

**Women's Participation in
Community Forest Management**
A Case Study of Kumroj Community Forest Users's
Group, Kumroj VDC, Chitwan District

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RECOMMENDATION LETTER

This dissertation entitled "**Women's Participation in Community Forest Management: A Case Study of Kumroj Community Forest User's Group, Kumroj VDC, Chitwan District**" has been prepared by Narendra Pathak under my supervision and guidance. This work is the outcome of his own intensive and independent research work and has been prepared in the format as required by the department. I hereby recommend this thesis work for approval and acceptance.

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APPROVAL LETTER

This thesis entitled "**Women's Participation in Community Forest Management: A Case Study of Kumroj Community Forest User's Group, Kumroj VDC, Chitwan District**", submitted by Narendra Pathak has been accepted and approved by the undersigned members of the evaluation committee.

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ABSTRACT

Community forestry was introduced in Nepal in 1978. The community forestry approach has been highly successful in the protection of forests in the terai of Nepal. Women are playing an important role in sustainable development of community forests. However, their role is neither properly identified nor explored. So, the study focuses to the women's participation in community forest management of Kumroj Community Forest User's Group.

To explore the target issues, some general and specific objectives are made. The general objective of the study is to find the women's participation in community forest user group's activities whereas the specific objectives of the study are:

1. To findout women's participation in Kumroj community forestry user groups activities.
2. To find the socio-economic condition of community forest user's.
3. To find the causes affecting women's participation in community forest management.
4. To find the view of local people about the women's role towards CFUG.

KCFUG of Chitwan district is selected for the present study. The reason for the selection of the site is convenient for the researcher, which is held on the basis of exploratory and descriptive research method. The study is based on primary and secondary data and the nature of data is qualitative.

Among the total households, only 145 households are chosen by caste or ethnicity for the study. Female respondents were selected for interview and male as well as female were selected according to the convenience for household survey. Key informants and focus group discussion also used to collect information.

According to the field survey, Female literacy rate is 56.94 percent and only 32.41 percent household heads are female. In forest resource collection, females involvement in firewood collection is 56.25 percent, in grass cutting is 66.07 percent and low participation in timber cutting and collection because hired workers also has been used. Participation in grass and firewood collection of female is higher man the rest.

Participation of women in general meeting of KCFUG is only 26.21 percent and participation of males are 73.79 percent. Participation of female in attending meeting was like audience is high. Taking part actively in general meeting, sharing in decision-making and discussion is very low. According to the government policy minimum 1/3 of the committee members must be female but in KCFUG committee there are just 2 female members among 15 members of the total committee.

According to the field study, there are so many obstacles for women to participate community forest activities, such as; traditional male dominated culture, household work load, lack of knowledge about community forestry, poor economic condition, lack of permission to attend meeting, lack of empowerment, feeling of women needless to participate in public concern, less chance to view for women in every sector of development activities, illiteracy etc.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
APP	–	Agriculture Perspective Plan
BS	–	Bikram Sambat
CBS	–	Central Bureau of Statistics
CF	–	Community Forestry
CFUG	–	Community Forestry User Group
CPFD	–	Community and Private Forest Division
DFO	–	District Forest Office
FAO	–	Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation
FECOFUN	–	Federation of Community Forestry Users of Nepal
FUG	–	Forest Users Group
GO	–	Government Organization
HHs	–	Households
HGM/N	–	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
ICIMOD	–	International Center for Integrated Mountain Development
MPFS	–	Master Plan for Forestry Sector
NGO	–	Non Government Organization
NNFP	–	Nepal National Forestry Project
OP	–	Operational Plan
PF	–	Panchayat Forest
PFNA	–	Private Forest National Act
PPF	–	Panchayat Protect Forest
WG-CIFM	–	Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Forest is a renewable natural resource, which provides a wide range of socio-economics benefits and services. Rural people are dependent on forest for the various products to fulfill their basic needs such as firewood, small size pole, fodder, leaf litter and medicinal plant. Forest management can be defined as the 'deciding what one wishes to do with a forest, taking into account what one do with it and deciding what one should do with it' (FAO, 1993).

Community forest management is about the local people who are working in the particular area of the forest with the use right involved in the consumption and the management of the local forest. The assumption of the community forest resource management is the management of the forest by the organization built with the local individuals who are the users of the particular forest area from a long time. The organization is rooted in the local values, practices, way of life and economic activities and long-standing traditional practices (Lindsay, 2000).

Community forest management policy was introduced in Nepal in 1978 as community forestry in response to the failure of the management from the center government based forest management policy (Private Forest Nationalization Act, 1957). This policy made the people authorized of them management of the

forest near of their community under the community level organization (That time's village level political unit, panchayat). Later on the provision has been made to form a separate independent group of the forest users to manage the forest as the Community Forest User Group (CFUG), which is an autonomous, self-governing organization by the policy level and responsible for the preparing their own constitution and operational plan to run the programs as their own wishes (WG-CIFM, 2002).

Community forestry in Nepal has come a long way since it was introduced. Nepal was one of the first Asian countries to introduce the community forestry program to overcome the environmental problems. It was begun as a program to regenerate degraded forest and to supply or fulfill the basic needs of people. So community forestry policy's main objective is to involve the local people in managing, using and protecting their local forest resources through organizational effort. The government policy of CF (Community Forestry) has empowered local people to make the decision about local forest resource. So that the community people will be benefited by forest in relation to fulfill their needs of timber, firewood, leaf litter and fodder. The CF approach has made a remarkable progress from highly technical forestry to participatory forestry, from protection oriented forestry policy (Private Forest Nationalization Act, 1957) to the sustainable utilization oriented forest policy (Gilmour, King and Hobley, 1992). For this reasons, Nepal's community has been recognized internationally as one of the most progressive in the world (Bartlett, 1992; Bird, 2000).

From beginning to now, one of the inseparable parts of Nepal's CF program is people's participation, involvement of the users in community forestry development process. Different trend has been established in different time under the board concept of people's participation. In present, the major issue of the CF is the social equality and gender balanced participation in forest user group (FUG), Participation of the people belong to different economic class, caste/ethnic group and social identity can make difference in the overall community forestry development program (Winrock, 2002). In present GOs, NGOs and other organizations working on the area of the forestry has highly emphasized o the social issue and with in it one of the prominent issue is gender balanced participation in forest management. This sensitiveness has made the different programs targeting to increase women's involvement.

In most of Asian countries women spend the significant portion of their time in forest related activities. Women are the active users and have the primary responsibilities to collect forest product in agriculture-based society. The collection of the firewood for cooking, leaf litter for the cattle and the compost fertilizer and fodder (daura ghas) is the major responsibilities of the women (Molnar, 1989). Thus it is expected that women should take part in the community forest management actively and successfully. For that strong policy supporting to the women's involvement and favorable social environment becomes fundamental. Since the policy in the government level as well as in FUG (Forest User Group) level op (Operation Plan) and constitution seems with a little

bit special address and the programs to uplift the women's position in the community forest management. But effective identification of the women associated with different interest group and roles and responsibilities in forest management by the policy level can be welcoming and a fruitful approach for the women's active involvement in the community forestry management.

