

**USER GROUPS PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN SYANGZA
DISTRICT OF WESTERN NEPAL**

A Dissertation

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HUMANITIES

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This Dissertation entitled **User Groups Participation in Community Forestry Resource Management and Development in Syangza District of Western Nepal** for the fulfillment of Doctoral Degree in Anthropology is an original research work of Prakash Upadhyay prepared under our guidance and supervision. We recommend this Dissertation for final evaluation and approval.

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Prakash Upadhyay

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBS	:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CF	:	Community Forestry
CFP	:	Community Forestry Programme
CFR	:	Community Forest Resources
CFRM	:	Community Forestry Resource Management
CFUC	:	Community Forestry Users Committee
CFUG	:	Community Forestry Users Group
CPFD	:	Community and Private Forest Department
CPR	:	Common Property Resource
DDC	:	District Development Committee
DFO	:	District Forest Office
DoF	:	Department of Forest
EIA	:	Environment Impact Assessment
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	:	Focused Group Discussion
FIG	:	Forest Interest Group
FO	:	Forest Office
FOP	:	Forestry Operational Plan
FUG	:	Forest Users Group
FUGC	:	Forest User Group Committee
Ha	:	Hectares
HH	:	Household
HMG/N	:	His Majesties Government of Nepal
ICIMOD	:	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IKS	:	Indigenous Knowledge System
INGO	:	International Non-Government Organization
LU	:	Livestock Unit
MPFS	:	Master Plan for the Forestry Sector
NCS	:	National Conservation Strategy
NGO	:	Non-Government Organization
NRM	:	Natural resources Management
NTFP	:	Non timber Forest Product
OP & C	:	Operational Plan and Constitution
PF	:	Panchayat Forest
PPF	:	Panchayat Protected Forest
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TIK	:	Traditional Indigenous Knowledge
UG	:	Users Group
UNFF	:	United Nation Forest Forum
VDC	:	Village Development Committee

LIST OF NEPALI WORDS

Bahun	:	Brahmin
Ban	:	Forest
Banpale	:	Forest watchman
Bari	:	Unirrigated land area
Basanta Panchami	:	Also called Saraswati Puja, a festival of goddess Saraswati observed during the month of February. This festival also marks the advent of spring season.
Bista	:	High caste elites contributing to poor Dalits through patron-client relationship.
Birta	:	Feudal forest tenure system, under which forest land grants made by State to individuals on a tax free and heritable basis.
Duna Tapari	:	A kind of plate made of folio (leaf)
Danda	:	Hummock (Hill)
Guthi	:	Forests held under the tenure of a religious institution
Jhakri Ko Than	:	Sacred place for spirit deity
Jimuwals	:	Local headmen collecting land levy
Khet	:	Irrigated land
Kulo	:	Indigenous small inland waterway for irrigation
Khoriya	:	Forest for shifting cultivation
Kipat	:	System of communal tenure
Mukhiya	:	Community headman during the Rana regime
Nag Ko Than	:	Consecrated place for snake god – the Nag
Neuro	:	A kind of green vegetable found in shrubs and forest
Pakho	:	Terraced Unirrigated land area in hills
Sadasaya	:	Member
Samabesi	:	Inclusive. A much discussed word in Nepal especially during and after the people's movement of April 2006. Samabesi envisions of the inclusion of all—poor, Dalits, females, ethnic groups etc under the broad umbrella of development, and Nepali nationality. In this study Samabesi denotes the inclusion of every one in CF resource management and development process.
Sarkar	:	Government
Talukdars	:	Local revenue collectors/functionaries
Thalus	:	Elites
Tole	:	Hamlet
Upabhokta Samiti	:	Users group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The social-cultural and cognitive dimensions of natural resources management, in-built shortcomings of participation and CPR theories, and the failure to tackle issues hindering progress towards better CF resource management and development, and need for change in participatory approaches in CFUGs that goes beyond mere institutional reforms are vital issues that are scrutinized in this study. The study also investigated discrepancy in degree of participation at various levels & dependence on CF. Drawing on research on CF resource management in 12 CFUGs of western Nepal, and on theories concerning the recursive relationship between CFUG and its structure and functional pattern; it illustrates the need for a more complex comprehension of various issues in participatory approaches and CPR theories.

This study addressed participatory Community Forestry as a holistic strategy and deduced that social, cultural & cognitive veracity of rural societies and their relationships with CF resources are more complex & entangled in a Caste ridden & Priest ridden society where there is a prime role of social/cultural/cognitive rather than technical factors in determining CFUG member's participation in CF resource management & development. It is revealed that at the time when state machinery is not functioning well, sampled CFUGs have clearly demonstrated their capacity to function in a democratic way by mobilizing members partaking at various stages & thus representing state at grassroot level by adopting local approaches, skills, knowledge founded on traditional cultural concepts to act in response to increasing pressures & opportunities in a complex world of commercialization, competition, privatization, globalization, westernization of culture. CFUG member's participation in CF resource management is based on the concept of cognitive reverence, mobilizing local power of knowledge and skill, generating respect on the part of more educated and influential to the less educated and less influential while sharing their knowledge/experience in day-to-day functioning in CFUGs. Users have been participating in diverse stages of CF resource management & development viz. resource assessment, decision making, programme implementation, maintenance and follow up, benefit sharing, conflict management, evaluation/monitoring. User's participation in these stages has been diverse and invigorating. User's feat in achieving participatory goals & variables influencing participation in CFUGs: Structural, Conditional, Communicative, Compositional, Cognitive and Social-Cultural stood vital.

