

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Forest is an important aspect of economy at the local and national level for Nepal. It is justified by a popular saying *Hariyo Ban Nepalko Dhan* meaning green forest is wealth of the nation. In Nepal forestry sector contributes more than 40 percent of livestock nutrition (HMG/DANIDA, 1998). Along with farming, two thirds of the country's energy requirement is fulfilled by forest (Regmi, 1978). At local level the farming system is also mostly depends on forest and forest resources.

Nepal government nationalized all forest to reduce the rampant deforestation throughout the nation after 1957 by introducing the National Forest Act (1957) to prevent feudal rulers from using forests for their own purpose (Regmi, 1978). Unfortunately the government was not prepared to assume the technical and administrative responsibilities of forest ownership. Villager's reacted negatively to nationalization of forest believed. It is believed that their traditional rights and unhindered access to the forests have been encroached by the state (Regmi, 1978). After 1960, the government realized that the participation of local people in forest management was imperative and essential. Consequently Panchayat Protection Forest (PPF), Panchayat Forest (PF), and later Community Forest (CF) were introduced in the late 1970s (Gilmore and Fishers. 1991).

Community forestry (CF) as a participatory strategy empowers local community in taking decision and implementing their decision in their own way (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). Role of state is limited to facilitator, which provides technical and other assistance as demanded by

the local community itself. As a concept, “CF hands over the management of forest resources to the rural people who use them for domestic purposes and in farming systems” (Fisher and Gilmour, 1991). The concept solely relies on handing over the task of managing forest resources to the local community and that the state should provide technical expertise from its end.

As Saul puts, the women are the best repository of knowledge on the use and management of trees and plants in their forest (1994). Therefore they are considered primary users of forest products. Their extensive and close contact with the forest gives local women a more detailed understanding of the forest resources than the local men. As main recipient of the forest resources, rural women possess indigenous knowledge on the use of various plants and herbs in the forests. Due to their encounter with various parts of the forest, they can identify species, their names, usages, geographic location, availability and the techniques for conserving them (Saul, 1994).

Though the empowerment of the local community it is believed that deforestation could be controlled. But it could not achieve its optimum target, due to exclusion of a large section of society including females. Owing to various traditions and gender biased beliefs, the females, who are the primary users of the forest, were not participated in the decision making process. The suggestions and ideas given by women for preserving the forest have been taken into consideration neither by the local community nor by the policy maker. As a result the working females have been treating the forest as the males, the others, property and did not make any contribution in the management of the forest (Saul, 1994).

This study has focused on the socio-cultural and economic backgrounds of women and their working sphere in the society by conducting a study of users of Ramche Community Forest (RCF) located in Palpa district in Nepal. This study specifically tries to investigate the roles assigned to women in managing, monitoring, evaluating, benefit sharing, and decision-making process in RCF.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Community Forestry is core to the existence of rural economy and domestic life along with the national economy and ecology (Saul 1994). Women spend most of their time in domestic and forest related activities. The rate of time that they spend in domestic activities related to forest, is proportional to the decrease of forest in the area. National and international development agencies and state policies here also point out that women's participation is important for CF management (Kafle, 2008). However women's actual participation in management activities determined by load of household chores on them, literacy, socio-economic, and other cultural factors (Chhetri 1999, Chhetri 2001). Due to continuous indulgence in domestic and farming activities, they fail short in actively participating in social and cultural activities. Along with the lack for formal education, and social discourse regarding the behavior of women in social settings, women are most often bared from expressing their opinion and sometimes they themselves shy away complying with societal norms.

Modern education, modernization and development have been playing vital role in reducing gender differences, but existing patriarchal values and norms are instilled in both sexes during the socialization process (Bhasin, 2000). Male centered concepts are forced onto them (males and

females) for acceptance and subsequent adoption (Ibid). As a result, they always feel short in moving ahead and shy away even if they are called on for providing their insights in any matter. Such practices exist in many societies of Nepal, which may be a great hindrance for the participation of women in decision-making processes including forest sector.

Though CFUG managed by women are better than those managed by both sex or by males only but their participation in the management of the CFUG remains low (Kafle, 2008). In this context, it is essential to find some issues like; what are the factors that hinder and or motivate women to participate in CF management? What are the factors that hinder women's accesses to decision-making position in a mix managed CFUG? If women involve in decision-making process can they take independent decision or not? Why do their decisions reflect the vision of their male counterparts? In the context of CF, women's decisions have been highly influenced by male members of family (Chhetri, 1999). Moreover existing socio-cultural customs and traditions, family responsibilities, prevalent socio-cultural norms, kinship ties and taboos as major obstacles that hinder women from raising concerns with their traditionally more powerful counterparts- males (Shrestha, 2009).

In this context, despite participation of women's presence in the decision making level, their active participation in the decision-making process still remains low. With this scenario in mind, this research will aim to answer some questions:

1. What are the socio-cultural and economic backgrounds of women?
2. What are the spheres of women in society?
3. What are the roles given to women in the managing CF?

4. To what extents are the women involved in benefit sharing and decision making process in CF?
5. Is there any variation in women's participation in CFUG.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to explore the participation of women in the management of RCF. However the study is especially focused on some specific objectives, which are as follows:

-) To find women's involvement in CF management especially protection and benefit sharing activities,
-) To find out the women's participation in decision-making process, and
-) To examine the factors those motivate and hinder the women for their participation in CF management.

1.4 Importance of the Study

Forest has been one of the important sources of livelihood in most parts of Nepal. Though CF has been able to decrease deforestation, it has been not able to foster as such due to lack of female participation at the decision-making level (Kafle, 2009). By studying the participation of women in Ramche CFUG of Rampur VDC, Palpa, this study will try to find out the roles of women in CF management especially in protection and benefit sharing activities. Moreover this study will also examine women's participation in decision-making process in CF. On the one hand this study will also explore factors that hinder female participation in CF management and on the other hand it will assess factors that motivate their participation in the CF decision making process. Therefore, as a sociological research, this study will be useful for further researchers on existing gender relationships in rural communities. As a socio-

economic study, its findings will be useful for planner and policy maker for developing effective policies and plans for further study.

1.5 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Community Forestry program is based on the participation of community members in decision making, in implementation, in benefit sharing and in evaluation (Maskey, 1998). As primary stakeholders, female are directly involved using forest resource, so their participation in managing forest resources is essential for the attaining the objective of Community Forestry.

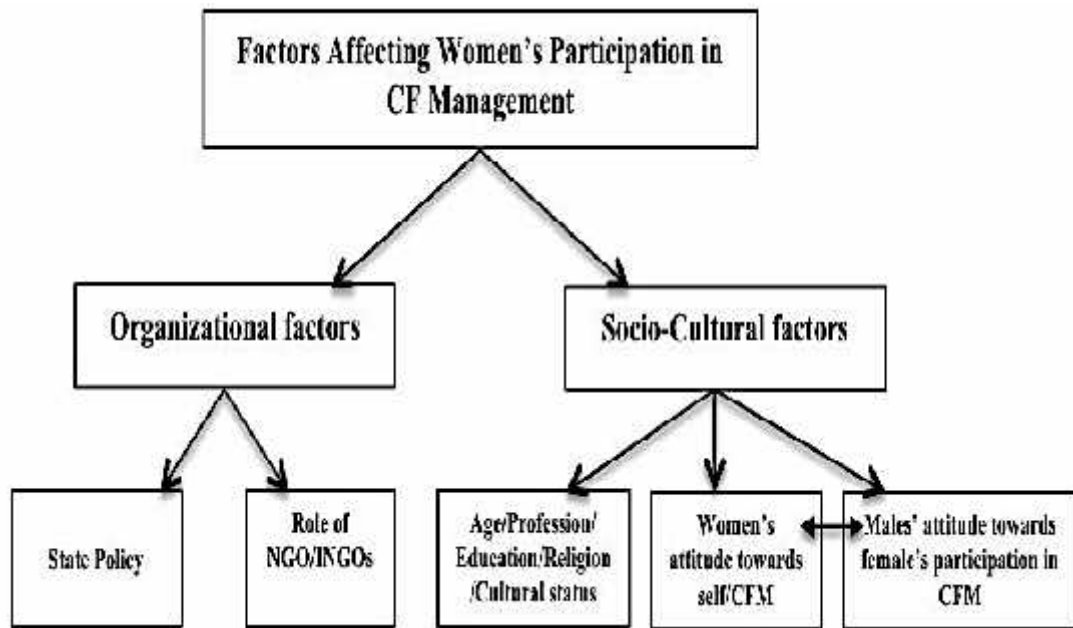
Participation of women in community forest is affected by dependent and independent variables, which is presented in figure 1. The figure 1 shows that women participation in CF is dependent on variable, which may be influenced by various factors, like role of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Provisions made by state in its policies for women in CF and the initiation of various social-organizations (INGO & NGO) in raising awareness among community members affects women's participation in CF.

Besides organizational influences socio-cultural practices also influence women participation in CF. The socio-cultural factors like age, level of education, profession, economic status and culture-religious practices are instrumental in guiding actions of an individual and social actors.

Attitude of males towards female participation and females perception about their participation in CF management and CF itself also has significant impact on the participation of women in CF.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework Designed for the Study



These influences are at play within every society and culture and their negative and positive impact on any section of a society is matter of culture in practice. Even though these cultural barriers could be overcome through various motivational factors they remain dominant in determining roles and performance of an individual in the society.

To examine these cultural barriers that hinder female participation in the management of RCF, this study has adopted gender as a theoretical framework. Gender concepts have been used to analyze apparent and inherent attitude of community members towards females. Working spheres assigned to women, and roles assigned to them in social and domestic arena has been analyzed through this tool to access the impact of gender discrimination on females' participation in CF management.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is divided in six chapters. The first chapter introduces the background of the study, statement of problem, and research questions along with its objective and importance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework. The second chapter discusses theoretical concepts related to gender, CF and the participation of Nepalese women in CF. The third chapter discusses the factors behind selecting the research site, research design and methodology, nature, sources and techniques of data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter of the study describes the prevalent physical and social conditions of the study area and RCFUG. Fifth chapter elaborates on the history and founding principles of the RCFUG and analyzes women's participation in the decision making process. It accesses the factors that have motivated and hindered their participation in the decision-making process. The last chapter concludes the study providing a brief summary of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Gender as an Analytical Framework

Men and women are both active actors and essential parts of a society. Although the physical identity and sex of a person is determined biologically, their community always assigns their social and cultural identity to them. The roles and norms of behavior assigned to them by their culture constructs their identity and their gender. According to their gender they act differently in society and thus their social roles also differ largely from each other (Beauvoir, 2005).

Gender is used to call the both identity of male and female in social perspective. It is the culturally defined role and behavior of men and women. The ground of gender is sex. Every society has given a certain activities for male and female for their livelihood. In general the roles of women in many societies are subordinating, domesticating, and marginalizing. The roles of men are as a bread earner, caretaker and head of the family (Kafle, 2008. Bhasin 2000).

It is a network of beliefs, personality traits, attitudes, values, behaviors and activities differentiating women and men through a process of social construction that has a number of distinctive features. It is historical; it takes place within different macro and micro spheres, such as the state, the labor market, schools, the media, the law, family/household and interpersonal relations; it involves the ranking of traits and activities so that associated men are normally given greater value. Formation of

hierarchies is based on rankings and is an intrinsic component of gender construction in most societies” (DFID, 2006).

Thus gender identities are not neutral; they are shaped by power struggle between both genders. The relationship between genders and the politics in them is represented in a “range of practices, ideas, representations, including the division of labor, roles, and resources between women and men, and the scribing to them of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavioral patterns and so on” (Bhasin, 2000).

Division of labor among males and females at home and at the communal level thus is always a product of the gender relationship (Bhasin, 2000). Family as the basic unit of society itself acts as the basis. Quoting Bina Agrawal (1994), Bhasin identifies private ownership and control over assets, especially arable land; access to employment and other income-earning means; access to communal resources such as village commons and forests; access to traditional external support systems; and access to support from the state or from NGOs as factors that determine the ‘bargain power’ of an individual within a rural family (2000)

Among other basis of division of labor, Gender is most dominant one that permeates public and private sphere of human life. It refers to the allocation of “different roles, responsibilities, and tasks to women and men based on societal ideas of what men and women should do and are capable of doing” (Bhasin, 2000). These roles are assigned on the basis of their gender rather than preferences or capabilities. These roles and responsibilities or to say activities/work can be broadly categorized as: productive; reproductive; and community work/activities (Bhasin, 2000).