Due to the elite dominated social structure and hierarchy the need of poor, lower caste and socio-culturally deprived people haven't adequately considered. They are put in the committee to fulfill the criteria of the disadvantaged people's (i.e. Dalit) representation but they don't have any decision making role. Same things repeat in the case of the women also. Although women representatives are in the EC (Executive Committee), it has increased the scope of the powerful minority of women's access to the local forest resource management. Most of the women in FUG are the wives and daughters of the community's big man i.e. VDC chairman's women family member, rich and elite class women (HMG/N, 2002). It has not made access to the poor women, lower caste women and women of the disadvantaged group of the community. This study describes the women's involvement in CF management and field level reality. How this strategy is being practiced. It also focuses on how effective the policy is to include different interest group's women and its impact on overall women's involvement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Forest management by local people is the key element of the Nepalese government's forest policy. Its two major objectives are the sustainable forest resource management and fulfilling the basic needs of the people by forest product (Bartlett, 1992). For both of the basic requirement the people's participation is one of the major agenda of the forest policy also. But in the present context, it has been realizing that the simple concept of the people's participation has been vague and insufficient to secure the access and inclusion of the people of the all interest groups equally. Policy seems a little bit specific for the women by making a specific provision for their certain percent participation in FUG's activities. But women's involvement in community forestry is still surrounded by many questions (Khadka, 1999). Therefore it seems necessary to move inside of this issue to find out the in depth reality. Are women making their participation in FUG as according to the constitution, op of the FUG and the government operational guideline for the community forestry management or not? How the policy framework has made provision or priority for women and how women are utilizing it?

But on the basis of the studies taken before (Regmi, 1991; Khadka, 1999; HMG/N, 2002), it can be easily assumed that women's involvement in the community forestry is very low, passive and insufficient (leaving some exemplary work) to make any kind of the intervention either being as the EC member or as the general user member (HMG/N, 2002). Which makes us to think

about the causes why women are still unseen in the community forest resource management? Either policy is weak or women themselves are not capable to make effective participation or there can be different factors constraining women. The socio cultural constraint such as the traditionally prescribed position of the women, socio structural bases and the socially acceptable role of the women has created the hindrances to their meaningful participation. Therefore it seems fundamental to identify the social cultural constraints to understand how policy and the implementation strategy can be made better or more effective to make the clear identification of the factors which can act as the bridge between policy and its proper implementation. So, the study has made in-depth study of the constraints women are facing against their involvement in community forest management.

Next, policy has made the certain legal provision on the response to the less and the passive involvement of women addressing as 'priority will be given to the women's participation Mahila Sahabhagita Lai Prathamikta dine) (HMG/N, 1995). The Concept of the 'interest group' holds great premises in involving or securing the equitable access and the opportunities of women in the sustainable community forest resource management (Gilmour and Fisher, 1992). The issue of the gender-balanced participation has been the hot issue but the issue of the equity among women or intra women equity, which is major dimension of gender balanced participation, has not been focused much. That has made an easy access to those women who have powerful status in the community. The powerful minority of the women whose men member of the

household are politically or economically powerful (like elite class women), are getting opportunities rather than the real forest user women. Moreover social inequality prevailing in society on the basis of the caste system has made high caste women of the society more powerful and dominant to those women belonging to the lower caste women. But forest is equally or more important for the (ultra) poor and the occupational caste groups people (i.e. potter, blacksmith). But the key of forest management is mostly in the hand of so-called big people of the community. The lower caste and socio-culturally deprived women's needs and same right have not been adequately acquainted at the community level reality (Winrock, 2000). In such a situation, it seems necessary to make a specific policy suitable to the particular. Community, cultural background to increase the participation of those disadvantaged group's women. How the policy has made the specific provision to secure the participation, needs and the role of the all interest group's women or policy is still silent to that particular issue? Therefore, this study has centered to the policy of the women in the community forest management in general and the disadvantaged, poor and lower caste women in particular.

- How the policy has addressed the women's participation in community forest management?
- What are the social and cultural constraints of the women's participation in community forestry?
- Whether the policy has addressed especially to those women having heterogeneous diverse social status or not? If not how

does it affect the overall process of women's participation in community forestry?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to find the women's participation in community forest user group's activities. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out women's participation in Kumroj community forestry user group's activities.
- To find the socio-economic condition of community forest user's study area.
- To find the causes affecting women's participation in community forest management
- To find the view of local people about the women's role towards CFUG.

1.4 Significance of the study

The forest is the main source of cooking fuel for rural people, fodder and bedding for livestock, timber for construction, manure and equipment for agriculture. Forest is important to balance the nature. Population growth rate is high in our country. The population pressure up on forest resource is increasing day by day in Nepal.

The sustainable use of forest without proper management of public (national) forest, this study will give information about the condition of women's participation in the community forest user

group of Kumroj Community forestry. This study will present the affecting causes on women's participation. This study might be useful for the policy maker and development workers of various sectors of the country. It might be useful to make new policies to solve the non-participation and low-participation problem of female in particular.

Such kinds of primary data may be useful for the foresters, community forest user groups, researchers of forest conservation and women's field, development programmers and development agencies etc. And this study will be useful for the student level research also.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic nation. It is really difficult to cover the multicultural, multi-linguistic population in the research for a student researcher. Due to the socio-economic variations may differ the causes of any socio-economic problem and the solution may be different.

This study has some limitations. This research is doing by the student researcher, for the partial fulfillment of the requirement of M.A. Degree in Rural Development. So, the researcher has limitation in economic source, limited in time and limited manpower for the extensive study. This study also has limitation in theoretical framework. Descriptive as well as exploratory research design is applied in this study other research design are not used so.

This study of Kumroj VDC may not be enough to generalize all over the nation. But it will be useful for the same ecological, socio-economic and socio-biological area of the nation.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This research report will gain its total shape when it go through each and every requirement as required for a complete report. This report has been planned to present the following chapter scheme:

- a. Introduction
- b. Review of Literature
- c. Research Methodology
- d. Overview of the Study Area.
- e. Women's Participation in Community Forest
- f. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The first chapter 'Introduction' provides the background, statement of the problem, Significance of the study, objectives of the study, limitation of the study and organization of the study.

The second chapter is the 'Review of Literature'. Here the previous study done by different persons both individually and institutionally are reviewed with their findings and recommendations on the associated fields. Similarly different articles, books, journals and periodicals are to be reviewed. It is mainly related to the theoretical analysis, brief review and pertinent literature available.

The third chapter deals with the 'Research Methodology'. In this chapter different statistical tools are used to tabulate and analyze the data available from the primary and secondary sources are discussed.

