Section V: Background and Results

Chapter 6: Contextual and situational factors for three case study sites

6.1 Introduction

The long-term co-operation among users and sustainability of resource system depends on factors both inside and outside the resource management regime (Steins 1997). A framework for analysis of these factors, developed by Edward and Steins (1998), explains collective action being emerged from and shaped by both the factors exogenous to the management regime (i.e. the contextual factors) and the internal factors (i.e. situational factors). Contextual factors are those diverse and dynamic forces “constituted in the social, cultural, economic, political, technological and institutional environment, in which the commons is embedded, are usually beyond the control of user community” (Edwards and Steins 1998, p.366). The contexts define “what is physically, legally, economically and socially feasible” [supply side] and “what is economically, socially and culturally desirable” [demand side] (Edward and Steins 1998, p.367). Situational factors constitute the forest, FUGs and institutions and are associated with the management regime and in direct control of the forest users. This chapter discusses the contextual and situational factors for three case study sites and serves as context for the case study chapters to follow.

6.2 Case Study 1: Laglage Pakha FUG, Kathmandu

6.2.1 Contextual factors

Geography

Laglage Pakha FUG is located in Matikhel village of Thankot VDC, Ward number two and all FUG members belong to this ward. The FUG is situated in one of the small hills in the west of Kathmandu district that surround the Kathmandu Valley (see Map 6.1). The valley comprises three districts, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Kathmandu is the capital of the country, which is in the Bagmati zone of central development region. Politically, the district has 46 VDCs, one municipality and one metropolitan city. Laglage Pakha FUG is situated on a hill with steep slopes. It is vulnerable to soil erosion and landslides. The hills experience a cold winter and a warm summer. The area receives around 1764 mm of average annual rainfall of which 80 percent falls during the monsoon season from June through September.
Map 6.1 Map of Laglage Pakha Community Forest and Kathmandu district (Nepal in the inset)

(Source: Laglage Pakha FUG 1999; Kathmandu DFO; modified and unscaled)
The natural resource base for the members of Laglage Pakha FUG is limited. While rivers, such as the Bagmati, Bishnumati and Sali, within the district offer environmental and religious services, they are of no direct use to Laglage users. Drinking and irrigation water is a severe problem and therefore they see the forest as a potential water source. The forest is the only natural resource upon which the community can depend for basic forest products to manage their livelihoods. While there are four other forests in Thankot VDC, only Setidevi CF offers some buffer for the Laglage CF as many Laglage users are also the users of Setidevi. The limited natural resource in Laglage Pakha means that the forest in Laglage experiences intense pressures from increased population in and around the FUG.

**Political factors**

Kathmandu is the centre for country’s political activities. Despite its proximity to Laglage Pakha FUG, the politics of Kathmandu have relatively little influence in the FUG, mainly because the FUG members are mostly illiterate and lack influential political leaders. Within the community, there is no significant level of political awareness. Some patterns of social and political interactions are mostly influenced by affiliation to a particular ethnicity, Magar. This ethnic group is known for loyalty towards their group leader. The politics among users is that the members follow their ethnic leader. The FUG members are keen to protect the forest because their leaders are committed to protect the forest.

**Socio-cultural factors**

While the FUG is dominated by Magars, it exists close to the large and culturally rich community of Newars, a dominant ethnic group in the Kathmandu Valley. There are few Tamang member households in Laglage Pakha FUG, despite Tamangs being the traditional inhabitants of most villages surrounding the valley. The Magar dominated Laglage FUG is cohesive, due largely to the persistence of ethnic religion, language, culture, clothing style and specific rituals within the village.

As the population in Kathmandu has increased, some residents, who seek a relatively cheap and less polluted environment, have settled in, or close to, Laglage Pakha. This changing demography will eventually cause a socio-economic and cultural transformation of the existing communities in and around the Laglage Pakha.

The Laglage Pakha FUG members are largely illiterate. Based on the HQI conducted, most of the people above 40 years of age have never attended school. Even the younger people have a high rate of drop-out during the primary schooling (up to grade 5), which means Laglage Pakha falls...
well below the national literacy rate of 60.25 percent (82.07 percent for Kathmandu) for people over the age of six (CBS 2002a).

Economic factors

Matikhel village, from where most members come to Laglage Pakha FUG, is predominantly a subsistence economy, heavily dependent on agriculture. The production of crops is associated with on-farm labour inputs and off-farm inputs, such as fertilisers, pesticides and capital. A very limited part of the production is sold in the market. It is surprising that the close market proximity to Kathmandu has had a very little effect on the agrarian economy of Laglage Pakha.

This isolation is changing however, as the relative deprivation of basic infrastructure in Laglage Pakha FUG has forced the community to depend on other areas to receive goods and services. Although the major highway of Nepal, the Prithivi Highway that links many parts of Nepal to the capital, runs through the north-west of Matikhel, there is no permanent link road from the highway to the village. The lack of road networks has impacts on the mobility of people, goods and services from and to the community. The area is deprived of irrigation, high school, medical facilities, drinking water supplies and has limited facilities for electricity and telecommunication. These factors have forced the community to depend on other areas, mainly the local town, Thankot. While this dependence is creating a connection between the Laglage Pakha and the local market, the FUG members rarely supply anything significant to receive benefits from the local market. There are enormous opportunities for the subsistence economy of Laglage to change and prosper.

History of forest management

Due to the geographical proximity and relative ease of access to Kathmandu, the hills surrounding the capital, which include Laglage Pakha, have historically supplied forest products to the residents and rulers of Kathmandu. The rapid decline of the forest was triggered by the urbanisation, industrialisation and rapid increase in the population of Kathmandu. By 1965, the forests were mostly destroyed. The DFO Kathmandu carried out the plantation of *Salla*\(^2\) in 1966 in Laglage Pakha with the help of World Bank and FAO. This plantation introduced new species, imposed a new system of forest management which neglected socio-cultural practices and increased the presence of DFO staff to restrict forest use. Deforestation continued, however, and the size and quality of the plantation has significantly reduced because the external plantation and protection programs did not account for the need of the users who had no alternatives other than using forests for their livelihoods.

\(^2\) *Salla* is a local name for *Pinus Species*; the coniferous species that produce softwood useful for furniture and light construction timber.
CF was introduced in Laglage Pakha in 1994/1995, mainly to combat continuing deforestation. While it was one of the early CFs formed in Kathmandu, CF policy was introduced in 1987, but took almost eight years to be implemented in the capital district. Despite this late introduction, the Laglage community accepted CF. Laglage Pakha FUG is one of the most active and effective FUGs in the district. There are, however, serious doubts on many FUGs about their quality and effectiveness to actively implement CF. The forest was handed over to the Laglage Pakha FUG initially for five years. In 2000, the OP plan was amended and approved by the DFO for another five years.

The implementation of CF in Kathmandu district is not impressive. Started in 1994, only 139 FUGs have been formed until 2003, which is less than average for a hill district in Nepal. The trend of FUGs’ formation is not encouraging (see Figure 6.1).

![FUG formation in Kathmandu District](image)

Figure 6.1 Community Forestry in Kathmandu district

The declining rate of FUG formation in the district is partly because there are limited numbers of potential CFs available to be handed over, but mainly because the resources at DFO are increasingly limited. There are eight range posts and one Ilaka office within the DFO. Laglage Pakha FUG is supported by Mahadevsthlan range post. While the donors’ support to CF has been instrumental, there is no specific project which focuses on the CF of Kathmandu. Laglage Pakha FUG does not receive direct support from any donors. All support activities from donors come through the DFO, which are insufficient and untimely. While there are many requests made by interested communities to become FUGs, they are pending at the DFO office. The number and skills of supporting staff are limited and ill-equipped with the CF knowledge and skills required to

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3 Ilaka is the section of a district divided for forest administration purpose and looked after by an Ilaka Forest Office. Normally each district in Nepal has one to three Ilaka offices within which Range posts operate.
work with the community. More information on socio-economic, land use and forestry in Kathmandu district can be seen in Appendix B-1.

6.2.2 Situational Factors

Situational factors at Laglage Pakha CF constitute the forest management regime. These factors can be explained using three key headings; the forest, the community and the institution.

a. The forest

The forest is the basic element of community forest management regime. Effective management of CF requires knowledge on the availability of forest products and the condition of forests, which determine the benefits and necessary management strategies. The size, location, boundary, type and composition of forest indicate the availability of forest (to supply present and future benefits). On the other hand, the condition of forest can be represented in terms of the stocking of stems, species diversity, crown cover, standing DBH, height and biomass.

Size, location and boundary of forest

Laglage Pakha forest is a small forest of 13.5 ha, situated on a steep northwest-facing slope with a central ridge in a setting of sub-tropical climate. The upper landscape is steeper and vulnerable to soil erosion and landslides. However, there are no traces of soil erosion in Laglage. The boundary of the CF extends to agricultural land and the Prithivi Highway in the south, Matikhel village and agricultural land in the east, Tutepani Stream and a trail in the west, and Lamochaur stream in the south (see Map 6.1). There are two neighbouring CFs, Setidevi and Baghbachhala Devi CFs. Most of the users of Setidevi FUG are also the users of Laglage.

Forest composition and condition

Laglage CF is a mixed forest of hardwood and coniferous species, the former having naturally regenerated and the latter established through plantation. The forest is divided into two blocks of equal size; Laglage Pakha and Pokhari Danda, established through plantation and natural regeneration respectively (see Map 6.1). The dominant hardwood species in the forest are _Chilaune, Katus_ and _Salla_. The plantation of coniferous species (_Salla_) was done in the lower ridge and closer to the village settlement during the time of rapid deforestation. Effective protection measures under CF have encouraged the regeneration of hardwood species in the upper ridge and within the open space of the lower ridge. In the open spaces, the FUG members have planted cash generating species like _Amriso, Bamboo, Jethimadhu_, and _Panisara_, developed a picnic spot, a 300m long fire-line and a shrub-land improvement demonstration plot. A grafting program is also underway, in which 38 _Naspati_ fruit trees are being grafted in _Mayal_ trees.
Anecdotal evidence shows that the forest was almost barren land before the introduction of CF. However, the Rapid Forest Assessment (RFA) found that the forest is a young, good quality forest, closely situated to the village settlements (Photo 6.1).

Photo 6.1 Laglage Pakha Community Forest

The total number of stems per hectare is 11,734, with 59.1 percent seedlings, 33.2 percent saplings, 7.1 percent poles and 0.6 percent trees (see Table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species (in local names)¹</th>
<th>Seedling</th>
<th>Saplings</th>
<th>Poles</th>
<th>Trees</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jhingane</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>1333</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katus</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilaune</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salla</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaphal</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2467</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6934</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11734</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of total | 59.1 | 33.2 | 7.1 | 0.6 | 100% |

²The names of all species are local names and are in italics (e.g. Sal). Scientific names of each species are provided in Appendix D-5.

The main species of the forest are Jhingan, Katus, Daphne, Chilaune and Salla. The dominant species such as Jhingan, Daphne, and Kaphal, which account for about 65.3 percent, are seedlings and saplings and do not offer major benefits to users. The most dominant species i.e. Jhingan, is
not the users’ preferred species. *Salla* is the only tree species which was established through plantation, suggesting that there were no trees left before the plantation.

Laglage Pakha forest is diverse in terms of species, DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) and height. The RFA found 24 species of various sizes recorded in three sample plots (each 10m x 10m). The plant diversity index (PDI) was very low (0.07, out of possible 1). The average crown cover percentage is 71.7, with micro-site variations in slope and aspect (see Appendix D-2.a). With DBH ranging between 3 to 32 cm and height of 3 to 36 metres, the forest is a mixture of different DBH and height class (see Appendix D-2.b). However, due to a large number of plants being seedlings and saplings, lower DBH and height are predominant.

**Supply potential and actual benefit flow from Laglage Pakha forest**

From the RFA, it was estimated that the forest has a supply potential of 77 bhari of foliage (excluding regeneration and ground grass), 174 bhari of fuelwood and 63 cubic feet (cu ft.) of timber per hectare per year (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Number of stems, biomass Annual Allowable harvest in Laglage Pakha FUG/ha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development class</th>
<th>Per hectare</th>
<th>Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH)/ha</th>
<th>Allowable harvest/ha/yr*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of stems</td>
<td>Biomass (kg)</td>
<td>Avg. age (yr.)</td>
<td>MAI (kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seedling</td>
<td>6900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapling</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>144830</td>
<td>14574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each household can receive an average of 14 cu ft. of timber, 39 bhari of fuelwood and 17 bhari of foliage per year (see Appendix D-2.d). The actual quantity of timber and fuelwood provided by CF is less than what would be potentially available according to HQI and RFA (Figure 6.2). The potential supply from forests can meet the timber demand, but cannot meet the fuelwood demand (see Figure 6.2). The forest is under-utilised but FUG members’ needs are not met (Appendix D-2.e).

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5 Bhari is a Nepali term which generally refers to an average load of forests products that a person can carry. It is approximately 30 kg (Malla et al 2003).

6 The basis for calculation is in Appendix D-2.c.
b. The Community

Laglage Pakha FUG comprises 61 households with a total population of 287. The settlement of user households extends over discrete groups of 5-20 households in the north-east of Laglage CF area. The FUG can roughly be divided into 4-5 hamlets. Agricultural lands surround households within each hamlet. While many users grow and consume rice, vegetables and fruits in their farmland, most of them obtain insufficient food from their land. The majority of households do not have a regular off-farm income and are poor. The sample data suggested that 65 percent of HHs are poor, 30 percent medium and 5 percent rich. Similarly, the FUG is relatively homogenous; 85 percent belonging to the middle caste, dominated by Magar ethnic group (see Appendix B-3). These families are largely male-headed households (70%), with a family size of 4 to 6 members. The community is increasingly mixed with other castes such as Newars, Chettri and Sunar (goldsmith) who have migrated to the surroundings and become members of the FUG.

Productive agricultural land is limited in Matikhel village because of the steep slope of the landscape. The sample data suggest that 15 percent households are landless or only have a gharbari (house land), while 60 percent have less than 3 ropanis\(^7\) of agricultural lands. The sample data also suggest that 75 percent of households own livestock mainly oxen, buffalo, goats and chicken. Most households depend on the market for many goods and services. This dependence is increasing as the land productivity is decreasing. This is gradually forcing the villagers to seek income beyond agriculture.

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\(^7\) Ropani is a unit of area equal to 0.05 hectare.
c. The institutions

In theory, Laglage FUG is legally autonomous to devise and implement locally suitable rules. These rules define what actions are required, prohibited or permitted in CF to achieve order for collective actions and sustainability of forest resource. In practice, the FUG members have rarely devised and implemented rules by themselves. Rules can be categorised into operational rules, collective choice rules and constitutional rules (see Appendix C-1). Since these rules are nested, the rules affecting operational choice are made within a set of collective choice rules, which are themselves made within a set of constitutional rules.

Operational rules:

Operational rules encompass rules defining users, restricting the access and use of forests, specifying the contribution on protection and management of forest and setting the penalty. These operational rules cover boundary, allocation, input, penalty and output rules as discussed by Ostrom (1990).

According to the OP of Laglage FUG, user households, who depend on the forest, can become members of the FUG by paying Rs 80 membership fee, subject to renewal each year. If one fails to pay the fees for three consecutive years, the member may be excluded from the FUG.

Laglage Pakha FUG strictly regulates the access and use of the forest. No member is allowed to enter the forest on days other than specified in the OP. Only three weeks in three months (July to September) are allocated for grass collection and five weeks in five months (January to May) for leaf litter collection. Each household is required to get a coupon (Rs 2) to enter the forest. Other products, such as fuelwood and timber, are generally extracted only during the silvicultural operations, aiming at improving the forest. While the fuelwood is free and equally distributed, timber is auctioned. Normally richer sections of the community have access at auction. There is no provision for extracting timber for agricultural implements for users who largely depend on agriculture. Charcoal extraction is prohibited. Most of these rules are decided by general assembly and implemented by the FUGC. Since the forest is open for such a limited time, users, who are heavily forest dependent, are forced to meet their needs elsewhere.

The Laglage Pakha FUG is committed to forest protection and management. All users patrol the forest on a rotational basis to control grazing, forest fires and encroachment. All members are required to participate in scrubland management and cleaning activities every year and thinning activities in every second year between February and April. They have planted seedlings of fodder species as well as income generating species, such as Tea, Amriso, Alaichi, Nigalo, Ginger and Timur. They have a plan to establish a nursery and to build a FUGC office as well as some picnic
spots. These activities show that the FUG is active and committed to forest protection and management.

There are heavy penalties for illegal activities. Although the penalty system shows the seriousness of users in forest protection, the heavy penalties for users and double penalties for non-users are critical, particularly for poor users. The high penalties also add doubts on their practicality and effectiveness. The penalty rules are summarised in Appendix C-3.

**Collective-choice rules**

Collective-choice rules regulate the ways forests should be managed. Rules are used to devise future operational rules and facilitate the enforcement of operational rules through a collective body (i.e. FUGC). In principle, users are supposed to make decisions through regular meetings and general assembly including selecting and changing the FUGC. In practice, however, most decisions are made and changed by the FUGC and DFO.

The key outcome of the general assembly of users is the Constitution and Operational Plan that contains specifications for entry and exit to the collective choice arena, roles, responsibilities and authority, tenure and termination processes of the FUGC. This also includes the processes to be followed before rules are changed.

The membership rules for collective choice levels for Laglage FUG state that a FUGC is formed with 11 to 15 members from among the FUG. At least one woman member is compulsory. The FUGC is selected, either by consensus, or by democratic majority rule. While the normal tenure of the FUGC is fixed for three years, the FUG can terminate the tenure of FUGC members if the member resigns, dies, becomes physically or mentally unsuitable for the position, exercises favouritism, or does not attend a FUGC meeting three times without any notice; or acts or supports action against the OP and destroys the forest (Laglage Pakha FUG 1999, p.16). The roles, responsibilities and authorities of users’ assembly, FUGC and DFO are outlined in Appendix C-2.

**Constitutional rules**

Constitutional rules are external to the Laglage FUG. These rules determine who is eligible to participate and what specific rules will be used to form the set of collective choice and operational rules (Edwards & Steins 1998). The Forest Act 1993 entitles the FUG to take over the management and control of forests and gives the legal recognition of the FUG as an autonomous institution. The DFO staff, however, influence the processes from the FUG formation through implementation and review of OP as the Act 1993 and Regulation 1995 have also empowered the DFO with both responsibility and authority to control FUG activities. The state, through the DFO, still owns the land and holds the power to dissolve the FUG.
6.3 Case Study 2: Bagbhanjyang FUG, Tanahun

6.3.1 Contextual Factors

Geography

Bagbhanjyang community forest is a small cap-shaped hill situated in the northwest of Damauli town in Vyas Municipality Ward No 11 of Tanahun district (see Map 6.2). The forest is surrounded by Vyas Road and agriculture lands in the east and north, and Madi River and Damauli city on the west and the south respectively. The area has a subtropical climate, averaging 15-25.8 degree Celsius. Having a microclimate created by surrounding mountains and rivers, a typical winter day in Damauli is characterised by fog, which remains heavy until midday. Forest related activities are constrained in the summer by mosquitoes and unpredictable rainfall. The average annual rainfall is about 2057 mm. The red and sandy soil in a steep landscape is vulnerable to soil erosion during the monsoon between July and September.

Tanahun district, in which the Bagbhanjyang CF is situated, is a hill district of Gandaki Zone in the Western Development Region of Nepal. It is about 150 km west of Kathmandu and is linked by the Prithivi Highway. Politically, it has 46 VDCs and one municipality. Damauli town in Vyas Municipality is the district’s headquarter.

Political factors

Damauli has always been politically sensitive. As a district’s headquarter, many local, district and national leaders use Damauli as a platform for politics. While many political parties are present, the Nepali Congress is the dominant party. Some of the influential national leaders in the Nepali Congress Party (the biggest political party in Nepal) are from Tanahun district. The leaders and supporters of the Nepali Congress Party are influential in district activities, including forestry.

In the history of CF in Nepal, probably the most politicised CF issue emerged from Tanahun district. In 1994/1995, Koidim FUG, with 130 households managing the biggest CF (508 ha) in Tanahun, was permitted to cut and sell a huge quantity of timber from its natural Sal forest. The decision was widely criticised and the DFO reversed its decision. The FUG took the case to the Supreme Court. The DFO was suspended by the Ministry and the FUG was about to be written off. Dramatically, the FUG and DoF settled the case without giving much public information. As it happened close to Damauli, this crisis has a significant impact on the utilisation and management of forest in Bagbhanjyang.
Map 6.2 Map of Bagbhanjyang Community Forest and Tanahun district (Nepal in the inset)

(Source: Bagbhanjyang FUG and DFO Tanahun; modified)
Socio-cultural factors

The users of Bagbhanjyang and the residents of Damauli are socio-culturally diverse. Originally local indigenous social groups, Daraii and Bote, inhabited Damauli. Currently, these groups are marginalised. The new social composition is strikingly diverse as many ethnic/caste groups, such as Newar, Brahmin, Chettri, Magar, Gurung and untouchable castes have migrated to Damauli in search of a better life. Many households in Damauli have retired army members, who are particularly influential in Bagbhanjyang FUG.

The Damauli population of 28,245 in 2001 represents about 9 percent of the total district population. It was only 20,124 in 1991. This increase can be partly linked to the intra-district migration in Damauli. This increases the pressures to Bagbhanjyang as it brings new users of FUGs. The demography of Tanahun district for the last thirty years suggests that the population is increasing rapidly, but not as fast as the population in Nepal (see Figure 6.3).

Economic factors

Bagbhanjyang FUG is a developed urban community. Its economy is predominantly a market economy. It is well connected with major cities of Nepal. The town contains facilities, such as
medical centres, schools, colleges and telecommunication facilities in a setting of extensive road networks. This accessibility of Bagbhanjyang CF makes the flow of forest products from Bagbhanjyang easy and the forest vulnerable to illicit cutting.

Damauli is relatively better off than other parts of Tanahun district. Many Bagbhanjyang users own agricultural land close to the town which they generally rent out to poor villagers. Since the district has a significantly higher percentage of agriculture land (41.1 %), compared to the national average (27%), only about 15 percent are landless in Tanahun. 43.29 percent of population is engaged in agriculture, while 85.33 percent of households depend on it. The agriculture is not self-sufficient as 69 percent of households in Tanahun are not able to produce sufficient food (DDC Tanahun 2001). Many people go overseas for employment.

**History of forest management**

The forest was healthy in Bagbhanjyang, while it was used and managed by the indigenous *Daraii* and *Bote*. The destruction was induced by a political decision by the state to relocate the district headquarter from Bandipur to Damauli in 1969. With the relocation, many government offices were constructed, migration increased and population rose. The new district centre became a centre for administrative, political and economic activities. The “development” of Damauli used raw materials extracted from the local forests. The forest office established thereafter issued *purgi* (forest concession licence). The climax of the forest destruction occurred at the time of political referendum in 1980.

As a response to the massive deforestation, the users of Damauli *Panchayat* ward number two started to protect the forest through an informal forest protection committee in 1983. The locally initiated and elite-inspired protection committee devised local rules to collect money from each household and employed a forest watcher. This was effective for the restoration of Bagbhanjyang forest. This system was only recognised by the state through the DFO Tanahun in 1991, after the restoration of democracy in 1990. This political change also changed the status of Damauli from panchayat to Vyas Municipality and previous ward number two was divided into three wards. The administrative and political re-division divided the existing FUG into two FUGs in 1998; Bagbhanjyang FUG (30.42 ha) and Birata FUG (37 ha).

DFO Tanahun has been responsible for managing the forests of Tanahun district. The DoF database shows that there are currently 289 FUGs managing 19,152.01 ha of forests in Tanahun. This has benefited 29,045 households (DoF 2003). As of 2001, about 30 percent of the total forest area (62,654 ha) of Tanahun district has been handed over to FUGs (DFO Tanahun 2001). The FUG formation trend is illustrated in Figure 6.4.
Out of eight range posts, the Vyas Range Post, in which the Bagbhanjyang CF is situated, is the most active Range post in Tanahun that handed over more than 22 percent of FUGs in the district. Due to the higher number of FUGs in Vyas, the support from the DFO is limited to FUGs. Additionally, two projects; Hill Leasehold and Forage Development Project (HLFDP) and Natural Resource Management Sector Assistance Programme (NARMSAP), which are supporting FUGs in Tanahun, are also co-ordinated by the DFO. More information on socio-economic, land use and forestry in Tanahun can be seen in Appendix B-1.