Males are assigned productive and communal works that yield financial returns. Based on this ground, they reinforce a powerful position within the family—this power sustains their position as the head of the household. On the other hand women are mostly assigned with reproductive and domestic works—which are interpreted as extension of the reproductive tasks. They are expected and trained to bear and look after children and other family members—which not only hampers their educational status but also limits their capacity to perform in the public sphere: the economic zone.

Thus economic activities performed by the women are subsistence in nature while that performed by the males are productive in nature and relatively values more. Jobs that entail authority, power and control are considered men's jobs and that comprises the 'public sphere'. And women are assigned jobs involving caring, nurturing, servicing and these functions comprise the 'household sphere'.

In agrarian society also as members of the 'household sphere', women are assigned with domestic and farm work while males as members of the 'public sphere' perform tasks that have greater social and economical advantages. Therefore, male employment is given greater emphasis and priority (Bhasin, 2000). Consequently, women may not participate in social decision-making process, including CF.

CF falls within the public sphere- the male sphere. Due to this socially sanctioned and endorsed dichotomy, females decline to tread into the male sphere and participate in the management of the CF. As a study that focuses on the factors that affect female participation in decision making process—that falls in the public sphere. This research has used above-mentioned theoretical concepts in analyzing situation of women in

Ramche CFUG. Analyzing the behavior of User Group members related to occupation, behavior and cultural roles and spheres assigned to both sexes will assist in assessing the gender categories.

2.1.2 History of Community Forestry Management in Nepal

Community Forestry has been seen as an important program that could help Nepal in reducing poverty. Based on the concept of providing full control to protect and manage local forest to communities, this program is the major strategy in developing forests. Though earlier forest management plans were state centered, introduced in the late 1970s this concept is aimed at using indigenous system of knowledge in protecting and using natural resources while being partially aided by external sources (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Before the advent of CF, Nepal's experience with forest has been varied and there has been a major shift in paradigm of state policy. In the pre-democratic regimes, forest policies were state centered however with the post-democratic era the paradigm has shifted towards local people centric (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Chhetri (2006) has classified evolutionary history of Nepal's forestry sector into three broad groups, viz.: privatization (pre-1950), nationalization (1957 and up to the mid-1970s) and community orientation, which began in the late 1970s with the introduction of the concept of Community Forestry (CF).

Forest Management Before 1950

When Nepal received the status of a nation state in 1769 it practiced feudalized forestry and all economic resources including forests were

controlled by the elites with permission from ruling classes-Shah, and Rana. The nexus between the local elite classes and the ruling classes resulted in the marginalization of some sections of societies across the nation structurally on the basis of wealth, status, gender, and caste/ethnicity. During this period diverse local indigenous institutions managed the forests and the state was concerned with raising revenue from it. Local elites acted as agent of the state to collect revenue from the peasants and in turn they used the forest as means of income generation without a sense belongingness (Paudel et. al., 2009).

The policy of extraction and repression adopted by the Ranas and the subsequent commoditization of natural resources like forest became means of gaining profit for the Rana regime. This commoditization of forest resources led to “a further deterioration of forests. The Rana rulers and their relatives sold an immeasurable quantity of hard timber to British India for the construction and expansion for railway lines to the Gangetic plains of India” (Gurung, 2009)

Forest Management After 1950

Six years after democracy was introduced in Nepal, forestry sector policy was also revised in 1957. All forest across the kingdom was nationalized and brought under the Crown. This act was in fact abolished private ownership of forests and transferred it to the government. However with changes in political system, there was change in forestry sector too. (Regmi, 1992)

Following the establishment of the Panchayat¹ System in 1960 by sweeping aside people’s democracy in Nepal, the government introduced

¹Panchayat was a partyless political system imposed in Nepal by late King Mahendra in 1961.

the Forest Act 1961 that secured power of the state on the forest and strictly aimed at control forests and generate revenues from it. It strictly adopted the policy of ‘fine and fence’ by centralizing all the managerial powers in bureaucracy (Paudel et. al., 2009). This was not all; the practice of centralizing the forests was even more put into force by the Forest Protection Special Act of 1967. This act handed over great powers in the hand of District Forest Officers that included to arrest and penalize anyone that violated the law. In this way the locals were further alienated from their natural resources (Paudel et. al., 2009).

However, it did not take much long to bring to the fore the failure of the centralized policy. By 1970s Nepal was facing Himalayan ecological crisis due to the rampant deforestation. Contemporary policies had failed to recognize the contribution of indigenous communities in managing forests and consequently denied their traditional use rights to forest resources and further more had ‘criminalized all kinds of forest uses (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Shift Towards Community Centered Forestry

National Forestry Plan (NFP) in 1976 had handed over the management responsibilities of forest patches to the local governments, called Panchayats in the name of ‘Panchayat Forest’, and ‘Protected Panchayat Forest’. This system of Panchayat forests got further boost when the government endorsed Decentralization Act 1982. This act empowered the local bodies more than ever in decision-making process and in the management of the forest along with other local resources (Regmi, 1992).

Though the Panchayats were provided with some major responsibility to handle the forest, clashes with forest users and lack of visible benefits

from the management part of the forest to the Panchayat leaders provided cue to the supporters of Community Forest (Gilmore and Fisher 1991). Apart from that the Panchayat system also could not provide needed support to the Community members in managing the forest patches, which were most of the time out of their political interests (Paudel, 2009).

The concept of community forestry was introduced by a Nepali forester E.J. B Rana as early as 1952/53 in one of his unpublished manuscript, however community forestry as a methodology itself was introduced to the nation in 1978 to address rapidly depleting forests across the nation and a corresponding failure of the Panchayat strategy (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991: 11).

Fisher pointed out that the government of Nepal did not hand over the forest to local people by their own will but due to inability to control forest depletion in effective way due to relatively limited manpower in comparison to a large dispersed population and the wide geographical distribution of forest resources (Fisher, 1994). As a practice this strategy involves the handing over of forests to communities (defined as user groups), including its management and protection. The forest handover process is formalized by endorsing an operational plan prepared by the user group. The operational plan outlines rules, regulations and procedures sanctioned by the Forest Department to be followed by the forest user group while consuming and protecting forest resources (Chhetri, 1994: 22).

CFUGs are defined as autonomous institutions by Forest Act 1993 and have been empowered to manage and utilize their community forests under the guidance of the operational plan prepared and endorsed by them (Chhetri 1994). As partners in CF program government performs

the function of a facilitator to the CFUGs. Forestry department officials provide technical assistance to CFUGs in preparing and implementing operational plan and CF activities. CFUGs manage, protect and utilize forest resources on sustainable basis (MPFS, 1988).

Being operated by an elected executive committee, it is essential that the CFUG effectively see to it that the proper procedures are adopted in the formation and functioning of the executive committee. However like other community based development programs that have failed to ensure active participation of indigenous peoples, women, *Madhesis*, *Dalits*, and other marginalized groups in mainstream development programs, CF has also been plagued by mostly by exclusion of women in the decision making process (Gurung, 2009)

2.1.3 Women's Participation in Community Forestry: A General Overview

Community Forestry as a community-based program relies on maximum utility of indigenous knowledge possessed by local communities in preserving and consuming forest resources. Owing to the conventional division of labor between men and women, rural women are close to forest and possess knowledge about fuel wood, fodder and medicinal herbs more than their male counterparts (Saul, 1994).

Despite the fact that the state policy stresses on mainstreaming women and other marginalized strata in the decision-making and planning process, they still are excluded from such process at the community level. The situation reflects lack of concrete efforts from the government in implementing policies and strategies and domination of rural elites in benefit sharing and decision making process of the CF (Fisher and

Gilmour, 1991). This deprives the poor, women, and socially marginalized users from actively participating in the decision process, even though they participate in the implementation (Shrestha, 2009).

Even though the state apparatus and policy makers have invested lot of emphasis on gaining the confidence of woodcutters and women, who are related primarily to the forests (MPFSP, 1988) women's participation in the community forest users group has been just limited to the issue of representation and adhering to the policy of "at least two thirds of the members of the user groups should be women" (Karki, et al., 1994). This nominal representation of women, which are often made to fulfill the basic criteria of CF by the male members of CFUG, reflects the male perspective towards women's ability to decide or to perform social functions—culturally thought to belonging to the male realm (Karki et. al., 1994)

Women have only a marginal influence in decision-making activities with respect to the conservation and management of community forests in their localities. Even if local women participate in the CFUGs they are educated and have little touch with forests and other workingwomen. In most of the cases male members are the main participants in CF development activities and decision-making process (Adhikari, 2001).

Master Plan for Forestry Sector (1988) and the subsequent revisions made by the government have also provisioned for the formation of CF that are solely managed by the females since 1990. This certainly had a positive impact on the participation of women in CF management. Following this argument, Kandel and Gautam (2004:5) state that coming up to 2004, women represented about twenty four percent of the total members in an

executive committee in average. However such CFUGs were limited to five percent of the total CFUGs nationwide.

Despite policies that advocate social inclusion, especially gender, in the forestry sector, lower level of female participation has been a serious setback to the program across the nation. The problems lie in the society's perspective towards gender roles. Existing religious, cultural and social ethics and traditional sex-based mode of behavior is at the very root of this unpromising female exclusion from CF. Kafle (2008) reports that member of CFUGs (male and female), civil servant authorities, NGO workers, and social activist indicated that the socio-cultural factors are the major influencing factors of low women participation in CFUGs.

A research conducted by ICIMOD (1998) it stated that to increase women's participation in Community Forestry Program it was necessary to boost up their inner sense of autonomy, identity and strength to overcome gender ideologies, social sanctioned roles, cultural taboos and roles.

Stressing on the need of increasing women participation in Community based programs, Kharel (1993) summarizes that if women are involved at every stage of the CF management, they acquire better opportunities to have their saying and their opinion taken into account by the community members. But he argues that if user committees are formed without representation of women or if the male committee members do not heed to the opinion of the females, consciously or unconsciously, the decisions usually fail to address the concerns of the females.

According to Regmi (1992) factors affecting in participation of women in community work are the clear prospects of benefit sharing, family

support, small size of the committee and the compactness of area where they work and personal characteristics such as marital status and age. He further outlines role of women in decision-making process and property rights as one of the major factors that contribute in forest degradation. The author refers to the practice of inheriting parental property strictly along patriarchal lines as one of the major cause that alienates women from decision-making process. Similarly heavy workload in household activities, timing and duration of meeting, men's resistance equity in benefit sharing are the factors affecting participation of women (Lama, 1999). This means personal characteristics; benefits from the participation and household as well as social supports affect the participation.

These studies show that women participation in community forestry management is crucial, but is still low. Socio-cultural factors like age, sex, marital status of the community members, prospects of benefit sharing, size of the committee, and involvement of women in decision making process remain vital in the success of the CF. This study has attempted to explore factors that motivate and hinder female participation in the decision-making and benefit sharing activities in community forestry by studying RCFUG as a case.

CHAPTER-III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rationale for Site Selection

The study area was conducted at Rampur-4 of Palpa district. It is located at the hilly region of the Nepal. Ramche Community Forest User Group (RCFUG) composed by patriarchal social and cultural structures. Therefore it was suitable to find out women's participation in CF management including decision-making processes due to socio-cultural background of women in the study area.

This study area was heterogeneous in terms of caste and ethnic composition. There were over 7 caste/ethnic groups. In this context, this area was suitable for the research to find out women's participation in CF based on ethnic background of women in the study area.

The economy comprises of farming, remittances and local jobs or business. With a mixed economy, roles and status of the women in the society also varied that affected their participation in social decision-making process can be obtained by studying this area.

I am a native resident of the study area. Therefore this area was suitable for the research to find out the women's participation in the decision making process of RCF especially in protection and benefit sharing activities and the factors that hinder and motivate their participation in it specifically.

3.2 Research Design

The research was based on cross-sectional research design. It has been used to describe the actual socio-economic condition of the studied

population, participation of women in different aspects of CF and their involvement in the decision making process. Along with that past and present situation of women's participation in CF decision-making process and changes seen in their status in CF has been analyzed through comparison with earlier situations.

3.3 Natures and Source of Data

The research was based on qualitative and quantitative data. Such data were collected, through primary and secondary sources. The Primary data were collected through structured questions and qualitative data through focused group discussion, interviews, and observations. The secondary data were collected by secondary sources like books, articles, and reports etc.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

There were 275 households in RCFUG. The Household survey was done in all households to collect the socio-demographic data. Firstly a household list was prepared. After household survey was completed, systematic stratified proportionate random sampling method was adopted to select the sample respondents. In accordance to it the researcher stratified the population into different strata on the basis of their caste and ethnicity. Separate lists were made for each caste/ethnic groups like Brahmin, Chhetri, Newars, Magars, Dalits, Thakuri, and others. From each of these lists 20 percent female respondents were selected through random selection process. Thus out of the total 55 female respondents, 22 were Brahmin, 16 were Newars, 6 were Magar, 6 were Dalits, 2 were Chhetris, 1 was Thakuri and 2 were from other category were selected.