Fourth chapter deals with various introduction of the study area providing with introduction, Demographic characteristics, Educational Status, caste/Ethnic composition and different source of income of the study area.

Fifth chapter provides, "Women's participation in community forest activities" in this chapter provides the women's knowledge about the forest policy, women's involvement in forest resource collection, participation of women in general meeting of C, women's knowledge about Forest and forest users groups, role of women in CF management, obstacles for women's participation in CF activities and views of local people about women's role in community forestry.

Finally, the sixth chapter states 'Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation' of the study.

The annex and bibliography will also be incorporated at the end of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Bases of the Community Forestry in Nepal

Two classical theories, under which Nepal's community has been widely discussed, reviewed are the 'common property resource' and 'paradigm shift from top-down to bottom-up development approach'.

2.1.1 Community Forestry as the common property resource

The common property is used to refer to a resource or a collective system for managing the resource. According to the Berkes (1989) 'a class of resources for which exclusion is difficult and joint use involves subtract ability'. There was confusion related to the concept of common property resources. Common property of ten has been used to refer to the resources available to all and consequently not owned or managed by anyone and also to the situation where access is limited to a specific group that hold the right in common (Berkes, 1989)

According to the Arnold (1998), the forest of the many region of the world have been used and managed as common property. People are depended on the forest's output, which are managed collectively by the user as a group. He as defined the concept of common property system as: "Resource, used by the particular group of the user (to the exclusion of the others) an institutional sets rules to govern rules and monitor and enforce the rules. Thus

common property system functions only if the group is organized or can organize themselves."

The community forestry program of Nepal is considered as the common property forest management system. Because its major features are the organizations of the users, definite membership criteria, social unit, collective interest of the people etc. (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). It has applied the both formal and informal use of the common property forests by villagers in the middle hill of the Nepal. Common property forests in Nepal are forests that are not privately owned and which are locally organized as belonging to the community (Bartlett and Malla, 1992).

The local management mechanism as FUG has evolved in Nepal as a strategy for the conservation as well as sustainable utilization of the forest to prevent the overuse of the forest. It further has enabled the people to obtain goods and services that improved their livelihoods without compromising long-term values of the forest.

2.1.2 Bottom-up Development Paradigm

The next widely discussed underpinning assumption under which Nepal's community forestry program has been defined is the 'bottom-up' development approach. As Gilmour and Fisher (1991) have defined community forestry program of Nepal is a paradigm shift from top down to bottom up. Nepal forestry change is a shift from the industrial forestry towards the Panchayat forest and Panchayat protect forest. The phrase was coined 'Forest for local community development' to accept the people first and the tree

second in forest management. This rhetoric was developed with the assumption that traditional professional forestry paradigm (industrial) forestry is the barriers to the establishment of genuine multidisciplinary approach, to develop the authority of the forest management to the community (Gilmour, King and Hobley, 1992). The traditional 'top-down' forestry paradigm was an ideology supporting the 'protection' of the forest where new paradigm supports the effective sustainable management of the common forest resource for the conservation as well as for the use (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). Therefore, the community forestry development program in Nepal has been considered as an 'innovative' bottom-up paradigm, because it puts people at the centre of the forestry and makes everything else peripheral (Gilmour, King and Hobley, 1992)

According to Gilmour and Fisher (1991) this innovative bottom-up forestry planning paradigm includes:

- By the policy, villagers are empowered to take decision about their forest resources.
- Proper reorganization of the organizational power and capabilities of villagers.
- Technical forestry to the social (community) forestry.
- Only protection of the forest to the conservation and sustainable utilization of the forest.

Rest of these two theories, other theories also has emerged in different time periods. Some important theories have been briefly discussed below.

2.1.3 Decentralization/Devolution of the power in Forest Management

The trend towards devolution and the decentralization of forest resource management responsibilities was highlighted in Nepal as devolution of the forest management and the utilization right to FUG (FAO, 1995). Decentralization and the devolution of the power is the dominant theme of the contemporary forestry policy and management discussion. Because of the failure of the centralized policy to produce the desired result, an attempt to the decentralization of the forest policy was made (Singh, 2000).

Devolution of the power refers to the relocating the power away from the center focal point. In the context of the community forestry of the Nepal, it describes the relocation of the administrative function or power from center location to regional and local office of the forest, local political body or to the natural user (Fisher, 2000). In Nepal, the evaluation of the forestry policy since late 70s has encouraged the community forest management (i.e. PPF, PF, MPFS). FUG is the example of the devolution of the power from government to the user giving high priority to the small-scale utilities and use purpose of the forest rather from the economic point of view. Although macro level board policy (such as MPFS) has guided the community forestry development process, it is actually a community level FUG that is well equipped and authorized to take all decisions of the local forest like making the constitution, OP, sharing of the benefit and etc. Although the board policy has certain guideline and policy framework to guide the

forest management, the FUG makes suitable OP and constitution as according to the social structural framework of the particular community. That can bring large differences in the policy implication and practices (WG-CIFM, 2002). So, it can be fine example of the devolution of the power in the forest management of Nepal.

The devolution of the power in community forestry has emphasized upon the local people's participation in the forest management. Participation has been a catchword of the bottom-up forest development approach. The basic philosophy of the Nepal's community forestry program is people's participation (the forest should be capable to fulfill the basic needs of the people through their participation). The management policy of the forest cannot be in isolation of the people who are supposed to be benefited. Therefore participatory resource management has seen as an appropriate solution to ensure the equitable and sustainable use of the forest (Dahal, 2003). To achieve this aim devolution of power or empower the local people to management their forest is the first necessary step.

2.1.4 'Social Equity', the Second Generation Issue of the Community Forestry

Social equity issue refers to the unequal power relation between rich and poor, high and low caste, women and men and so on. The social issue has been considered as the second-generation issue of the community forestry. The agenda of the equity has been focal point of the social issue (Winrock, 2002).

According to the Gilmour and Fisher (1991), from two different reasons equity is related to the community forestry. First is the philosophical argument's community forestry is aimed to meet the need of the diverse group of the society. It must insure the disadvantaged group's people's access to by the policy level and empower them to make equal control in CFUG.

The second is 'the political reason'. The program should benefit various interest groups in community. The membership in CFUG doesn't adequately represent poor and occupation caste group's participation. They have not the equal access due to various reasons (i.e. social hierarchy) in the intra CFUG activities, mainly in benefit sharing and decision-making. The issue of the intra CFUG equity is generally related to these problems. (Winrock, 2000; Grosen, 2002; Tiwari, 2002)

-) Traditional value of the caste, class ethnicity and gender.
-) Dominance of elite and high caste group's users in executive committee.
-) Dominance of the executive committee on the user groups.
-) Exclusion of the some community member from the user groups.
-) Domination of the certain interest group in the FUG level decision making process and less chance to for the rest of the interest group (men dominates the women)
-) Distribution of the forest product among the members, which are against the interest of the resource poor members.

