts

iii. Matching Fund

® Contribution in Kind - 42,069$

® Contribution in Cash – Around 50,000 $ committed by CFUGs for enterprise establishment

Monitoring and Evaluation

The project has considered monitoring and evaluation through internal monitoring system of FECOFUN and the project and external/joint monitoring and evaluation for smooth implementation of the project.

Documentation

Documentation has been considered a very integral part in the implementation of this project. Activity documentation supplemented by photos has been emphasized in this project.

Issues and Challenges

Establishing forest based enterprises incorporating the concepts of SFM and GG is a very challenging task at community level. Some of the major challenges and issues faced by the project at present are as follows:

- ® Conceptualization of SFM through economic, environmental and social perspective at community level.
- ® Maintaining community forest governance at desired level.
- ® Securing financial resource for enterprise establishment and assurance of market channelization and quality control for community products.
- ® Community enterprises under low priority area of financial institutions.
- ® High expectations of community towards financial resources from project.
- ® Continuity of SFM Demonstration Sites upon phasing out of project.

Lessons Learned

During the implementation of project activities, the project support unit conducted workshops, seminars and interaction with multiple stakeholders including CFUGs which has provided following lessons:

- ® Coordination and collaboration with multi-stakeholders results in synergistic relationship
- ® Periodic monitoring necessary to maintain good governance in CFUGs
- ® Utilization of local resource persons and local institutions are economically efficient and viable
- ® Local initiatives has the cohesive power to bring together different stakeholders
- ® Establishment of enterprise is a long-term process in terms of sustainability
- ® Joint proactive effort of multiple key stakeholders necessary for enterprises establishment
- ® More effort and coordination needed to secure counterpart funds for enterprise establishment

Way Forward

With project progress through implementation of activities, different areas have been identified which the project and the institution needs to address in order to establish sustainable enterprise with sustainable resources. The project seeks to move forward in the following direction

I. Advocacy:
- ® Conceptualize communities on community level sustainable forest management criteria and indicators and extend its reach to other CFUGS
- ® Influence to develop eco-friendly policy supporting community forestry enterprises development
- ® Mobilize media to advocate in favor of communities to simplify the tedious legal process

II. Capacity Enhancement:
- ® Promote local resource persons and local institutions to maintain sustainability of demonstration sites and enterprises
- ® Establish community enterprises based on community business plan
- ® Provide further training and empower local resource persons on the concepts of SFM, GG and community enterprise

III. Coordination and Marketing:
- ® Widening of project concept and replication of project activities to other locations
- ® Continuation of coordination and collaboration with government and other multi-stakeholders
- ® Seeking internal and external resources to continue the initiative
- ® Initiation of tying up with other projects operated by FECOFUN, government and other organizations
- ® Coordination with financial institution to promote the forest based enterprises developmen