6.3.2 Situational Factors

The situational factors of Bagbhanjyang CF include three components: the forest, the community and the institutions.

a. The forest

The forest of Bagbhanjyang was almost destroyed due to political and other factors. The present status is encouraging as the forest has improved.

Size, location and boundary of forest

The area of the Bagbhanjyang forest is 30.42 ha which is surrounded by the Vyas Road and agriculture land in the east and north, and trail and Madi River in the west and residential area of Damauli town in the south. Its proximity to Damauli and the extensive network of roads makes the forest accessible for users and non-users. The protection of the forest and the exclusion of non-users is therefore a challenge for the Bagbhanjyang FUG.
Forest composition and condition

Bagbhanjyang CF is a naturally regenerated broad-leaved forest dominated by Sal and Chilaune. It is an even-aged and homogenous forest. Its ground cover is mixed, which includes species such as Bhoddeheiro, Simal, Kyamun, Padke, Katus and Yeiselu. The vigorous regeneration and closed canopy of the forest means that it is a young dense forest, supporting wildlife, such as leopard, monkeys, foxes, deer and bees.

The forest has been divided into five blocks to provide sustainable supply of forest products. This division was done by the DFO and the FUG. The description of blocks is given in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Blocks in Bagbhanjyang CF and their descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block no.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Slope</th>
<th>No. of stems/ha (no seedlings)</th>
<th>No. of seedlings /ha</th>
<th>Basal area (sq.m.)/ha</th>
<th>Main species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sankharpakha</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>20°</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>15479</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>Sal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sitalpakha</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>19°</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>14571</td>
<td>37.03</td>
<td>Sal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anoppakha</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>22°</td>
<td>2226</td>
<td>22857</td>
<td>33.89</td>
<td>Sal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bagbhanjyang</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>20°</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>8669</td>
<td>34.48</td>
<td>Sal/Chilaune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jude pani</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>21°</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>6759</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>Chilaune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average/ha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2088</td>
<td>13667</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bagbhanjyang FUG (1999)

The above table shows that the forest comprises mainly two species; Sal and Chilaune. The growing stock of Bagbhanjyang CF is very good. The conclusion from the DFO staff was that the stock was too high and there was a need for significant thinning, with about 50 percent stems (Bagbhanjyang FUG 1998). In practice, users hesitate to follow extensive thinning in the forest.

RFA was carried out in Bagbhanjyang CF in three plots (each of size 10 m x 10 m), established in different sites representing the diversity of the forest. The findings are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Results of RFA in Bagbhanjyang CF/ha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Seedlings</th>
<th>Saplings</th>
<th>Poles</th>
<th>Trees</th>
<th>Total (except seedlings)</th>
<th>Total including seedlings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>4034</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>1333</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>5767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilaune</td>
<td>2300</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>3133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghantu</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angeri</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4133</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15900</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2566</td>
<td>18466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The RFA found that the forest is dominated by seedlings, saplings and poles of *Sal* and *Chilaune* species. The forest is young and dominated by seedlings (86.1%). The largest numbers of stems were Ghantu (4,700/ha), which is considered as the biological indicator for sites that support *Sal* species, but has no significant use value itself. Trees constitute only 0.2 percent of *Sal* species. When the seedlings are excluded, the forest contains 67.5 percent of poles, 31.2 percent of saplings and 1.3 percent of trees.

Although the density varies widely within the forest, the overall forest condition is good. There are 2,566 stems per hectare excluding seedlings, which is increased from 2,088 per hectare in 1999. This increase has contributed to bring the crown density to 60 percent (see Appendix D-3.a). Additionally, there is very good regeneration and the number of seedlings increased from 13,667 in 1999 to 15,900 in 2001 (DFO Tanahun 2001). The south part close to the town has an open space where a drinking water tank and the Vyas Range Post are situated (Photo 6.2). This open site displays signs of pressure and requires new plantation. In the southeast, the electricity transmission lines have forced some trees to be cut. There are no significant open spaces and soil erosion within the forest. The plant diversity index is low at 0.04 (from the possible 1). The forest is good in terms of the diversity of DBH, height and biomass and volume (see Appendix D-3.b). The overall quality of the forest is good which shows considerable potential as a source of valuable quality timber for furniture, raw material for construction, fuelwood, and other forest products.
Supply potential and actual product flows from Bagbhanjyang CF

Bagbhanjyang CF is providing both direct and indirect benefits to the FUG and others. From RFA, it was estimated that the forest can potentially supply 105 cu ft. of timber, 184 bhari of fuelwood and 64 bhari of foliage (excluding regeneration and ground grass) (Table 6.5).

Table 6.5^ Number of stems, biomass and Annual Allowable Harvest in Bagbhanjyang FUG/ha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development class</th>
<th>Per hectare</th>
<th>Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH)/ha</th>
<th>Allowable harvest/ha/yr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of stems</td>
<td>Biomass (kg)</td>
<td>Avg. age (yr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seedling</td>
<td>15900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapling</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>24710</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>238432</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24331</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each household can receive an average of 18.8 cu ft. of timber, 32.9 bhari of fuelwood and 11.5 bhari of foliage per year (see Appendix D-3.d). The actual harvest of forest products is minimal in relation to the potential supply of the forest. The forest can potentially meet the fuelwood demand of the FUG, but it cannot meet the timber demand (see Figure 6.5). As all households use alternative fuel for cooking, there is an enormous surplus of fuelwood. This is opposite to the case of Laglage Pakha FUG. This is contradictory to the demand and supply analysis by the DFO for Tanahun district, which shows that the demand far outweighs the supply (DFO Tanahun 2001).

Figure 6.5 Under-utilisation of Bagbhanjyang Community Forest

The forest is significantly underutilised due to the rules that limit product harvesting.

^The basis for the calculation of this table is in Appendix D-3.c.
b. The Community

Bagbhajanjang FUG is situated in urban setting and comprises 170 households with a total population of 1,106 users. The FUG is spread out in a number of toles\(^9\) in the south of the forest. Users were identified on the basis of the administrative boundary of ex-Damauli *Panchayat* ward number two. When the *Panchayat* was converted into a municipality, ward number two was divided and the FUG members are spread out in Municipality ward numbers 2, 10 and 11. The FUG represents 3.9 percent of the total population of Vyas Municipality and 9.6 percent of the total combined population of ward number 2, 10 and 11 of the municipality.

The FUG is relatively wealthy and heterogenous. Out of 170 households, 23 households were systematically selected as sample households in terms of wealth ranks [poor (4), medium (4), rich (15)]; gender [female-headed HHs (5) and male-headed HHs (18)]; and ethnicity/caste groups [Lower caste (1), middle caste (16) and higher caste (6)]. Other features of the sample households of the FUG can be seen in Appendix B-3.

Although almost all households of Bagbhajanjang depend on business and paid employment, the FUG members are economically heterogenous, owing to great variations in private land, income sources and food security. There are 48 percent of landless users who are mostly poor and depend on wage labour. The rich users, while having good income earning businesses, also tend to own private land.

The ethnic composition of the FUG is heterogenous. *Bote* and *Daraii* are the indigenous people of Damauli, but migrant groups, such as *Brahmin* and *Chhetri* (higher caste); *Newar*, *Gurung*, *Magar*, *Tamang* (middle caste); and *Kami*, *Damai* and *Sarki* (lower caste – untouchables) constitutes the majority of the FUG. The details of the ethnicity/caste in the FUG and in the sample are presented in Appendix B-3.

The market setting of the FUG has a number of impacts on the way users manage their livelihoods. The livestock holdings are very small with details of livestock given in Appendix B-4. Cylinder gas or kerosene stoves are used for cooking food and only a minority of users use fuelwood for cooking in conjunction with kerosene stoves (17%) (see Appendix B-5). Since there are no trees on private land, the above factors influence the demands of forest products.

The economic, ethnic and gender aspects of the FUG were considered in forming the FUGC in Bagbhajanjang. The representation of females is significant in the FUGC positions, such as vice-chairperson and secretary (Table 6.6). During the field survey, only the chairman and secretary were active in assisting this research.

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\(^9\)Tole is a group of houses of different ethnicity, located along the street/path.
Table 6.6 Composition of Bagbhanjyang FUGC by wealth ranks, gender and ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of Bagbhanjyang FUGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUGC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. The institutions

The institutional arrangements of Bagbhanjyang FUG regulate access and forest resource allocation and provide for sanctions for non-compliance. These arrangements include rules that are formal and written down in the OP and constitution of the FUG as well as informal rules, which are common practice, but not detailed in the formal piece of paper. While the OP provides the terms and conditions for the management of forest, it is the constitution that describes the conditions for collective action.

Operational rules

Bagbhanjyang FUG with the help of DFO Tanahun has demarcated and established the boundaries of the forest and listed 170 households who can get access to the resource system. The OP regulates where, when and how long users may have access to certain parts of the forest. Since the forest is divided into five plots for the purpose of scientific management, the access is managed and specified in terms of these blocks for three months (January, February and March) each year in a rotational basis. This is the main time users collect forest products. Users can access the forest from July to September when they are required to participate in the plantation of income generating species (mainly Bamboo) and in godmel (i.e. cleaning, weeding etc).

The operational rules also spell out for how the benefits of the forest are realised in Bagbhanjyang. The FUGs collect forest products from the specified blocks as well as dry and dead trees from anywhere in the forest during the year. The products are also collected by confiscating products from illicit cuttings. There is a provision that such products are ‘proportionately’ distributed among the users. However, they are not free of cost. In order to regulate the distribution, there is a limit system. The collection of ground grass, leaf litter and fodder and charcoal production is prohibited. The free forest products are Sal leaves and Bamboo Lingo (i.e. a religious use of Bamboo shoot), but only for religious and social purposes. These products are also available for non-users, but this attracts fees.

The OP of Bagbhanjyang FUG also specifies the type and size of contributions from the users in the protection and management of the forest. All user households are required to provide voluntary contributions for forest protection, management and utilisation activities. However, there is a
tendency that many households send hired labourers for such activities on their behalf. The forest is protected through the self-discipline of the users, rotational patrolling from the member households and particularly through hiring two forest watchers.

The fines are very high. At the extreme, users could be expelled from the FUG. Non-members are fined double the fines provisioned for the members (see Appendix C-5). The OP has strict penalty rules that specify the process and extent of sanctions and who will execute the rules. While the FUG assembly takes the decisions on the process and extent of sanctions, the assessment of the non-compliance activities against the OP and advice for the sanctions remains the authority of the FUGC. If someone among the FUG members commits illegal activities within the forest, the FUG confiscates both the forest products and instruments used by the illegal cutters. These are sold at auction.

**Collective choice rules**

Collective-choice rules include the entry and exit rules for the FUGC membership (membership rules), formation and termination of FUGC, roles, responsibilities and authorities of the FUGC and general assembly (position and authority rules) and the processes required to inform and change the operational rules (procedural and information rules). Rules devised in these arenas are used by the FUGs, FUGC and the DFO in making policies (operational rules).

The FUGC is a collective body that is supposed to execute the decisions made by the assembly. In order to become a member of the FUGC, one must be a member of the FUG. The rules requires 13 executive members in the FUGC, at least 20 percent must be female. The chairperson is the head and most powerful person of the FUGC, followed by the secretary. The FUGC is formed, either by the consensus, or by the majority of FUG members. The collective choice rules are also established by assigning certain roles, responsibilities and authorities for the general assembly and FUGC, which are outlined in Appendix C-4.

While in theory the assembly members are responsible to prepare the constitution and OP, define and recognise use rights and decide all kinds of rules, the FUGC appears more powerful in devising rules and enforcing them on the ground. The major decisions are mainly taken by the FUGC in the assembly meetings, which are organised twice a year. The process of making, changing and informing the decisions usually occurs at the FUGC, which meets at least once in two months. The FUGC can only make valid decisions if at least of 60 percent members are present. The decisions are as far as possible taken by consensus or otherwise by the majority. All decisions are written in a decision-file, which becomes official only when it is jointly certified by the chairman and the secretary. The FUGC is also authorised to delegate its responsibilities and
authorities to sub-committees. There are specific processes to be followed for both punishments and rewards, which are administered through the FUGC.

Constitution rules

Constitutional rules of Bagbhanjyang FUG determine the eligibility of users to participate in the CF system and provide a crucial space for devising, enforcing and modifying collective-choice and operational rules. External decision making arrangements are set out by the Forest Act 1993, Forest Regulation 1995 and other government orders and directives. Since these rules are made by the national level politicians and higher level bureaucrats, the Bagbhanjyang FUG does not have influence in devising these rules. These rules are, however, legal arrangements administered through the DFO and must be followed by the Bagbhanjyang FUG. The authority given to the DFO through these requirements makes the DFO powerful to control many activities of the FUG.

6.4 Case Study 3: Pragatisil FUG, Kaski

6.4.1 Contextual Factors

Geography

Pragatisil CF is situated in ward number 13 of Lekhnath Municipality in Kaski district. The forest is surrounded by the Khudi Khol in the east, Seti River in the west, Kotre Khol in the south and ward number 12 of the municipality in the north. Situated in the eastern part of the district covering 57.74 ha of forests, it borders Tanahun in the east separated by the Kotre Khol (see Map 6.3). The area of forest represents 0.7 percent of the total municipality area. This CF is about ten kilometres east of the second biggest city of Nepal, Pokhara. The Prithivi Highway, which connects Pragatisil and Pokhara, runs through CF.

Situated in the middle hill region, Pragatisil CF consists of a number of small cap-shaped hills. It lies in the flat river plain of the Seti River in the south. This area constitutes the greater Pokhara Valley surrounded by the Annapurna range. It enjoys a mild sub-tropical climate and heavy monsoonal rainfall. While the specific land use information for CF is not available, the district information shows that the forest area is about 38 percent, 25 percent cultivated land, 13 percent grass land and remaining rocks, lakes, settlement and snow area (DFO Kaski 2000). The area has problems of flooding, lack of sufficient forest products, and soil erosion.
Map 6.3 Map of Pragatisil Community Forests and Kaski District (Nepal in the inset)

(Source: Pragatisil FUG 2000; DDC Kaski 2002)
Political factors

The users of Pragatisil FUG are divided in terms of the political ideology. Many FUG members support the Nepali Congress Party and the Nepal Communist Party (CPN) [United Marxist and Leninist (UML)]. This generally reflects the overall politics of Lekhnath Municipality and the politics of Kaski district. The communists generally win the majority of seats for the parliament as well as in the District Development Committee (DDC) because of their penetration within major ethnic groups, such as Gurung. However, in the last election, the constituency elected a congress candidate, a national level leader, who served as Speaker of the House of Representative in the Parliament.

One of the impacts of the higher level politics in Pragatisil FUG is that many members of the FUGC are elected partly because they are affiliated to certain political parties. Within the group members who follow the same ideology, the higher caste and rich users are dominant in powerful positions and in making important decisions. This polarisation is often unproductive as the FUGC members sometimes oppose agendas because they belong to different political parties.

Socio-cultural factors

The socio-cultural context for Pragatisil FUG and Kaski District in general is multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious. However, there is a domination by different ethnicities; Brahmin, Chettri and Gurung, two languages; Nepali and Gurung and two religions; Hindu (82.7%) and Buddhist (15.9%). Gurungs, who are traditionally Buddhist, inhabit the upper hill region of the district and account for 19 percent of the total population. With the increase in income (mainly from overseas jobs), they have migrated to the lowland and cities, including in Pragatisil area. The lowlands and valleys of Kaski District are, however, dominated by Brahmin (37%) and Chhettri (26%), who follow the Hindu religion and speak the Nepali language.

The demography of Kaski shows a young population. While the majority of the population are under the age of 29 (64.58%), the literacy is high (76.05%) compared to the national average (60.25%). However, female literacy is only 26.44%, well below the national average (35.54%). The population in Lekhnath Municipality as well as in Kaski District has significantly increased in the last 30 years (see Figure 6.6). For the last 20 years, the percentage rate of population increase is higher than the national average.
Figure 6.6 Comparison of the population change in Kaski and in Nepal between 1971 and 2001
(Source: CBS 2002a; Karan & Ishii 1996)

**Economic factors**

The village, in which Pragatisil FUG is situated, has a transitional agrarian economy. Many users are involved in agriculture, but also in business. 43 percent of households in Kaski are landless (24.4 % in Nepal) and depend mostly on market and overseas jobs for their livelihoods. Almost 31 percent of households have non-agricultural economic activities. There is a local market called Gagangaunda, where local users do most of their basic shopping. The increased market link is established by the Prithivi Highway that connects the FUG to Pokhara and other parts of the country.

The economy of Pragatisil FUG is embedded in the economy of Kaski District, which is the third best district in Nepal in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) (0.45), indicating a higher level of human development (DDC Kaski 2002). The per capita income for the Kaski residents is NRs10 13,761, which is significantly higher than the national Per Capita (NRs 7,673). With the enormous natural beauty of its lakes and the Himalayas, the Pokhara Valley is one of the best tourist destinations in Nepal. Tourism is one of the key sources of income and employment. Despite this, Pragatisil FUG has no direct tourist inflow because of the peripheral location to the city of Pokhara.

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10 NRs stands for Nepalese rupees (1 US $ = approx. 75 NRS)
History of forest management

The history of forest protection in the village, in which Pragatisil FUG is situated, shows that the Nationalisation Act 1957 and subsequent legislation which aimed to protect the forest had a negative impact on the forest of Pragatisil. The administrative expansion of forest bureaucracy in Pokhara in 1960 and the development of roads and other infrastructure contributed to deforestation. By 1976, the cadastral survey clearly categorised Pragatisil as shrubland. The widespread realisation of the deforestation and the increased scarcity of forest products highlighted the need to restore the forest in Pragatisil. The restoration program in 1976 came from Queen Aishwarya on the occasion of the International Women’s Day, which was intensely supported by the DFO Kaski. The forest was named Rani Ban (Queen Forest).

The northern part of the Pragatisil forest was not heavily deforested, as in the south. The community have been protecting a patch of forest around the Kalika temple for religious reasons as they organise and celebrate many cultural and religious functions in the temple. Users are prohibited to cut trees around the temple as they believe the forest is an ashram (house) for Hindu goddess that in Hindu mythology, killed many evils.

Although there was no formal introduction of Panchayat Forest (PF) and Panchayat Protected Forest (PPF) in Pragatisil, coincidentally the users formed the forest protection committee in 1978; the same year that the PF and PPF policy was introduced in Nepal. The committee worked well, even if it did not receive official recognition, but this supra-legal committee had support from the Shisuwa Panchayat (council) (later Lekhnath Municipality). Users formed an ad-hoc committee in early 1992 and requested the DFO to hand-over the forest. Pragatisil CF was handed over in 1993 initially for five years. The previous committee was not recognised. In 1998, the OP was amended and approved for another 12 years.

Kaski District is one of the most progressive districts in Nepal in terms of implementing CF. The district now has 411 FUGs, which is one of the highest for a district in Nepal. They manage 14,210.26 ha of forests and benefit 34,610 households (DFO Kaski 2000). Additionally, what makes the district progressive is that most of the FUGs are active or moderately active. The district has one Ilaka Forest office and eight range posts. The Shisuwa Range Post is the most progressive range post that has handed over 83 CFs benefiting more than 6100 households. There are eight FUGs in Lekhnath Municipality alone. Pragatisil FUG is one of the active and effective FUGs under the Shisuwa Range Post in Lekhnath Municipality.

Most of the FUG members protect the forest through their own rotational patrolling system (56%) in Kaski district. However, 34 percent of FUGs still employ forest watchers. The demand and supply analysis shows that 49 percent of FUG members receive sufficient quantity of forest products.
products from CF, while the majority (51%) of users do not get sufficient products. Due to the increased scarcity of forest products, only 47.39 percent of households in Kaski use fuelwood as the main energy source for cooking, which is significantly lower than the national average (65.59%). One shortcoming of CF in Kaski is that around 100 FUGs’ have their OP overdue for review and amendment.

6.4.2 Situational Factors

Situational factors at Pragatisil CF constitute the forest, the community and the institution.

a. The forest

Size, location and boundary of forest

Pragatisil community forest covers 57.74 ha, comprising five fragmented forests; Kamardhikh Pakho, Khudi Khola and Sayno Thumki Pakho, Rani Ban and Satpatre forest (see Map 6.3). The forest is surrounded by rivers and streams; Khudi Khola in the east, Seti River on the west, Kotre Khola in the south and ward number 12 of the municipality in the north. The Prithivi Highway runs through the forest (see Map 6.3).

The forest is divided into seven blocks by the DFO Kaski for the purpose of scientific forest management. The descriptions of the blocks are presented in Table 6.7. The main species of the forest is *Sal*, while the plantation of *Sissoo* is mixed with naturally occurring *Khair*.

Table 6.7 The description of blocks in Pragatisil CF, Kaski

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks of Pragatisil Community Forest, Kaski</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarkhand Pakho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalikanagar Tarpha Pakho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paharepani Pakho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani Ban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satpatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khudikhola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayno Thumki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Pragatisil FUG 2000)
Forest composition and condition

Pragatisil CF is a mixed broad-leaved forest. The naturally regenerated Sal species dominates about half of the forest and half is the Sissoo species established through the plantation. Being located in the flood plain of the Seti River, Khair is naturally occurring within the Sissoo plantation in the sandy soil along the river bank. Other species include Chilaune, Lemon grass and Amla. In Khudi Khola, the plantation of Bamboo, Amriso, Amla, and Sissoo was carried out for income generation and reducing the stream bank erosion. This plantation is fenced by barbed wire funded by the group income. There is vigorous regeneration and generally the canopy is closed. Users reported that the forest has wildlife, such as leopards, monkeys, foxes and deer.

The forest was degraded before the introduction of CF. Currently, RFA showed that the forest is young, dominated by seedlings (91%) and poles (7.2%), with few trees (0.2%) and saplings (1.5%) (Table 6.8). The survey was unable to account for the plantation of Sissoo in two blocks in the southern part of the forest due to heavy rainfall and swamp condition during the research. There are 23 species, but the forest is dominated by Sal. The largest numbers of stems are Ghantu (5,900/ha), which has no significant use value itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Seedlings</th>
<th>Saplings</th>
<th>Poles</th>
<th>Trees</th>
<th>Total (exc. seedlings)</th>
<th>Total including seedlings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sal</td>
<td>4034</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>5634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilaune</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghantu</td>
<td>5900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5133</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16467</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>18067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% total</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the density and other factors vary widely within the forest area, the overall forest condition is good. There are 18,067 stems per hectare, out of which saplings, poles and trees constitute 1,600 (8.6%) and the rests are seedlings (Table 6.8). Compared with the data recorded in the OP of the FUG, the total number of stems per hectare has increased from 12,065 in 2001 (Pragatisil FUG 2001). The plant diversity index is low at 0.03. The crown density is 55 percent, largely attributed to 1,600 stems (excluding seedlings) per hectare (see Appendix D-4.a). The forest is good in terms of the diversity of DBH, height and biomass and volume (see Appendix D-4.b).

The forest along the highway and close to the residential area has some open spaces, which displays signs of pressure. In the south-east, the soil is sandy with low productivity and frequently flooded by the Seti River. The plantation has some open spaces, which needs enrichment plantation. In the north-west, there are open spaces along the bank of Khudi Khola, which also has
some soil erosion. There are potholes within the forest, from which the FUGC has controversially sold mud and stones. The forest is beautiful in cap-shaped hills (Photo 6.3). The overall quality of forest is good which shows considerable potential as a source of valuable quality timber for furniture, raw material for house construction, fuelwood and other forest products.