The structural factors like the size of CFUGs, CF area etc are playing a determining role in settling on the success in terms of CFUG performance and users participation. User's participation is high in the case of small CFUGs but with ample forest resources; whereas user's participation is low in comparatively big CFUGs with small CF area and inadequate resources. Situational variables namely responsiveness/awareness of CFUG Constitution on the part of users, apparent benefits, leadership competence and acquisition of knowledge related to CF is augmenting user's participation. Interactional variables like frequency of communication, complexity in interpersonal communication at various levels between stakeholders has influenced user's participation in CF resource management & development. Smooth communication between users & committees is responsible for user's lofty participation. Compositional variables like CFUG committee leaders and member's age etc, has been influencing user's participation. The leadership competency of young & dynamic leaders, participation of married people esp. females compared to males, aged compared to tender, middle class compared to very rich or very poor, has good participation in CF resource management. But wealthy households participated keenly and consciously in higher levels of forest management (decision making) whereas very poorer households participated less at this. Majority of committee members have linkages with political parties but it is not responsible in lowering or towering participation. Internal heterogeneity of CFUG is also not responsible for influencing user's participation in a negative way. Cognitive & social-cultural variables like user's knowledge of their environment, surroundings, culture based system of knowledge, technology has been vital in guiding users day-to-day participatory behaviour in resource

management practices as almost all sampled CFUGs members have their CF resource management practices identical with conventional values based on a core set of traditional cognitive values of community with dependence on various social, economic, biophysical & status related factors. However, socio-cultural traditions, customs, & beliefs of users do not always lead to ecologically sustainable behaviors in CFUGs; yet they motivate sustainable practices in local context. Larger households, high social status, representation in committees, CFUG with large forest area, smaller forest area with a few users are the more active participants in forest protection. Women of larger sized households, who reside close to the forest, have their strong positive influence on participation in forest resource management. The key factors for low participation of women & Dalits in decision making are education and traditional customs, male machoism guided by culturally appropriate behaviour and culture of poverty. Middle and rich households derived more CF resources compared to poor/very poor. Households having more livestock and access to larger area of CF are dedicating more time in CFUGs & are extracting higher value of CF resources. User's dependency on CF resources declined with rising incomes. Foreign transmittal, cash profits, agricultural income & other forest income have inverse relation both with CF resource use and dependence.

Likewise, CFUG governance is affected by awareness, adoption of transparent and accountable mechanisms, existing conflict mechanisms, degree and extent of rules enforcement and relationship with external agency. For user's optimum participation, governing process in CFUGs need to build upon transparent mechanisms in terms of access to information, decision-making, laws enforcement, benefits sharing, and emphasis on socio-economic objectives. CFUGs take over of pasture lands at the cost of degeneration of pasture resource in the present are contributing enriching vegetation but may create serious future consequences.

Fair participation and resource sustainability is feasible through negotiation over rights, better conflict management, and regard for cultural and social issues. However, so far, user's participation has been conceived in a paradigm which views participation as a panacea or magic bullet to solve problems rooted in bureaucracy, politics etc. It is necessary to use a different paradigm which views participation and resource use as an iterative learning process in CFUGs allowing for a more eclectic approach, as resource uses are embedded in cultural, social background, institutions & the use of cultural lenses is vital to comprehend these. Such lenses are relatively easy to see in determining the status of participation to a new paradigm that integrates resource sustainability with gender equality & justice within and between generations.

Last not least, this study deduced that there is a widespread consensus in favour of 'community management' approaches to common property resources such as community forests. This is endorsed and legitimized by theories of CPR collective action theories which, this study argues, generate distinctively ahistorical and apolitical constructions of 'locality', and impose a parochial definitions of participation, resources and economic interest. Through an anthropological ethnographic exploration of community managed forests in western Nepal, this study ultimately challenges the bureaucratic-economic-institutional modelling of common property systems and argues for a more historically and politically grounded understanding of users participation, CF resources, rights, cognition and urges for a reconception of common property which recognizes cognitive, symbolic as well as material interests and resources.

Nepali society is complex in itself, likewise in rural Nepal community forest are viewed not only as sources of forest products, but as forming part of a rural 'public domain' through which social relations are articulated, reproduced, challenged or maintained. CF systems are also influenced by local conditions and environment. Thus, only externally designed scientific knowledge and technological approaches to comprehend locality, CF system and participation are inadequate as they are based far from oriental rural realities and have limited goals, scope and an inadequate institutional foundation. An integrated approach integrating modern knowledge of CF resource management with traditional approach and the inclusion of both flora and fauna in CF programme will provide a richer base for user's participation in community forestry resources management.