3.5 Techniques of Data Collection

Various data collection techniques were used to collect primary data for this research. The techniques used in this study are outlined as follows:

3.5.1 Household Survey

Household survey was conducted to collect primary data on the socio-economic data such as education, occupation, male-female population of the household, and marital status, religion, caste/ethnicity and land and livestock ownership of the user households and women's participation in CF management.

3.5.2 Key Informant Interview

Key informants interview was the most reliable source of information. Informal interactions, in the form of interview were conducted with executive committee members to assess information on the formation and working procedures of the executive committee. Interaction with District Forest Officer was useful in knowing the handover process of the forest to the local community and interviews with local women was imperative in knowing the working spheres assigned to females and males within a family, in community and in the RCF. Discussion with some female executive members also assisted in finding out factors that hinder and motivate female's participation in RCF. Local leaders were interviewed to explore the history of the RCF.

During the fieldwork interviewing with women, particularly those who had to manage their domestic and agricultural works on their own, was difficult due to their time constraints. So many of these interviews were taken in the evening after dinner. And most of these respondents had their

neighbor or a close relative with them while interacting with others. They give answers only after discussing with others, like neighbors.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focused group discussion was held with the members of the executive committee. Similarly focused groups discussions were held with forest users to collect data about their perceptions on women's participation in CF management. The discussions were also imperative in assessing factors that motivate and hinder women's participation in CF.

3.5.4 Observation

Observations were conducted to assess the working spheres of males and females within a household, community and in EC and general assembly meetings of the RCF. These observations were carried out by participating in executive committee meetings, by walking through forest, and through community visits.

3.6 Data analysis and Presentation

In this research, the researcher has used both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was presented by using statistical tools like tabulations, percentages, graphic presentation and frequency distribution. The qualitative data were presented by categorizing them in thematic way and were presented and analyzed in logical manner.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

As a study that is focused on a particular community, belonging to specific geographic location with its own cultural and social values, this study has its own constraints. The study has only covered the users of

Ranche Community Forest Users Group, located in Rampur-4, of Palpa district that is located in the mid hills of Nepal. So the outcomes of the research might be not suitable for generalizing in geographical, social and cultural conditions other than that of the study area itself.

This study has been conducted for the completion of the partial fulfillment of Masters Degree in Sociology. Therefore findings might not be feasible for a detailed research on the issue due to the constraints of time and resources in preparing it.

This study has adopted gender as a theoretical framework for analyzing the factors hindering female participation in CF, so findings might not be relevant to communities that have different socio-cultural practices other than that of RCFUG.

Moreover this study is based on cross-sectional analysis of primary data and therefore findings might not provide insights into changes seen in the participation of the females in CF program over a period of time.

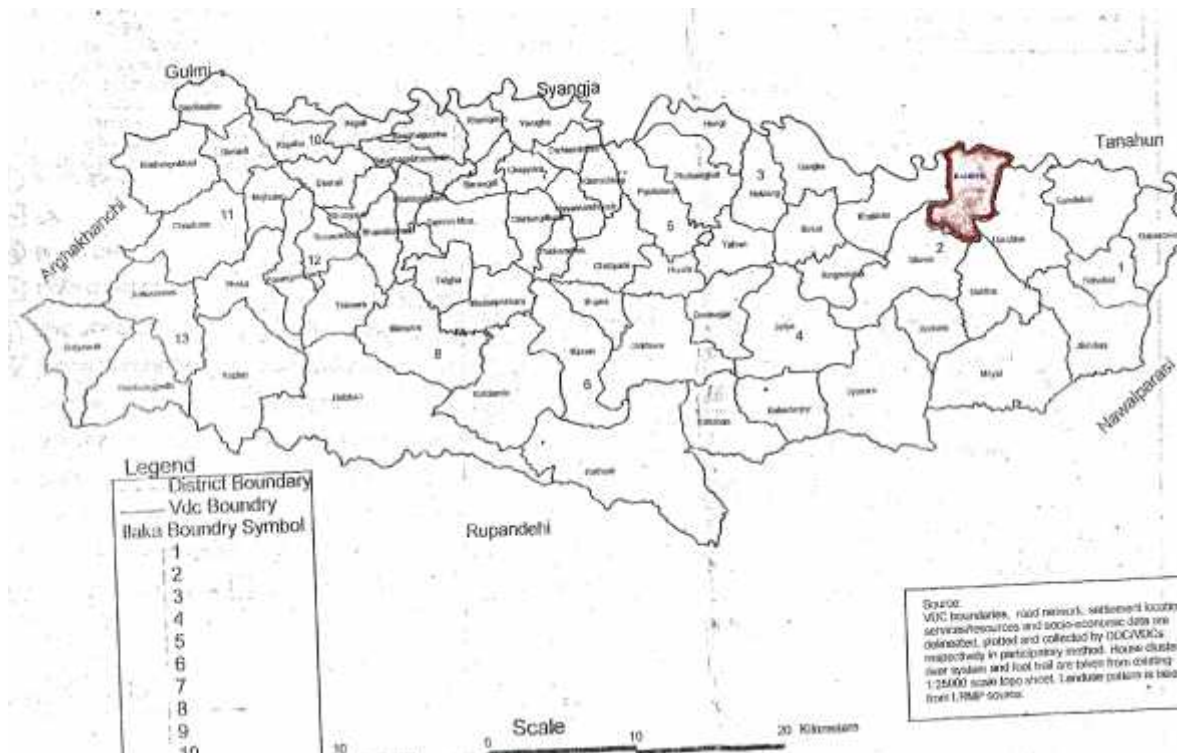
CHAPTER IV THE SETTING

4.1 Physical and Social Settings

The Ramche CFUG is located in Rampur VDC of Palpa district. The VDC is one of the 65 VDCs and 1 municipality of the district. It is situated between 27°. 19' longitude and 83°. 56' latitude. It is 1293 meters above sea level. It is 65 Kms. away from Tansen- district headquarters. The average temperature ranges between 34-38 °C in summer and 6-18°C in winter.

Map 4.1

Rampur VDC (highlighted) in Palpa district.

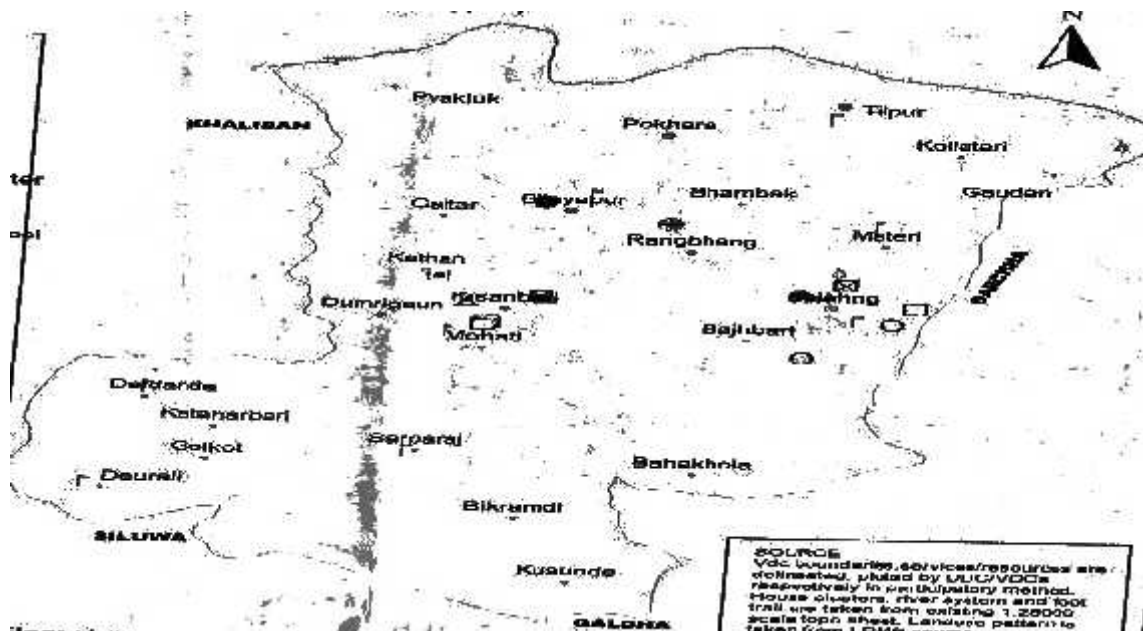


The VDC borders Darchha VDC in the east, Khaliban VDC in the West, Kali Gandaki River in North and Siluwa and Galdha VDCs in South (See map 4.2).

As an area that falls in mid hills, the climate is suitable for semi-tropical vegetation. There are 7 community forests in this VDC and *Shorea Robusta*, *Schima Walichi*, *Bombax Ceiba*, *Acacia Catechu* are some of the major trees found in them. Main river streams of this VDC are Bahakhola, Datauli, Chawadi, and Turundi. Forest resources like leaflets, timber, firewood and water from the river stream are used for domestic and farming purposes.

Map 4.2

Physical boundaries of Rampur VDC



(Source-VDC Profile, 2008)

The VDC has been gradually developing as local trading and education center. Similar to other growing semi-urban hilly areas, it has a heterogeneous population that consist people of various caste and ethnicity. Major caste and ethnic groups belonging to this VDC are Brahmins, Chhetri, Dalits, Newars, Magars and Thakuris.

Nepali language is the common lingua franca across all linguistic communities of this area. However some Magar and Newar family and community members speak Magar and Newari respectively within their own family and community. Hinduism is common religion of all these caste and ethnic communities.

4.1.1: Demographic Composition of VDC

Rampur VDC's population comprises of 50.41 percentage of male and 49.58 percentage of females. The total population of the VDC was 11539, which were accommodated in a total of 2167 households (VDC profile, 2008). Thus a household within the VDC accommodates 5.32 persons. It was due to the agrarian economic base of the society. As a society that relies on agriculture, a family needs large number of family members to fulfill human resource demands necessary for farming activities like cattle grazing, fodder collection, sowing, reaping, and cultivating farms, among other farming, livestock activities. This large size of a family might be for fulfilling human resources.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Population on the Basic of Sex in Rampur

Ward No	Household	Male		Female		Family Size	Total Population
		Total	%	Total	%		
1	227	630	49.45	644	50.54	5.61	1274
2	119	330	50.76	320	49.23	3.26	650
3	452	1229	50.12	1223	49.87	5.42	2452
4	308	857	51.68	801	48.31	5.38	1658
5	461	1060	50.02	1059	49.97	4.59	2119
6	158	443	52.36	403	47.62	5.35	846
7	127	360	48.91	376	51.08	5.79	736
8	168	434	49.54	446	50.68	5.23	880
9	147	474	51.29	450	58.70	6.28	924
Total	2167	5817	50.41	5722	49.58	5.32	11539

Source: VDC Profile, 2008.

Ranche Community Forest User Group (RCFUG) falls in ward no 4 of this VDC and as table 4.1 shows it has the third largest population (1658) in comparison to other wards (for detail explanation on this issue refer to next chapter detailing on this topic within this unit).

4.1.2 VDC Economy

Major occupation of the residents of this VDC is agriculture. VDC data shows that agriculture is major occupation of a majority (62.85 percentage) of the total 5370 population (VDC profile, 2008). Besides agriculture foreign employment was another source of income generation. The table 4.2 shows that the distribution of occupation followed by the people Rampur VDC.

Table 4.2
Distribution of Occupational Practices in Rampur

Ward No	Industry	Business	Agriculture	Service	Foreign Employment
1	3	105	415	25	213
2	-	5	224	14	108
3	9	49	340	64	289
4	2	39	243	36	160
5	8	50	579	91	201
6	6	18	236	52	109
7	1	16	256	37	34
8	1	3	745	19	113
9	1	13	337	27	72
Total	31	300	3375	365	1299

Source: VDC profile, 2008

The data in table 4.2 shows that 24.19 percentage of the population fulfill their social and family expenses from remittances sent from abroad. Besides agriculture and foreign employment, services in

government and non-governmental Organizations, small-scale business and cottage industries are other sources of income respectively adopted by the population of this VDC and Ramche CFUG.

As farming is primary source of income for most of the residents of this VDC, they depend on forest resources for rearing livestock, for collecting firewood, leaflets, and cutting grass.