) Inadequate representation and the virtually non-involvement of all interest groups in setting institutional rules and arrangements.

The word 'community' in the community forestry indicates a homogenous group having common interests. But the community members are diverse in terms of their occupation, wealth, education and the caste/ethnicity although it may be a homogenous group in terms of physical characteristics such as geography. The issue of the intra CFUG equity is very important where the members of the community are diverse in terms of the socio-cultural and economic factor. Within a community there are the groups of the people who have the same interest common characteristics in certain thing; this is termed as the interest group (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). With respect to even the forest management too, the identification of the needs roles and authority of all interest group within a user group is crucial to maintain the intra-CFUG equity.

In most of the Nepali society, caste/ethnic group is the key element in maintaining the social diversity, where another equally important category is the diversity in terms of the gender. In terms of the caste, the caste based social stratification has created the unequal access/opportunities of the people within the community forestry, as the poor and the occupational caste group's (mental worker, shoe-maker, tailor etc.) People are often ignored in the decision making process of the community forestry. Which directly further effects a distribution of the goods and benefit and making participation in other activities of the FUG (Winrock, 2002).

Participation itself doesn't always secure all kinds of the community's people's involvement. Because it is a vague term and its notion doesn't secure all people's power over the decision-making and benefit sharing (Fisher, 2000). But it is incomplete to secure the all interest groups peoples participation equally socially disadvantaged people's (such as the poor, women and so called low caste) access has still in question. The cause is the community level's powerful people's domination upon the common property resource. FUG is not often comprised of household of the diverse social economic status and diverse forest based interest. In EC, generally poor women and disadvantaged people are often ignored and decision-making (Graner, 1997). According to her (1997), the community forestry often unsuccessful to secure the basic needs of the poor and low caste peoples basic needs because of the elite and high caste people's domination in FUG. According to her study in the Sindhupalchok district she has concluded that:

-) Member in user group are predominant from the economically advantaged group.
-) Economically disadvantaged groups are often excluded from the membership.
-) Economically disadvantaged groups may lose access to VITAL resources.

The term 'environmental Justice' also concerns to the equitable distribution of the resource, fair treatment of people of all races, culture and income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of the environmental law, regulation and policies

(Adhikari, 2003). He (2003) has maintained that Nepal's problem of the caste based discrimination of the functional; participation in the community forestry can be better understood as the 'environmental cosmism' because caste has become the major determinant of the exclusion and inclusion of the people in community forestry.

2.1.5 Equity among the Women in FUG

Strategies to increase women's control over the local natural resource management must address the question of gender relation. To understand gender issue in forest management it is necessary to look at the gender roles and division in term of ownership and control over and access to resource, knowledge and the product of their labour (Sarin, 1992). Probably all the societies, women have little value to men because of the subordinate social status. In the rural Nepalese society, there is no equal opportunity for the men and women in all sectors.

When question of the equity in community forest management comes, it often gives the notion of the equal opportunity for the women the disadvantaged and the lower caste's people. Gender and equity has been the major agenda of the contemporary debate on the people's participation in the community forestry. It is related to the gender balance participation in FUG and it basically rests on the leadership, benefit sharing decision-making and the representing the certain interest group.

Both policy and the implementation strategies and the programs of the donor agencies have focused to make better status of women in forest management and tried to make at least token

participant of them in executive committee of the user groups (Bennett, 2003). But nominal discussion has been made so far about the equity among the women or intra women equity. The policy seems considering women as the single interest group as we know women as an interest group from the gender balance participation's perspective. But in reality women is not the homogenous group in every respect. With in the women they have the diverse interest according to the caste, economic status, household position, educational status and age group (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991; Singh 2000). The woman of the user's household doesn't have the same types of access and opportunities and constraints to make the desired involvement in CFUG activities. But those minority women who have the dominant figure in the society are getting the easy access inn the mane of certain part of the women's representatives in FUG' beneficial activities such as training. In reality they don't represents or make it beneficial for all the women who also have the same kind of the right. The women of a blacksmith household, women of the landless household and the regular forest user women etc. are not getting chance or getting less chance. In the country, women of the elite class, women member of the village level figures, educated women who is not related to the forest as rest of the community women are getting the privileges in the name of the women's participation (HMG/N, 2002). In this way in reality the real user, poor, lower caste and occupation caste group's women have been excluded from making any meaningful intervention. Therefore securing an easy access of the all types or basically disadvantaged groups' women seems most necessary to make possible the real essence of the women's participation.

2.2 Evolution of the Community Forest Management Policy

Rural Nepali economy is highly based on agriculture, although subsidiary occupations are government and private job, their main occupation is agriculture and livestock raising. Therefore the most important natural resource for them forest resource for various reasons (i.e. daily animal feeding, firewood for cooking and pole for making house) (Amatya and Shrestha, 2002). People have a certain relation with the forest and certain mechanism of the forest management based on particular environment and people's culture. Traditional, indigenous forest management have been practiced from several hundred years ago in Nepal (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991), which has been based on the practical experiences of the community dwellers that differs from community to community in terms of culture, religion, knowledge system and living pattern. The traditional mechanism of forest management has been transmitted from generation to generation as a wealth of knowledge. Such knowledge and experiences have taught users how forest should be managed in the interest of the community (Dikun and Lis, 1999).

The development of community forest resource management in Nepal is not only the concept but a major part of the government policy and supported by the foreign aid (Gronow and Sheresthat, 1992). In Nepal forest department was established in 1942 (FAO, 1993). Before it some national codes were introduced as first policy written in 1953 by E.J.B. Rana, a national code for the use and the management of the forest promulgated in 1884 (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991; FAO 1993) for the management of the forest.

But due to the various reasons those programs were not effective and that time's political conditions also helped degrade forest. Government policy was made to control the forest from the center. The forests were over exploited and government could not stop it because of technical, political as well as other reasons. To stop the destruction and degradation of the forest, the government adopted a restrictive policy, the private forest Nationalization Act, 1957. This Act brought a vital change in relationship between people and forest. It supposed people not as a 'manager' but as a 'destroyer' of the forest and isolated them from the forest. Through that policy all forest was technically came under the government. So people started the illegal falling of the tree and agricultural use land (Amatya and Sherestha, 2002; Bartlett, 1992). Therefore this forest act was not suitable from the people's point of view and it was unsuccessful because it didn't recognize the role, authority and responsibility of people in forest resource management near their village (FAO, 1993).

In the late 1970s, a new concept of forest management was introduced as Nepal National Forestry Policy, (NNFP) in response to the failure of PFNA, 1957 (FAO, 1993). Social/community forestry evolved with an address to concern of meeting subsistence needs of the people for firewood, leaf litter, fodder and etc. The Panchayat forest (PF), 1976 and Panchayat protected forest (PPF) rule, 1978 were people oriented forest policies. With the formulation of the PF and PPF, community forestry was implemented in twenty-nine district of Nepal with the loan assistance of the World Bank. On some hill district different donors

like USAID, AUSAID provided the grant assistance, etc. (Joshi and Pokhrel, 1998).