Photo 6.3 Pragatisil Community Forest

The supply potential and benefit flows from Pragatisil CF

RFA estimated that the forest can potentially supply 24.1 bhari of foliage (excluding regeneration and ground grass), 83.2 bhari of fuelwood and 56.1 cu ft. of timber per hectare per year (Table 6.9). If the forest is managed to its potential, each household can receive an average of 4.8 bhari of foliage, 16.7 bhari of fuelwood and 11.2 cu ft. of timber per year (see Appendix D-4.d).

Table 6.9 Number of stems, biomass and Annual Allowable Harvest in Pragatisil forest/ha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development class</th>
<th>Per hectare</th>
<th>Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH)/ha</th>
<th>Allowable harvest/ha/yr(^{11})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of stems</td>
<td>Biomass (kg)</td>
<td>Avg. age (yr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seedling</td>
<td>16467</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapling</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>2571</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>211079</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24577</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15405</td>
<td>4622</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pragatisil CF can potentially provide numerous direct and indirect benefits to the FUG and others. However, the forest is not used to its potential. The demand far exceeds the supply potential of forest products under the current practices (see Figure 6.7). The HQI found that the

\(^{11}\) The basis for the calculation can be seen in Appendix D-4.c.
annual demand of fuelwood in Pragatisil is very high, but the extraction of products is a fraction of what is demanded. This data contradicts the data of the DFO inventory whose records found that the forest can potentially produce a surplus of fuelwood and timber. It should be noted that the above prediction for potential harvest is a rough guideline. Social acceptability is important in determining the scientific availability of forest products.

![Figure 6.7 Under-utilisation of Pragatisil forest](image)

**b. The Community**

The users of the FUG live in a semi-urban setting that comprises 290 households with a total population of 1600. The FUG members are spread out in a number of toles located at the south and west of the forest. The settlements are along the highway in Tallo Gagangaunda, a local market.

The FUG members are economically and ethnically heterogenous owing to the great variations in private land, income sources, food security and ethnicities. The sample shows that there are 55 percent of poor users, while medium and rich account for 28 and 17 percent respectively. Ethnically, the higher caste users who are the traditional resident of Tallo Gagangaunda, dominates migrated groups, such as Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang (middle caste); and Kami, Damai and Sarki (lower caste – untouchables). The economic, ethnic and gender aspects of the FUG were considered in forming the FUGC in Bagbhanjyang. The representation of females is significant in the FUGC (47 %) (Table 6.10). However, the FUGC remains dominated by the higher caste users.

Table 6.10 Composition of Pragatisil FUGC by wealth rank, gender and ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of Pragatisil FUGC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUGC rep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of land ownership, the majority of users have a small parcel of land, which is not sufficient for them to meet their needs. The ownership of livestock is relatively large (3.2 per household). The ownership of livestock is higher among the rich, male and higher caste users than the rest (see Appendix B-6). The use of fuelwood is one of the most crucial factors impacting on the Pragatisil forest. The sample households show that majority of users use cylinder gas, bio gas or kerosene stove for cooking food. Yet, significant proportion of users use fuelwood as a primary source for fuel (24%) (see Appendix B-7).

c. The institutions

Operational rules

Pragatisil FUG with the help of DFO Kaski has surveyed, demarcated and established the boundary of forest and listed 290 households as member HHs. The FUG members collect forest products during the forest management activities as well as dry and dead trees from anywhere in the forest anytime of the year. The products are collected by confiscating from illicit cutting. The collection of ground grass, leaf litter and fodder is restricted, while charcoal production is prohibited. All households are required to provide voluntary contributions for forest protection, management and utilisation activities. The forest is protected through the self-discipline of the users, rotational patrolling from the member households and hiring of forest watchers.

The OP of Pragatisil FUG has strict rules that specify the process and extent of sanctions. While the FUG assembly takes the decisions, the assessment of the non-compliance activities against the OP and advice for the sanctions remains the authority of the FUGC. If someone among the FUG members is found doing illegal activities, the FUG confiscates both the forest products and tools. These are then sold at auction. Higher fines are imposed on individuals who light fires and who encroach the forest boundary. Frequent illegal action by individuals is referred to the DFO for legal action. Non-members are fined double the fines provisioned for the FUG members.

Collective choice rules

FUGC is a collective body that executes the decisions made by the assembly. In order to become the member of the FUGC, one must be the member of the FUG. The FUGC is formed, either by the consensus, or by the majority of FUGs. Any member of the FUGC can be terminated if the member dies, or resigns, or out-migrates, is absent for three consecutive FUGC meetings or acts against the OP and constitution of the FUG.

The collective choice rules are also established by assigning certain roles, responsibilities and authorities for the general assembly and the FUGC. It is clear that the general assembly of the FUG is supreme in making all decisions. While in theory, the assembly is responsible for
preparing the constitution and OP, define and recognise use rights and decide all kinds of rules, the FUGC appears more powerful in devising rules and enforcing them on the ground. FUGs and the general assembly seem to legitimise the rules made by the FUGC.

**Constitution rules**

Constitutional rules of Pragatisil FUG consider decision-making arrangements external to the FUG. External decision making arrangements are set out by the Forest Act 1993, Forest Regulation 1995 and other government orders and directives. These rules are made by national level politicians and higher level bureaucrats. The Pragatisil FUG does not devise these rules, which are being administered through the DFO Kaski, but must follow them. The authority given to the DFO through these requirements enables the DFO to influence and control many activities of the FUG at the collective-choice and operational rules.

**6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter described the contextual and situational factors of three caste study sites. These sites have different socio-economic, historical, political and ecological contexts that have influenced the emergence, evolution and outcomes of collective action. The differing contextual and situational factors were crucial to influence the demand for, and supply of, forest resources in these FUGs. These factors directly or indirectly influence the choice sets available for the users. From these choice sets, the users select their strategies and these strategies in turn produce certain outcomes. This chapter established contexts for the result chapters to follow for each case site.
Chapter 7: Result – Case Study I: Laglage Pakha FUG, Kathmandu

7.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the experience of CF at Laglage Pakha FUG, Kathmandu (hereafter Laglage FUG). Specifically, the chapter investigates collective action processes and outcomes at the FUG and household levels. While these processes are set out in policy and legislation, it is likely that actual processes differ from what is required by law and policy, which has implications for what outcomes are produced. The understanding of the actual processes is therefore important and must be based on the views of local users, who directly affect, and are affected by, such processes.

The findings of the study are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on how collective action emerged and the FUG formed by the DFO to manage the degraded forest. The second section deals with implementation processes in five sub-processes; namely forest management, product distribution, income generation and community development, decision-making and linkage development. The findings indicate that the condition of forests is perceived to be improved, but the decision making and implementation processes are inequitable. Despite the strong participation of users, the processes are not genuinely participatory because the decision making and implementation of decisions are dominated by the DFO staff and community elites, whereby the needs and concerns of the poor, women and lower caste users are ignored. The processes are narrow and practically isolated from other organisations. The chapter concludes by summarising key findings.

The results of this chapter are based on the Household Questionnaire Interviews (HQI), observations, group discussions and informal talks conducted in Laglage FUG. The results from HQI are first presented for all sample households with the figures and text [sample size (n) =20 households; total (N) =61]. As described in Chapter Five, the study assesses the perceptions of users in terms of wealth ranking [poor (n=13); medium (n=6); and rich (n=1)], gender [female (n=6); and male (n=14)] and ethnicity/caste [lower caste (n=1), middle caste (n=17) and higher caste (n=2)]. Only one rich household was studied because the users identified only one rich household in the FUG. There were several lower caste households, but only one was willing and available to participate in the study. The cross-sectional results are presented when the particular opinions and figures show interesting examples and trends. Other results are qualitative and presented as narratives in the text.

While the sample size is adequate in relation to the total number of households, the sample size, particularly for the sub-groups, is small in terms of the absolute numbers and statistically
insignificant. There is also the possibility of overlap between the sub-categories, e.g. poor and female. However, findings and trends are supported by triangulation (sources, methods and approaches) employed in this research to ensure the validity and reliability of the data and generalisations.

7.2 The emergence of collective action - FUG formation in Laglage

Collective action emerged in Laglage FUG with the initiative of the DFO to form the FUG. The processes involved in FUG formation establish the foundation for the FUG. Data from the HQI indicated that due to low levels of awareness on CF concepts and the roles and responsibilities of users under CF, the participation of local users in FUG formation process was passive and the process was controlled by the DFO and local elites.

The actual users were identified during the formation process and most users participated in the meetings and general assembly (90%), but users were reluctant to express their views (Figure 7.1). This may be because the majority of FUG members were unaware of the concepts and procedures of CF at the early stage (11 of 20 HHs). Consequently, most respondents believed that local elites made the decisions, which were then written in the Constitution and OP. The whole process was controlled by the DFO, while other institutions such as NGOs, bilateral projects and VDCs did not play any role in the formation process. Nevertheless, the majority of users perceived that local systems of forest use and management were acknowledged in the OP (60%), as the new system established the legality of forest use.

Figure 7.1 Perceptions of respondents regarding the FUG formation processes in Laglage Pakha

Within the sample households, the participation among poor households was very passive, as almost all households did not express their needs and views during the meetings and assembly (12
out of 13 HHs). This was because the majority of them were unaware of CF (see Appendix E-1.a). On the other hand, despite the majority of female-headed households being aware of CF, they appeared to have passively participated because of social norms. This indicates that the awareness of the concepts of CF was not the sole factor affecting the participation of poor and female users in the FUG formation process. Further, there was no guarantee that their views were taken into account in final decisions, as most users believed that the community elites and DFO dominated most of the decisions.

The passive participation of users and domination of elites in FUG formation process was also evident in group discussions and informal talks. Participants at group discussions felt that users did not have the chance to learn the concepts of CF nor had they have opportunities to express themselves. For example, one user said “the DFO staff collected information on land, livestock and trees, but I did not know why they did so” (Ktm/LP.3 2001). Another participant stated that “DFO staff did not inform us that the community forestry was intended for our forest” (Ktm/LP.4 2001). One woman said that people feared talking with DFO staff and therefore, avoided meeting them. When the users participated in the assembly and meetings, they did not put their views because they did not know what they had to say and what they had to do in the meetings. A small group of local elite made decisions as asked by the DFO staff. Overall, the users were not satisfied with the process of FUG formation. For instance, one user said, “the DFO staff wrote the OP … I raised my concerns, but they were not considered” (Ktm/LP.3). Despite the dissatisfaction, users believed that the FUG formation was a good initiative introduced by the DFO. This “good” sentiment was shared by the FUGC chairman and secretary and by a teashop owner.

7.3 The evolution of collective action - Implementation of CF in Laglage

Collective action was evolved in Laglage FUG with the implementation of the approved OP. The implementation involves diverse and simultaneous processes that have produced outcomes. The five key sub-processes are discussed below.

7.3.1 Forest management

As described in Chapter Six, the condition of forest in Laglage is good with enormous potential to supply forest products. The HQI data confirms that the forest condition has significantly improved and the forest product flow has increased through CF. The data shows that the majority of users knew the boundary of forests and all users participated in forest protection and godmel (silvicultural operations) (Figure 7.2). As users effectively look after the forest, the majority of respondents believe that there is no need for hiring forest watchers and that there are no significant
conflicts in forest protection. The forest management has advanced to a stage, where the majority of users have participated in the plantation of income generating species.

The advancing forest management and improvement of forest condition do not mean that the FUG implements the OP as expected by the DFO. The majority of respondents believe that the forest protection has not been carried out according to the OP. The FUG seems to continue viewing the DFO as a key source of the forest management support as three quarters of respondents believe that they need increased forest management and protection support from the DFO. Users generally believe that the DFO should employ forest watchers as it did earlier.

Figure 7.2 Views of respondents regarding the forest management processes in Laglage Pakha

Across the sample data, 5 out of 6 female respondents believe that they need to hire forest watchers to ensure the protection of forests, which is also shared by one lower caste respondent (see Appendix E-1.b). Most females (5 of 6 HHs) do not see any conflicts. On the other hand, the majority of male respondents (8 of 14 HHs) see conflicts in forest protection, but do not see for a need to hire forest watchers. Similarly, the majority of poor households believe there is conflict in forest protection, but do not support hiring the watchers. Thus, conflicts in forest protection do not necessarily mean that the FUG needs to hire forest watchers. Interestingly, one lower caste respondent does not believe that the product flow has actually increased through CF because the household is not allowed to use the forest for charcoal production.

The strong sense of participation in forest protection and management was obvious in the group discussions. One participant said, “who else will protect our forest, we have to do it” (Ktm/LP.1 2001). Users were more concerned with forest protection than the utilisation of the forest because they were eager to ensure that the forest “would never be destroyed again as it was before” (Ktm/LP.2 2001). They were quite enthusiastic about income generating non-timber forest products. At the same time, the group discussion participants were concerned with the under-
utilisation of forests. For example, one participant said; “we have many dead trees, which can be sold, I don’t know why they are left to decay” (Ktm/LP.3 2001). The participants were also concerned about the continually decreasing support from the DFO, which they believe “needs to be increased to increase awareness of good techniques of forest management” (Ktm/LP.1 2001). They are frustrated by the declining interest of the DFO in the management of forests; one woman asked; “why did not any DFO staff come with you”. Overall, users welcome more support, not control, from the DFO.

All the users participated in the plantation program, but the general view was that the plantation was not needed at all, as natural regeneration was profuse. The participation thus appeared to be obtained through some form of pressure.

7.3.2 Use and distribution of forest products

An underlying assumption of CF is that the benefits should accrue to FUG members. Therefore, it is important to know what the benefits are, what is the need of forest users, who gets the benefits, how the distribution occurs, who distributes the products and what people feel about it.

As discussed in Chapter 6, Laglage Pakha forest can potentially supply enormous benefits. To find out if the potential supply of products can meet the needs of the FUG members, a discussion was conducted with household members during the HQI. The study estimated that each household required an average of 11.4 cu ft. of timber, 49.5 bhari of fuelwood, 70.5 bhari of fodder and 10.1 bhari of leaf litter per year from CF and other sources (see Appendix E-1.c). Users expected to meet most of forest product needs from CF. Across the sample households, the poor households needed more fuelwood, fodder and leaf litter than medium and rich households, while one rich household demanded more timber than other poor and medium households. Similarly, male-headed households demanded more forest products than female-headed households (see Appendix E-1.c). The potentially available products for harvesting are far greater than what is actually being harvested (see Chapter Six) and therefore, the forest is under-utilised.

The actual harvesting of products was far less than what was wanted. The study estimated that each household received an average of 1.7 cu ft. of timber, 15.1 bhari of fuelwood, 14.1 bhari of fodder and 6.1 bhari of leaf litter per year. The fuelwood and fodder harvested during the silvicultural operations was supposedly distributed equally, while timber was sold at auction. However, users also collected dry firewood, ground grass and leaf litter freely during the forest opening times. The poor households received less timber and fuelwood but more leaf litter than other households, while the male-headed households received equal or more products than the female-headed households. Overall, the higher caste households received greater amount of
products than lower and middle caste (see Appendix E-1.c). While some users’ needs are met from other sources, the Laglage FUG members heavily depend on the forest to meet a significant part of their needs. As there is a significant gap between the need and actual supply of products, there are crucial reasons to improve forest management. The percentage gap is higher for the poor, women and lower caste respondent households than other households (see Appendix E-1.d).

Despite a formal provision to provide equal rights, responsibility and shares for all users, the quantity of products actually received by individual households was not equal. It is therefore important to understand how the harvested products were distributed among users. The HQI indicates that the products distributed have not fulfilled the needs of the FUG and that the distribution process is controlled by the FUGC, which in turn, is controlled by the DFO.

Figure 7.3 Views of respondents regarding the product distribution processes in Laglage

The sample data suggest that the majority of respondents were unaware of the details of product distribution system because they do not participate in the process of distribution (Figure 7.3). Only 3 of 20 of the respondents (15%) participated in the process. Instead, the data indicated that the FUGC distributed the products and the distribution system was controlled by the DFO, with no influence from donors or VDCs. While the majority of respondents’ needs were not fulfilled, they were satisfied with the distribution system in that each household was supposed to receive an equal share of products. However, all households believed that the distribution did not reflect the needs of the users because there was no separate arrangement for the poor and rich households. The majority of respondents (70%) are therefore of the opinion that the distribution system needs to be changed in order for the distribution process to be equitable.

Across the sample households, the data show that one poor (1 of 13), no female (0 of 6) and a few other households participated in the distribution process (see Appendix E-1.e). This suggests that
the distribution was carried out by males. However, most female respondents (5 of 6) perceived the equal distribution of products, while the majority of male households (8 of 14) who appeared to have distributed the products, believed that the product distribution was not equal. Thus, the product distribution may not have done equally. Three quarter of male-headed households (11 of 14) believed that there was a need for equity in product distribution. Overall, there was a call for equity principle to be implemented in product distribution.

The opinions presented above are supported by the group discussions, which included an intense and useful debate on whether equity should be the basis for forest product distribution. Some users commended the existing basis of equality principle in distribution, as one high school graduate (an educated person in the context of Laglage) pointed out:

“We receive equal amount of forest products for each household, we are happy with it … we should not distribute more for some and less for others because every household sends only one person to protect the forest”. (Ktm/LP.5 2001)

Others saw equity as reasonable for the unequal society of Laglage FUG, but they supported the equality principle because of the fear that a discretionary distribution may be unworkable in the present framework of CF. For instance, a FUGC member said; “equal system is working well, equity may be reasonable… but is hard to work within the existing CF framework”.

However, many group participants, particularly among the disadvantaged groups, were frustrated with the equality principle as one participant pointed out; “products my household receives are not sufficient. I have to buy fuelwood, which I can’t afford … equal system is not practical” (Ktm/LP.4 2001). The above sentiment was supported by a local woman who had been employed as an animator by a donor’s project. She supported an equity principle and believed, the equality principle is dangerous for the sustainability of CF:

“We have to change rules and attitudes of people in order to distribute products on an equity basis, otherwise what will the poor do?… they will have to steal forest products … the problem will be back to the original”. (Local women animator 2001)

The HQI data and discussions indicate that the product distribution is being carried out by FUGC and that the equality principle is the basis for product distribution. However, the HQI data also suggest that the distribution is actually not equal in practice. This system that theoretically aims to give equal share of products to all users is not practical for many users, particularly for poor and other disadvantaged groups of the community.

7.3.3 Income generation and community development

Most users are interested in income generation and community development through CF. Informal talks and discussions stressed the need of the FUG to increase its income and contribute to the construction of water tanks, school and roads. Users were prepared to voluntarily participate in
such activities. They were interested in the use of forests that did not lead to the forest degradation, such as selling of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and ecotourism. However, the majority of them believed that CF was not contributing as much as it could.

The HQI survey indicates that the FUG has a limited source of income and users are uncertain about how the income is being mobilised. The data show that the group income is being generated from membership fees and fines (100%), not from the sale of forest products (Figure 7.4). However, the majority of respondents believe that the FUG needs to generate income from the use of forest products by selective logging, but are uncertain about whether the FUG should establish a joint venture with industry. The FUG lacked transparency in terms of fund management as all sample households were uncertain about the fund and how it was used. The majority were unsure if the fund was used for community development. However, all users believed that the fund was not loaned to individual households. The majority of users believed that the generation of income and mobilisation of funds had been controlled by the DFO, while donors and other institution did not have any influence. A common theme emerged out of the sample households was that the FUG lack significant income and therefore, the DFO needed to provide financial support to the FUG.

Across the sample households, the majority of poor households (7 of 13) believed that selective logging was not possible for the FUG to generate income, while it was generally supported by other households. Similarly, the majority of female households opposed the possibility of selective logging, while the majority of male supported it. The discussion suggests that the poor and female households possess more anti-logging attitudes than other households due mainly to the fear from the possible deforestation in Laglage (see Appendix E-1.f).

![Respondents' views on income generation and community development processes in Laglage Pakha FUG](image)

Figure 7.4 HQI respondents’ perceptions on income generation and community development processes in Laglage
The group discussions and talks were specific about the ways, in which income was being generated, where the money was and how it was utilised. A group participant, who is also a member of FUGC, explained:

“We don’t sell many products; donations, fees and fines are the major sources of group income …the funds are deposited in the bank, we utilise the funds for office stationery, rewards to students who passed SLC and to welcome guests”. (Ktm/LP.1 2001)

Many users were interested in the generation of the group’s income and they participated in the plantation of income generating species. However, such participation was not for generating incomes for individual households. The group participants were also keen on generating more income from other sources like tourism and selling of medicinal herbs rather than cutting trees. Despite being unaware about the sources and uses of the funds, there was a strong trust and dependence on the FUGC. The extent of trust is highlighted by the statement of one of the respondents, who said, “our committee knows it all, they collect the money and use it…they are managing it well” (Ktm/LP.5 2001).

The poor and other disadvantaged members expected the FUGC to help them in the form of individual loans for enhancing their livelihoods. However, the discussion pointed out that the priority of the FUGC was not to help the individual members, but to spend the income on community development activities. This was shown by the statement from a FUGC member: “we don’t have enough money, we would like to first spend on drinking water tank and essential roads… if we had more, we would loan to poor users as well” (Ktm/LP.1 2001). A common point that emerged from the discussions was that the contribution of CF to improve users’ livelihoods had been very negligible, as the income and income sources of the FUG were extremely limited and the DFO was not providing any financial support.

7.3.4 Decision making and implementation of decisions

An effective on-going decision-making and implementation process should actively involve local users and their views to address their needs and expectations. Local users should devise the local policies and implement them to realise desired outcomes. However, in the HQI, it was found that the decision-making and implementation process was not genuinely participatory. The decisions did not reflect the needs and views of the poor and minorities because the FUGC highlighted the interest of the non-poor in the final decisions. Additionally, the majority of respondents were uncertain, whether the decisions made in general assemblies, were actually implemented in practice or not. Despite this, most of the users were happy with the FUGC.

The sample data show that most households participated in general assemblies and meetings and the needs of all including the poor and disadvantaged groups were discussed in such gatherings.
(Figure 7.5). The majority of households have discussed their views in the small groups before the meetings. However, the needs of all users were not addressed in the decisions. Instead, the final decisions were taken by the FUGC (95%). This means that the users have not truly participated in the decision-making process. Additionally, the majority of users were uncertain, whether decisions made at the assembly, were actually being implemented. The lack of genuinely participatory decision making and informed implementation processes may be due to users not having collective decision making experience in the past, as the data show that no households believed that they had such experience. This may be because the process was controlled by the DFO, since the majority of users believed that the FUG’s decision making and implementation was being controlled by the DFO.

Figure 7.5 Perceptions of HQI respondents in decision making and implementation processes in Laglage

Across the sample data, it was found that a few male households (3 of 14) believed that the decisions addressed the needs of the users, while no female households (0 of 6) believed this. Similarly, only 1 of 13 poor households viewed that their needs were considered in the decisions (see Appendix E-1.g). This indicates that the needs of the poor and female households have been ignored.

In the group discussions and informal talks, users highlighted that they have received training and improved knowledge and new skills required for decision making and implementation. The majority of users also viewed that the practices of meeting and assemblies have increased trust and reciprocity among users. Users frequently emphasised that the CF was as important as their own private lands.

Despite the HQI indicating that the decision making was not participatory, most of the respondents in the group discussion did not see any problem in the decision-making. These participants believe
that it is not practical to let everybody put their views. There is a tendency to accept what the leaders proposed; the “yes-syndrome”: “we attend the meetings, we protect the forest … When our committee member asks me if I agree with their statement, how I can repudiate as I have also selected them, I definitely say yes” (Ktm/LP.5 2001). Likewise, they don’t generally question and examine what the FUGC decides as one group discussion member said:

“I have attended amsabh (general assembly) when asked by our committee, but I don’t know what our committee decides in the meetings … they must be doing well, as we have good members in our FUGC”. (Ktm/LP.3 2001)

This reliance on, and confidence in, the FUGC means that the committee is emerging as a supreme body and the FUG members are becoming the helper of the FUGC. One user said; “whenever the committee asks us, we are always there to help them” (Ktm/LP.4 2001) that “we selected the committee because they know better than us, they can make good decisions” (ibid).