4.1.3 Presence of Development Organizations

More than thirty governmental and non-governmental organizations were found to have been working in the study area aiming to build up capacity of the locals along with constructing infrastructure necessary for the society. Organizations like the Youth Clubs, Aama Samuha, have been actively promoting informal literacy classes, child-care, income generation activities, women empowerment, sanitation and hygiene.

Aama Samuha was found to be active in advocating and lobbying to secure female rights and their day-to-day concerns. This organization has been acting as a platform where the local females share their problems and find out solutions to them through interaction and discussion. It has unified the females and now has been conducting programs that raise awareness on female rights and gender equality. It has helped housewives who have troubled relationships with their husbands and are deprived of proper living conditions by their husbands.

As a common platform where females discuss their domestic and communal matters, Aama Samuha has also brought the females together where they discuss their common welfare. This group has been actively raising voice for the representation of women in social welfare and it is

also eluded to have contributed in the increased participation of women in RCFUG.

This area has adequate presence of educational institutions that includes kindergarten, primary, secondary and colleges that are operated by the state and by locals. It has one post graduate college, seconded by three higher secondary schools, five secondary schools of which two are boarding schools that provide co-education. RCFUG has been providing funds to operate these schools and a postgraduate college. The funds collected by selling woods, timber and by hiring picnic spots are provided to these schools and colleges they have been providing education to the locals-both males and females.

4.1.4. Development Infrastructures

Rampur is one of the fastest developing VDCs in Palpa. Development infrastructures of this VDC were not destroyed, with the exception of its police post, during the decade Maoist insurgency. And presently whole of the VDC, along with users of Ramche CF in ward no 4, are provided with necessary development infrastructures including electricity, drinking water facility, health posts, communication, and transportation. Most of the parts of this VDC are connected to a rural gravel road network, which in turn is connected to Sidhartha Highway. One of the most important infrastructures for farmers is irrigation canal and with the exception of ward no 2 and 9, all wards of this VDC are irrigated by Rampur Canal.

4.1.5 Natural Resources

This VDC has been endowed with abundant natural resources like arable land, forest, and water resources. Most of the arable land is facilitated with irrigation facilities from Rampur canal and other arable lands. The

arable land was divided into *khet* (irrigated land), *bari* (non-irrigated). Along with *khet* and *bari* some portion of land is also used for *khar-bari* (land used for cultivating wild grass). This type of land provides fodder for livestock throughout the year.

There are 7-community forests in this VDC, including Ramche Community Forest. These forests have been catering to the firewood, timber and leaf litter needs of the local community. Along with that these forests are major source of grasses for the livestock. Major timber yielding trees found in this area are *Shorea Robusta*, *Schima Walichi*, *Bombax Ceiba*, and *Acacia Catechu*. River streams like Bahakhola, Dataueli, Chawadi, and Turundi are major sources of water used for drinking and irrigation of this VDC.

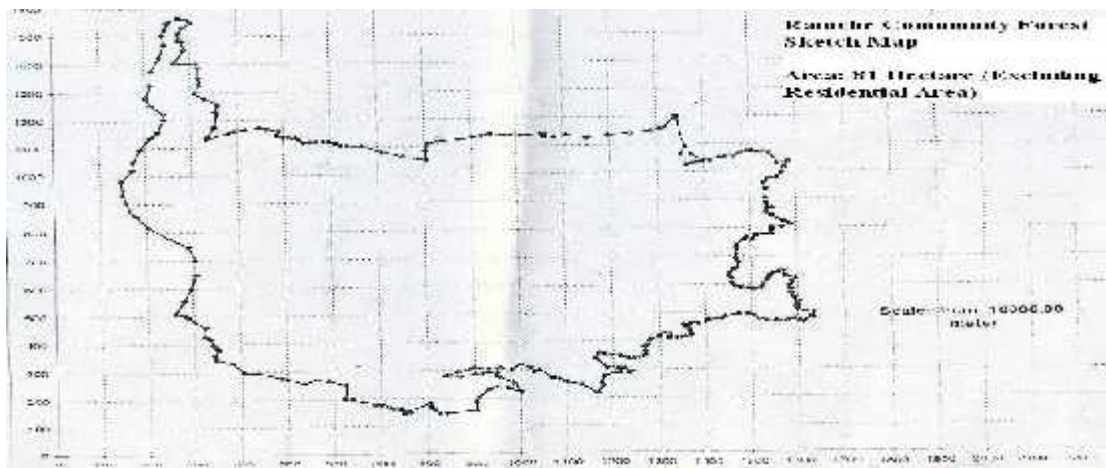
Presence of ample water and forest resources has provided favorable conditions to the residents of this area for agriculture, horticulture and livestock farming. All these activities depend on water and forest resources and in absence of these factors; locals of this area would have certainly faced hardships in making their living.

4.2. Ramche Community Forest User Group

Ramche CF is located in mid hills and occupies 81 hectares of forestland. It was formed in 1991. It borders Chisapani and Pani Banda in the East, Khajane Khola and Jamune Kholso in the West, Barbise Khet and Bejhand Khet in the North and Deuchur and Chispani Kholso in South. The forest has rich source of timber yielding plants. *Shorea Robusta*, *Schima Walichi*, *Bombax Ceiba*, *Acacia Catechu* are some of the major timber yielding plants found in this forest. These trees are valued for their timber. Members of the RCF use timbers from these trees

to construct houses, barn and cowsheds, agricultural tools and household furniture. The Map. 1 shows the geographical area of Ramche Community Forest.

Map 4.3
Area of Ramche Community Forest



Source: Field Survey, 2011

Users of this CF are allowed to use timber from the forest by paying NRs 50 for per cubic feet of *Shorea Robusta*, NRs 30 for per cubic feet of *Schima Walich* and NRs 25 for per cubic feet of other types of trees. Other resources provided by this forest are firewood, grass, leaf litters, and pastures that are used for livestock farming and for agricultural purpose by the users. RCF is the main source pasture for grazing domestic livestock and for cutting grass for the animals. User group members are allowed to assess this facility through out the year. RCF is opened twice a year in June and September for collecting dry firewood and once a year, usually in January, to trim undergrowth of trees. CFUG members participate in pruning the forest and use the trimmed parts for firewood.

4.2.1 Caste and Ethnic Composition of User Group

As mentioned earlier this user group has a heterogeneous population comprising of various caste/ethnicity. Despite the varied ethnic backgrounds of the users, no apparent ethnic and racial tensions were observed during the research. Users were found to have a sense of ownership of the CF. The Table 4.3 shows the caste/ethnic composition of the RCF user group.

Table 4.3
Caste and ethnic composition of RCFUG

Caste/Ethnicity	Household		Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Brahmin	110	40.00	250	32.89	310	36.90	560	35
Newar	82	29.09	200	26.31	200	23.80	400	25
Magar	31	11.27	125	16.44	125	14.88	250	15.62
Dalit	30	10.90	110	14.47	120	14.28	230	14.37
Chhetri	8	2.90	25	3.28	25	2.97	50	3.12
Thakuri	6	2.18	20	2.63	20	2.38	40	2.5
Others	10	3.63	30	3.94	40	4.76	70	4.37
Total	275	100	760	47.5	840	52.5	1600	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

With a total population of 1600 people, the population comprises of Brahmins, Newars, Magars, Dalits, Adibasi, Chhetri, and Thakuris. Brahmin's population is greater than any other caste and ethnicity in the area. They comprise thirty-five percentage of the population. The Newars with a total population of 400 have almost ten percent more population than that of the dalit who occupy 15.62 percentage of the

population pie. Adibasi, Thakuri, and Chhetri's occupy the least number of populations respectively. Altogether they occupy around ten percentage of the population.

Comparatively the Newars were found to be relatively less restrictive on the movement of their female members in community work. The caste and ethnic background of the population may influence the participation of women in CF because the different background of caste/ethnic groups have different socio-cultural backgrounds or norms and values that define the sphere of men and women in society. Details on this will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.2.2. Demographic Composition of Ramche CFUG

RCFUG consists of a total of 1600 people living in 275 households. Of its total population, 760 were females and 840 were males. Presence of the male sex in the population is greater by 5 percentages. The sex and age composition is presented in table 4.4. The table shows that 62.81 percentages of the total population is economically productive. In comparison to it the dependent population, comprising of the infants, adolescents, old, rests at 37.18 percentage of the total population. The adolescents and old population which is 18.75 and 11.87 percentage of the total population respectively is actively involved in assisting in performing domestic works like cattle grazing, child rearing, collecting firewood, livestock rearing, irrigating farmlands and other farming activities. These are some of the domestic responsibilities that fall in the sphere of women.

Lack of family members assistance in performing these extended range of domestic work, might also be hindering the participation of females in CF management activities along with other social activities. This division of

labor has substantial impact on the participation of men and women in CF management and this issue will be discussed in chapter five.

Table 4.4
Age and Sex Composition of RCFUG

Age	Female		Male		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-4	45	5.35	50	6.57	95	5.93
5-9	90	10.71	80	10.52	170	10.62
10-14	70	8.33	70	9.21	140	8.75
15-19	65	7.73	60	7.89	125	7.81
20-24	45	5.35	45	5.92	110	6.87
25-29	65	7.73	45	5.92	110	6.87
30-34	75	8.92	65	8.55	140	8.75
35-39	60	7.14	50	6.57	110	6.87
40-44	70	8.33	60	7.89	130	8.12
45-49	50	5.95	50	6.57	100	6.25
50-54	55	6.54	40	5.26	95	5.93
55-59	60	7.14	45	5.92	105	6.56
Over 60	90	10.71	100	13.15	190	11.87
Total	840	52.5	760	47.5	1600	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

It was found that the lower representation of the Brahmins, and null representation from the Chhetris and Thakuris in the executive committee is a result of the patriarchal Hindu values that restricts female from getting out of the domestic threshold. Even though Brahmin's households have a dominant presence in this RCFUG, the representation of women from their community is nominal. Of the total 6 females participating in the executive committee of RCFUG, only one of them is a Brahmin, 3 of them are Newars, 1 is from the Dalits and the last one is from other groups (details will be discussed in detail in chapter V).

CHAPTER-V

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CF ACTIVITIES

This chapter traces the history of Ramche Community Forest, the objectives behind its establishment, the level of participation of women members in forest maintenance, in distributing forest resources: firewood, fodder, and timber. This chapter explores females' knowledge about forest resources, their attitude towards CF, their status and participation level in Executive Committee (EC) meetings and FUG assemblies and lastly factors that hinder active and effective participation of women in decision making process.

5.1 History of Forest Management at Ramche

Traditionally Ramche forest (now RCF) has been preserved and used by the people of different *toles* (settlements) like Rangbhang *tol*, Bejhand *tol*, Sundar *tol*, Chandrajyoti *tol*, Bahakhola, Dadhrantaar, Birendra *tol* and Bangepasal *tol*. However, they have been managing the forest in different ways in different time periods.

Before the Panchayat² period, all the villagers used forest resources like firewood, timber, and leaflets on their own wills. There were no written guiding principles or written rules and regulations that guide the use, rights and responsibilities of the village. The villagers used the forest on their own. It was 'their' forest and they fought united with other villagers to maintain exclusive authority over the forest and its resources. Due to strong unity between them in defending their ownership of the forest and

² Panchayat is equivalent to present day Village Development Committee (VDC). Elections for the Panchayat were conducted once in five years. However unlike present day multiparty democratic system, individuals aspiring to serve the Crown and His subjects contended the elections on individual basis and no political parties existed during the Panchayat era.

its resources, they have retained ownership of the forest throughout the history.

Ramche forest came under the Village Panchayat during the Panchayat rule. After that the villagers were deprived of ownership of the forest and were only provided with rights to use the forest resources. The Panchayat government did not hinder villagers from using forest resources but they felt alienated from the forest. This situation, claimed, led to the rise of negative attitude of villagers towards forest resources and resulted in depletion of forest resources.

In response to a question on forest management during that period, Bishnu Prasad Regmi, aged 70 and resident of Dadhrantar *tol* said:

“It was the King’s forest then on (after the Panchayat took over). We tried to save it as the government had directed us, but villagers used forest resources without any affection towards the forest. It was a government’s property and it was ‘free’,”

Regmi had served the Panchayat as Pradhan Pancha (equivalent to present day president of a VDC). He remembered that in comparison to his childhood days, Ramche forest had depleted significantly after it was brought under the Panchayat. He said that during his tenure he made the appointment of a *Ban Pale* (forest guard) mandatory to every Panchayat forests users as directed from district headquarters.

