

COMMUNITY FORESTRY: HOW INCLUSIVE IS IT?
A Case Study of Community Forest Users Groups in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Community Forestry (CF) is a participatory approach to forest management where local people are directly involved in the management and use of forest resources. In Nepal, CF program aims at supporting local livelihoods by promoting sustainable forest management. This study examines the extent to which women and the poor are represented in the decision-making and benefit-sharing mechanisms of CFUGs in the three mid-hill districts of Nepal. The research variables used were related to the participation of women and the poor in the CFUG assembly, the executive committee (EC) and EC key positions; and access of the poor to different trainings, equitable distribution of forest products and the CFUG funds.

The required data were extracted from a field survey dataset of the Livelihoods and Forestry Program. Descriptive statistics and chi-square test of the survey data revealed that women and the poor were slightly under-represented in the general assembly of the CFUGs in all three districts of the study area. Likewise, women and the poor are disproportionally represented in ECs. Besides, the analysis revealed that women and the poor were significantly under-represented in holding EC key positions. Chi-square test (X^2) statistic showed that gender and economic class are related to the executive committee leadership.

Although there is variation in terms of the degree of access to benefits derived from the program, the results for all districts show that in most cases, the non-poor benefited significantly more than the poor in all areas, with the exception of participating in CFUG level training programs. X^2 - test showed a significant relationship between the training type and the economic class in the study area.