One major point coming out of the discussions was that participation of the poor and other disadvantaged members was often obtained through persuasion, threat and sometimes by coercive power, such as heavy fines and possible exclusion from the FUG. According to a blacksmith, people like him have been marginalised by the FUGC. He sees no point in attending the meetings and assemblies, but he does so to avoid fines and exclusion. Similarly, a woman member, who depends on wages, added:

I only go to forest protection and assemblies because I will be fined if I don’t do so… also we have to support our leaders, their good views, so that our committee brings more money from the forest office for our village.

Respondents thought that the control of DFO was overwhelming FUG’s decision making and implementation. A member of the FUGC was critical on the DFO support because the FUG’s decisions without the regular support from the DFO can be illegal. Users shared a common point that they had a low level of awareness about the decision making processes, which made the DFO staff to come out to help them and employ regular checks and balances. Since even the committee member was not aware of the processes, it was unlikely that the majority of users would know the proper decision making mechanism.

Except for the DFO, there seems to be no influence by other external agencies in the decision making process. Users are generally happy with the fact that there is no political influence in decision-making. Users do not want CF to be enmeshed in the politics of the country because they believe, politics could jeopardise the whole CF process. The users, however, wonder why local government bodies like the VDC, and donors are not helping them. Overall, discussion group participants felt that the decision-making is primarily the job of the FUGC, while the guidelines and directions from the DFO are the foundation for their decisions and the FUG members are there to help the FUGC.
7.3.5 Linkage development and power relations

One critical process of CF is the need to develop linkages between local people and other concerned stakeholders, particularly the state and to deal with the issue of power relations. It is important to develop useful and active links among the actors involved in CF in order to make effective decision and implementation. While the development of linkages and networks offer many benefits, such as sharing the experience and problems and receiving support, this process also creates space for the control and manipulation by the more powerful actors over less powerful actors. Therefore, the issue of power is important as CF involves a transfer of authority and responsibility from the state to local communities to manage and use the forest. The need for a participatory decision making and implementation in CF requires a significant change in the pre-existing social hierarchy and power structure at the local level. Without addressing the issue of power, the decision making and implementation is likely to maintain the status quo, which is top-down, oppressive and inequitable.

The development of links and networks, and the issue of power relations can be discussed in the chain of relationships among different actors in CF. These includes the relationship between FUG and FUGC, FUG and DFO, and FUG and other external actors (local government, FECOFUN, NGOs and donors).

**FUG and FUGC**

Within the FUG, the CF initiative aimed at changing the pre-existing unequal power relations between the poor and relatively not so poor users, lower caste and higher caste and male and female users. However, the interviews, discussions and informal talks indicated that there was no significant shift in the power relations. The existing power relation was restructured by the formal establishment of a FUGC. The power has been centralised in the FUGC, in which the traditionally powerful users have gained the power in a new structure and continue to control the decision making and implementation processes.

The HQI data indicate that the FUGC is powerful and dominating, as the majority of respondents believed that the decisions of the FUG were dominated by the FUGC (70%). Most respondents believed that the FUGC controls the use and management of forests, as they viewed the FUGC as powerful, strong and capable to make and implement decisions (Figure 7.6). Despite the domination by the FUGC, the majority of respondents viewed that their relationship with the FUGC was good. This was, however, contested by a lower caste respondent.
Figure 7.6 Views of respondents regarding the relations between Laglage FUG and FUGC

The HQI results reflecting the critical aspect of the FUGC can be linked with the overall composition of Laglage FUGC, in which there is no representation of rich and very low participation of women and lower caste users in the committee (Table 7.1). Users said that the representation of lower caste and female users in the FUGC is very passive. They are there to meet the mandatory requirement of the FUGC imposed by the DFO. The committee is dominated by the middle caste male and the majority of them belonging to the medium wealth ranks. While 65 percent of the members of the FUG are poor, only 44 percent of them are represented in the committee. This ratio is critically low for females. The FUGC being a major body of the FUG, the over representation of some and under representation of other groups suggest that there are serious hurdles for the procedural and distributive equity and sustainability of Laglage Pakha CF.

Table 7.1 Composition of the Laglage Pakha FUGC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total members in the FUGC</th>
<th>Wealth ranks</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Caste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Laglage Pakha FUG 1999)

In the discussions with the FUGC members, it was observed that the operation of the FUGC appeared to be as more of a bureaucratic organisation, rather than a people’s democratic institution. The filing system the FUGC maintained, the meetings it conducted and the majority and equality system it adopted, reflected the transfer of knowledge and skills directly from the DFO to the FUGC. Some FUGC members had a view that the poor people were ignorant and did not know the value of forests. The FUGC members were not confident to utilise the forest
products. They highlighted the important role of the DFO in supporting the FUG and the need of the FUG to focus on forest conservation. The FUGC members opined that there were indigenous knowledge and skills for forest use and conservation, but there were no attempts by the FUGC to implement them as a basis for local decision making. This was because the FUGC members believed that they needed to follow the guidelines of the DFO which did not encourage them to use their knowledge and skills. In the discussion, the FUGC members identified themselves as powerful decision makers and implementers of the decisions.

In the group discussion that included users and FUGC members, the majority of the participants agreed that the FUGC was strong and controlling the forest use and management. Participants were generally happy with them, as they had chosen the FUGC members. The main criterion for FUGC selection was “the capacity to deal with the DFO staff” (Ktm/LP.3 2001). However, some participants viewed the attitude of the FUGC chairman and secretary almost the same as the old forestry officials; “we need to obey chairman and secretary … they can fine us, like the Ranger before” (Ktm/LP.4 2001). The participants were not happy with the way the FUGC imposed the requirements for participation in plantation and forest protection. There was a common concern that the call for assembly was to give official recognition to decisions already made by the committee members, particularly the secretary and the chairman. While the majority of the FUG seems to decide consensually in the assembly, there was a clear indication that many people were not happy with the way the FUGC was working.

**FUG and DFO**

One of the critically important aspects of CF is the relation between the FUG and the DFO. The HQI data depict that the majority of respondents have viewed the DFO as powerful and controlling, and believe that it hesitates to devolve the power to the FUG (Figure 7.7). The sample data also show that the support from the DFO was not sufficient. The majority of respondents believed that the support has actually declined. Most respondents were, therefore, not happy with the performance of the DFO before and after CF implementation. However, most respondents opined that the relations between them and DFO have relatively improved through CF, compared with the situation before CF.
One of the issues discussed intensely in the group discussion was the past, present and future role of the DFO in Laglage Pakha. Users saw the previous role of the DFO as corrupt and autocratic, particularly the Ranger and Banpale (Forest Guards\(^{12}\)). After the introduction of CF however, the role of the DFO and the perception of people towards them have positively changed. Group discussants highlighted the declining presence of DFO staff, particularly the Ranger and Banpale and when they visit, they consult with some members of the FUGC, generally the chairman and secretary of the FUGC. There is selective consultation to save the DFO’s time and resources to meet its strict annual target.

Not all users are positive and happy with the role and performance of the DFO. The FUGC members are frustrated because the support is limited, untimely and insufficient as the Ranger takes a long-time to respond to requests. There is also dissatisfaction with DFO activities for lacking strategic consideration suggesting that a uniform support being given to FUG members without considering the immediate needs of Laglage FUG. There have been numerous complaints about the Ranger not being able to attend the assembly and provide technical and legal advice to the FUG and FUGC. The Rangers and FUGC members identify the topic for the discussion, but users highlighted a need for DFO staff to view themselves as facilitators for FUG development, rather than gathering information for monitoring, evaluation and control of the FUG.

As regards DFO support in the form of training, the majority of training and study visits are being given only to FUGC members. The FUGC members rarely teach other members of the community, despite the assumption that trained participants should teach others what they have

\(^{12}\) Forest Guards are civil servants who work at the local level with the Rangers. They used to be employed in a policing role, but now under CF, their role has been significantly transformed. Unlike Forest Guards, the Forest Watchers are employed by the DFO or by the FUG (not civil servant) to look after some specific forest areas.
learnt. This means that the DFO support is intercepted by the FUGC, but not transmitted to the grass roots level.

**FUG and other institutions**

The sample HQI data reveal that Laglage FUG has no or very negligible interaction with external institutions, except the DFO. The sample data show that the majority of respondents believed them not having cooperation with the members of other FUGs and that they are not aware of the FUG network. However, the majority of them cooperate with the local school and temple. Most respondents do not believe that the VDC has been cooperative with the FUG, while none of the respondents believe that any NGOs, donors or political parties are directly helping or influencing Laglage FUG. However, the majority of respondents believe that they need donors for community development.

![Figure 7.8 Perception of respondents regarding the relationship between Laglage FUG and external institutions](image)

Figure 7.8 Perception of respondents regarding the relationship between Laglage FUG and external institutions

The members of the group discussions agreed that the FUG has not received any direct support from external institutions, including VDCs. No donors ever tried to approach the FUG to offer them a direct help. In the informal talks, it was perceived that the majority of users do not prefer the political parties influencing the FUGs. However, most users strongly felt that the donors, NGOs and other organisations must help the FUGs directly, not through the DFO. There was a strong feeling that the VDC can help the FUG to carry out the community development activities. However, the majority of group discussants pointed that the DFO staff did not encourage the FUG to establish the linkage with VDCs and other institutions. They believed that the DFO staff did not prefer to deal with many stakeholders in managing the forests. The majority of group participants, including the FUGC members, did not know the existence and mechanisms of the users’ network. Those, who knew the existence of the network, relied on the FUGC to work for them in regards to the benefit they could receive from the network.
7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the investigation of collective action processes and outcomes in Laglage Pakha FUG. The results indicate that the formation of the FUG was controlled by the DFO. Users perceived that the condition of the forest has been significantly improved, but the livelihood benefits are very limited. The forest is under-utilised as a result of the protection focussed approach of the DFO, which has been employed by the FUGC. The needs of the users are not met. The distribution of forest products is not equitable, as the principle of equality of shares employed by the FUGC is questionable. While most users attend forest management activities and decision making processes, the decisions are mainly made by the FUGC. Additionally, most users are uncertain if the FUG activities are being carried out in line with the OP. The general perception of users is that the FUGC implements the decisions and the DFO controls the FUG. Despite this, the FUG members appeared to be happy with the protection of the forests, but are not satisfied with the existing system of decision making and product distribution. Clearly, equity issues should be further analysed.
Chapter 8: Results – Case Study 2: Bagbhanjyang FUG, Tanahun

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the second case study, Bagbhanjyang FUG in Tanahun district. The aim of the chapter is to investigate issues of local level collective action processes and outcomes in Bagbhanjyang FUG. The findings are presented in two sections. The first section discusses the processes associated with the emergence of collective action which primarily deals with the formation or recognition of FUG and preparation of the OP. The second section presents the results associated with the evolution of collective action that involves implementation processes of the approved OP. This includes five sub-processes, namely; forest management, use and distribution of forest products, income generation and community development, decision making and implementation of decisions and linkage development and power relations. The findings indicated that the users are forced to prioritise their activities in the face of market pressures that have reduced the relative importance of CF. Many users are trying to avoid the meetings and assembly, preferring responsibilities to be delegated to the FUGC. Inequity in participation is pervasive. While the forest condition is improved, the majority of users are keen to maintain the forest, mainly for non-use purposes. The protection focused forest management has serious implications for equity.

The data are based on Household Questionnaire Interviews (HQI), group discussions, observations, participant observation, and informal talks. The results from the HQI are first presented for the sample households with the figures and text together [sample size (n) =23; total households, N = 170]. Then, the sample data are divided into three categories in terms of wealth ranking [poor (n=4); medium (n=4); and rich (n=15)], gender [female (n=5); and male (n=18)] and ethnicity/caste [lower caste (n=1), middle caste (n=16) and higher caste (n=6)]. Only one lower caste household was interviewed. Several others were invited to participate, but they were unavailable and unwilling to participate in the research. The findings and figures presented in the chapter from the sub-categories do not present as statistically significant, but they show the examples and significant trends in the case under study. Other results are qualitative in nature and presented as narratives in the text.
8.2 The emergence of collective action - FUG Formation in Bagbhanjyang

Collective action in Bagbhanjyang FUG emerged before the formal CF policy was implemented in Nepal. Users informally protected the forest, which was recognised by the DFO Tanahun. During the process of recognition, however, the DFO carried out the process in line with the official requirements to hand-over the forest to community. The main processes were FUG formation and preparation of a Constitution and Operational Plan (C&OP).

In Bagbhanjyang FUG, the formation process involved a process of ‘recognition’ of the already established user group. As soon as the CF policy was implemented on the ground, some key members of the committee requested the DFO to recognise them. Accordingly, the DFO Tanahun legalised the forest protection committee. However, HQI and discussions indicated that the recognition process was not participatory. The process of recognition was controlled by the DFO and many issues, such as equity were left unaddressed at the formation process.

![Figure 8.1 Respondents’ views on the FUG formation processes in Bagbhanjyang FUG](image)

Figure 8.1 Respondents’ views on the FUG formation processes in Bagbhanjyang FUG

The HQI data show that the majority of respondents were aware of the concepts of CF at the time of recognition (Figure 8.1). It was probably due to the existence of local forest management practices prior to the CF and Bagbhanjyang’s proximity to the DFO office that distributed information on CF. However, almost half of respondents did not participate in the process and therefore, the majority of respondents were uncertain about whether all users were identified. When users participated in meetings and assembly, the majority of respondents did not express their needs and views, but the wealthy businessmen, teachers, social workers and politicians (i.e. the elite) directly or indirectly dominated the final decisions. The majority of respondents believed that the local system of forest use and management was recognised by the new OP. The DFO’s new policy was accommodated into the previously established indigenous system, but the
recognition process modified the pre-existing system of forest management. Therefore, the majority of respondents believed that the process was controlled by the DFO, while other actors were not influential.

Across the sample households, the participation was unequal, as the majority of poor (3 of 4) and female-headed households (3 of 5) participated in the meetings, while the participation was low for rich (5 of 15) and higher caste (2 of 6) households (see Appendix E-2.a).

FUG formation was not the key theme of the group discussion and talks and the majority of the group participants (N=5) and other users, were largely unaware of the detailed formation process. Despite this, all group participants believed that the forest protection committee was effective in protecting the degraded forest before the handover. The protection initiative emerged from the political leaders. As one respondent stated, “some social workers, who were also the member of Panchayat politics, formed the committee to protect the forest and eventually, they also won the local election” (Tan/B3 2001). The initial approach was “to choose those members of the committee who were believed to have cut more trees” (ibid). Users frequently stressed that the motivation for the formation of the protection committee came from the environmental threat posed to Damauli residents from increased flooding of the Madi River.

Those, who knew about the initial stage, believed that the formation process was the process of recognition completed by the DFO and previous committee members. As one member said:

“Bagbhanjyang forest protection committee was accepted, not formed by the DFO. The DFO only renamed us as the Bagbhanjyang FUG. We asked DFO to support us, and the Ranger legitimised the process”. (Ex-FUGC member, Tan/B1 2001)

However, the majority of users were not happy with the way the process of recognition was carried out because the DFO staff only liaised with elites and committee members. While users considered the recognition as good initiative, they questioned the legitimacy of this process because users “were not consulted and even not informed about this process” (Tan/B4 2001). One respondent added; “the Ranger only needed the committee to make the deal” (Tan/B3 2001). One of the reasons for not involving all users was because there had been “a preset understanding with the DFO to assume the committee as users’ wholesale representative” (Tan/B3 2001). It was also because “the Ranger was in a hurry to hand-over as many community forests as possible to grab the incentives from the office” (Tan/B1 2001). Even when there were discussions, the procedures were largely a formality. As one respondent said; “my views were not taken into account in the formation of the FUG’s constitution and OP” (FUGC member 2001). Not all users with recognised rights were identified, but the users were determined by the Ranger and community leaders. One disadvantaged group member said; “some users were missed on the list, but some ‘new users’ were added up by the community leaders and the Ranger” (Tan/B3 2001).
Informal talks and group discussions indicated that the Ranger drafted the OP and the constitution. Many users did not know whose role it was to prepare the Constitution and OP. Some users, particularly the shop-owners, had no idea as to whether the FUG had an OP and constitution. Interaction with a number of users indicated that there was no invitation for the assembly and meetings and therefore, they were not aware that such meetings were held. The discussions suggested that the process of recognition controlled by the DFO was negatively perceived by majority of users.

While the process of FUG formation was questionable, most users were not concerned because they valued forest protection, which was the basic aim of the formation. As one respondent said:

“The forest has been conserved, what else do we need? It is not possible to consult everyone. Even if all users were invited, business owners would not have attended the meetings anyway”. (Tan/B5 2001)

8.3 The evolution of collective action - Implementation of CF in Bagbhanjyang

Collective action in Bagbhanjyang FUG has evolved through the implementation of an approved OP. The FUG members have managed and utilised the forest in different ways, made and re-made decisions and established connections with various stakeholders. The implementation of CF activities can be discussed in terms of five sub-processes.

8.3.1 Forest management

Forest management involves a combination of conservation, protection, enrichment and utilisation of forest. It aims at achieving sustainable forest management. The active participation and dedication of users is required, but the users also need to be cohesive and confident. As discussed in Chapter Six, the condition of Bagbhanjyang forest is good, which has been achieved by the commitment of users in forest management. Now, the focus of forest management has evolved from the protection and restoration of the forest to a stage where users are interested in active management of forests to generate income.

The HQI data indicate the users’ perception that the condition of forests has significantly improved through CF (Figure 8.2). However, respondents were divided in regards to whether the product flows has increased. The data also show that only about half of the respondents participated in forest management activities, such as godmel, pruning and plantation. As the majority of users are involved in business and jobs, they appeared to have prioritised their business over the participation in CF. The low level of participation meant that a significant proportion of
respondent households (9 of 23) were unaware as to whether the forest protection was carried out according to the OP.

Users have long been involved in the protection of the forest and therefore, the majority of respondents knew the boundary of the forest. The clarity in forest boundary means that the FUG members have few conflicts regarding forest management. The majority of the respondents believed that there were no conflicts in forest protection (15 of 23). This is important because the forest protection has been effective in the face of potentially adverse factors, such as a large population of non-users having easy access to forests and the proximity of the market.

The HQI data indicate that the users are not confident to protect the forest, as all members believe that they need to hire forest watchers to ensure forest protection. Additionally, the majority of respondents believe that they need forest management training and support from the DFO and other institutions to improve forest management.

![Figure 8.2 The perceptions of HQI respondents regarding the forest management processes in Bagbhanjyang FUG](image)

Across the sample households, the rich (5 of 15) and male (9 of 18) households participate in forest management activities less than the poor (3 of 4) and female-headed (3 of 5) households. The participation was also low among higher caste households (2 of 6) (see Appendix E-2.b).

Poor households are less aware of the forest boundary than others. Only one (1of 4) poor believed that they knew the boundary of the forest. The majority of poor and female-headed households did not believe that the product flow increased through CF, while this was opposed by the majority of rich and male households. Thus, the disadvantaged users may have participated for reasons other than the anticipation of forest products. One labourer said; “the shop-keeper asked me to go to
forestry activities … I need to go there because I need job by the shopkeepers”. Such economic relations may have influenced participation of poor users.

There was a consensus among the group participants and other users that the Bagbhanjyang forest has significantly improved through CF. One respondent said; “CF has changed the face of Bagbhanjyang. It used to be a barren land; landslides were common about 10 years ago. Now, it is a dense and green forest” (Tan/B2 2001). The group discussion indicated that the change in forest condition was due to the relatively effective protection measures because of the strong sense of ownership among users. One respondent said, “… we feel the forest as our own, the protection is our obligation” (Tan/B1 2001). However, the continued effectiveness in forest protection is under threat as the community interest and participation is gradually decreasing. The group discussions indicated that the participation is not impressive because the community is less dependent on forest products as one FUGC member said:

“Participation is very poor, especially of the businessmen, women and poor. This is because the community is more dependent on business and jobs than on forest products”. (Tan/B2 2001)

Different level of participation may be linked with wider and historical factors, as one respondent said; “the participation is never equitable in Nepalese society, as the society is historically, politically and culturally segregated, creating spaces for inequity” (Tan/B1 2001). Some businessmen remarked that the limited participation was due to the FUGC not inviting them.

Besides participation of users, users highlighted other factors that are problematic for sustained effectiveness of forest protection. The market has been identified as a major threat, as one respondent said; “users are not confident to look after the forest by themselves due to its proximity to the market” (Tan/B2 2001). Users were concerned about illicit cutting by the poor and furniture business users. Similarly, the easy road access is also identified as a problem, as one user said; “situated along the highway … there are chances for forest products being stolen” (Tan/B4 2001). The secretary of the FUGC raised the issue of increasing population in Damauli that has increased the pressure to Bagbhanjyang forest.

Besides the above challenges to effective forest management, the discussions indicated that the management of forests has been sub-optimal. While users agreed that their dependence on forest products was marginal, the majority of users questioned the retention of older trees inside the forest. A major point coming out of the group discussions was that the Bagbhanjyang FUG had not utilised the forest because the DFO staff encouraged them to conserve it and controlled the decisions to utilise forest products. For instance, one member stated; “the DFO controls the decisions and is keen to ensure the forest remains intact …no utilisation as far as possible” (FUGC member 2001). For example, a local NGO Manager said:
“Rangers’ promotion of block-wise management of forests through technical forestry and the exhibition of the hardcore foresters’ attitude has been a problem for the effective forest management at the local level”.

However, a FUG member, who is also a Ranger working in another district, argued that the DFO has not been protection-oriented in Bagbhanjyang, but given its proximity to city and the risk of forest misuse, it is in the best interest of the FUG to focus on the protection of the forest in Bagbhanjyang. Overall, users supported the active management of forests.

8.3.2 Use and distribution of forest products

The above findings indicated that the majority of users do not heavily depend on forest products for their cooking, heating and other needs, but they are concerned about forest underutilisation because they still need various forest products. They are concerned because the forest could potentially meet their needs, but the extraction of products has been very limited.

To assess the needs of the users, discussions were conducted with the members of the sample households studied in the HQI. It was estimated that each household required an average of 20 cu ft. of timber, 17.6 bhari of fuelwood, 37.4 bhari of fodder and 1.7 muttha of Sal leaves from CF and other sources (see Appendix E-2.c). Users indicated that almost two-third of their requirements are expected to be met by CF. The data shows that timber is the most valued forest product. Fuelwood is not heavily used, as almost all households use other fuels for cooking. There is no very limited need for agriculture implements, fodder and leaf litter. Across the sample households, it was found that the poor households needed more fuelwood than the medium and rich households, but less of other products. The poor households did not need fodder because they did not raise livestock. Similarly, the needs of higher caste users were generally higher in terms of timber, fodder and leaf, but were lower in terms of fuelwood. The improved management of forest could potentially meet the fuelwood needs, but not the needs for timber (see Chapter Six).

The harvesting of products was far less than what was available in the forest, and what was wanted by the users from CF. The study estimated that each household received an average of 3.1 cu ft. of timber, 5.8 bhari of fuelwood, 0 bhari of fodder and 1.7 muttha of Sal leaves per year (see Appendix E-2.c). The Sal leaves were needed for the festivals. These needs were fulfilled because it was permitted to collect freely. However, there was no provision for fodder extraction. The extraction of fuelwood and timber was carried out during silvicultural operations, which were sold to user households. The poor households received less quantity of forest products, while the rich households received more products. Similarly, the male-headed households received more products than the female-headed households. The higher caste households received more products than lower and middle caste households. The product distribution was not equitable or equal.
The estimate indicates that the actual harvesting is far less than the availability of products. The forest is clearly underutilised. The percentage gap between the actual needs of the users and the actual harvesting of products is generally high. The gap is higher for the poor than for the medium and rich households (see Appendix E-2.d). The shortfall in the Bagbhanjyang community has to be fulfilled from other forests, thus shifting the pressure to forests elsewhere. The gap between the quantity demanded and supplied is one of the concerning factors for Bagbhanjyang FUG. As there is a significant gap between the needs and actual supply of products and the forest is not utilised to its potential, there are good reasons to improve forest management in Bagbhanjyang.