After mandatory directives from the Panchayat, every community who used forest provided a *Ban-Pale* to protect the forest. As the Panchayat did not have sufficient financial resources to provide remunerations to *Ban Pales*. In this situation the villagers themselves provided seasonal grains two times a year. A Nepali³ family from *Chandrajoty tol* was

³ A Dalit caste assigned with dynasty profession of stitching clothes. They are different from modern day tailors as they take wages in the form of seasonal grains and along with stitching clothes, played music during festivals, sang songs and performed

appointed as the *Ban-pale* for Ramche Forest. This family served as the forest guard since then.

Chandra Devi Nepali, who is working as the forest guard said that during the starting days of her appointed period, trees were chopped illegally. At that time, she and her husband, who was also forest guard had to fight with the illegal timber cutters for stopping them from chopping the trees without getting permission from the Panchayat. She further said that it was hard to stop the villagers from illegally cutting trees. These timber cutters were usually from the adjoining villages (and at times from the rightful villages). She adds that the job to protect the forest was very tough as the villagers themselves were also involved in illegal cutting of the trees.

The Ramche forest was registered as a community forest in 1991. After that to follow guarding the forest became easier as the villages did not chopped trees. After her husband's death in 2009, Chandra was given the responsibility of *Ban-Pale*. She says in comparison to the past guarding the forest has become more convenient to stop illegal chopping of trees. It was due to cooperation from the CF members and their awareness about the rules of using the forest. Now, the forest was dense and full of trees and grass, which was also found in my own observation.

5.2 Objectives of RCFUG

Ramche Community Forest was established with the sole purpose of providing usable rights to the villagers to utilize forest resources on sustainable basis. In its statute, RCFUG has mentioned as protection, development, management, and utilization of forest resources including

other functions assigned to them. However in present day most of them have left these traditional profession and the caste-based traditions and even if they stitch clothes they take wages in cash.

timber, firewood, and fodder, as its major objective. It also aims at collecting funds by selling extra forest resources and use the funds in protection, development, management of the forest and in community development initiatives. While aiming at conserving soil erosion and preserving biological diversity, the CF aims at acquiring governmental and non-governmental cooperation in strengthening its user's capacity and in conducting various income generating programs.

5.3 Women's participation and their Status in Executive Committee

The present day constitution of RCFUG has made the provisions of 33 percentage women's participation in executive committee. The term of the committee members was generally confined to two years. The executive committee was formed by a general assembly in every two years period. Generally the members are nominated through consensus among the users. If they don't reach consensus, they involve in the process of elections to form EC. The table 5.1 shows the caste and ethnic wise participation of women in CF

The table 5.1 shows the caste/ethnic wise participation of male and female in Executive Committee from 1991 to 2010. The informants informed that the user group has been managing the RCF since 1991 in formal way. The table clearly shows that in the initial phase of establishment RCF there was no or very little participation of women in EC. The male especially high caste and ethnic groups had dominant presence in the EC. Along with that Dalit people had also no presence in the EC. The reasons for the minimal or null participation of Dalits was referred to their ignorance of state affairs, illiteracy, continuation of culturally and traditionally assigned caste based occupation like leather

work, metal work, and their acceptance of ‘inferiority’ imposed upon them by the members of ‘high caste’ society.

Table 5.1

Participation of Women by Caste and Ethnic Composition in EC

Year	High Caste		Ethnic Group		Dalit		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1991	71.42	0.00	28.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	7	0
1993	57.14	14.28	28.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	6	1
1995	33.33	22.22	33.33	0.00	11.00	0.00	7	2
1997	44.44	22.22	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	7	2
1999	27.27	18.18	36.36	9.09	0.00	-	8	3
2001	36.36	18.18	27.27	9.09	9.09	0.00	8	3
2003	33.33	20.00	26.66	13.33	0.00	6.66	9	6
2006	40.00	13.33	26.66	6.66	6.66	6.66	11	4
2008	60.76	18.38	38.46	7.69	7.69	0.00	10	3
2010	23.07	7.69	23.07	30.76	7.69	7.69	7	6

Source: RCFUG Record Archive

In the 20 years of CF establishment female participation seemed certainly progressed from null to a dominant presence of 46 percentages. In term of quantitative representation it was really a good or well participation of women as well as other marginalized sections like Dalits in the case of RCF. It was found that the Chairman of RCFUG, Krishna Prasad Shrestha, also accepted that women are still lagged behind in actively participating during the decision making process. Elaborating on the factors for lower level of participation in, Shrestha pointed towards female’s ‘shy nature’ of the females and their reluctance to speak in public places.

In the study, I found certain changes in male's attitude towards female. This change is reflected in the statement of Nagilal Paudel, a 62-year-old resident of Birendra *tol* and member of the RCFUG:

“ In our times, women were not allowed to perform tasks assigned to male like attending and speaking in community meetings, going to offices. They did not do our task. We (males) made decisions not the women. In your time (alluding to the researcher), the case has been reversed. Nowadays the girls are smart, they do everything. See yourself you are so smart, you know more than us, you are educated and you can talk like males. Everything has changed”

Birendra *tol*, Ward No-4, Rampur VDC.

Paudel statement clearly shows the multi-generations experiences about how women were perceived and behaved by males of his generation as well as in the present. His statement reveals that in the past men only took decisions and that they were engaged in every kind of communal and social work. In present day males' perceptions have changed due to the introduction of modern education system. In the study area educated females began to perform like males. It is knowledge and education that has made the women capable to speak like males. This revelation certainly has some underpinnings that shows shift in paradigm of gender consciousness—females can work like males. Moreover, women's sphere, i.e., household have been gradually changing into public sphere like CF management in the study area.

Though males have provided places or reservations to females in the decision making level, the females themselves are not satisfied with their newly assigned roles. Female executive committee members expressed deep dissatisfaction towards being a member of committee. They perceive assigning of such social responsibility to them as a burden.

Mainly their dissatisfaction emanated from the kind of role assigned to them in the executive committee. While they get a role in development committees some women weigh its benefits in terms of its potential to provide them opportunity to attend trainings, workshops and receive financial payments. Along with these they also consider what they loose at the domestic level by performing the roles. And some women are reluctant to participate in decision-making process due to the lower level of importance given to their opinions in meetings by their male counterparts. In this regard, Gyanu Thapa Magar at the age of 42 said:

“There is no benefit in becoming a member of Forest Committee (EC). We have to go whenever they (males) call us even by leaving our children and livestock hungry. Moreover there is no benefit for women like us (relatively poor and less literate) to participate in the committee (EC). Whenever there are any events that will bring some money, prosperous household women are selected. Than why should we sacrifice our household needs for the sake of others (villagers). Everyone uses the forest why should we only work (attend the meeting and perform other EC activities) while others (who are not members of the EC) also share benefits equal to us. Just a waste of time”

-- Bahakhola, Ward 4, Rampur VDC

Gyanu’s statement explicitly indicated that women were struggling to adjust their daily domestic routine to participate in any social event, including CF management by sacrificing the needs of their families and livestock. Moreover it was very difficult to the poor family to participate in the CF management as compared to the economically sound family. Participation of women, who are relatively poor in financial terms and who are engaged in their own domestic work, thus remains lower than those belonging to those women who have sound financial and social status.

Another problem that the poor families have been facing is discrimination. Her statement indicates that women from the prosperous and well-to-do classes are always engaged in social works that promise financial incentives reflects the practices of class hegemony in rural societies. Her question “ why should we sacrifice our household needs for the sake of village?” is a bold manifestation of women belonging to her class who are put to menial work without any financial incentives. Sarita Kafle (34) a resident of Rangbhang *tol* and member of the RCF also expresses similar sentiments:

“ Last year when they (villagers) had to select instructor for the adult literacy class they selected Pavitra. There are other women in the villages that can do that job and were in need of it more than her. But her father-in-law used all his power (influence) to give it to her. I protested against it, but who would listen. But my name was referred in EC of the CF by others claiming that I am active. You know, they referred my name not because of my activism but because there are no benefits and money here.”

--Sarita Kafle, Rangbhang *tol*, Rampur-4

Sarita, here is another example who is frustrated of class-based discrimination. Being a member of the poor class, she claims, she was deprived off the opportunity to instruct at the adult literacy class. Her argument that women, who were in more need of the job, should be given the job than to a women who belongs to prosperous household, is a growing demand for equity based distribution of resources among community members.

Her statement is also evident of the fact that omen from relatively poor and illiterate families within the society are deprived of opportunities or positions that have prospects of trainings, workshops and financial

incentives⁴. Influential and prosperous household males use their social and personal influences to reserve such positions for females of their households or for that of their kith and kin. Lack of supporting attitude from the knowledgeable and financially well to-do members of the EC (as done by Pavitra's father-in-law in Sarita's case) has been deterring women from the poor and marginalized strata of the community in expressing their ideas and opinions for promoting the CF.

This problem can be further extended. The division of labor on the basis of sex and determination of wages on the basis of sex rather than work itself is also function in this instance. While males and females from the prosperous households are selected whenever there are programs promising financial incentives, males and females from the down-trodden classes are selected for works that don't promise or have relatively poor financial incentives—like the CF program.

The respondents informed that gender based social and family roles also hinder women's participation in CF programs. CF program schedules and routines determined by the male members do not consider the convenience of female members. The female respondents told me that the males do not have to look after households whereas the females have to do. CF programs arranged in peak hours (i.e., in morning hours when the females have to cook, cut fodder or attend their farms or in evening hours when they have other domestic or farm works) compel the women to choose between the CF programs and their family work or to say their 'personal work'.

⁴Daily, travelling allowances provided by organization to participants of any training, workshops and any other programs conducted by such organization are taken as opportunities to make some extra income by financially poor families. Some of the families, especially the relatively poorer families indulge in development committees, formed for various purposes, so that they might hit upon such workshop or trainings and add certain extra earning to their regular income.

Females are solely assigned with the domestic job and any other duties outside that sphere—like attending CF meetings—puts them in a situation where they have to choose between the ‘personal’ and the ‘social’. The male members of EC have wives at home to look after their households, while women EC members are not aided by their husbands while they attend social functions because domestic affairs-like cooking, feeding—do not come under ‘their’ (male) sphere. Females have to do their culturally and socially assigned chores and at the same time they have to attend their ‘modern’ chores like participating community development meetings, trainings and activities. Due to this situation women don’t get favorable environment to contemplate on social issues and thus subsequently cannot provide their best insights even if they participate in the decision making process.

Despite such restraints and difficult situations some women dare to take on both responsibilities at a single time. But due to lack incentives and knowledge on the purpose of their involvement in the EC, restrains them from providing substantial contribution to the CF.

Owing to these problems many of the female members hesitate and even deny participating in development programs that demands them to sacrifice their family needs and priorities. When I approached two female executive committee members -- Poonam Shrestha (35) and Radha Devi Paudel (50)— to know how they became members in the EC they also claimed that their families made them EC members. Despite being members of the EC, both express reluctance to participate in the CF activities.

“My husband does not likes me to attend meetings, going outside and acting like a Netani⁵. Therefore I don’t participate in the meetings as well as trainings organized by the CF. I don’t know why he ever placed my name in the EC.”

-Poonam Shrestha, Age 35, Sundartoal, Ward 4, Rampur VDC

“ I have two children, the elder one, Sishir now studies in class 12 in the Rampur. His father is in India for a long time now. Last year Sishir attended the forest meeting and came home announcing that he had written my name in the forest committee. I had to attend the CF programs sometimes putting aside domestic work and the kids and when his father saw this upon his return from India last Dashain he was not happy about this.”

-Radha Devi Paudel, Age 50, Dadhran tol, Ward 4, Rampur VDC

Both Radha and Poonam are representatives of such women who are engaged in development activities not of their own will but for their family members—males. The male members of their family enlisted both of their names in the EC. Enlistment of women in EC by the male members of their families reflects the level of male domination in the society. Such unilateral decisions made by the males-- be it a husband (in Poonam’s case) or be it a son (in Radha’s case)—represent the social and familial status of women.

Their cases reflect the existing perception of males towards females who participate in social and communal works by transcending their domestic chores. Even though some males support their wives for participating in social events, they don’t like such behaviors from their wives. In such situations women become reluctant to participate in EC activities in the fear that their husbands might despise them. In consideration of these facts, though the percentage of female participation has certainly been uplifted than earlier, their participation in the decision making process

⁵An Nepali equivalent of leader for the female. While *Neta* is used for the male leaders, *Netani* is used for the females in local dialect and derogatory tone attached to it.

has remained limited to papers and words. The actual objective of using their knowledge for managing forest remained a far-fetched dream due to constraints analyzed ahead in this study.

5.4 Distribution of Forest Resources and Women's Participation

Distribution of forest resources to its users is an integral part of CF. Equal distribution of its resources among its members on the basis of sex, and caste is equally important for sustaining the program. The RCFUG statute has provisioned equal accessibility rights to all of its users without any discrimination on the basis of caste/ethnicity and sex.