The Decentralization Act of the early 1980s empowered Panchayat to form the committee of the forest consumers. It provided Panchayat with defined function, responsibility and authority for implementing projects of forest management funded through district or VDC budget (Functions such as a forestation, development and management of the forest). It tried to address the concept of forest user group (FUG) by creating user committee from the people, who are using the particular forest. The Decentralization Act (1987) made provision that community forestry has to be formed by local people in coordination with the forestry component at the district level (i.e. range post staff, DFO etc.) and the FUG is the main body of the forest management. The role of the center government is to continuously update the overall picture of the forest, provide guidelines trainings and resources to the district and monitoring and advising them for the more effective performances (WG-CIFM, 2002).

The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS) was prepared in 1988 and approved in 1989. It has the 25 years policy and planning framework. MPFS has defined the concept of the community forestry user group as (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991) quotes "..... to entrust the user with the task of protecting and managing forests.....". In the Master Plan's socio-economic objectives, community forestry has been conceptualized for the subsistence needs' the CF program aims to develop and manage

forest resource through the active participation of the individuals and communities to meet their basic needs. Some features of the MPFS, 1988 are as follows (Bartlett, 1992; WGCIFM, 2002; Joshi and Pokharel, 1998):

- Accessible forest will be managed by empowering local community.
- Decentralization should be applied in the forest management.
- Satisfaction of the community's basic needs.
- Sustainable utilization of the forest resource.
- People's participation on decision making and sharing the benefit for the long-term forest management with the task of socio-economic growth of the people.
- Women and poor should be involved in the management of community forestry.

After the restoration of the democracy in 1990 the local communities got more empowered in every aspect. This made the peoples more interested to make their participation in the forest management also. The definition of the community with respect to the forest management changed from the political unit 'panchayat' to the user group, all the user of the certain forest area. FUG has been defined as 'a group of the local forest act to protect, manage and the use of forest resources of one or more areas' (HMG/N, 2002). So community forestry's user group is related to the collective group of the people using the certain forest area and interested in the

management of it under the government guideline of the community forest management.

The panchayat forest regulation Act, 1978 failed to ensure or involve all the users of the forest in the management due to various regions in its implementation of the more than 14 years. The forest Act, 1993 therefore Focused on to strength the CF approach by repealing the all previously existing forest legislation, providing a legal basis for the implementation of more effective CF development program (Winrock, 2002). Following the principles established by the MPFS-1988, the Forest Act -1993 Clearly defined the concept of CF, making the FUG empowered rather than any political unit.

According to the (WG-CIFM, 2002), "The 1993 Forest Act clearly defined the forest user group (FUG) as an autonomous and corporate bodies with perpetual succession. FUGs were defined as a group of the households using or development on forest resources. FUGs are identified by the district forest office (DFO) based on the household survey to access forest dependence."

According to this Act, after the reorganization of the users, the members develop a constitution and five-year's management and protection plan. Each FUG is supposed to make an executive committee (EC) of 10-15 members of its users. The role of the forest department is to facilitate the functionary of the FUGs and provide technical assistance as according to the necessary (WG-CIFM, 2002). Therefore this policy has provided a strategies legal framework for the expansion of the community forestry.

2.2.1 Major Objectives of the Community Forestry Policy

As already discussed, the essential philosophy of the community forestry of Nepal is based on the idea that forest should be managed by the local people or the real forest user for their own benefit (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). Some major aims or the objectives of the progressive community forestry policies of the Nepal are (Bartlett, 1992; Neupane, 1992):

- To hand over all the accessible forests to communities.
- To establish and to empower the forest user groups assisted by the field staffs of the forest department.
- To prepare operational plans of the forest management initiated by the forest user group.
- To give priority to mobilize women's participation in the forest management, as far as possible.
- To provide any income from the forest product after covering the costs of the forest operation to the 'forest user groups'.

Table No. 1

Status of the community Forestry in Nepal

Handed over community Forest Area	1 million Hectare
Number of the Forest user group	1200
Number of the households	1.4 million
Number of Women user groups	560

Source: Department of Forest, 2003

2.2.2 Policy for the Women

Community forestry policy has recognized women as the real user and possible manager of the forest. As earlier mentioned, the major statement of the government policy's people's participation, the policy has remained successful from this point of view because it has made a remarkable success in involving people in community forest resource management.

With in the people's participation one major aspects or widely discussed topic is the women's participation. The importance of women in CF has created a situation to think about the women's access, role and involvement in CFUG for the policy maker (Gronow et al., 1989). Therefore, address to women in policy statement has been made to create an easy platform for the women's involvement in community forest management.

One of the major plans of the forest sector in Nepal, the master plan for the forestry sector (MPFS) has given special attention for the participation of the women's component in forest management. The plan has recommended certain percent representatives in the FUG should be women as the basic requirement to form the user's group (Khadka, 1999). 2052 B.S. and revised in 2058 B.S. has indicated that there should be one third (33%) women in FUG (Timsina, 2002). The operational guideline for the community forestry has acquainted these things for the encouragement of the women's participation in the community forestry management. In the operational guideline for the

community forest development program following address has been made for the women (HMG/N, 1995).

Identification Phase: Interest of the both men, women as well as the disadvantaged group in the community should be identified. The importance of the women component in forestry development should be widely discussed. A list of the active women of the community should be made. But while focusing on the women special care should be given to local culture, society and the economic activities as well as the women's work load.

Forest User Groups formulation phase: While making FUG's EC, the equal opportunities should be given for both male and the Female's participation from all interest group, caste and ethnic and occupational caste group.

Operational plan preparation phase: The OP of the user group should have some special program for the women and the disadvantaged group's people's benefit.

Implementation Phase: In the forest management the suitable environmental should be created for the women's involvement. That should have some special program targeted to women and disadvantaged group of the community.

Review Phase: Before the revision and the improvement of the OP by the general assembly of the users, discussion with the poor, Dalit and women is necessary.

In this way, operational guideline of the community forest development has recognized the involvement of the women in all the phases of CF process as the prerequisites for the process of

forest management (HMG/N, 1995). In the five-year development plan also the involvement of the women in the forest resource management as the major requirement of the forest development policy (HMG/N, 2002). The Agriculture perspective plan (APP) has also emphasized on the good policy of the forest management, which can enhance the greater participation of the women in the sound natural resource management. This can protect the interest of the women and the people of disadvantaged group (HMG/N, 1995).