While the OP requires all users to contribute equally to management activities, the distribution of products is not equal. Products were sold to those households who could buy, often at competitive rates. The HQI indicate that the products distributed have not fulfilled the needs of the FUG members. The majority of FUG members fulfil their needs from other sources. The distribution process is controlled by the FUGC and the DFO.

The HQI data show that the majority of respondents were, either unaware, or uncertain on the product distribution principle because the products were distributed by the FUGC (Figure 8.3). However, most respondents participated in the distribution process (21 of 23) because they were interested in buying products, in which prices were assumed to be cheaper than the market price.

All respondents viewed that there was no separate arrangements for the poor and rich households. Instead, the majority of respondents believed that the distribution of products was based on the equal opportunity for all users to buy from the FUGC, which they believed, was done according to the OP. However, no respondents believed that the products they bought from CF fulfilled their needs. While some users may have capacity to buy from the market, others may not. The majority of users were therefore, not happy with the existing distribution principle because of the DFO controlling the distribution. The majority of users viewed that the distribution should be based on the needs of the users.
Across the sample households, no poor households (0 of 4) were aware of the details of the product distribution, but they all attended the distribution process (see Appendix E-2.e). The poor users were unable to meet their needs from CF and therefore, no poor households were satisfied with the product distribution. All of them believed that the product distribution should be based on equity.

The issues of product distribution were highlighted by the group discussions and informal talks, in which group participants equated the attendance to participation. People attended the auction because the auction price was “significantly lower than the market price” (Tan/B2 2001). However, users complained that the rate is still “too high for poor users” (Tan/B3 2001). A disadvantaged group member, who is also a member of the FUGC, argued that the poor people are not getting the appropriate benefits from CF:

“The poor people cannot depend on CF as forest products such as fuelwood and leaf litter do not sustain our livelihoods. We need paid employment in CF. We are not getting sufficient fuelwood and timber from CF … the rich buy products at auction, we cannot afford”. (FUGC member representing the disadvantaged group 2001)

Users were critical on the existing principle of product distribution. Most users emphasised that the FUGC should distribute the products equally and freely to users, but “the FUGC sells the forest products to those who can buy them” (Tan/B3 2001). The FUGC members and DFO staff were criticised for “selling timber to friends and relatives at their discretion” (Tan/B5 2001). The majority of group participants indicated that the poor users may have been unfairly penalised by this selling system. Although some users said that it was “a practical need of the FUG to protect the forest” (Tan/B4 2001), most users said it would be fair to distribute forest products on the basis of needs and free of charge.
Despite critical issues of fairness, most users were satisfied with the product distribution because they valued forest conservation and future flow of benefits more than the present use of forest products. Some users were satisfied because “… forest should not always be viewed as a pool of products, it is the mother nature, nurturing our life” (FUGC member 2001).

One of the highlights of the discussion was that the forest has many mature trees that are not being utilised. The underutilisation was due to “the FUGC not being confident to regulate the extraction and maintain the forest cover” (Tan/B1 2001) and because “the DFO does not support to cut and sell trees” (FUGC member 2001). Some group discussants blamed the FUGC being supervised by the DFO, as one member said:

“The forest is capable of reproducing … what we need is to utilise forest products to its full potential. However, due to conservative and the restricted mindset of some users and protection-focused CF strategies of the DFO, the forest is being protected at the expense of the critical needs of many users. It is against the reproductive capacity of the forest”. (Tan/B1 2001)

8.3.3 Income generation and community development

Income generation and community development through CF is popularised by the DFO and supporting agencies. Collective action has advanced towards adopting such strategies to generate income and contribute the income to community development. However, the discussions and talks with users indicated that such activities are limited.

The HQI data show that the FUG generates income from the sale of forest products and fees and fines. However, there is a need for more income to be generated from CF, which the majority of users believe, could be done from selective logging and joint venture with industry (Figure 8.4). Most respondents also support increasing the membership fees (22 of 23). This indicates that the users are interested in income generation through the use of forest products as well as from the contribution by members.

The sample data also show that there is a lack of transparency in fund management, as all users are uncertain about the amount of funds and where they are held. The majority of respondents, however, believe that the income has been used for constructing bridges, schools and roads, while they do not think that the fund has been loaned to individual users.

The data show that the DFO has controlled the income generation and community development activities of the FUG, while other organisations, such as donors, are not influential in such activities. The majority of respondents believe that the DFO should provide regular financial support to the FUG.
Across the sample data, it was found that the majority of poor households were supportive of selective logging and a joint venture with the industry to generate more income (see Appendix E-2.f). The majority of female-headed households opposed the selective logging and the joint venture with the industry, while it was supported by the majority of male-headed households.

The above data are elaborated by the group discussions. It is clear from the group discussions that the income generation has been passive as “the major source of income is only the membership fees and fines” (Tan/B1 2001). This limited income generation is due to “the forest being young and there is a low level of confidence among FUG members to actively utilise the forest” (Tan/B1 2001), and “the DFO being unhelpful” (Tan/B5 2001). However, this situation is changing, as one group participant said; “as the FUG is raising funds from diverse alternative sources including sale of timber and non-timber forest products” (Tan/B1.2001). A common point coming out of the talks and discussion was that most users do not support cutting trees for increasing income, but to generate income from measures, such as eco-tourism, recreational use of the site and plantation of cash generating species, including fruit trees.

The discussions indicated that the management of the FUG fund has been non-transparent. While users are aware of the income, they are not aware of the amount and its status. Despite this, users do not believe that there are issues of fund embezzlement or corruption. However, some users believe that the funds are dead, mainly being deposited in the bank. Others believe that the FUGC has spent on infrastructure development. Overall, the discussion participants considered the FUGC as the manager of the fund and they are not concerned about the fund status, as the fund size is small and FUGC members are trusted.
The fund mobilisation aspect is not impressive in Bagbhanjyang. The majority of group discussants believe that the income has been spent on forest watchers, FUG office management, infrastructure building and community support. However, they argue that the fund mobilisation has not been effective because the FUGC members lack skills to mobilise fund and the DFO is less supportive to fund mobilisation. The users believe, however, that the institutional forum of the FUG could be a means to address the community’s wider development needs.

8.3.4 Decision-making and implementation of decisions

Collective action has evolved in terms of decision making and implementation. Many users are united to make and re-make decisions and implement them. All users are expected to participate in decision-making and implementation and that decisions reflect the needs and views of all users. However, the HQI data indicate that the participation of users in decision making is not impressive, while the decision-making and implementation processes are dominated by the FUGC and controlled by the DFO.

The HQI data show that almost half of the respondents did not participate in the decision making, despite most users being invited to attend meetings and assembly and the majority of them having a strong sense of ownership of CF (Figure 8.5). In a situation where the participation was already low, the belief of the majority of respondents that the needs and views of the poor users were discussed in the meetings was less meaningful. Further, the decision making was not inclusive because the majority of respondents believed that the process was dominated by the FUGC members (not by the wealthy businessmen and politicians), who implemented the decisions according to the OP. The low level of participation and lack of inclusive decision making may be linked with the majority of users not having a previous experience of collective decision making in a formal way. This indicates that the previous informal decision making under the forest protection committee was different than what is being practiced by the FUG.

The data also show that while deforestation occurred during the political crises, the majority of users do not believe that there is any influence from the political parties in on-going FUG’s decision making and implementation processes. However, most respondents believe that the decision making and implementation processes are controlled by the DFO, while there is no influence from donors. Nevertheless, the majority believe that support (not control) is required from the DFO to make and implement decisions.
Across the sample households, one important point the data indicated was that the level of participation of poor and female-headed households was higher than that of rich and male-headed households in the decision making process. Since the FUGC dominated the final decisions, the participation of the poor and female households was passive.

However, the sample data across the households indicate that the majority of rich (13 of 15) and male (15 of 18) households believed that the needs and views of the poor households were discussed in the meetings (see Appendix E-2.g). The views of the male and rich households, who also hold the majority of FUGC positions, do not necessarily represent the views of the poor. The views of the poor may have been wrongly interpreted in the decisions.

Group discussions support the HQI data. The discussions indicated that the participation of users in decision making and implementation processes was not impressive and that the FUGC was responsible for such activities on behalf of all users. According to an NGO manager, the possible reasons are “the lack of spare time and low expectation from forests”. The poor groups of the FUG rarely receive invitations for the meetings and assemblies, as one respondent said, “the FUGC members do not invite them to meetings” (Tan/B4). Many users do not attend meetings because as one group participant said, “there is dissatisfaction amongst the users that the forest does not meet their needs … the lack of concept of CF among users” (Tan/B1 2001). While the majority of users agreed that the FUGC is responsible for decision making and implementation, the FUGC member complained that “the limited participation of rich and poor households was not helping the FUGC to address their needs” (Tan/B2 2001).

It was clear that the FUGC members were happy to make decisions for the users. As the secretary of the FUGC stated; “the FUGC makes sure that the decisions of FUG are transparent by
informing the users”. The FUGC Chairman said; “the meetings are held regularly and decisions are implemented according to OP and directions of the DFO”. However, the majority of members highlighted that poor and business users are not participating, even if the FUGC frequently request them to participate. The discussion also pointed that the help from the DFO was not sufficient for the FUGC. Interestingly, the group discussants and other users were happy that the decisions made by the FUGC.

Another aspect of the decision making process discussed was whether it has been inclusive and equitable. Most agreed that the decisions are ‘good’, implying that the rules are effective in conserving the forest. One poor respondent was concerned about “the decisions being taken without their involvement” (Tan/B4 2001). Many poor users emphasised that the FUGC has focussed on forest conservation activities and ignored employment generation possibilities useful for the poor. The majority of poor asserted that the forest is managed, not to provide forest products, but to provide a green environment, which is of marginal importance for the poor.

The group discussion and talks indicated that there was no direct domination by wealthy users, politicians and higher status people in the FUG’s decision making and implementation processes. This was so because, as one female participant said, “rich and high status people believe the CF as a minor activity … less important for them to make a big influence” (Tan/B3 2001). However, an NGO manager said:

“Elite domination is inevitable in community forestry … although most wealthy and powerful users do not capture the positions in FUGC and exert pressure in assemblies, they indirectly control what issues are raised and which way the decisions go”.

Many users and group discussants agreed that the decisions are directly dominated by the FUGC and “the FUGC makes decisions because it is given the authority and responsibility to do the job” (Tan/B2 2001). The needs and views of the poor and others in decisions are the discretion of the FUGC members:

“The FUGC members are expected to represent and decide for the needs of the poor and other members … so far, the FUGC is focused on the forest conservation rather than meeting the needs of users”. (Tan/B1 2001)

The majority of users were happy to leave the decision making to the FUGC. As one respondent said; “it is good for us that the FUGC is deciding … I cannot come to do forest protection activities, I need to continue my business, while the forest is protected” (Tan/B1 2001).

Due to limited participation, many users are not aware of the OP. Those, who know about it, believe that the OP is a reference document to clarify confusion, not a working document to guide forest management. The local forest dependent business-owners were critical on the OP and
restricted use of forests. One member said; “the FUGC is not demand-driven; rather the FUG is doing what the DFO has asked them to do for the protection of forests” (Tan/B5 2001).

The discussions and talks indicated that the decision making and implementation processes at Bagbhanjyang FUG have matured. One group discussant said; “users are organised and interact more frequently than ever before” (Tan/B3 2001). The majority of participants believe that CF has improved their institutional knowledge and skills required for effective decision-making. One member said; “the FUG system has increased the unity, trust and reciprocity among users” (Tan/B1 2001). It is believed that users are cohesive about forest management and they have a sense of ownership of the CF.

8.3.5 Linkage development and power relations

Between FUG and FUGC

The HQI data indicated that the relationships between the FUGC and users are good, but the FUGC is dominant in the affairs of the FUG. The majority of respondents believe that the FUGC controls the use and management of forests as it is strong, capable and dominating in the FUG’s decision making (Figure 8.6). While the majority of respondents believe that the FUGC is guided by the assembly, they viewed that there is a need for the extension of the FUGC and change the way decisions are made. Across the sample households, no poor households (0 of 4) believe that the FUGC is guided by the decisions made at the assembly, while this was contested by the majority of rich households (10 of 15). The majority of poor households (3 of 4) believe that the decision making style of the FUGC needs to be changed, which was contested by the majority of rich households (see Appendix E-2.h). Overall, the poor households appeared to be less happy with the FUGC than the rich households.

Figure 8.6 The views of the HQI respondents in regards to the relations between Bagbhanjyang FUG and FUGC
The group discussion and informal talks indicated that the relationship between the FUG and FUGC was not good. The current FUGC is generally regarded as responsible. One member said; “the work done by the FUGC is not extraordinary, but the FUGC members are hard-working” (Tan/B1 2001). However, some users indicated that the decisions and implementation by the FUGC are not transparent and accountable. One small business owner said; “we do not know what the FUGC does”. Some members argued that the FUGC is selective to send the invitations for the meetings. Some group participants also criticised FUGC as being weak, biased and not confident in forest management. Overall, the FUGC was seen as the follower of the DFO.

**Between FUG and DFO**

From FUG formation and implementation to the post-formation stage, the DFO staff play a crucial role in CF. The policy requires the DFO staff to devolve its power to forest users and to facilitate them (not to control) in the processes of CF. However, the HQI data and discussions indicated that the DFO controls the CF processes.

The HQI data show that the DFO controls the FUG and that the FUG needs to seek permission to use forest products (Figure 8.7). The majority of respondents believed that the DFO staff regularly visit the FUG and they mainly meet the FUGC members. Despite the regular meetings, the majority of users believed that the support from the DFO has been insufficient and untimely. The data also show that the majority of respondents are not happy with the DFO performance in CF (8 of 23), while none of the respondents were happy with the role of the DFO before the CF. The performance here basically refers to the accountability and effectiveness of DFO in delivering services to the FUG. There is a positive change in the attitude of people, in which the DFO was previously stereotyped as corrupt. This change in the perception of users is indicated by the majority of respondents (14 of 23), who believed that the relations between the FUG and the DFO has improved through CF.
Across the sample data, it was found that the majority of poor households (3 of 4) believed that the DFO staff only meet the FUGC members in regards to CF (see Appendix E-2.i). As a result, no poor households (0 of 4) believed that the relationship between the FUG and the DFO has improved through CF, while this was not agreed by the majority of rich households (11 of 15).

The group discussants agreed that the conventional style of mechanistic and target-oriented Hakim (order) system of bureaucracy still exist in practice, though with less intensity. One respondent said, “the attitudes of the DFO staff have not changed … DFO staff exercises their conventional power” (Tan/B1 2001). The group participants believed that the DFO is powerful and authorised to control CF activities. The power is seen as “legitimate for a state agency that has a land ownership” (Tan/B1 2001). However, the power to take back the forest from the FUG is considered “too much as users have to work hard to restore the forest” (Tan/B3 2001).

The working pattern of the DFO is widely perceived as patronising. Some participants questioned the need for all of their decisions and activities to be reported to the DFO. In particular, users were critical of the forest guards (i.e. the lowest level DFO staff), who still possess the traditional policing attitude of the DFO staff. However, most users do not blame individual DFO staff, as a respondent said; “the problem is the system of CF which made the DFO staff to control the FUG” (NGO manager). The need to transform the CF system was emphasised in the group discussion.

Most users found that the DFO activities are not consistent, particularly in the context of the frequent transfer of the forest officer. They keep close watch on the DFO because changes in the DFO activities affect the forest. One participant said: “we are scared with the Koidim case … we don’t want to see it again here in Tanahun … definitively not in Bagbhanjyang” (Tan/B1 2001).

Despite all the criticisms of the DFO, group participants agreed that the perception on the DFO has positively changed. Users believe that CF has been an example of people-centred governance in
Nepal that has given “the DFO a chance for a radical transformation of its previously tarnished reputation” (NGO manager 2001). However, one user highlighted that “there is much more to be done in terms of real devolution of power before the success of community forestry can be celebrated” (ibid).

**Between FUG and other institutions**

Bagbhanjyang FUG members are involved in many activities and they interact with many institutions in an every day basis. Their involvement in CF is a part of their lives. FUGs are only one of a number of institutions working at the local level. There are local government (Village Development Committees (VDC) or municipality), other FUGs, FUG network, NGOs, bilateral projects, political parties, government line agencies and other social and community institutions. The effective co-ordination and co-operation of these institutions could help the sustainability of FUGs.

However, the HQI data indicated that the FUG is isolated and does not have a working relation with other actors, except the DFO (Figure 8.8). The majority of them are not aware of the FUG networks. The only interaction that exists between the local community institutions, such as school and temple and the FUG, as the majority of respondents believe that the FUG is helping the local school and temple. They emphasised the need for the external institutions to help the FUG.

**Figure 8.8 Perceptions of the HQI respondents in regards to the relationship between Bagbhanjyang FUG and other actors**

Group discussions and talks indicated that the activities of the FUG occur in isolation of other activities and institutions because the DFO has set up the FUG to operate in that manner. The majority of discussants are aware that many external institutions such as NGOs and donors are helping FUGs through the government, but they prefer to receive direct support from donors. There were also concerns that there was “no support and cooperation from other line agencies”
Users commonly pointed out that the lack of support from the external institutions was due to the DFO being unable or unwilling to co-ordinate such activities.

Discussion was intensely divided on the need for and impact of political support, especially as to whether they should get help from the local level government. Overall, the discussion suggested that the political support is not necessary for CF to succeed, but positive support would help the FUG to improve confidence.

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the local level collective action processes and outcomes of Bagbhanjyang CF. The results show that there is limited distributive and procedural equity within the FUG. Many users, particularly wealthy, are trying to avoid attending the meetings and assembly, preferring responsibilities to be delegated or deposited to the FUGC so they can be involved in business and jobs. The issue of equity has emerged because the poor attend the meetings, but wealthier users significantly influence the way decisions go through their linkages to the FUGC members. The protection focus of forest management has less impact on wealthier users than the poor because they are able to afford forest products. While the improved forest condition is strongly perceived by users, this was achieved at the expense of poor users who are deprived of essential forest products that the forest is capable of supplying. There is a concern about the under-utilisation of forests. Clearly, equity issues are important for further analysis.
9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the local level collective action processes and outcomes of case study number three; Pragatisil FUG in Kaski district. The chapter consists of two sections. The first section presents the findings of the emergence of collective action, which includes the formation of FUG and preparation of the Constitution and OP. The second section deals with the evolution of collective action involving implementation processes, which are discussed under five sub-processes. The results show that the forest condition has significantly improved, but the forest is under-utilised. Unlike the two cases discussed previously, significant conflicts exist in this case. These are linked with inequitable processes and outcomes. The findings are based on Household Questionnaire Interviews (HQI), observations, group discussions and informal talks. Table 9.1 gives details of the sample of the HQI.

Table 9.1 Composition of the HQI households in Pragatisil FUG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-section of the HQI</th>
<th>Sample size (n = 29), total number of households (N) = 290</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealth Ranking</td>
<td>Poor (n=16) Medium (n=8) Rich (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female (n=12) Male (n=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Lower Caste (n=5) Middle caste (n=14) Higher Caste (n=10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2 The emergence of collective action - FUG Formation in Pragatisil FUG

Collective action in Pragatisil was formalised by the DFO Kaski. The formation of the FUG included diverse sub-processes such as awareness raising, user identification, establishment of the forest boundary and the preparation of the Constitution and OP. According to the Forest Act 1993, the responsibility of the DFO is to support the formation process and to help the FUG to constitute themselves. The required process is sound in principle, but in practice, short cuts are taken mainly due to meet the target of the DFO.

The discussions indicated that there was a demand for group recognition by the community who had been protecting the forest. However, the formation of the FUG was carried out by the DFO that replaced the then existing forest protection committee by a new FUG. The DFO staff mostly consulted the previous committee members for information. A few influential village residents were involved, while the participation of general members was limited. By necessity, the participation of people was often obtained by force to meet official targets.

Household Questionnaire Interviews (HQI) show that, despite the majority of respondents being unaware of the concepts of CF, they participated in the meetings and assembly (Figure 9.1).
However, their participation was passive as the majority of them did not express their needs and views. The data indicated that the community leaders and wealthy people dominated the decision making, while the process was controlled by the DFO.

The majority of respondents did not agree or were uncertain that all users were identified during the formation process. However, since the forest was legally given to the community, the majority of respondents believed that the OP recognised the local system. The data indicated that the process was situated in the local system, but was isolated from external institutions, apart from the DFO.

Across the sample data, respondents generally agreed that the formation process was elite-dominated and DFO controlled. However, there were differences in terms of awareness of CF, user identification and the participation of users. As the data show, the majority of rich (4 of 5) and higher caste respondents (7 of 10) were aware of the CF at the time of FUG formation, while only 4 of 16 poor and 1 of 5 lower caste respondents were aware of CF. The data also indicated that those disadvantaged respondents who were involved were passive in the process (see Appendix E-3.a).

![Figure 9.1 Respondents’ perceptions on the FUG formation process in Pragatisil FUG](image)

FUG formation was one of the major themes of the group discussions, as every participant (total=5) had some memories of the lengthy hand-over process. Other users included in the study were also aware of the FUG formation process. The common impression of the process was that the DFO was dominant, but inefficient. It undermined the previous forest protection and use systems.

It was clear in the group discussion that the FUG formation process was lengthy. While most of the group members were aware of the process being considered by the DFO, respondents said that the DFO was “unsupportive to handover the mature Sissoo plantation” (Kas/P2 2002). Users had
to “wait about 18 months to finalise the FUG formation and approval process” (Kas/P1 2002). The reason for a lengthy and inefficient formation process was due to some “land and forest boundary disputes” as well as “problems of user identification” (Kas/P1 2002). In fact, as one respondent argued; “the process suffered from the lack of interest and motivation from the DFO” (Kas/P2 2002). The discussion concluded that the lengthy process was due to the FUG not being seriously considered by the DFO in its annual target.

The process was not effective in terms of spreading the awareness of CF. For instance, one participant said; “we did not know that we were about to get the management responsibilities and use rights from the DFO” (Kas/P4 2002). Most of the respondents did not know the OP and assembly, but they knew that the FUGC was formed to protect the forest. Users were not clear about their responsibilities and authorities, but were dependent on “the information supplied and interpreted by the FUGC members” (ibid).

Despite the long history of forest protection by the users, it was clear in the group discussion that the FUG formation process was introduced by the DFO “without proper recognition of the existing use and management systems” (Kas/P1 2002). The majority of respondents have no idea why the DFO did not recognise the existing system, but one respondent said; “DFO staff was frustrated by the dispute during the process… the new system was assumed to resolve disputes” (Kas/P2 2002). Another group participant said; “not only the DFO staff, but some of our FUG members supported the new rules, because the old rules were not scientific” (Kas/P1 2002). The group discussion indicated that the imposition of new rules by the DFO was to ensure forest protection, particularly the protection of the mature plantation previously established by the DFO.

The formation process was not participatory. The Ranger “only consulted village elites” (Kas/P5 2002). There were no small meetings and discussions. The general assembly was a formality, in which “the DFO staff drafted the Constitution and Operational Plan in consultation with the previously existing forest protection committee members” (Kas/P2 2002). Elites captured the positions in new FUGC and “imposed decisions against the poor and disadvantaged” (Kas/P4 2002). It appears that the ownership and control of the FUG formation process remained with the DFO. One member added; “the DFO was basically owning the process, rather than supporting it” (Kas/P2 2002).

9.3 The evolution of collective action – implementation of CF in Pragatisil

Collective action in Pragatisil has evolved such that users are divided and conflicts are significant in the implementation processes. Many users frequently said that key FUGC members are no
longer trusted. However, for sustained cooperation, the implementation must be effective, referring to the processes that result in socially desired outcomes. The following sub-section discusses the five processes and activities that explain the issues of processes and outcomes of collective action.