The users collected firewood, grass and fodder, and timber for household purpose from RCF. The General Assembly decides the date to open the forest for collecting firewood. The EC takes decision to provide access to forest for timber on the basis of guidelines outlined in the statute of the RCF.

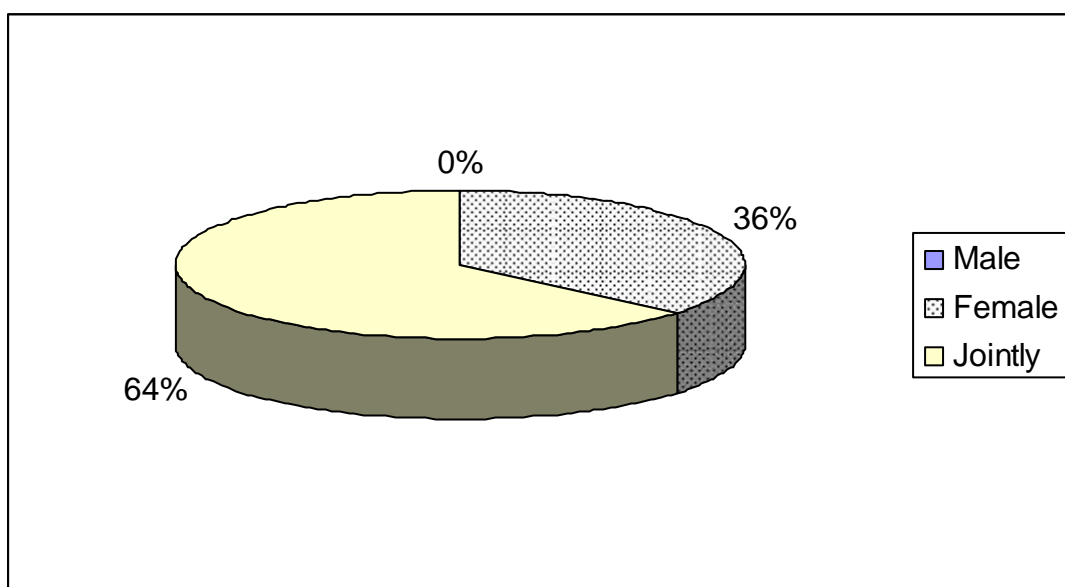
Firewood collection is opened three times annually—January, June, and September. The EC fixed the date for opening day for firewood collection. It issued orally circulars to all of its members. The level of participation in such meeting was found to have a dominant presence of the males with a low presence of the female members- mostly who are EC members. Once some possible dates for opening the forest are floated by the Chairman of the EC, present members of the CF comment on it and necessary revisions were made to the dates before the actual date was fixed. Present members endorsed the decision taken by signing the minutes of the meeting on the spot.

5.4.1 Firewood Collection

RCFUG consists of 275 households. Out of them around 96 percentages used firewood to cook food at home. Out of the total HHs 65 percentage used biogas as alternative source of energy, and remaining 4 percent used both LPG gas and firewood. All of them depend on the RCF to fulfill their need of firewood. The CF had provisions to open the forest for collecting dry-wood three times a year in general and for pruning forest once a year.

The dates for doing to these activities are generally fixed by general assembly meetings of Ramche CFUG every year. Usually the forest is opened for two days for dry wood and one week for green wood collection for each time. The task of collecting firewood is assigned to the females socially. Out of the total respondents, 36 percentages said that they collected firewood themselves without any assistance from male members of their household.

Figure 5.1
Sex-Based Participation in Collecting Firewood



Source: Field Survey, 2011.

However, a majority (64 percentage) of females were assisted by male members of their house to collect firewood. And none of the respondents said that their male members collected firewood on their own. I have also found that the women are assigned lead role in collecting firewood. In comparison to that, none of the males collected solely firewood. This trend reflects the patriarchy culture followed by the society may influence the sphere of male and female in firewood collection. As an extension of the domestic work, it has assigned firewood collection to the females. Even if the males collect firewood, they don't play a lead role in the activity. Male participation in this activity was always found to be in the form of 'superior assistant'. Chopping trees with axe requires greater level of physical strength and to perform these activities the females ask for the help of the males.

Respondents informed that the male participation was much more while chopping live trees once a year because the work needs more physical power. The CF opens the forest once a year for pruning forest areas that are dense and needs thinning. Chopping live trees needs higher level of physical strength and thus demands the participation of male members of the household.

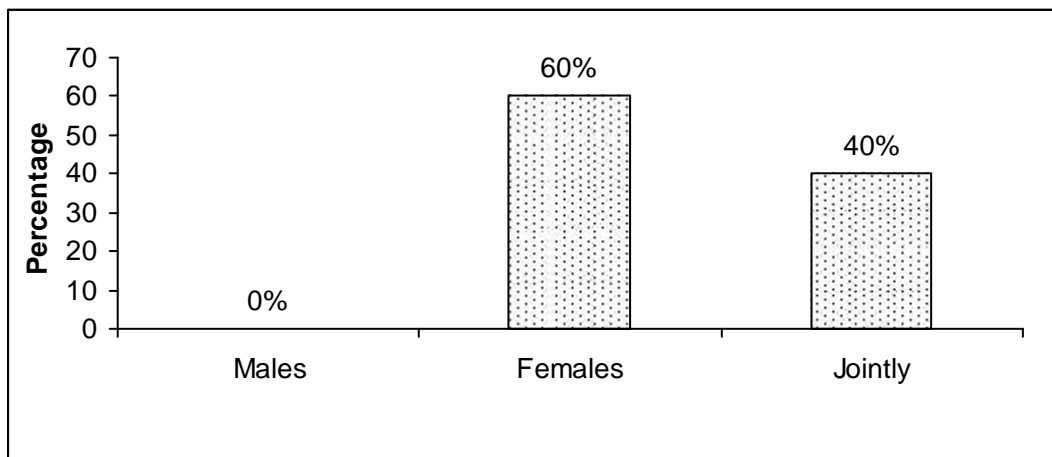
5.4.2 Fodder Collection

Fodder –dry and green- is necessary for the users of the Ramche CF as is to all other farmers. Most of the users said that they solely depend on the forest to fulfill the needs of their livestock. Users are free to graze their cattle in the forest and to cut grass dry as well as green throughout the year. Study revealed that collecting fodder is one of the main task assigned mostly to females in the community.

Among the total respondents interviewed 60 percentage of the respondents informed that they collected the fodder for their cattle on their own through-out the year and lacked any cooperation from the male members of the society. However forty percentage of the respondents enjoyed cooperation from their husband. This category of female said that the household males assisted them mainly in cutting green leaves of trees solely and denied to cooperate in cutting green or dry grass.

Figure 5.2

Sex-Based Participation in Fodder Collection



Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Null participation of the males in collecting firewood and fodder is not due to lack of knowledge on these assignments. As Bhasin (2000) points out, these activities do not yield higher economic returns and are therefore tagged as 'female-work'. Like an agrarian society that is gradually influenced by capitalist mode of economy, the patriarchy has held up financially and socially prospective tasks for itself and assigned the rest economically less yielding jobs to the females.

Respondents claimed that the males did not participate in accumulating firewood when the forest was open for firewood through out the years. With the inception of CF program, access to firewood was limited and

here the male involved himself in collecting firewood. Inculcation of such gendered concepts among the members of the society restricts the males from taking over the responsibility and also restricts the females from assigning any of the tasks exclusively to the males. When I asked with Shanti Magar, aged 35, about her husband ever assisted for cutting grass and fodder, she exclaimed:

“Aamai (Oh my God!) what are you saying. Its (cutting grass and fodder) our (female) job. What will people say if a husband cuts the grass while having his wife sit at home? That’s a blasphemy. He (husband) helps me whenever there is work pressure on me and if I am not well, in collecting firewood. But grass! Come on he doesn’t even know to handle a sickle to cut grass. But he sometimes helps in cutting live-tree green leaves for the buffalo, as I am afraid of tall trees. That’s so nice of him.”

- Shanti Magar, Bange Pasal Gau, Ward No 4, Rampur VDC

Shanti here is a representative that is amazed with the very thought of asking or allowing her husband to cut grass and collect firewood. Patriarchy assigns both tasks exclusively to the female. And social customs and roles have perpetuated these gendered roles as ‘inherently feminine’ domestic chores.

Shanti’s exclamation indicates the strong influence of the patriarchy’s doctrine upon her. The doctrine even restricts her from thinking to such ‘extreme deviation’ social custom. It’s a ‘blasphemy’ for her to ask or to allow her husband to cut grass and fodder. Like her other females’ performance has been limited to domesticity. Owing to such entrenched gendered thoughts, the females fail to come out from their domestic circle and assume responsibilities taken by the male.

5.4.3 Timber

Ranche Community Forest provides exclusive access to timber from the forest to its users. The CF provides timbers to its member for household purpose rather than that for business intention. It was found that the executive committee holds the right to grant or reject any application for timber assess. The executive committee rejects any user that is applying for timber to use it for commercial purpose. If users have requested timber for using it to construct house or other any other domestic and farming tools, they are granted permission to cut the certain trees. Users have to pay royalty charges to the CF for using timber from the forest as outlined by the CF in its statute. Royalty charges assigned for various types of timber by the statute of the RCF is presented in table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Charges of timber per cube feet at RCF (in NRs)

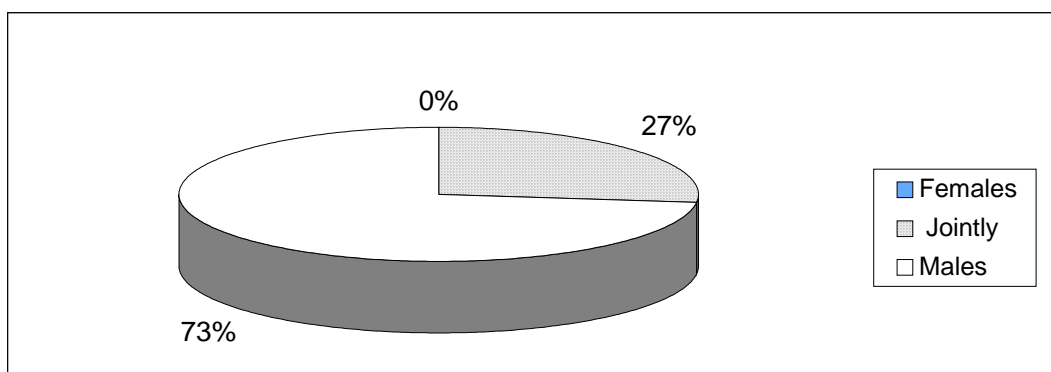
Types of Trees	Per cube feet charge
<i>Shorea Robusta</i>	50.00
<i>Schima Walichi</i>	30.00
Others	25.00

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Shorea Robusta locally known, as *Saal* is the most expensive timber tree in the CF. Users have to pay NRs 50.00 per cubic feet timber of the tree. This tree is valued for its enduring strength to termites and extreme weather is thus used as construction material in households. *Schima Walichi* locally known as *Chilaune* is another tree that is mostly used by the locals for construction purpose and is valued at NRs 30.00 per cubic feet. For cutting other trees available in the CF, users have to pay NRs 25.00 per cubic feet.

As shown by data in figure 5.3 the tasks have domination of the males (73 percentage) with the null initiation from the females on their own. However 27 percentage of the female respondents said that they assisted the males in cutting timber. But again there presence in this endeavor is not aimed at making timber but to collect the branches and tweaks of the timber tree to make firewood.

Figure 5.3
Sex based Participation in Timber Collection



Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Analysis of sex-based participation in the collection of forest products shows that the mostly women are the one who are mostly involved in collecting forest resources. While cutting grass and collecting fodder are assigned as female sphere, cutting tree and timber are assigned to the males. With males only limited to heavy task such as timber, in other task their presence has been in the capacity as an assistant to the women who play the lead role in cutting grass, collecting fodder and firewood collection, which are main benefits of community forest especially in a community whose major occupation is agriculture.