The ninth and the tenth development plan possess poverty alleviation as the main objectives of it. To achieve it good community forest resource management is required. Both have mentioned the role of the forest resource for the sustainable development - 'Community forest resource management will meet local requirements for the forest products as well as income and the employment opportunities for the sustainable development - 'Community forest resource management will meet local requirements for the forest products as well as income and the employment opportunities for the communities.' For this, it has stressed to involve women in community forest resource management to ensure the participation of them in mainstream of the development. Therefore the development plans has emphasized on the inclusion of the women in forest management with special program targeted to socio-economic development of them i.e. income generating activities for women (HMG/N, 1997, 2002). FECOFUN, an umbrella organization of the FUGs has mentioned in its constitution compulsory provision of 50% of EC member in FUG should be women.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the detail of the procedures adopted for the present research. The details of the research design, data collection techniques, nature and sources of the data analysis techniques and the introduction of the study areas have been presented.

3.1 Research Design

The study has adopted the 'descriptive' research design. A descriptive research design has been used because the goal of the study is to describe qualitatively the women's involvement in the community forest management rather than comparatively and explicatively.

The study is based on the qualitative interpretation of the gathered data. So the descriptive research design is the best for the present study. The study describes policy related to the women's involvement in the community forestry (with reference to the OP and the constitution of the studied FUGs), the field level reality, how they are participating and the different hindrances of the women to be a part of the forest management as according to their socio-cultural and economic differentiations. Therefore this research design is helpful to describe the women related policy and reality in the community forestry management system.

3.2 Study Area

The Kumroj Community forest User Group (KCFUG) is selected for the study. The Kumroj Community forest lies in ward no. 3 and 4 of Kumroj village development committee of Chitwan district, which was handed over to the people of this VDC in 2051. The researcher is the inhabitant of the same village development committee. Being the local people, the researcher became able to collect the reliable information from the existing socio-cultural structure. Before this attempt, there was no study conducted study focusing women's participation and role on development activities as well as community forest activities of that area.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

In order to achieve the objective o the research, relevant data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Since the nature of the study is the qualitative, preference has been given to qualitative primary data collection techniques. However quantative data was also collected by household survey.

3.4 Data collection Techniques

The secondary data were collected form the published and unpublished books, documents, studies carried out before related to the present topic, the constitution and the operational plan of the studied FUGs. The other sources were the different government legislation, regulation, Acts, operational guidelines of the community forestry, bulletin published by the government forest office and etc.

Especially following methods of the data collection was adopted to collect the primary data from field study.

3.4.1 Household Survey

For the detail information of the respondents household survey has been conducted. Approximately 10 percent user's households has been taken as sample in the present study i.e. 1448 total user's household and 9 wards in the study area, 145 user's in 9 wards has been taken as sample. The sampling households have been chosen by conducting stratified random sampling method according to their caste, ethnicity, education and other entity and backgrounds. The format of the HH survey has been included in appendix 1. (Male and Female both are the respondents).

3.4.2 Observation

In the course of fieldwork of this study, simple observation was done. The conditions of forests, the general and committee meeting of user group women's role in the meeting and women's participation on forest products collection were observed in this study. House constructions and condition of firewood storage also was observed. So the observation was proved more fruitful to find the reality in this study.

3.4.3 Interview

Several interviews have been conducted during the field works. Some key informant interviews (individuals) and some group interviews were taken. Individuals of former and current executive committee (EC) members, women of the different groups

were taken interviews. Group interview of the men were taken at tea shop and dairy collection center. Interview helped to understand the men's concept toward women's involvement, different constraints of the different groups' of women their knowledge about FUG, forest management and their understanding of the forest policy.

3.4.4 Focused Group Discussion

Information about a community can be best obtained by looking separately at the groups of the people with common interest. FGD provides an in-depth discussion by listening of the people of different age, ethnic group, on certain topic (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). For women it provides an opportunity to express them about the topic. And for researcher it is very useful to understand the diversity of perception and opinion about definite topic.

Discussion were held between the member's of forest user's groups (FUGs) for the present condition of the groups, rules and regulation, management and development practices of FUGs and the past and present of community forests. Emphasis was given to the women's role on managing the forests.

3.4.5 Tools of Data collection

- (a) Semi-structured question prepared for household survey.
- (b) Check list for focus group discussion.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected through various methods was compiled and crosschecked to avoid the possible errors and the misinterpretation of the data and to maintain the validity and reliability of the data.

Looking at the relationship of the data and its nature collected data by the primary and secondary sources have been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. However, very few quantitative explanations have been made and the much focus has given in the qualitative explanation. Emphasis has been given to reflect to the natural, same and exact interpretation of the respondent's own words and the real picture of the field reality as far as possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 Background of the Study Area

The Kumroj Community forest lies within the Kumroj village Development Committee (VDC) located outside the northern boundary of the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP). This forest is bordered by the Rapti River in the South, RCNP in the west and Settlements in the north and east. Because proximity to the Rapti River puts agricultural lands in this area at risk from recent floods during the monsoon, the local people, with support from the small farmer's Development project and CARE Nepal, initiated a small scale reforestation programme at the edge of the agricultural field in the late 1980s. This was the first step towards what would become the Kumroj community forest.

Tharus, the indigenous people of the Chitwan valley and the hill migrants (mainly Bramhin, Chhetri, Magar, Gurung, Newar and Tamang) are the local inhabitants. The residences are subsistence farmers, agriculture and livestock raising being the mainstay of their economy. Major crops include rice, wheat, maize and mustard with newly practiced vegetable farming.

Since 1992, the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), with support from the German Embassy, German-Nepal Friendship Association (GNFA), the Bio-Diversity Conservation Network (BCN) and Save the Tiger Fund (STF), initiated a community Forest program to restore more than 1000

hectares of severely degraded land adjacent to the RCNP, Creating a largest community forestry program of this type in the Terai region. This area, called the Kumroj community forest, is now managed by the local user's group with the technical support of KMTNC'S Nepal conservation research and Training center (NCRTC). Altogether 1178 households with a population of over 7168, directly benefit from this forest. The Kumroj community forest was officially handed over for its management to the local user's group of Kumroj village Development Committee (VDC) 1-9 in November 1996 by the district forest office of Chitwan.

4.2 Objectives of the Kumroj Community Forest

The preliminary objectives of these forests are:

- To fulfill certain degree of the fodder, fuel-wood and timber needs of the local people.
- To offset the pressure on the RCNP.
- To create sense of ownership to the users' towards natural resources and enhance micro enterprise activities within the area of benefit local communities.
- To reduce land encroachment, soil erosion, and consequently flooding.

4.3 Natural Resources

Vegetation: The Kumroj community Forest is riverine forest type which has been revived by fencing off the area and allowing it to regenerate naturally/plantation. The main tree species are simal

(Bombax Ceiba), Vellor (Trewia nudiflora), Kutmiro (Litsea Monopetala) with Sissoo (Dalbergia Sissoo) and Khair (Acacia Catechu) in the plantation site. The simal tree, which dominates and forms the upper canopy of the tree layer, has a spiny bark when young develops buttresses at the base in older stage. The grasslands form another diverse and complex community in the forest with a greater number of floodplain species. The wetlands and rivers consisted different hydrophytes which are essential for wildlife diet.