9.3.1 Forest management

Forest management includes the definition of forest boundaries and the protection, plantation and silvicultural activities. When the FUG matures and the confidence and cohesion of users increase, the forest management advances to a phase of active management. In theory, these processes are expected to be carried out by the FUG to improve the forest and meet the needs of the FUG members. However, in practice, there are many issues, some of which are discussed below.

Respondents of the HQI perceive that the condition of forests has significantly improved and the product flows increased through CF (Figure 9.2). This may be because the majority of users (62%) have participated in the protection and management of forests. However, the data indicate that the FUG has some critical problems. Firstly, despite a good level of participation, the majority of respondents (76%) are unaware as to whether the forest has been protected according to the OP, indicating that the protection of forest may be unsystematic and non-transparent. Secondly, despite the FUG managing the forest for more than a decade, the majority of respondents do not believe or are uncertain that the forest has clear boundaries. Consequently, there are conflicts in forest protection, for which the majority of respondents emphasise the need for hiring the forest watchers. Thirdly, the FUG members see the DFO as a source of “improved knowledge”, as the majority of respondents demand the DFO to provide training and other support for improving the forest management in Pragatisil. The strong anticipation of the DFO support suggests that users are not fully confident in forest management.

Across the sample data, the participation of the poor is lower than the rich in forest management activities. This may be because the poor users are less aware of the boundary of the forest and therefore, they are uncertain of the secure product flows in the future. The low participation of poor users may also be because the majority of them (14 of 16) do not believe that the FUGC follows the OP (see Appendix E-3.b).
The disadvantaged groups perceive lower level of conflict in forest management than other users. Across the sample data, conflicts are perceived relatively more by the majority of rich (4 of 5). However, the majority of respondents emphasise the need for forest watchers. The relative emphasis given by the rich and higher caste respondents to hire forest watchers is greater than by the poor and lower caste respondents.

In the group discussion, most participants reiterated their success in restoring the forest. However, the participants were critical on the protection, as one respondent said; “forest is protected as if it is not for use” (Kas/P2 2002). The majority of them agreed that the “forest has improved from almost a denuded land, but products are not sufficient” (Kas/P4 2002).

It is clear from the discussion that the participation of users, particularly the poor and women users, is low in forest protection and management. However, one respondent argued; “poor and women users normally do not receive information in time and sometimes they can’t make it. There are social and economic reasons” (Kas/P4 2002). On the other hand, most participants believed that the FUGC members want the participation of all people in the protection and management activities, but are not keen on all users attending meetings. One poor group member critical about forest management activities, said; “the poor people are asked to do heavy work such as pitting, carrying loads, whereas FUGC and other wealthy people monitor such activities” (Kas/P5 2002). The group discussion clearly indicated that the low participation of poor and women is linked with social and economic factors.

One of the major issues identified in the group discussion is the conflict among the FUG members in forest protection and management. A majority of discussants believe that “the conflicts are developed mainly from the scattered forest patches and dispersed settlements” (Kas/P2 2002). The conflicts are intensified in the FUG due to “a limited communication between the poor and rich
within the FUG” (Kas/P2 2002). The group discussions clearly indicate that users want more training and support, which they believe, help to resolve conflicts, and protect and manage the forest. To resolve conflicts, the discussions highlight the need for forest watchers to be supplied by the DFO.

However, the group participants are concerned with the low level of support being provided by the DFO. While they highlight the need for support, one respondent said; “the FUG should be careful of conditions coming with the DFO support” (Kas/P3 2002). While the plantation is carried out by the DFO and handed over to the FUG, the general view is that “the DFO still takes the plantation as its own” (Kas/P4 2002). One user, who lives close to the plantation said; “the site is regularly monitored by the DFO staff” (Kas/P5 2002). Users are not happy with the DFO encouraging plantation, while there is profuse natural regeneration in the forest. The discussions suggest that the DFO controls the forest management activities in the FUG because, as one respondent said; “the land tenure remained with the DFO” (Kas/P1 2002).

9.3.2 Use and distribution of forest products

The underlying assumption of CF is that the benefits should accrue to FUG members. Thus, it is important to know what the benefits are, what is the need of the forest users, who gets the benefits, how the distribution occurs, who distributes the products and what people feel about it.

As discussed in Chapter 6, there are enormous benefits that the Pragatisil Community Forest could potentially supply. To find out if the potential supply of products could meet the needs of the community, discussions were conducted with the household members during the HQI. The study estimates that each household requires an average of 16.1 cu ft. of timber, 42.9 bhar of fuelwood, 359.3 bhar of fodder and 16.7 bhar of leaf litter per year from CF and other sources. Users suggested that about two third is expected to be met by CF. Across the sample households, the poor households need more fuelwood, fodder and leaf litter than medium and rich households, while rich household demand more timber than the poor and medium households. Similarly, male-headed households demand more forest products than female-headed households (see Appendix E-3.c). The lower caste needs more fuelwood, fodder and leaf litter than other households. Since the forest product needs of the community are high, even when the forest is managed scientifically and used to its optimum potential, the estimate indicates that the potentially available forest products is unlikely to meet all the needs (see Chapter Six). This is consistent with the estimate of the FUG in the OP.

The harvesting of products is far less than what was wanted from CF. The study estimates that each household has received an average of 3.6 cu ft. of timber, 10.3 bhar of fuelwood, 14.3 bhar
of fodder and 7.3 bhari of leaf litter per year. The rich and higher caste respondents receive more high value products such as timber and fuelwood, while the poor, female and lower caste users receive more low value products such as fodder and leaf litter (see Appendix E-3.c). Disadvantaged groups of the FUG require more fuelwood and other products, while the rich, male and higher caste users need more timber. The percentage gap between the needs and the supply of products is higher for the poor and lower caste respondents (see Appendix E-3.d). As there is a significant gap between the needs and actual supply and the forest is under-utilised, there are reasons to improve forest management.

The OP states that “the timber is distributed to the FUG members according to their needs … the excess timber will be sold at auction with 15 percent discounts to the members” (Pragatisil FUG 2000, p.15). The OP is remarkably silent on the use and distribution of forest products other than timber. In practice, users suppose that the fuelwood and fodder harvested during the silvicultural operations are distributed equally. Users have also collected dry fuelwood, ground grass and leaf litter during the forest opening times. Since there is significant level of uncertainty and confusion about product distribution, it is important to analyse how the harvested products are distributed among users.

The HQI indicate that the products distributed have not fulfilled the needs of the FUG and that the distribution process is done by the FUGC, which is controlled by the DFO (Figure 9.3). The majority of respondents believe that donors and local government have no influence in the product distribution (55%). The data suggest that despite the majority of respondents (62%) participating in the product distribution process, they have a low level of knowledge about how forest products are meant to be distributed. Only 28 percent of the respondents are aware of the product distribution system. The participation of respondents without knowledge of the system means that many users have attended the distribution process.

The distribution is controlled by the FUGC and DFO, which largely follow the principle of equality, as 59 percent of respondents believe that the product distribution is based on equality principle. Equity principle has not been considered, as no respondent believes that there are separate arrangements for the poor and rich. However, the provisions of equal shares have been positively perceived, as the majority of respondents (59%) are happy about it even if their product requirements are not fulfilled. Despite the relative happiness, the majority of respondents (55%) believe that equity should be the basis for product distribution.

Across the sample data, only a small proportion of poor (3 of 16) and female (3 of 12) respondents are aware of the details of the product distribution system. All lower caste respondents (n=5) believe that the OP is not properly implemented by the FUGC and the majority of them view that
the distribution of products is not equal. The majority of disadvantaged respondents are unhappy with the distribution and therefore, they support the need for equity as a basis for product distribution (see Appendix E-3.e).

![Respondents’ views on product distribution process in Pragatisil FUG](image)

Figure 9.3 Perceptions of respondents in forest product distribution processes in Pragatisil FUG

The group discussion indicates that users participate in product distribution because they anticipate some products. As one participant said; “we anticipate the benefits, but do not know how products should be distributed” (Kas/P5 2002). The FUGC is assumed to be “responsible for distributing forest products equally to all member households” (Kas/P1 2002). However, another participant said; “the chairman of the FUGC is biased to households close to him” (Kas/P5 2002). Overall, users are not happy with the existing FUGC, particularly with the chairman.

In the group discussion, there is a consensus in that the DFO controls the product distribution. One participant said; “the ultimate decisions on forest product extractions depend on the DFO … this also affect distribution” (Kas/P2 2002). Another participant argued; “the power of the DFO generated from the ownership of land, making the DFO able to control the FUG” (Kas/P3 2002). Overall, group participants believe that the FUGC distributes products according to the DFO directions.

The group discussion indicates that the forest product distribution has not met the needs of the FUG members. Group participants agree that the FUG member households “receive fuelwood, grass and leaf …but not enough” (Kas/P4 2002). A teashop owner is frustrated with the product distribution rules, “being too strict and rigid in compared to the improvement of the forest and increased forest products availability”. He is worried about the future of his tea-shop due to increased fuelwood scarcity, which he believes “not being seriously taken by the FUGC”. A poor woman argued; “I only need fuelwood, which is insufficient, nothing else … cannot swap products with other users”.
The underlying principle for product distribution is that “each household equally contributes to forest management and receives an equal quantity of forest products” (Kas/P1 2002). This is considered as an improved criterion in an unequal socio-cultural context as:

“The equality system has been undermined by the social and cultural system. We have been desperate for equality. Equity is far from our sights. Working in the equality system in product distribution in community forestry is satisfying for us”. (Kas/P3 2002)

Generally, many users are happy with the equality system in the distribution because it is better than the previous system. In the traditional system, “all people sitting in the same bench, eating the same type of food and speaking in front of the village head was socially unacceptable for the village elites and also for the entire village” (A teashop owner 2002).

However, the majority of group participants believe that equality of share has been seriously misleading in practice because “those members who are in the FUGC, municipality and with a good connection with the DFO, have better access to forest products compared to those who are poor” (Kas/P2 2002). The poor and lower caste users argue that the FUGC does not distribute products on an equal basis. One member questions the usefulness of equality principle:

“If you don’t have livestock, you don’t need fodder. If you don’t have land and livestock, you don’t need both fodder and leaf. If you don’t have money, you can’t buy timber at auction. So, if you are landless and livestockless poor, what do you need? … fuelwood? Still you cannot rely on fuelwood as it is insufficient … those who have money, can afford to enjoy the equality system and the poor who have no alternatives, have to suffer”. (Kas/P2 2002)

It is obvious in the discussion that equity is not the basis for the distribution because “the DFO has not promoted it in the policy and practice” (Kas/P1 2002). There are reasons for equity being not promoted by the DFO, as one respondent said:

“Equity is difficult for the DFO to ask FUGC members, who are mostly village elites, to establish a system that requires them giving more products to others”. (Kas/P2 2002)

The provision of equality is not monitored by the DFO because “it is not required by the policy” (ibid) and “the DFO is not much interested on how products are distributed within the community” (Kas/P1 2002). Overall, the discussion highlights the need for equity principle to be implemented in product distribution.

9.3.3 Income generation and community development

Income generation and community development are promoted by the DFO and other agencies in Nepalese CF. It is assumed that natural, social, human and institutional capital organised within the FUG framework can potentially generate financial capital, which can be crucial for much needed local community development. The benefits of CF are assumed to contribute to poverty alleviation. However, users have suggested that for Pragatisil FUG, the generation of income and
community development are very limited and the FUG has not realised such activities in practice
to the extent that they are promoted in the rhetoric.

Respondents said that the FUG does not have a plantation of income generating species, but the
majority of respondents believe that the income has been generated from the sale of forest
products. There is a strong belief among the majority of respondents (82%) that the CF must
generate more income. However, they point that it is not good to generate income through
selective logging, or joint venture with industry, or by increasing the fees and fines. Instead, they
(90%) view that the DFO and other institutions should provide financial support to the FUG as
they (76%) believe, income generation activities are controlled by the DFO. In regards to the use
of the existing fund, no individual users have received loan from the FUGC and no respondent is
clearly aware of the fund and its status.

When the data are analysed across the sample, the majority of lower caste users (4 of 5) do not
know that the FUG has generated income from the sale of forest products. The majority of them
believe that there is a possibility for selective logging to generate income. However, the majority
of other users, particularly all the rich (5 of 5) and higher caste (10 of 10) believe that the FUG
should not generate income from the joint venture with industry (see Appendix E-3.f). This finding
suggests that the advantaged groups of the FUG are more interested in forest protection than other
users.

![Respondents' views on income generation and community development processes in Pragatsil FUG](image)

Figure 9.4 Views of HQI respondents in income generation and community development
processes in Pragatisil FUG

The group discussions emphasise the need to generate more income from the forest. The group
participants see enormous possibilities of income generation from the forest, as one respondent
said:
“We should support the idea of cutting trees, selling them to the market and generating income, provided that the site is replaced by the plantation. We must not fear losing the forest, but must be confident to restore it”. (Kas/P2 2002)

However, users have hesitations about cutting trees because, as one participant said; “the DFO may resume CF” (Kas/P1 2002). The group discussion indicates that the joint venture with industry is a good idea, so that “the partnership between the private company and the FUG brings knowledge, money and skills needed for active forest management” (Kas/P2 2002). This is, however, contested, as some members especially the poor and women, suggest the alternative ways to generate income such as from “ecotourism, non-timber forest products, nursery … rather than cutting trees” (Kas/P5 2002).

It is clear from the group discussion that the mobilisation of funds has been inefficient and non-transparent. One group participant argued; “the FUGC needs to show how much is the income, where the income is and how it is being mobilised” (Kas/P2 2002). There are serious doubts whether “the fund has been properly managed by the FUGC” (Kas/P5 2002). The FUGC is ineffective in terms of helping the poor because it “did not provide loans to the poor, while depositing money in the bank” (Kas/P5 2002). However, the FUGC member defended against the issue of non-transparency and ineffectiveness of fund mobilisation:

“All the income is in the bank. Every detail is regularly presented in the assembly and annual auditing, but it is difficult to show every detail to everyone, we have spent on development activities, but loaning to the poor has risk of not returning in time or never returning”. (Kas/P1 2002)

The FUGC member added; “the issue of fund mobilisation has been there for a significant time” (ibid). The reason for a persistence of the issue is that “the FUGC did not consult FUG members to spend the money. The FUGC chairman handles the money … the sale of the forest soil was later known to us” (Kas/P5 2002). One group participant questions the FUGC as “accountable more to the DFO as to the FUG” (Kas/P2 2002). Overall, group participants were not happy with the FUGC.

Despite many issues surrounding the income generation and mobilisation, the group discussion is conclusive that “the FUG is a suitable platform for community development” (Kas/P3 2002). The suitability of the FUG has been judged in terms of “the established rules and organisation, significantly improving forest and support from the people” (Kas/P2 2002). The problem is identified as the declining support from the DFO, while reinforcing the control of the FUG through legal and administrative mechanisms:

“DFO does not provide needed financial support. Supporting activities are on the decline as forest watchers are now not paid by the DFO. We need money to manage our forest, money is required to maintain the temple, construct the FUG office and many more. But the DFO requires us to maintain the forest … to present the inventory report ensuring that the forest is well looked after. How do we get money? We cannot sell trees, as it destroys
the forest in the view of the DFO and we do not get the financial help from the DFO”. (Kas/P2 2002)

While the group discussions emphasise the financial help from the NGOs and donors, the discussants are critical on the way donors are helping the FUG. Users are not enthusiastic about the NGO help, as one respondent said; “NGOs depend on the government and bilateral projects for their financial survival” (Kas/P3 2002). The help from the donors coming through the DFO is argued to have “supported more to the DFO staff, a little to the FUGC and none to the poor” (Kas/P2 2002).

9.3.4 Decision making and implementation of decisions

Ongoing decision-making and implementation processes involve the participation of forest users in deciding and implementing how the forest will be managed. In theory, active and inclusive participation of all users are required to effectively manage the forest. However, the HQI, group discussions and participant observation suggest that the participation is passive, non-inclusive and FUGC dominated. There is no mechanism put in place to assess whether the decisions are effectively implemented in practice. Conflicts are not resolved. Users believe that the FUG is in a critical stage because conflicts are increasing and decisions are not consensually taken.

The HQI indicate that the majority of users (66%) receive invitations from the FUGC and 55 percent of respondents participate in meetings and assembly. One of the reasons for the participation is that as 93 percent of respondents agree, users feel CF as their own private land. 55 percent of respondents said that they have previous experience of collective decision making. The majority of respondents (52%) also believe that the needs and views of the poor have been considered in the decisions. However, the decisions are dominated by the FUGC, as 62 percent of respondents believe. However, only 21 percent respondents believe that the FUGC implements decisions made at the meetings and assembly. The majority of respondents (76%) view that the DFO controls the decision making and implementation activities of the FUG, while there seems to be no influence from the political parties in decision making and implementation. The data also indicates that users expect decision making and implementation support from the DFO.

Across the sample data, it is interesting that the majority of poor respondents (11 of 16) participate in the meetings and assembly, while participation is low among the rich. However, the majority of poor and lower caste respondents believe that the FUGC dominates the decisions and their needs and views are not considered in the decisions made by the FUGC (see Appendix E-3.g).
Figure 9.5 Views of HQI respondents in ongoing decision-making and implementation processes in Pragatisil FUG

The group discussions are useful for revealing the meaning and level of participation in decision-making and implementation processes, which are not explicit in the HQI results. The discussion is conclusive that the participation from the women and poor is declining. A poor respondent highlighted the problem of participation by the poor:

“The poor cannot attend all assemblies because we do not always get the invitation from the FUGC chairman, sometimes we get information after the assembly and meetings … cannot give up the wage work, which feeds my family … community forestry does not feed me. The FUGC does not understand the poor’s need and constraints”. (Kas/P5 2002)

Even when some users attend the meetings, there are issues of the significance of participation. One FUGC member said:

“The majority of poor participants do not speak or share their views in the assembly and meetings because they are not educated and do not have courage to express their needs”. (Kas/P1 2002)

Other group participant argued:

“The poor and women are not able to express themselves directly in front of the men and higher caste rich because of the socio-cultural stratification and economic differentiation”. (Kas/P3 2002)

One of the important issues identified during the discussion is that, despite the participatory rhetoric of CF, the implementation of the policies at the local level has largely been based on the traditional and semi-feudal social system which re-inforces the hierarchical system that “hinders, rather than encourages the participation of every section of the society” (Kas/P4 2002). The dominance of FUGC in the decision-making and implementation has become “necessary in practice, no matter what the policy prescribes” (Kas/P2 2002).
However, the group discussions highlight that decision making and implementation activities are better now than they were before. The majority of group participants believe that the CF has increased institutional knowledge and skills. Trust and reciprocity are increasing. However, despite the sense of ownership of forest and knowledge and skills of CF, users raise the issues of conflicts, which are not resolved by the local mechanisms.

It is clear in the discussion that the DFO is not sufficiently supporting the FUG. When asked how it becomes possible to support without control, one group member argued; “the legal authority given to the DFO and the land tenure of the government made the DFO a powerful body to supervise and control the FUG” (Kas/P1 2002). The majority of the group members argue that the land tenures should be transferred to the FUG to transform the FUG into an independent and autonomous body. Users say that the DFO control is counter productive for the FUG’s effectiveness in decision making and implementation.

While there is no direct influence from the political parties, the group discussion highlights that “the political decisions taken at the higher level is influencing the FUG at the local level” (Kas/P1 2002). Even the municipal council members, while they do not directly involve in the FUG’s decisions, “have influence in terms of their political affiliations with the member of the FUGC” (Kas/P2 2002). The political influence of any type is, however, “highly undesirable for CF” (Kas/P3 2002). What is desirable, but not available, is the support from NGOs and donors, which the group discussants consensually perceive as the agents bringing “finance, better knowledge and good techniques for forest management” (Kas/P2 2002). The group participants also stressed the need to utilise the local knowledge for effective management of the forest.

9.3.5 Linkage development and power relations

Linkage between the FUG and FUGC

The relationship between the FUG and FUGC is a vital aspect of CF at the local level. In principle, the FUG and general assembly are supreme bodies, which devise and change rules and implements them through an executive organisation called FUGC. By law, the FUG is authorised to form, change and dismiss the FUGC. However, in practice, the FUGC largely dominates and controls the decision making and implementation processes.

The HQI data indicate that the FUGC in the Pragatisil FUG is overly dominant in every aspect of the FUG. The majority of the respondents (93%) view the FUGC as controlling the use and management of forest (Figure 9.6). The dominance of the FUGC in the CF process is felt by each group in the society. The majority of respondents (76%) are uncertain if the FUGC is guided by the assembly and OP. The powerful and dominant FUGC have appeared to be non-transparent.
Although the majority of respondents (86%) believe that the relationship between the FUG and FUGC is good, almost all respondents emphasise the need for changing the existing FUGC (93%). The majority of respondents like to see the FUGC changing the decision making styles. The sample data point out that users are not satisfied with the current status of the FUGC.

Figure 9.6 Perceived relationships between Pragatisil FUG and FUGC

The group discussion supports the HQI results. One woman participant said; “the meetings and assemblies are held by the FUGC in such a way that the women users are not able to speak their concerns in front of the large mass” (Kas/P4 2002). When users cannot express their views, it is “the FUGC that starts proposing and approving decisions” (Kas/P2 2002). The agenda setting remains the responsibility of the FUGC, in which “the interest of the poor and women rarely considered, but the FUGC and elites impose their interests” (Kas/P2 2002). There is a consensus in the group discussion that the FUGC makes decisions because “the users do not know the issues at hand due to the lack of information about the legal provision” (Kas/P3 2002). The FUGC often “filters and poorly communicates information about the law and requirements of CF to the members” (Schoolteacher 2002).

The group discussants said that the relationship between the FUG and FUGC is good because “the forest has been conserved due to the action of the FUGC … why be in conflict with them?” (Kas/P4 2002) However, there is a disappointment with the existing FUGC. One group participant said:

“The forest product extraction has been strictly limited … neglecting the need of the poor, while the neighbouring FUG members are comfortably using the forest”. (Kas/P5 2002)

There is a feeling among the group discussion participants that the FUGC chairman has served in the FUGC since its inception and “there is a need for change” (Kas/P4 2002).
The role of the DFO is critically crucial for CF to be effectively initiated and implemented. In principle, the role has to be facilitative to the FUG. However, in practice, as shown by the data, the role has been perceived by users as authoritarian, policing, paternalistic and controlling. However, the FUG’s striving for the DFO support reflects the decreasing level of self-reliance. Despite the control, the relationship between the FUG and the DFO has improved.

As the sample data show, the majority of respondents believe that the DFO controls the FUG and it requires the FUG to get permission to use the forest. The majority of respondents (69%) believe that the legislation for maintaining the DFO control has to be changed (Figure 9.7).

The support from the DFO seems inadequate. 90 percent of respondents demand increased support. The available support is untimely. While the majority of respondents are not happy with the performance of the DFO, the data indicate that the performance of the DFO has improved in the perceptions of the respondents.

The cross-sectional data show that the DFO staff often meet the rich users, not the poor. The majority of poor users do not believe that the relationship between them and the DFO has improved through CF (see Appendix E-3.i).

The group discussion concludes that the impression of the DFO has been significantly improved by the positive impact of CF. One group member explains:

“The DFO staff used to police the forest and people. We feared the Ranger and Banpale [forest guards] as dangerous enemies, they were corrupt, and no one was willing to talk to them. However, community forestry has changed all. Even people perceive DFO staff as friends. The Ranger is welcomed in villages. People go to the DFO for support. This is the transformation in the perception of people … congratulations to the DFO”. (Kas/P1 2002)
However, the group discussants are cautiously positive on the performance of the DFO in CF. The main concern is that “the support has been decreasing … available support is uniform, sometimes untimely, but mostly insufficient” (Kas/P4 2002). The decreasing support is due partly to “the less and less direct incentives for the DFO staff in providing timely, suitable and sufficient support to FUGs … decreasing interests and motivation of the staff to work for the FUGs in case by case basis” (Kas/P2 2002). Insufficient support is attributed not only to “the limited willingness of the DFO, but also the limited capability of the DFO staff to supply the diverse needs of the FUG” (Kas/P3 2002). The support being provided for the FUG members in terms of training to increase capability is questioned as “limited to the FUGC and a few elite in the community … who are less dependent and less committed to community forestry” (Kas/P5 2002).