5.5 Preservation Initiatives of RCFUG

Aimed at preserving the CF, the user groups have outlined certain mandatory rules and regulations aimed at preserving the forest and the

local ecology. Some of the salient steps taken by the CFUG were as follows:

-) Deforestation: As per the rules of the forest cutting of trees including young trees was not allowed to the users. The rule even restricts of cutting or chopping any tree within the CF. (However, users complained despite constant vigilance on their part, some times users themselves and sometimes people from the neighborhood encroaches and cut trees. Putting these kind encroachment has been a major concern for the User Group.)
-) To deposit, mortgage or hand over the CF land: The land was totally owned by the RCFUG. It was restricted to mortgage or handovered the CF to individual usage.
-) To use forestland for private purposes: RCF territory was not encroached or used by member of user groups or by any other persons for fulfilling personal purposes like farming or residence.
-) To tame or hunt wildlife illegally: RCFUG strictly prohibits hunting wild animals and birds. No incidences of such poaching were found in the RCF.
-) Restrictions on soil erosion promoting activities: RCFUG strictly restricted any activities like excavating, digging rocks, soil, concrete, silt etc. in the forest area for averting soil erosion. Users were found to be aware about soil erosion and its impact on the forest.

5.6 Women's Knowledge and Attitude towards Ramche CF

To understand the knowledge of the women about the RCF, I have used some indicators like the name and date of establishment of the CF, name and numbers of EC members, area of RCF. All of the respondents possessed accurate knowledge regarding the nomenclature and established year of the CF. Out of the total 55 respondents, 53

respondents knew exact number and names of the EC members. That clearly indicates that they were conscious about EC.

During my field study, I asked the coverage of the area of CF among the female respondents. They did not provide exact area of the land covered by the CF but they gave the geographical locality that separated the CF from other CFs or areas. Their knowledge about the geographical territorial landmarks of the CF was an outcome of their constant acquaintance with the forest. And lack of knowledge about the exact area of CF reflected lack of communication between EC and its users.

Along with the area, most of the female respondents did not possess correct knowledge on the establishment and functioning of the CF. Of the 55 respondents interviewed, 40 female respondents did not know the established date of the CF and 38 of them had the misconception that forest was managed by the government. The existing misconception among the women respondents on the management of the forest also reflected lack of communication about the working and functioning procedures of the EC to the users.

Most of the respondents were from economically poor households and were occupied most of the time with their own household activities. Most of them were between the age group of 30 to 45 years, and were uneducated.

Despite lack of accurate knowledge about the area, managerial procedures of the EC, with the most (53) respondents said they should be actively involved in the management of the RCF.

5.7 Women's Status in Managing RCF

Active participation of both sexes in making plans, taking decisions and implementing them was lacking in RCF. Only a single member, either the

male or the female, from a household attended the meetings or assemblies of the CF.

Meeting and assemblies are important ways to take right and participatory decision through discussion and debate. As a community based program, RCF convenes periodic meetings, assemblies. President of RCFUG, Krishna Prasad Shrestha, informed that the Executive Committee meetings were conducted every month and general assembly meeting were called generally two times a year to fix dates for firewood collection and forest pruning.

In the Executive meeting, agendas were presented for discussion by the EC secretary. Efforts are made to consider everyone's opinion and to take a consensus decision. Majority based decisions were taken if efforts to cater consensus fail. Along with determining dates for opening the forest, General Assembly meetings provide platform for the users to express their concerns with the EC members. They provided their feedback, suggestions to the EC and at times also challenge any controversial decision taken by the EC.

5.7.1 Women's participation in FUG Assemblies

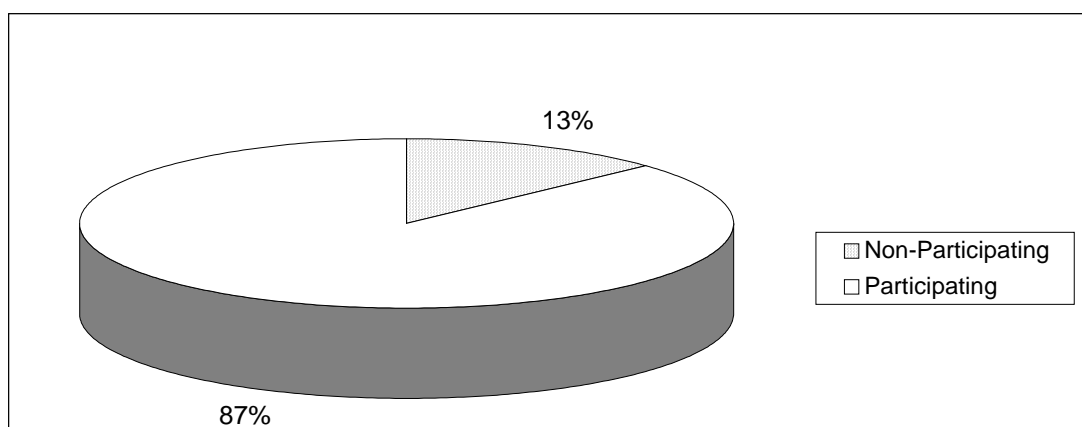
FUG assemblies are important component of CF. They act as venue to take decisions and to challenge decision taken by the EC. Along with that it is an important factor that provides information to all users about the activities and programs of the CF. Participation of females in such assemblies is imperative in raising increasing participation of females in public sphere.

Study of the trend of female participation in such assemblies revealed that lately their participation in assemblies has increased. Of the total fifty-five respondents interviewed, 87 percentages said that they participated in

the last assembly of the CF that took place some one-month before the day they were interviewed. Similarly out of the total sampled respondents 13 percentages said that they did not participate in the meeting.

While elaborating on the causes of not participating around 63 percentage of them said they were occupied in domestic work while some others (8 percentage) of them said that they were not informed about the meeting and 29 percentage of them said that their family members had participated in the assembly meeting. The figure 5.4 shows the participation of women in FUG assembly in the study area

Figure 5.4
Participation of Women in FUG Assembly

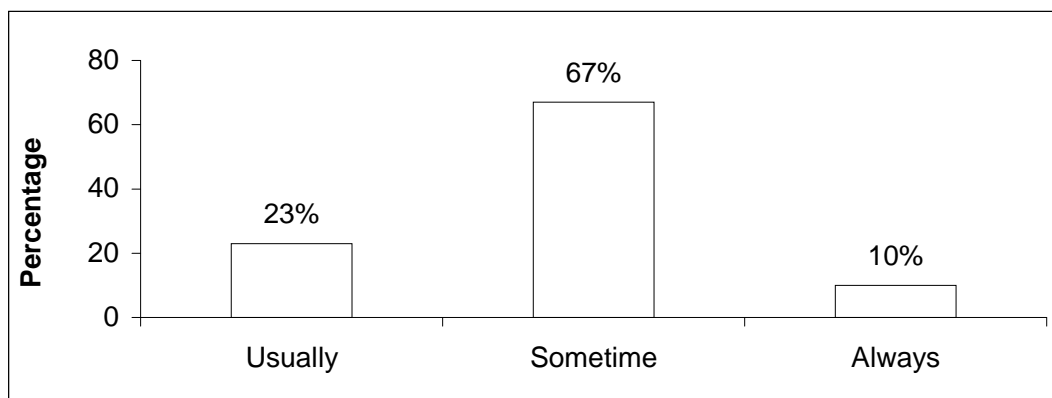


Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Mostly the participation of women in FUG assemblies is not so high as mentioned above. Study revealed that a huge numbers (67 percentage) of the total respondents participated in the meetings only sometimes. With another 23 percentage of women attending the meetings usually, only 10 percentage respondents said that they attended the assemblies on regular basis. 82 percentages of the women, who participated only sometimes in the assemblies, pointed to domestic workload as a deterring factor. And the rest of them (18 percentage) said that they did not participate in the assemblies due to lack of information about the meeting. The figure 5.5

shows the frequency of participation of women in FUG assembly in the study area.

Figure 5.5
Frequency of Participation



Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Field observation revealed that most of the females who participate in the meeting on regular basis are educated and belong to a family where they have other female members to do the household work. While those belonging to ‘usually participating’ group, fluctuate their participation on the basis of the availability of spare time from their household chores as they most of them less indulged in farming activities alone.

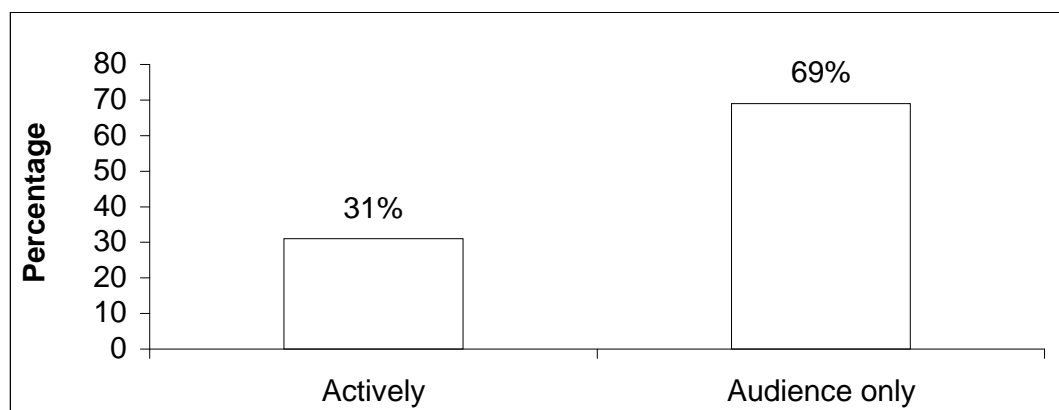
5.7.1.1 Nature of Participation

Active participation and participation as a non-responsive audience in the meetings are two different things. Active participation of members in the decision-making process helps in taking participatory decision. During the interview, 69 percentages of the women informed that they were not interested in the CF programs discussion at the executive meetings or at the assemblies. And they also informed that did not know about the topic of discussion during meetings and assemblies.

Respondents' nature of participation was broadly categorized into active and audience participation. Only thirty-one percentages of respondents said that they usually knew the topic of discussion in the meetings and sometimes provided their opinion in the discussion. But the rest (69 percentage) of the respondents said they never apprehend the topic of discussion or agendas of the EC meetings.

Informal discussion with some of women, who were found to be participating as audience, revealed that they participated due to threats from the EC. To ensure participation of the Users in the meeting, the EC members were found to have issued threats to scrap the membership of any user family who do not participate in the meeting. Even though issuing such illegal threats has succeeded in ensuring the participation of users in the meetings, it nevertheless has failed in actively involving them in the decision making process. The figure 5.6 shows the nature of women's participation in assembly and meetings.

Figure 5.6
Nature of Participation



As mentioned earlier, assemblies are means of communicating and sharing experiences and putting forward one's view about communal decision. And as members of society who are more related to forest than

their male counterparts, women certainly have better knowledge and insights to share. But due to various impeding factors they have been not able to contribute their ideas and visions in managing CF.

5.8 Factors Affecting Women's Participation

As I mentioned already in this chapter that the participation of women is relatively low in comparison to the rate of their contact with the forest for consuming forest resources. During the study, women outlined various factors for their low and inactive participation in CF. Some of the most salient constraints that have been affecting them are described below.

5.8.1 Domestic Workload

As part of the rural economy, agriculture is the main occupation of the inhabitants of RCFUG. Most of the farming and domestic work is assigned to be in the sphere of the women. Due to their pre-occupation with the household work—that includes cooking, washing, feeding children, and looking after their needs and their other household members need is one of the major component of rural women's household duties.

Besides their household duties, they have to rear cattle, and perform duties in their farms to cultivate crops and tend them at home once they are harvested. This occupation continues all through the year. When I asked Rashmi Rashaili, aged 40 and member of the executive committee about her daily household routine, she narrated her activities like this:

“I wake up at around 5 am in the morning. First of all I open the doors for the cow and put some grass for her. Then I sweep the house and scrub it and go to the water tap to fetch fresh water. After that I milk the cow and kindle fire in the kitchen to cook tea and breakfast. By this time my husband also gets up and takes a bath and performs daily pooja. While he performs his pooja I cook tea for both of us and then cook some breakfast-usually its roti- for

my three children and daughter. After taking their snacks my daughter Shanti-which is middle one- fetches some grass for the cow, while my son and husband do some work at home-usually related to carpentry. My husband is a carpenter and the elder son helps him in early morning hours. By 9am I finish feeding the kids and see them off to school and before or sometimes after I serve lunch to my husband I clean the cowshed. After I have taken my lunch and fed my husband, I clean up the kitchen and boil some crushed grains for the cow. My husband's workshop is just below the house. He takes care of the cow during day time-that includes putting the grass during day time and giving her water by mixing it with grains that are leave on the fire before I take the cattle to forest for grazing.

I have six goats, one ox, and one young ox. I take them to forest and while they graze I collect fodder for them for the evening. At around 4 pm I bring the cattle back home. I cook snacks for my husband and children who also return home by that time. After eating snacks my daughter and I go to farms to look after them while my husband and my sons remain at home working in the workshop. Usually by dusk we manage to come home. And after taking rest for some time milk the cow while my daughter starts up fire and cook tea for all of us. We drink the tea together and then the kids get back to study, my husband performs puja and I start cooking dinner for us. Generally by 8 to 9 pm we finish our dinner and after cleaning vessels and putting grass to all the cattle I go to bed by 10 pm, ending the day.”