Wildlife: After only eight years of protection, Kumroj community forest has been quickly colonized by wildlife. Over 159 species of birds, including colorful parakeets and scarlet minivets and the endangered dusky horn owl, large grass warbler, lesser adjutant stork, lesser spotted eagle, yellow bittern, darter, black stork and bristled grass warbler have been recorded. There are more than fifteen individuals of the endangered greater one horned rhinoceros, three species of deer, marsh mugger crocodiles and some resident tigers in the forest. Jackal, Small Indian civet, wild boar, Python, Five-striped squirrel, gray fox, yellow throated martin, golden monitor lizard and Jungle cat are also found here. The tall simal and other trees served as the favorable habitat for avian species.

4.4 Place of interest of Kumroj Community Forest

The users' group has constructed a Machan (view tower) with two rooms and four beds for visitors who want to experience Jungle life in the night. From the Machan, visitors have a spectacular view to observe animals and bird watching in a peaceful setting. Grassland and waterholes have been renovated to enhance game

viewing as part of the habitat management program. Even from the elephant back it is safe and easy to watch the wildlife.

4.5 Demographic structure by ward and sex

The total households of this VDC is 1448 and the total population is 7561 among which 3644 are male and 3917 are female (CBS-2001). The following table has present the ward wise and sex wise distribution of population.

Table 2

Population by ward and Sex

Ward No.	Total HHs	Population				Total Population	Percentage
		Male	%	Female	%		
1	169	426	49.59	433	50.41	859	100
2	146	365	49.32	375	50.68	740	100
3	229	549	47.74	601	52.26	1150	100
4	197	458	49.51	467	50.49	925	100
5	147	404	48.97	448	51.03	825	100
6	116	287	47.83	313	52.17	600	100
7	183	480	48.14	517	51.86	997	100
8	216	569	47.38	632	52.62	1201	100
9	45	106	44.73	131	55.27	237	100
Total	1148	3644	48.20	3917	51.80	7561	100

Source: CBS 2001.

From the above table, it is clear that the average household size is 5.22 for Kumroj VDC, which is approximately equal to national average. It is also shows the population of female is 51.80 percent in Kumroj VDC.

4.6 Caste and Ethnic Composition of the study area

The total population of the Kumroj Community FUG is 7561. Where men's population is 3644 and women's population is 3917 and the total number of users household is 1448 of the different caste and ethnic groups (CBS - 2001).

Table 3

The Caste/Ethnic Composition of the study area

Caste/Ethnic Group	Population	Percent
Tharu	2642	34.95
Brahman-hill	2281	30.17
Chhetri	1138	15.05
Tamang	254	3.36
Darai	235	3.11
Gurung	217	2.88
Kami	206	2.72
Newar	171	2.26
Bote	93	1.23
Damai/Dholi	75	0.99
Sarki	60	0.80

Magar	43	0.57
Kayastha	26	0.34
Majhi	22	0.30
Unidentified Caste	15	0.20
Sherpa	14	0.18
Yadav	13	0.17
Sanyasi	9	0.12
Thakuri	8	0.10
Teli	8	0.10
Dusadh/Paswan	7	0.09
Rai	6	0.08
Kumhar	5	0.06
Others	13	0.17
Total	7561	100.00

Source: CBS 2001

The user groups are diverse in term of the caste and ethnicity. In total 7561 people are users; there are users of different caste/ethnic group. Most of the users belong to the Tharu, Brahman and chhetri Caste group.

4.7 Demographic Characteristics by Age and Sex

The population distribution by age and sex is presented in table 4.

Table 4

Distribution of Sampled Household Population by Age and Sex

Age group	Population		Total Population	Percent
	Male	Female		
Below 10	96	107	203	25.00
10-59	228	237	465	57.27
60 Above	70	74	144	17.73
Total	394	418	812	100.00
Percent	48.52	51.48	100.00	-

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The above table shows that Female population is 51.48 percent while male population is 48.52 percent. The proportion of economic Female population in the total population is estimated as 56.70 percent.

4.8 Educational Condition of the Study area according to sex

There is one government high school, two lower secondary schools, three primary schools, two English medium primary Boarding Schools. As the education condition is considered, the number of well educated female population is negligible. The following table shows their educational status.

Table 5**Educational Characteristics of Study area according to sex**

Educational Status	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Illiterate	98	28.82	155	43.06	253	36.14
Literate	36	10.59	49	13.61	85	12.14
Primary	73	21.47	58	16.11	131	18.72
Lower Secondary	58	17.06	46	12.78	104	14.896
Secondary	40	11.76	38	10.56	78	11.14
S.L.C. and Above	35	10.30	14	3.88	49	7.00
Total (above school age population)	340	100.00	360	100.00	700	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Total literacy rate of the study area is 63.86 percent and illiterate is 36.14 percent. Female literacy is 56.94 percent and male literacy is 71.18 percent. In total among the school age population 43.06 percent female are illiterate while just 28.82 percent male are illiterate. Female educational rate is low than male. Informal literacy programs made some women literate.

4.9 Occupational Structure of the User's Households

Agriculture is the main economic base of the people in the study area. However agricultural activities are still primitive and crude. The most ethnic communities mainly depend on agriculture and as a waged labour too. As the country's deteriorating condition could not easily promote their sources of income, so now a day some young members of the study area have also been attracted towards gulf countries for getting occupation as the wage labours. They comparatively make more amount of money than in Nepal.

The following table gives about the occupation of the study area.

Table 6
Occupational structure of Sample Households

Main Occupation	Households	Percent
Agriculture	119	82.07
Non-Agriculture	26	17.93
Total	145	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The above table shows that 82.07 percent of households are engaged in agriculture while only 17.93 percent are engaged in non-agriculture activities. Non agricultural activities are as; business, service, non agricultural labour etc.

Due to facility of irrigation, the paddy is produced twice a year, early paddy is planted in Chitra-Baishkh and harvested in

Jestha-Ahad while the late paddy is planted in Ashad-Shrawan and harvested in Kartik-Mangsir. A part from paddy, people also cultivated pulses like Mash, Mushuro in small area of land; vegetable are grown near the homesteads mainly from home consumption. Main vegetables grown are Potatoes, Radish, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Baygon (Bhanta) and leafy vegetables (Rayo, Palungo, Chamsur). The production of fruits is very low in the study area.

4.10 Source of income of the users

The main sources of income are agriculture in rural area. Agriculture income mainly consists from agriculture products and livestock. In rural areas non-agriculture sectors such as remittance, labour, service, business and cottage industry are also contributing in total income. The following table 7 gives about the source of income of the study area.

Table 7
Source of income of Sampled Households

Source	Percent
Agriculture	51
Livestock	13
Remittance	12
Labour (Wage)	10
Service	6
Borrowing	8
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

The above table shows that most of the people or almost 86 percent households engage in agriculture; generate 64 percent of the total income from and livestock, while remaining 36 percent of total income is generated from non-agriculture sector.