The group discussion clearly indicates that the DFO has power and control over the use and management of the forest. This power is given by “the forestry legislation from which the government secures the land tenure and empowers the DFO to own the processes of the hand-over and withdrawal” (Kas/P1 2002). This power is seen as “threatening, not only to the independence of the FUGs, but also the participatory approach of the CF” (Kas/P2 2002). The DFO’s extensive control over the FUG is made possible through “the large bureaucratic organisation of the DoF with a pool of resources which allow it to easily and effectively communicate with and justify to the policy makers as well as forest users about the risk of forest loss” (Kas/P1 2002).

**FUG and other institutions**

Community Forestry constitutes a part of the wider system. Forest users at Pragatisil FUG, like elsewhere, need to interact with a number of external actors. However, the data indicate that the FUG operates in isolation, apart from the DFO. The HQI sample data depicted in the Figure 9.8, show that the majority of respondents (55%) do not believe that the FUG members cooperate with the members of other FUGs in relation to forest management. The data also highlight that the majority of respondents are not aware of the FUG network (59%). While the OP of the FUG claims that the FUG should support school and temples, the majority of respondents, either do not agree, or are uncertain about it (59%).

The majority of respondents also perceive that the FUG does not receive support from or is influenced by the municipality, donors, political parities or other government agencies. However, the data clearly show that 79 percent of respondents highlight the need for outsiders to help the FUG. A majority of respondents do not believe that NGOs and donors are influencing the FUG (55%).
It is clear from the group discussions that the FUG needs external support for effective decision making and implementation processes. A common understanding among the FUG members has been developed that the DFO is the only external actor that can help the FUG. However, help from donors is seen to be financially rewarding for the poor and rich users and thus, is most welcomed.

The discussions clearly indicated that the political influence has been undesirable. However, the group participants believe that, due to members of the FUG belonging to different political parties, political division and groupings within the FUG and FUGC are common, which is influencing the decision making and implementation. Users are supportive of the idea of FUG network, but one group discussant is critical:

“The organisation has been highly politicised, it opposes every step of the forest department… but has established parallel bureaucratic structure… everyone wants to be its leader… there is dirty politics within the FECOFUN, which rarely advocates the interests of vast majority of forest dependent poor people”. (Kas/P2 2002)

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the local level collective action processes and outcomes of Pragatisil CF, Kaski. The results show that there are many issues involved in the existing local processes and outcomes, including procedural and distributional equity and the isolation of FUG. The current practice appears to be different than what is required by the forest policy. The chapter exposed the domination of the FUGC in decision making and implementation processes, passive participation of users and strong perceptions of users in regards to the FUG being controlled by the DFO. Additionally, despite the strong interest of the FUG members to interact with and receive support from external actors, the FUG has not had any significant interaction with other FUGs, NGOs, donors and other government line-agencies, except the DFO.
However, the forest condition is perceived to have significantly improved after CF. This is confirmed by the RFA (Rapid Forest Assessment) presented in Chapter 6. However, this improvement is largely achieved at the expense of the poor users who do not receive sufficient forest products. The DFO is perceived to have indirectly forced the Pragatisil FUGC to emphasise forest protection. Clearly, there are issues of equity to be further analysed.
Chapter 10: Multiple actors, multiple scales – Perspectives on Nepalese CF

10.1 Introduction

Many well-intended forest policies have failed because inadequate attention has been given to the various stakeholders and their respective interests, concerns and priorities. Policies have not met their stated objectives as the consequences of the policy are perceived to be adverse by one or more stakeholder groups, and have therefore, led to non-cooperation by some stakeholders. Many policies that have been perceived to be successful, have achieved their success only at the expense of certain stakeholder groups. A case in point is the CF policy in Nepal that involves many stakeholders in formulating and implementing policy at different levels. While issues, such as equity, have been identified, previous studies have rarely explicitly analysed equity issues as perceived by various actors at different levels.

This chapter assesses different views of various actors regarding the issues of CF policy making and implementation. The results are presented in five sections. The first section provides the views of respondents in terms of the definitions and issues of Nepalese CF. The second section deals with the emergence of CF and formation of FUGs, followed by the evolution of collective action. Fourthly, opinions related to distributional and procedural equity are discussed. The chapter concludes by summarising the key points.

10.2 Interpreting CF: multiple actors, multiple views

10.2.1 Defining Community Forestry

Definitions of CF have been contested among actors. The SSI indicate that most forest users have a vague understanding of CF (here called “CF basic”), while others either emphasise local people managing the forest and receiving benefits (i.e. “CF local”), or interpreting as institutional arrangements to involve local people in forest conservation, management and utilisation (“CF institutional”).

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13 Stakeholder in this thesis refers to a category of people who are affected by the CF policy or those who directly affect the implementation of CF activities. The type and level of stakes may be different from one group to the other. While there is a broad level of commonality in interests, priorities and concerns within each stakeholder group, depending upon different sets of socio-cultural, economic, political and institutional circumstances, there may be many sub-groups. Thirty-seven individuals are selected for SSI in this study which fit in to four groups (forest users, state forestry officials, others (NGO, university and business), and international agencies and bilateral projects (IABP) (see Appendix 9.1). They are operating at four different levels; local, district, national and international. The forest users and state forestry officials are the key stakeholder groups because they are directly relevant for this study. Stakeholders and actors are interchangeably used in this thesis.
a) Forest users

At the local level, the majority of respondent users have a vague understanding of CF. For instance, a lower caste female respondent views CF as “the forest belonging to the community” (DISV/Kas). The FUGC members highlight the efforts of local people, as a FUGC secretary interprets CF as “the forest that is being protected and used by the local people” (FUGC/Ktm.2).

At the national level, respondents from forest users’ federations (FECOFUN14 and new federation) define CF with a focus on the local people, as one respondent said; “community forestry is a forest managed by its traditional users to meet their basic needs” (USFED.1).

b) State forestry officials

Despite working in a bureaucratic organisation under the same institutional and legal arrangements, there are inconsistencies in views among the state forestry staff working at different levels. For the staff, who work at the local level, CF is mainly a local affair. For instance, a Ranger said; “CF is a forest managed by a group (CFUG) under their own rules and regulations” (RAN/Kas). On the other hand, the District Forest Officers (DFOf) appear to focus on the institutional arrangements between the state and forest users. For instance, a forest officer defines CF as “a forest legally handed over to local people and is managed and protected by them” (DFOf/Kas). At the national level, the emphasis of CF is on the real forest users, who manage and use the forest. One respondent argued:

“Community forestry is a forest handed over by the DFO staff to the grass root people who are using it. Although local people have been involved in the forest management for over 20 years, CF is only that forest, where users are managing and using it”. (NFOf.1)

The Director of the Forest Research and Survey Centre (FRSC)15 interprets “community forestry as a part of government forestry, which is managed by communities” (NFOf.3).

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

The definitions given by the respondents from the university and NGO emphasise local rights to use and manage the forests, as a respondent said; “CF is an institutional arrangement that recognises local rights and indigenous knowledge to forests” (NANGO). On the other hand, one

14 FECOFUN stands for Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal. It is the first national federation in Nepal that claims to advocate, represent and safeguard interests of local forest users. This organisation, largely funded by donors, NGOs, and membership fees from the FUGs and has a bitter relationship with the state forest department. The most visible existence of FECOFUN is at the national level, but has a hierarchical structure in line with the political structure at local, district, regional and national levels. The views presented here represent the FECOFUN at the national level, as the national executive committee answered SSI themes collectively in their meeting in the absence of the researcher. This happened because at the time of SSI, the majority of the FECOFUN central committee members preferred to express collective voice in the written form, rather than one member expressing the view of FECOFUN.

15 FRSC is an organisation, which works directly under the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation in Nepal. This was previously funded by ODA (Overseas Development Agency). Its functions are now constrained by financial limitations. There are rumours that the centre is on the verge of collapse.
respondent from a forest dependent business perceives CF as “a government program that is killing the forest-dependent business” (NABUS.2).

**d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)**

Among IABP respondents, the definitions of CF revolve around the CF local and CF institution. For instance, a CF expert believes CF as a local program where “forest nearby the village is protected, managed and utilised by the community with their own decisions” (IABP.2). Conversely, a FAO program officer sees CF as “a means to meet basic needs of local people by the joint action between people and government of the day” (IABP.4). CF is also seen as a corrective measure employed by the state to solve its previous policy mistake:

> “Custodial forest management was put in place through the nationalisation of forests which converted community rights into concession. This was a major policy mistake as forests were heavily deforested. The government realised the need for local community in forest management and policy were formulated to correct the previous mistakes”. (IABP.1)

It is important to distinguish between the ideal and actual definitions of CF because the above definitions and assessments of CF often refer to what respondents think CF should be, rather than what they think CF in practice.

**10.2.2 Key issues of CF**

Two underlying objectives of CF are to conserve the forest and improve livelihoods of local people. While all respondents believe that forest conservation is relatively effective, there is a question of whether or not CF has improved the livelihoods of local people. Closely related to the question of livelihoods, there are issues of equity, power relations and sustainability.

**a) Forest users**

At the local level, most respondents believed that the condition of forests has significantly improved through CF. However, they believe that livelihood benefits are limited. For instance, a respondent from the FUGC view that “forest products are not supplied according to the need of the people” (FUGC/Kas). The benefits are “insignificant in relation to the population of the FUG” (LG/Tan). On the other hand, the local businesses question the FUGC’s “attempt not to use available forest products and support businesses” (LOBUS/Tan). For some users, particularly disadvantaged users, who heavily depend on the forest, CF has been counter productive. As one poor kami (blacksmith) highlighted:

> “My traditional work is aaran [workshop], in which my family depends. I used to get charcoal freely to run the aaran. Since the introduction of community forestry, charcoal burning is prohibited. While I serve for the community, I do not know why it is banned”. (DISV/Ktm)
The majority of respondents believe that the reason for limited livelihood benefits is due to the state controlling the benefit flow. For instance, a respondent said; “the government hands over the responsibilities but not supports the FUG financially” (FUGC/Ktm.1). Another respondent emphasised; “the hurried CF handover processes in which the DFO staff make the rules to limit the benefit flow” (FUGC/Kas).

At the national level, respondents from the users’ federations point out that the state’s control over the income of the FUGs is the main issue of CF that has major impacts on the benefit flows from CF. One respondent said; “the DoF has been trying to capture 40 percent of FUGs’ income, while users do not get sufficient forest products” (USFED.1).

b) State forestry officials

The majority of respondents from the state forestry officials at the local and district levels believe that CF has delivered or is on the way to deliver, its aims, as “CF has conserved the forest and is progressively meeting the needs of users” (DFOF/Tan). However, some respondents believe that CF has had limited success because it is focussed on forest protection. As one respondent argued:

“CF has a marginal success in achieving its objectives of meeting the basic forest product needs of local people and conserving the forest. The forest management needs to be re-oriented for more productive forestry rather than existing protection-oriented community forestry to contribute to socio-economic development”. (RAN/Kas)

Some respondents believe that the limited success of CF is associated with the forest users, not with the DFO. One respondent explained:

“First users are in a hurry to get the forest handed over to them and later they realise the need for sustained contributions and need to comply with the terms and conditions. They tend to decrease their level of participation over time”. (DFOF/Tan)

The limited success of CF is also linked with the legislation. One officer said; “FUG’s tendency is to spend money on community development, not on CF. There is ambiguity in the legislation on what the DFO should do when there is such non-compliance” (DFOF/Kas). Respondents agree that the DFO imposes some rules, but such imposition emerges from the legislation that “requires the DFO to comply with the legislation and to ensure forest conservation” (DFOF/Ktm).

At the national level, the majority of respondents believe that “the outcomes of CF have been positive and CF is moving in the right direction to achieve its objectives” (NFOF.2). There are suggestions that CF is moving towards commercialisation of forest products. One respondent elaborated:

“The Master plan for forestry sector (1988) set main objective as to meet the basic needs of the local people. Now, it is realised that CF can be more than that. Broader objectives are formulated beyond subsistence needs. Commercial uses of CF resources are being considered after the FUG having a surplus”. (NFOF.1)
Some respondents, however, question the focus on income generation because “the FUGs are not capable of harvesting products for their own use, let’s not talk about the commercial harvesting and generation of income” (NFOf.3).

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

The majority of other key respondents dispute the claim by the majority of forest officials that CF has been effective. One respondent argued:

“People are still struggling to meet their basic needs of forest products. CF as a program and a process has not been effective in reaching the majority of local people, particularly the poor people”. (NANGO)

CF is not significantly contributing in improving the livelihoods because “rules are not formed to promote forest management as a part of rural livelihood, rather they are to conserve the forests and discourage sustainable use” (NANGO).

d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)

The majority of IABP respondents believe that the forest is better protected by CF, but there is a huge potential of CF yet to be realised. Some respondents question the limited focus of CF on the poor users. One respondent argued:

“There is a marked difference in the forest cover under CF. People can get forest products legally from the forests. However, the current system is less focussed on the use of forests and benefit to the poor users”. (IABP.2)

There are suggestions that the continuation of institutional rigidity at the forest department has hindered the success of CF in Nepal. One respondent stated:

“CF is about changing the power relationship. We cannot have successful community forestry on the ground promoted by the forest department without any major institutional change. Presently the institutional structures are hierarchical and have established a non-flexible environment to work with the local people” (IABP.1).

Other respondent was critical on the focus of CF to generate income. He argued:

“The concept of community forestry has been deformed. The present scenario is that a few people administer the CF program and they are trying to fell trees and get money in their pocket. The focus on the basic needs is undermined in favour of generating income for the group. Conceptual deformation is impacting on the benefit flow to the people”. (IABP.4)

He added:

“Many FUGs cannot understand what is required by written rules because they are illiterate. Income generating activities promoted by the state and other organisations are the game played by the forest department and elites. Forest department is deciding the fortunes of the poor”. (IABP.4)

The initiation of CF is flawed and the technical, target-oriented and hurried processes being employed by the DFO staff is viewed as the underlying issue of CF. One respondent argued:
“Formation of FUG is flawed because the FUG has to be registered with the constitution before they could formulate the Operational Plan but, the DFO staff complete the process together to meet the target. CF problems are the result of a quick fix and target-oriented approach”. (IABP.2)

10.2.3 CF and sustainable development

CF is implemented as one of the approaches to achieve sustainable development. One fundamental issue identified by the respondents is the need for CF to address issues of conservation and development. Different actors view differently in regards to how to address the dual need of CF - the conservation of forests, while using it for socio-economic development.

a) Forest users

At the local level, all respondents believe that local efforts are the key for addressing issues of forest conservation and community development. They stress the need to generate income from the sustainable use of forest resources, which can be used for development activities. The majority of respondents agree that effective support should be provided by the state and other organisations. However, the key for the success is the local people. Some respondents highlight the need for alternative sources of energy for fuelwood and timber such as kerosene, biogas and solar energy to reduce the dependence on forest. All respondents emphasise the indirect use of forests for ecotourism and other sustainable harvesting practices.

At the national level, respondents believe that local knowledge is an important asset for CF to address the issues of sustainable development. One respondent said:

“We need a system that genuinely utilises local knowledge for conservation and economic development. This is an under-utilised asset that can help to increase efficiency and effectiveness of forest utilisation and then development”. (USFED.1)

b) State forestry officials

At the local level, the majority of respondents view that an effective partnership between the DFO and local people is essential to generate income and to adopt alternative measures to reduce dependency on the forest. A Ranger stated:

“Users should involve using alternative sources of energy and decrease their dependence on forests. Household and market demands can be substituted by emphasising the private plantation. Then, a productive forest can be utilised, if there is an effective partnership between users and DFO to achieve sustainable development”. (RAN/Kas)

The majority of respondents at the district level believe that the utilisation aspect of CF is poor. They support Ranger’s claim that an active utilisation of forest needs better partnership between the FUGs and the DFO. However, they put emphasis on scientific forestry to address the issues of CF and sustainable development.
At the central level, the majority of state forest officials believe that the CF in Nepal needs an approach that integrates scientific and local knowledge. However, they highlight the need for sustained yield concept. One respondent said; “community forestry should focus on enterprise development, industries and generate fund for local development. The FUG and DFO should adopt the concept of sustained yield” (NFOf.1). On the other hand, one respondent disputes the need for scientific knowledge, but accentuate the sense of ownership:

“When users feel the forest as their own, they decide to cut or to protect the forests. They don’t cut trees, if it affects their environments”. (NFOf.2)

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

The majority of other key stakeholders believe that the issues of sustainable development should include social and human development. A respondent said:

“Balance and sustainability depend on the context and interpretation, but so far, issues of sustainable development are narrowly focussed on development. Important issues of education, training, skill development, and co-operation are overlooked”. (NANGO)

One academic highlights the challenge for CF to integrate scientific forestry and indigenous forestry to address issues of sustainable development:

“The challenge for community forestry is to integrate joint efforts of different stakeholders employing scientific and indigenous forestry that lead to multiple use forestry with an appreciation of the markets”. (UNI.2)

d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)

The majority of respondents from IABPs believe that CF is progressive and can contribute to community development, but the existing institutional and policy environments are insufficient. For example, a respondent said:

“Existing policy and institutional arrangements do not enable the FUGs to balance the objectives of conservation and development. The forestry staff are often counter-productive because they emphasise the forest protection and tend to overlook social implications of forest management”. (IABP.3)

10.3 The emergence of collective action – FUG formation in CF

CF in Nepal exemplifies a relatively successful case of how, given the appropriate policy and legal environment, users can collectively organise themselves and manage forest resources. The emergence of collective action is important because once a forest is handed over to the FUGs, the authority to exercise usufruct rights rests entirely with the FUG and the FUGC elected by the users. Despite the progressive policy, the practices have been diverse and the emergence of CF has been perceived differently by different actors. However, based on the SSI, some general indications can be outlined;

a) The DFO plays a vital role in the formation of the operational plan and the constitution.
b) Representatives of the local users are heavily involved in the process, while general users are marginally involved.

c) Local people are happy with the CF initiative, but not with how it was implemented.

**a) Forest users**

Although the opinions among forest users are varied, the SSI indicate that discussions and meetings occur in the community during the initial process of CF. The DFO staff have organised a general assembly, helped to elect the FUGC and drafted the Constitution and OP. However, the general users are marginally involved in the process.

At the local level, the respondents are divided in terms of having awareness of the emergence of collective action. Almost half of the respondents are aware of the process as they are involved in the discussions and meetings for the formation of the FUG and FUGC. The respondents share a common expression that the DFO staff have driven the process. As one FUGC respondent said; “Ranger came to our village and organised meetings and the rules were made by Ranger. The process was quickly finished” (FUGC/Ktm.1).

Almost half of the respondents, including all respondents from the disadvantaged group, local government and NGO, do not know the process of FUG formation. One respondent said; “FUG formation processes are known to our secretary [of the FUGC]” (DISV/Ktm). They believe that only few members of the community are involved in the FUG formation.

At the national level, respondents believe that the DFO and some local people control the FUG formation. There are suggestions that the formation is driven by the target of the DFO, as one respondent said:

“The DFO sets certain target per year to hand-over the forest. The staff consult the community leaders and completes the formality … conservation objectives naturally dominate in the FUG’s plan”. (USFED.2)

**b) State Forestry Officials**

The majority of respondents from the local level admit that while meetings and consultations are the part of the FUG formation process, the hand-over process involves consultation with few members of the community. One respondent said; “In practice, DFO forms the FUG, but in legal terms, users form the FUG” (RAN/Kas). One officer said:

“In theory, a group of interested people comes to the office and requests for the community forestry. Our staff go to the village and facilitates meetings to prepare plans. In practice, However, it is the Ranger that has to do most of the tasks for the users, including drafting the Operational Plan”. (DFO/Tan)

At the national level, the majority of officials believe that the emergence of CF is based on the experience of failures. They assert that FUG formation process is carried out by the field staff...
according to the legal provision, which requires the staff to facilitate local users. One respondent explained:

“The DFO staff realised that local political body was not effective to manage the forest because real users were not included in forest management. The staff included real users in forest management. Based on the policy, FUGs are formed by local users and the DoF staff and donor’s staff facilitate the process” (NFOf.1)

Some respondents dispute the above claim that the emergence of CF was based on past failures, but recognise the origin of CF came with elite-based decentralisation. The ex-chief planning officer at the Forest Ministry argued:

“…how CF was started? It would be a surprise that it was not started to make communities involved in forest management. It came up as waves of decentralisation and village leaders were given the authority to manage the forest”. (NFOf.2)

He added:

“At the beginning, government staff formed the groups, their rules and organisational structures. But now, people are organising themselves, they decide what to do, what rules to form and when to cut trees…there is a gradual change in the FUG formation process from the DFO owned process to users’ owned process”. (NFOf.2)

**c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business**

The majority of respondents from other key stakeholders dispute that the DFO staff facilitate the FUG formation. Instead, they argue that the formation is practically owned by the DFO. One respondent stated; “theoretically the local people form FUGs but in practice, DFO forms them” (UNI.2). These respondents stress that there are significant gaps between what DFO staff actually do, and what they are required to do in CF.

**d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABPs)**

The majority of respondents from IABPs believe that the forest users themselves should own the FUG formation process. However, this ideal is “compromised in practice as the FUG is often formed by the state and international agencies” (IABP.3). One respondent explains why the process is controlled by the DFO and others:

“The FUG is formed by the government and some cases, by the international agencies with a limited consultation of few village elites. I do not think that the process of FUG formation and plan preparation can easily be understood by illiterate village people. The process is favouring the elites and forest department as the process is complex and not flexible to suit in the local conditions”. (IABP.4)

**10.4 The evolution of collective action in CF**

Over the years, CF in Nepal has evolved with different FUGs facing different organisational, structural and societal challenges. It is generally acknowledged that forest condition has improved and rural communities derive a wider range of benefits from forests. There is increasing
recognition that local forest management can make a critical difference to the socioeconomic sustainability of rural populations. At the same time, differential impacts of CF have been reported that indicate CF adversely affecting the livelihoods of particular groups of rural people in Nepal. Inconsistencies are identified within the forestry legislation and between the forestry legislation and other legislation. There are issues of power relations, both within the FUG and between the FUG and others. In this context, the SSI was carried out with various actors, who have identified some of the key issues of CF related to forest management, livelihood benefits and power relations.

10.4.1 Forest management and conservation

There is a general understanding that local level collective action is effective in improving the condition of forests. However, it is unclear whether conservation is primarily the interest of local users or if conservation has been imposed by outsiders. Who are the major beneficiaries of the conservation, who suffer the most from it and why has forest conservation been highlighted?

These opinions can be summarised as;

d) CF has definitively improved the forest condition and local participation is vital for sustainable conservation and use of the forest.
e) Forest users perceive that their contribution in CF is more effective than the state.
f) The most forest dependent users have been hard hit in the short term due to the extended closure of the forest, the lack of the recognition of specific needs for traditional uses in the OP and increasing scarcity of alternatives.
g) The protection of forest have given the forest users a sense of security of resource availability in the future, while the state officials judge the success of CF in terms of how well the FUGs are protecting the forest.
h) The recent forest policy and changing attitudes of the state forestry officials have encouraged the local people to protect the forest. However, government policies need to be more pro-local people, if the CF is to be sustained.

a) Forest users

The principal view held by the local forest users is that the major contributing factor to the improvement of the forest condition is the interest, commitment and sustained participation of the local people. They affirm the need for the state to support, not control the FUGs. They believe that their continued participation depends on whether their needs are met. One respondent said:

“Forest condition is better now. It used to be almost a barren land… we have managed it well and can do it in future. But, our continued participation depends upon the fulfilment of our needs”. (DISV/Kas)

While most respondents are proud of their success in terms of forest protection, in the short term, many disadvantaged users are not happy because the current OP neglects their needs. One respondent argues; “Most important need for my family is charcoal, this is not allowed … good
forest does not mean anything to me” (DISV/Ktm). However, a common theme among respondents is that the forests managed by the FUG are better than the state-managed forests and as one respondent said; “our contribution in CF more than that of the state” (LONGO/Tan).