--Rashmi Rashaili, Ward No 4, Bange Pasal, Rampur VDC

The continuous workload throughout the day does not provide time to participate in the CF activities. Due to such a busy and tiring daily routine at home it is very hard for women to concentrate on the meeting agendas while participating in the meeting. Participating in the CF activities is perceived as a ‘social affair’ and women are reluctant to sacrifice their domestic affair or to say their personal affairs for the sake of the ‘social’.

5.8.2 Social Customs

Social Customs are complex entity to define them in such a short space. However the term is deployed here in relation to the roles and tasks assigned to women and men in society and the mode of behavior expected from both sexes as part of the society. Respondents said that the task of attending meetings and participating in social activities is solely assigned to the male members of a family. And a woman should participate in absence of the household male member.

Due to the patriarchal customs female's mobility is restricted and consequently women do not participate in community development activities. And even if any woman crosses these patriarchal customs and roles, community members ridicule her for crossing her limits and acting like a male. As these types of females have to work with males their husbands and family members and at times community members accuse her of indulging in sexual activities with those males. Due to these types of risks, mostly women prefer to stay away from these communal discussions and communal work where they have to work with the males.

These delimitations put on the female have been obstructing their participation in social events and has relegated them to domestic work and sphere. And impact of these can be seen in the CF program as well as in RCFUG.

5.8.3 Educational status

Education is a powerful tool that assists in questioning established traditions and customs. Lack of it assists in maintaining and fostering cultural taboos and customs. Of the total 55 respondents 32.72 percentage of them were found to be illiterate. And 15 of them attended meetings and

assemblies only sometimes. Only 1 of them always attended the meetings always.

Of the total respondents, 30.90 percentages attended the meetings and assemblies usually. 30 respondents (54.54 percentage) attended the meetings and assemblies only sometimes. Of them 15 (50 percentage) were illiterate. Only 8 of these (55 respondents) women participated in the meetings always. And of these 8 women, only one of them was illiterate. Table 5.3 compares the level of education of the respondent women with their frequency of participation in the CF meetings and assemblies

Table 5.3
Comparison of Literacy with Frequency of Participation

Educational status	Usual Attendees		Sometimes Attendees		Always Attendees	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Illiterate	2	11.76	15	50.00	1	12.50
Literate	2	11.76	4	13.33	1	12.50
Primary	1	5.88	1	3.33	2	25.00
Low. Sec.	1	5.88	1	3.33	--	--
Secondary	4	23.52	7	23.33	3	37.50
PCL	5	29.41	1	3.33	1	12.50
Higher studies.	2	11.76	1	3.33	--	--
Total	17	30.90	30	54.54	8	14.54

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Due to undereducated or illiteracy, they follow lack the capacity to question or deviate from established traditions, cultural customs, and

roles promote male supporting customs and norms and further endorse the male codes of conduct.

5.8.4 Poor Domestic Economy

In the earlier pages, Gyanu Thapa Magar has said, “there is no benefit in becoming a member of Forest Committee (EC).” By ‘benefit’ she was alluding to economic gains from participating in the meeting. When asked about the ‘benefits’ she wanted from the CF meetings, she said “What else? Wages! If we work on others farm for one or two hours we are paid. And that money helps in buying things for my kids. But what do we get by attending the meetings?” Due to this poor domestic economy that mostly feeds on farming activities, most of the women, like Gyanu, are indulged in subsidiary economic activities. To fulfill the burgeoning needs of their families women take up wage labor or small business that includes—grocery shops, to attend the needs of their family. Despite being indulged in farming and other occupations, women resort to part-time occupations that assist in attending the needs of their family members. This restricts them for participating social events.

5.8.5 Secondary Status in the Society:

As part of the patriarchal society, women are often relegated to secondary status at the family and social level. Due to existing social customs and traditions, and family traditions based on the patriarchal ideologies, men are always primary people who make the decision. Thus ideas and abilities are not the basis for leading the family and social affairs but it is the sex-lineage that determines the leader. Due to the existence of over arching patriarchal ideology in the study area, women are given second preference to making decision.

Poonam and Radha, quoted earlier, were also referring to the existence of this gender discrimination when they said that their husband were against their participation in EC meetings. Poonams's statement that her husband does not like her being a *netani* (female leader) and Radha's expression that her husband was not happy to see her participate in CF activities prove that women in the study area are not allowed to act as leaders.

Most of the women in the study, accepted that they possess secondary status in decision-making process whether be it at home or in social sphere. Women who are part of the executive committees said that their part in the meetings was to comply with the decision taken by the males. The acceptance from the female too as being the 'second sex' has assisted in retaining the secondary status of female as the better half of the male.

CHAPTER- VI

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the participation of women in managing Ramche Community Forest situated in Ramche-4 of Palpa district in the western hills of Nepal. The study focused on finding women's involvement in the management of the forest, especially in protection and benefit sharing activities. Secondly the study has tried to find women's participation in decision-making process and thirdly it attempted to access factors that motivate and hindered their participation in Ramche CF.

The study has used gender perspectives to analyze quantitative and qualitative data collected through primary and secondary sources. Roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men in consuming forest yields, in protecting forests and in decision-making process were compared using gender perspectives to analyze the impact of gender discrimination on women's participation in CF. Along with that the study has assessed socio-economic factors that were hindering and motivating participation of women in CF.

The data presented in the study suggested that women's participation in public sphere has increased significantly. Most of the women have come out of traditionally assigned domestic sphere and now present in public sphere. Of the total 13 executive committee members of the RCF, 46 percentages of them were women members. This was a major change as the committee had null presence of the females during its establishment 20 years back. Participation of the females in communal meetings and discussion has increased. 87 percentage of the respondents said that they had participated in the last assembly of the CF.

Despite the increase in the number of females participating in such communal meetings, which are part of the public sphere, their regular and active participation in them still remains low. Of the total respondents, 67 percentage of the respondents said that they participated the EC meetings and assemblies only sometimes. Only a third portion (31 percent) of women said that they were interested in the discussions held during the meeting and thus actively participated in the decision-making processes. The rest i.e., 69 percentage of the women respondents participated as mere audiences. Moreover around 72 percentages of the respondents were not aware of the date of establishment of the CF and 69 percentages of them were not aware of the management function of the EC. This ignorance on the party of the women about the CF reflects lack of active participation in the activities in the CF.

However women's participation in the benefit sharing activities was more than that of the males. They were mainly responsible for collecting firewood (36 percent) and fodder (60 percent). Both of these tasks were found to be assigned to the women and were accepted as an extension of the domestic work. Even though most of the respondents (64 percent) informed that male were also involved in these tasks, they played a secondary role in these activities. Only forty percentages of the women were found to have been assisted by male members of their family in performing these tasks.

Study revealed that the active participation of the women in the public sphere was hindered to compelling responsibilities as the domestic level that included rearing children, livestock, and full responsibility of farming activities. Besides domestic workload, lack of education, and sex-based discrimination were major factors that affected women's participation in CF management and decision making process.

Most of the respondents (63 percentage) were found to have barred from participating in the decision making process by domestic work that included child rearing, housekeeping, livestock rearing and farming activities.

Lack of education has also hampered the females from participating in public sphere. 40 percentages of the women who did not visit the EC meetings and assemblies were illiterate. Due to lower level of education, most of the females were found to have been dominated intellectually also by the males at the communal and family level.

Poor domestic economy and subsequent reliance of women on labor wages for substantiating their family income deterred the women from participating in the CF decision-making and management activities. To fulfill the demands of their family members, they had to involve in wage works to generate extra income and thus lacked time to participate in communal affairs.

Lack of support from family males to participate in community meetings and discussions was found to be one of the major factor that hindered female participation in the CF decision making process. Instead of encouraging their female members to participate in such community activities, some of respondents said that their family did not approve their involvement in community affairs that involved working with the other males.

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APPENDIX I

HOUSEHOLD CENSUS FORM

Respondent's Name: _____

Age:

Sex :

Marital Status:

Family Type:

Religion:

Caste:

VDC:

Ward No/Toal:

Family Details of the Respondent:

S. N.	Name	Relation with HH Head	Age	Sex	Education Level	Occupation	Marital Status

Land Ownership Details:

S. No	Land Types	Area (Ropanis)
1	Khet	
2	Bari	

3	Total	
---	-------	--

Livestock Ownership Details

S. No	Animals	Numbers
1	She-Buffalo	
2	He-Buffalo	
3	Buffalo Calf	
4	Oxen	
5	Cow	
6	Cow Calf	
7	Goat	
8	Others	
9	Total	

APPENDIX II

RESPONDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Respondent's Profile:

1.1 Name: _____

1.2 Age: _____

1.3 Occupation: _____

1.4 Marital Status: _____

1.5 Family Type: _____

1.6 Educational Status:

Illiterate []

Literate []

Primary Education []

10+2/PCL [] Higher Education []

2. Socio-Economic Condition:

2.1 What is the main source of income?

Agriculture [] Livestock [] Business []

Services [] Labor [] Others []

2.2 What fuel is used for cooking purpose by cooking?

Wood [] Kerosene [] Biogas []

L P Gas [] Others []

2.3 Who selects the fuel types in the family?

Self [] Husband [] Both [] Others []

3. Women's Participation in CF Activities and Roles Performed

3.1 What kind of activities are you indulged in your CF?

Cleaning [] Pruning [] Plantation []

Guarding [] Weeding [] Others []

3.2 How much/often do you indulge in this/this activities?

Hrs. per day [] Once a week [] Twice a week []

Other than those mentioned above []

3.3 Who collects the following forest products and how often?

Activities	Male			Female			Both
	Usually	Sometimes	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Always	
Fuel wood							
Fodder							
Timber							
Leaf litter							

others							
--------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3.4 Have you every participate in FUG assemblies ?

Yes []

No []

3.5 If yes, how often do you participate in FUG assemblies ?

Usually []

Sometimes []

Always []

3.6 How did you participate ?

Actively []

b. As an audience [] Others []

3.7 If no. why have you not participated ? Give reason.

.....

3.8 Is women's involvement necessary in CF management activities ?

Yes []

No []

3.9 If yes, why ? State reason.

.....

3.10 If no, why ? State reason.

.....

4. Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Community Forestry Management Activities

4.1 Do you have any problem to participate in CF management activities ?

Yes []

No []

4.2 If yes, what types of problem do you have ?

.....

4.3 From when do you get that problem ?

.....

4.4 Do you think the level of women's representation in CFUG committee is low ?

Yes [] No []

4.5 If yes, what are the reasons for the low participation ?

.....

4.6 Why are females interested to participate in CF activities ?

.....

4.7 What work do you do since you get up in the morning ?

.....

4.8 If you spend so much time in your household, farming and other activities how is it possible for you to participate in your CF activities ?

.....

4.9 Are you an earning member of your family ?

Yes [] No []

4.10 If yes, is it possible for you to participate in CF activities ?

.....

4.11 How do you manage your time for this ?

.....

5. Women's Knowledge and Attitude Towards Community Forestry

5.1 What is the name of your community forest ?

.....

5.2 When was this CFUG established ?

.....

5.3 Who established the CFUG ?

Government [] VDC [] All users []
Male member of the community [] Don't know []

5.4 How many members are there in the user community ?

.....

5.5 Do you know the area of your community forest ?

.....

5.6 Do you know the process by which women are involved in the FUG committee of your CF.

.....

5.7 If yes, state the process.

-
- 5.8 Are you satisfied about the selection ?
 Yes [] No []
 If No

- 5.9 What do you think about the present condition of your community forest ?
 Improving [] Deteriorating [] Unchanged []
 Don't know []
- 5.10 Do you want to make changes in the existing management system ?
 Yes [] No []
- 5.11 If yes, what type of changes do you have desire to make ?

- 5.12 What type of role is the forestry technicians are playing ?
 Satisfactory [] Mediocre [] Unsatisfactory []
- 5.13 Have the various NGOs, INGOs, DFO conducted any forestry related awareness programs in your FUG ?
 Yes [] No []
- 5.14 If yes, what type ?

- 5.15 Has anyone from your family received forestry related training ?
 Yes [] No []
- 5.16 If yes, who has ?

- 5.17 If females have not participated in any trainings, why ?

- 5.18 What type of role should be played by these agencies to increase the level of women's participation in CF management activities ? Give your attitude.

- 5.19 Have you any suggestion to promote your CF in future ?