At the national level, respondents are anxious that, despite the commitment of forest users, the sustainability of CF is threatened by the power of the state that can usurp the use rights of forest users at any time. They suggest that the long-term sustainability of the forest depends upon the commitment of the government policies and the local OP to address the needs of the local people.

b) State forestry officials

The majority of respondents believe that the institutionalisation of CF process by the state and the efforts of foresters are the major contributing factors in the success of CF. One respondent said:

“The condition of forest has improved. We, at the department of forest, have worked hard to make this happen. However, we do not undermine or control the effort of users, we support them”. (DFO/Tan)

A different perspective is given by another respondent:

“Forest condition has improved because forest is being managed through a concept where local users involve in managing and using it. The DFO staff are supportive and donors are generous. Time has come to look at some issues in implementation. We are working for some policy changes, sustained yield should be the criteria to harvest the forest so that it can be maintained in the long run”. (NFO.1)

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

The majority of respondents of this group believe that forest management is promising, but they are critical of the centralised policy making process. One respondent said:

“Community forestry is becoming a promising source of livelihood benefits, but given the centralised policy process and a focus on micro-level activities without due consideration of wider factors, it is unlikely to maintain the sustainable forest cover. The policy needs to account the rights, needs and constraints of people and the effects of social, political and economic factors affecting the management of forests at the local level. (NANGO)

d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABPs)

The majority of respondents from IABPs believe that CF is relatively effective in protecting the forests, but they doubt the sustainability of CF if the present approach continues. One respondent said:

“The condition of forest has improved, but forest sustainability is doubtful under the current processes and activities. You cannot have a forest and money together. You have to trade off between them. Sustained yield is a useful concept but can the users do this? It is doubtful”. (IABP.4)

The majority of respondents hesitate to label CF a success because there are some critical issues not being addressed. One respondent said:
Successful community forestry should have, at least a clearly defined group of users, a clearly demarcated area, the product flows meeting the needs of users and the Operational Plan and policies guaranteeing security of tenure and share of rights … the last two are critical in Nepalese CF”. (IABP.3)

10.4.2 Livelihood benefits from CF

One of the fundamental assumptions of CF is that it benefits people and therefore, people participate in forest management. There are different types of benefits; direct and indirect, which can be realised through extractive and non-extractive uses. The benefits of a forest are, however, limited and often mutually exclusive, given the subtractability and slow renewability of forests. On the other hand, there are many people involved in CF with diverse needs, interests and expectations. In some CF situations, stakeholders may prioritise extractive uses and in other situations, they may highlight non-extractive uses. The views of various actors revolve around four key points; a) CF for forest products to support local livelihoods, b) CF for economic and community development, c) CF for environmental protection, and d) CF for national economy.

a) Forest users

Among forest users (n=18), the majority of respondents believe that CF provides various forest products to local forest users (89%) and it benefits the environment (72%). However, only 27 percent of them view that CF generates income and has contributed to community development, while 22 percent of respondents believe that CF also benefits the national economy.

At the local level, the majority of forest users view CF as a source of direct and indirect benefits and highlight the need for income generation, but exclude the extraction of timber. One respondent said; “CF provides forest products such as fuelwood, leaf and fodder for local people, not timber and charcoal. [There are] enormous possibility of generating income, but no income being generated” (DISV/Kas). The supply of available forest products is contested by a blacksmith, who said; “… no need of other products as much as charcoal, but the FUGC does not allow it” (DISV/Ktm). The majority respondents from the FUGC dispute the above claim and argue that timber is being supplied when it is needed. However, they concede that the use of timber is strictly limited as “harvesting timber can destroy the forest” (FUGC/Tan). The majority of respondents regard CF a national icon and a success story to attract international donors.

Interviews among forest users indicate that they are interested in generating income for the group as well as for individual households. One respondent questioned; “local people only get some fuelwood and leaf but why they cannot get income for households?” (LG/Kas). They believe that income generation is not occurring because the DFO is controlling the forest use. One respondent said; “the DFO staff focus on forest conservation and are less supportive in utilising the forest”
The majority of them question the DFO’s argument that CF should provide wider benefits, as one respondent argued; “the DFO’s focus for the wealth for all is actually the wealth for none” (NGO/Kas). However, the majority of respondents are relatively happy because CF is at least conserving the previously lost green forest.

At the national level, respondents believe that CF has benefited the state and local people, but the benefits are greater for the state. One respondent said:

“The government benefits more from community forestry than the local people … by saving the money in protecting the forest, and directly and indirectly generating revenue and using CF as marketing tool for attracting donors”. (USFED.2)

b) State forestry officials

Among state officials (n=9), all respondents believe that CF provides forest products to local people and is a potential source of income for community development. The majority of them acknowledge that CF has saved the state expenses and impressed many donors (67%). Yet, they underline the need for CF to contribute to the state revenue. Only 45 percent of them view that CF is significantly protecting the environment.

At the local level, all respondents believe that CF is providing some forest products to local people. They emphasise the legal rights of users to use forest products. They also agree that CF has also relieved financial pressures of the forest department by decentralising the responsibilities. Overall, they give emphasis to the direct contribution of CF in the state revenue.

At the district level, all respondents District Forest Officers (DFOfs) believe that CF has protected the forest and has a potential to generate income for the FUGs and the state mainly through non-extractive uses. One respondent said:

“Income generation activities are popular among FUGs but they need to generate income through NTFPs, eco-tourism, and improved fodder for livestock … households can generate income from the sale of meat and milk of their livestock. … CF should contribute to the state revenue”. (DFO/Tan)

At the national level, all respondents believe that CF is a huge success, but benefits are limited to the FUGs and should now be extended to the wider society. One respondent said; “the government yet to realise benefits from CF in monetary terms … wider community is entitled to, but excluded from receiving CF benefits” (NFOf.3). The majority of them call attention to move CF beyond subsistence forestry, as one respondent said:

“Community forestry was first set to meet the basic forest needs of local people and to conserve the forests. Now, it should go beyond subsistence forestry and adopt sustainable harvesting strategies to realise significant benefits for national and local economy”. (NFOf.1)
c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

All respondents believe that CF is not benefiting to people and the state as much as it could. One respondent from an NGO highlight the need for increased use of forest products; “There are emerging possibilities of CF to generate income from NTFPs and timber itself” (NANGO).
Among respondents from businesses, CF is viewed “as greening the mountains … foregoing the huge potential to generate income because there is the lack of cooperation among forest users, government and the industry” (NABUS.2). On the other hand, one academic highlights the non-monetary benefits of CF; “CF has wider benefits, all of which cannot be monetised. An old proverb; the green forest is the wealth of nation, is revived. Nepal is popular as a country of community forestry” (UNI.2).

d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)

The majority of respondents from IABPs view that the key aspect of CF is the recognition of local rights over the use of forests. For example, one respondent explained:

“With progressive policies, local people are getting benefits as their rights, not as concessions. Nationally, the danger of degradation of valuable resources has been arrested. This has linkage to other national economic activities such as agriculture production, protection of slope dynamics and hydrology, country’s commitment to biodiversity conservation, in tourism and conserving the identities of local communities”. (IABP.1)

10.4.3 Power relations - who controls CF?

This section discusses opinions regarding control and power relations involved in the management of forests. Based on the SSI, the key findings are:

i) Forest policy of Nepal is liberal because the Forest Department is weaker to implement and control forest management activities effectively and efficiently.

j) The state, with the liberal policies, has democratised most of the forest management responsibilities to local forest users, without devolving sufficient authority to them. The state retains a certain degree of control to take back CF from FUGs.

k) These devolved authorities are intercepted by the FUGC and other elites, who control the decisions over the use and management of forests. Despite the policy provision, the majority of local forest users are marginalised in practice.

a) Forest users

The majority of respondent forest users believe that the DFO has decentralised responsibilities for forest management, but the key decision-making power remains with the DFO. One respondent said; “now we have to manage the forest, but the DFO staff monitor the forest use” (DISV/Kas).
The majority of respondents believe that the FUGC and some other elites have intercepted the limited power devolved to the FUGs and the control of forest has been shifted from the DFO to the village leaders. As one respondent said:
“The management of forest is now shifted from the DFO control to the village leaders’ control. The major change is that the FUGC control is stricter than the DFO control … need for further devolution within the user groups”. (LONGO/Tan)

b) State forestry officials:

All respondents from the state forestry office dispute the claim by forest users that the DFO maintains a strict control over the forest use and management. One respondent argued; “the state has devolved authorities and responsibilities to the FUGs, but the DFO has a responsibility to safeguard the interests of the wider society, including the disadvantaged groups, so land ownership should stay with the state” (DFOf/Kas). They argue that the retention of land tenure with the state is very important, as one respondent explained:

“If the department decides to hand-over the land tenure, what else the department will have? CF becomes a private property. There will be benefits for some and no benefits for others. I don’t think foresters are hesitating to devolve the power, but it is for the sake of the general interest that the foresters need to contribute some ways in community forestry, for what they are trained for”. (DFOf/Tan)

At the national level, the majority of respondents believe that the forest policy is successful due to the willingness and commitment of the government to decentralise and devolve the responsibilities and authorities to local forest users. However, they also argue that the government needs to retain certain degree of control so that “CF does not become a private property” (NFOf:4).

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

The majority of respondents in this category believe that the power of the users over the fate of the forest has increased. However, this changing situation does not have significant impact on the poor, women and other disadvantaged groups. One respondent said:

“The FUG has better power now to govern forest resources as compared to the situation before. However, the poor and marginalised people are missed out in this system. The state has devolved limited power to local people, which is intercepted by the powerful community members. Further democratisation is needed within the FUG”. (NANGO)

Respondents agree that there are issues of who controls CF. One respondent said; “If policy asks the DFO to devolve its power, then, the DFO has to do it. Who makes the policy and how are they made, is the most important issue” (UNI.1). One respondent rejects the DFO not devolving the power:

“Under community forestry, foresters are devolving their authorities and are becoming social foresters from the technical forester. The criticism against the devolution and the DFO control is emerged from the relics of the politics penetrated into CF. Since the government is to govern, we cannot work on a situation where the FUG controls the DFO”. (UNI.2)
d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABPs)

The majority of respondents believe that the forest policy in Nepal is one of the most progressive and liberal policies in the world. They argue that the reluctance of the state to devolve the power to the local users is “more in other countries than in Nepal” (ISBP.1). One respondent said; “the devolution is also the interest of the state to reduce its expenditure and to attract donors” (IABP.3). The power interception and other issues are emerging, as one respondent mentioned:

“Some members of the FUG intercept the power and hence the disadvantaged groups of the community do not have a fair share and representation in the process … this is a reflection of how the society works in Nepal”. (IABP.3)

Other respondent underlined the risk of devolution:

“The state wishes to decentralise its forest management and development responsibilities to the communities to decrease its expenditure. Doing everything within community forestry is a danger for people who are forced to compromise in meeting their basic needs”. (IABP.4)

10.5 The outcome of collective action: Equity in CF

One of the critical issues of CF in Nepal is that the processes and outcomes are not equitable. The processes and outcomes are fair there is positive discrimination to the poor, women and other disadvantaged groups. Two key themes of equity; procedural and distributive, are explored in two sub-sections.

10.5.1 Procedural equity: participation in decision making

Participation is one of the fundamental aspects of CF. The results of SSI indicate that participation of local users in decision-making is not equitable. While the involvement of local people in CF processes has increased, participation of the majority of forest users remains passive. Inequity in decision making is exacerbating as the elite domination is a widespread and the influence of the DFO is overwhelming.

a) Forest users

At the local level, all respondents believe that participation of users in decision-making is inequitable. One basic reason for inequity is that people do not participate at all. The lack of participation is because “female and lower caste users lack knowledge of CF” (FUGC/Ktm.1). Another respondent said; “many users do not participate because they depend on businesses or wage labour … there is not much to receive from the forest” (FUGC/Tan.1). Participation is also affected by the lack of information, as one respondent said; “we participate when FUGC invites us, but we hardly get invitation” (LOBUS/Tan). Poor users often do not speak or do not attend the
meetings because “they know their voices are not going to be heard … they know what is going to happen, what the local bosses will do” (LG/Kas).

Inequity also occurs when users attend meetings and assemblies, but their views are not taken into decisions. One respondent said; “People with good education, high income, large property and high caste are traditionally dominant in the society, it is common in the society” (LG/Tan). The majority of respondents believe that the domination is entrenched in history and culture of the Nepalese society.

Some respondents, particularly the FUGC members, deny that elite domination is a problem. The majority of respondents agree that active participation depends on users’ personal disposition. One respondent said; “some people speak more and some less, this depends on one’s habit … we can’t include views of those who never speak and of those who never attend meetings” (FUG/Kas). The social and cultural context of Nepalese society is responsible for some users not being able to actively participate in decision-making. One respondent highlighted; “in our society and culture, women are less active than men and low caste people are dominated by the high caste … this comes to community forestry” (FUGC/Ktm.1). One respondent argued:

“The poor and women generally participate less and they often do not say what their interests are. Then, one cannot blame that the FUGC or some local elites capture the decision-making. It is often left to the FUGC to decide on behalf of the FUG. If we do not decide, who else will do it? It is social obligation, not the domination”. (FUGC/Tan.1)

At the national level, all respondents believe that the participation is not equitable, but the level of participation of the poor and women is increasing. Inequity in participation occurs because “local level forestry staff mainly contact village leaders and the staff are most influential in the decisions” (USFED.2). They indicate that the elite domination is supported by the DFO and the top-down, bureaucratic and undemocratic decision making prevalent at the DFO.

b) State Forestry Officials

All respondents from the state forestry officials view that participation in CF is a serious issue because it is inequitable. One respondent said; “Only some people make decisions in community forestry … elites receive more benefits than the poor” (DFOf/Ktm). The majority of forest officials believe that the active participation of local users in FUGs’ decision-making is increasingly limited to few members of the FUG, particularly the FUGC. One respondent said; “only the active members of the FUG committee decide most of the rules” (DFOf/Ktm). This is causing elite domination in CF and “community forestry is moving towards committee forestry … sometimes chairman and secretary forestry” (DFOf/Tan).
The majority of respondents believe that elite domination in decision making is historically rooted and difficult to change. One respondent said; “… working in the forest department for the last 25 years made me believe that forest use decisions are made by elites, such as Jimmawals and Talukdars and this has little changed” (RAN/Tan). As one respondent argued; “Historically rooted feudal system is biased to some sections of the community … low caste people are kinds of servant for the higher caste, women are suppressed and the poor work for the rich” (RAN/Kas). All respondents believe that the state has an important role to play to safeguard the interests of the poor and minorities.

However, efforts at addressing equity issues are misleading. As one respondent said:

“The presence of women and lower caste people in the FUGC is not more than the passive attendance, but this can make some officials and donors happy”. (NFOf.3)

The majority of respondents emphasise the need for enabling policies, in which the interests of the poor users are prioritised. Some respondents relate the issue of equity with democracy. One respondent said:

“The FUGC is elected by the FUG. Once elected democratically, they have the mandate to decide on behalf of the people. If people choose to elect people who are not accountable to them, it is their job to remove. We should not over-state that the FUGC is dominating in local decisions. In fact, they are doing their job”. (NFOf.3)

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University and Business

Among NGO, university and business respondents, most of them view that there is inequitable participation in the processes of decision-making. One NGO respondent said; “the poor do not often participate in decision-making because their priority is the immediate needs to feed their families” (NANGO). Another respondent added; “the poor users are not given the opportunity to participate by the elites” (UNI.1). The respondents from businesses argued differently; “the poor may decrease their participation because they do not see their basic needs met by CF … dominated by the agendas of the DFO and the FUGC” (NABUS.2).

Elite domination in FUG’s decision-making is a continuing problem that negatively affects the livelihoods of the poor. One academic highlighted; “a belief that the FUGC needs outspoken and capable individuals and the poor are not fit for this, is misleading and counter productive” (UNI.2). Another respondent stressed the issue of power relations; “Unequal power relations are the key factor in decision making … broader socio-political situation is also favourable for those who have access to money, education and land” (NANGO). Most respondents believe that the central level decision making processes are bureaucratic, centralised and unaccountable.
d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)

Among respondents from the IABPs, there is consensus that there is no equitable participation within the FUG’s decision-making. The majority of respondents believe that the level of participation by the poor may be decreasing, as one respondent said; “the participation of elites has increased while other users are less and less involved in the process” (IABP.4). One reason for decreasing participation by poor users is because “the poor do not derive household income from CF and by necessity, they prioritise wage activities” (IABP.2). Another reason is that the elites dominate the processes, which is encouraged by the state. One respondent said; “without the help of elites, the forest department cannot deliver its target and commitment with the donors” (IABP.4). One the other hand, some respondents argue that the leadership in CF, which is required for the initiation and operation of CF, is misinterpreted as elite domination. One CF expert argued:

“It is common in any social work that some pioneering people must initiate the activity. For this start, a leadership should be there. This representation and leadership is a part of democratic culture, but leadership by the FUGC has been mis-interpreted as elite domination”. (IABP.3)

The majority of respondents believe that the elite dominance and conflicts are increasing, as one respondent argued:

“Benefit sharing is the trigger of conflicts and elite domination. A lot of trouble will be there as the forest is up there and ready to harvest; we are going to face a lot of elite domination and conflicts. Unfortunately, we do not have preparedness to deal such troubles”. (IABP.1)

To address equity issues, the majority of respondents stress that efforts must be taken at very beginning of the FUG formation process, in which the poor must negotiate first within their own communities during the FUG formation and then with the forest department at the second level.

10.5.2 Distributive equity: the poor and distribution of forest products

One of the critical aspects of CF is that the distribution of products may be differential to different sections of the community. The interview data indicate that all households receive some type of forest products. However, as the product distribution is based on equal share to all households, the poor households, who heavily depend on forests, do not receive sufficient forest products. On the other hand, the majority of respondents believe that despite the policy guideline for equal distribution of products, the practice of distribution is not equal (and then the outcome is not equitable) as a result of a widespread elite domination in decision making and distribution processes. Yet, they are relatively happy with the current system because it is better than the previous feudal system that oppressed the poor.
a) Forest users

At the local level, a common view is that local people receive some, but not enough forest products. One respondent said; “we receive forest products, but not sufficient for our needs” (FUGC/Ktm.1). All respondents believe that there is no separate arrangement for the poor and rich households to distribute products according to their needs. The distribution is inequitable, as a blacksmith asserted; “I do not need fodder and animal bedding materials, what I need, is charcoal, which is prohibited” (DISV/Ktm).

The respondents are divided in terms how the forest products are distributed and how it should be done. Almost half of the respondents believe that the distribution is based on the principle of equality, which is practical and is working well. One respondent said:

“The distribution is based on equal efforts, equal shares. We can’t give more to some users who need more products. It is not practical, it creates problems and is unworkable”. (FUGC/Kas)

Some respondents argue that focussing on equity principle, rather than equal distribution can stimulate social division. One respondent argued; “if we give more products to the poor, rich households might leave the FUG, but the rich have more resources to contribute in CF. Equality is important to balance conservation efforts” (FUGC/Ktm.1).

Importantly, almost half of the respondents believe the distribution of products is not equal. One respondent said; “community forestry has further marginalised the poor … there is no equality, no equity; and the poor cannot protest due to social and culture constraints” (NGO/Tan). The implementation of equality principle is questioned on the grounds of gender perspective. As one respondent said; “…female households get lower amount of forest products, because they cannot cut and carry the same amount as the male” (NGO/Ktm). Many users argued that equality principle practically discriminates against the poor because unlike wealthy people, the poor do not have resources such as time and money to use when the forest is open and they are not available to collect forest products. Therefore, they emphasise the need for equity principle as a basis for product distribution.

At the national level, respondents believe that equality is the principal system of product distribution, which is easy to implement for the FUGC and DFO. They highlight that “working towards equity is complex and impossible within a strong state control” (USFED.1). They question equity principle in terms of the suitable platform to help the poor, as one respondent said:

“CF should not be seen as a place where poor people get more benefits. It is not a government system, it is a people system, where every household contribute equally and get equal benefits. Government is responsible for bringing incentives for the poor”. (USFED.2)
b) State Forestry officials

At the local level, the majority of respondents view that there is no equity principle in product distribution and they are also critical on the current equality principle employed by the FUGC. One respondent said; “cooperation between the rich and poor has never been equal in the Nepalese society … the poor are the loser” (RAN/Tan). There are doubts on equal product distribution, as one respondent said; “in theory, there is equality but in practice, a few people distributes the product and they meet their interest … there are cases of unequal distribution” (RAN/Kas). All respondent agree that equity is an important aspect of CF being overlooked by the DFO and the FUG.

At the district level, all respondents do not see equity in product distribution, as one respondent said; “the local elites have regulated product access and distribution, the poor no longer receive products freely as before” (DFOf/Kas). Issues related to equity are not well studied, as one respondent pointed:

“The question of who wins and who loses in Nepalese CF has not yet been genuinely researched. The poor, who used to collect firewood and logs freely, are now forced to abide by the community rules”. (DFOf/Kas)

At the central level, all respondents believe that there is no equity principle but that, equality is the main principle of product distribution. However, they stress that equity must be the guiding principle for product distribution because CF is for the poor, not for elites. The majority of respondents believe that the lack of equity is because equity is not required by legislation. Some respondents believe that the CF in Nepal is on the way to equity. One respondent argued:

“Some FUGs are lending interest-free loans to the poor. The department of forests is considering some policy changes to maximising benefits for the poor, forming sub-groups for the poor, including special programs in the Operational Plans”. (NFOf.1)

c) Other key stakeholders at the national level – NGO, University, Business

Among other key respondents, inequity is viewed as a widespread problem that needs urgent attention. One respondent said; “intra-group inequity is because the distribution is controlled by local elites and forestry staff” (UNI.2). Respondents identify inequity as a challenge in the existing system of CF where forest users, specially the poor, are still seen as forest destroyers. One NGO respondent highlighted:

“Equity issues at the community level are conditioned by the broader community and political economy. Nepalese political economy is controlled by wealthy and powerful individuals who capture the political and bureaucratic positions and control the state policies and implementation process. They have extensive linkages with local elites and regulate the resource management to fulfil their interests. Any attempts to address equity need to take a broader perspective”. (NANGO)
d) International agencies and bilateral projects (IABP)

All IABP respondents believe that the poor and other marginalised sections of the community are receiving products, but the product distribution is inequitable. The problem of inequity is that “neither the Operational Plan has the equity provision, nor it is required by legislation” (IABP.3). Another respondent pointed; “there is no hard fact on inequities; just anecdotal feeling prevails, which is not enough for policy transformation” (IABP.1). The FAO program officer argued; “Under the current policy focus, equity is not possible because CF is driven by money motives; CF like a business” (IABP.4). Despite many problems dealing with equity, all respondents highlight that equity is not only desirable, but is necessary for the FUG to become sustainable. However, they believe that indirect measures are required to address equity as discriminatory provisions can upset people.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented multiple views on the issues of collective action processes and outcomes in Nepalese CF. The findings indicated that forest users have vague understanding of CF, while the state forestry staff highlight institutional definitions. However, views often represent what CF should be, rather than what CF is. Respondents identified four key issues of CF; sustainability, livelihood benefits, power relations and equity in the emergence and evolution of collective action. The majority of respondents were happy with the emergence of CF, but not with the way the process was carried out because it was controlled by the DFO and local elites. The findings suggest that the condition of forests has significantly improved, but the livelihood benefits are limited. The forest is under-utilised as the DFO staff and elites employ a protection-oriented approach of forest management.

While there are significant differences in views between different actors, one interesting result is that local level processes and outcomes of collective action are not only conditioned by forest, institutions and local forest users, but also are shaped by factors beyond CF and actors operating at different levels. Accordingly, problems of CF are embedded in wider social, economic and political factors and solutions should acknowledge these factors. It is instructive from the chapter that the analysis is carried out by highlighting why and how issues of collective action and outcomes are perceived differently by actors at different levels and what are the implications for future CF policy and practices.