4.11 Distribution of Household Head by Gender

Table no. 8 shows the condition of household head by gender in each caste and ethnic of the Kumroj Community Forestry uses group.

Table 8

Distribution of Household Head by Gender in the Study Area.

Caste/Ethnicity	Male		Female		Percentage
	No	%	No	%	
Tharu	28	62.22	17	37.78	100
Brahman-hill	35	83.33	7	16.67	100
Chhetri	13	61.90	8	38.10	100
Tamang	4	66.67	2	33.33	100
Darai	3	60.00	2	40.00	100
Gurung	2	50.00	2	50.00	100
Kami	2	66.67	1	33.33	100
Newar	1	33.33	2	66.67	100
Others	10	62.50	6	37.50	100
Total	98	67.59	47	32.41	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Above table shows 67.59 percent household heads are male and 32.41 percent household heads are female in the study area. In Brahman family 83.33 percent household heads are male, which is comparatively higher than other caste family. In Gurung family 1 is male and 1 is female. So on in Newar family 1 household head is male and 2 household head are female. Generally, females became household's heads due to Job migration of male in family.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FOREST ACTIVITY

5.1 Women's knowledge About the Forest Policy

Since, to be aware or knowledge about the policy of the forest management is the basic necessary for the local forest manager. Not only for the executive committee member who are responsible to run the FUG's all activities but also equally important for the user member to know about the policy for creative feedback for the EC members. So that they can develop their management capacity, confidence, can be aware of their right and capable to bear their roles and responsibilities correctly. But relating to the studied FUGs, not only the women but also men have very poor knowledge about the operational plan, constitution and the government's policy for the community forestry management. It was very surprising that when the secretary of the studied FUG was requested to provide the OP and the constitution available for the researcher, he gave OP only. When he again asked for the constitution, he replied they don't have any other documents. Finally, when the chairperson told him to see in the office and he found it. Looking to it he expressed that he has seen it for the first time.

This is an example about the local people's sensitivity and consciousness for the policy. The Key person who has the major role in the forest management has not read the written document about his right, role and the responsibility. Those members who have involved in EC for the long time have more idea than the new

member. And they seem more sincere to the policy than the new members.

The condition of the women is more miserable than men's. For example former EC member's opinion can be taken. She disclosed - "Women don't feel necessary to know about policy related to different activities of forest management. What the dominant EC members say, it is the policy for us rather than written or made like how much cost to pay for firewood. Since men of the family know it is not necessary women also know same thing." During the field studies, 70 women were asked their knowledge about the policy of the forest. All of the women had the common answer 'I don't know' (in Nepali thaha chhaina). Some 40 years crossed illiterate women responded that the policy is not to harm the greenery of the forest like cutting the green tree for the firewood and not to do those activities which has prohibited. One lower caste women told that what is written they can't read and nobody orally tells them about this. So they remain unknown about the program, special facility for the woman and the advantages for the involvement in the forest resource management. So it can be concluded saying women has nominal or almost don't possess knowledge about their community forest.

5.2 Involvement in forest resources collection by gender

In KCFUG households used to collect grass and firewood annually and the entire household used to collect firewood and grass, timber is collected according to their need. Following table shows the involvement in forest resources collection by gender

Table 9**Involvement in forest Resource collection by gender**

Forest Resources	Household members involved in forest resource collection						Total no of respondents	
	Male	%	Female	%	Both	%	No	%
Firewood	17	15.18	63	56.25	32	28.57	112	100
Grass cutting	9	8.03	74	66.07	29	25.90	112	100
Timber	89	79.46	-	-	23	20.54	112	100

Source: Field Survey, 2006

In this study 112 household from different caste and ethnic groups were taken for sample. Out of 145 sample households that was mentioned in methodology(remaining 33 households are not involved in forest resource collection). Among them male from 17 household, female from 63 household and both male and female from 32 household used to go for firewood collection. Similarly male from 9 household, female from 74 household and both male and female from 29 household used to go for grass cutting. So on male from 89 households used to go for timber collection and 23 households used to go both genders to collect timber. Above table shows that high involvement of female in forest resources collection.

5.3 Participation in general meeting of KCFUG by age and sex

General meeting of user group held one times per year. There is compulsory provision to attend the general meeting of KCFUG but some household don't go in general meeting. The information condition of meeting attends by age and gender was collected by household survey. Following table presents the sex and age composition of KCFUG Meeting attends.

Table 10

Distribution of household members participated in general meeting by Age and Sex

Meeting attend by age	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
15-25	10	58.82	7	41.18	17	11.72
25-35	15	60.00	10	40.00	25	17.25
35-45	26	76.47	8	23.53	34	23.45
Above 45	56	81.16	13	18.84	69	47.58
Total	107	73.79	38	26.21	145	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2006

According to field survey, male participation is higher than female participation in general meeting. In general meeting during survey period 73.79% were from male and 26.21% were from female participated.

5.4 Women's Knowledge about Forest and Forest User Group

Most of the women have known their community forest name as the Kumroj Ban and some know as the Kumroj Samudayik ban. Generally the woman who has crossed the 40 years has known the traditional names and the physical characteristics of the different part of the forest in the past such as Dhumre Khola, Jankauli, Thuligairi etc. So they know the forest through these names (specifically the difference place of the forest) rather than through the name of the community forestry and its sub-areas. They also know the major species of the forest, such as the Kali-kath, seti-kath, Kaulo, chutro, simali etc and their different values, purpose and appropriate season to harvest their products. Women have told many times the community forest as our forest (Hamro-Ban). But they don't know that how does it is their forest, or they don't know the process how to be the member of the community forestry. They don't know about any process of the FUG like how to become member, how executive committee has been formed and the how it works. Many of them even don't know about the general assembly (Sadharan Sabha). They have seen the card of the FUG member but most of them don't know its purposes. Illiterate women told that the member of the CFUG told him to keep it safely, so she has put it in the box but she doesn't know what it is. A thirty-five year old woman expressed that it is the Ban ko card (forest's card) but she has never looked it carefully because she has confidence that her husband has knowledge about the forest affairs. So she seems it is not necessary for her to know about it.

Women know the EC member very well who are in EC since 4-5 years. But they don't know all the new members who are in the committee since one year. Even about their village' (tole's) representative in the EC they are unaware who is he/she. Therefore women know a lot about the forest but they have very little knowledge about the FUG and its functional aspects.

To the response of the answer what kind of knowledge you possess about their community forest, one Tharu caste's women reply in the question that why should we know about the forest? Our budha (indicating to the husband) knows everything. Since he knows everything why should I take interest? But there are some women also who have interest to be knowledge about FUG and they have some knowledge about it. But numbers of those kinds of the women are very few. But in general it can be assumed that women possess nominal knowledge about the forest management through the organization/FUG.

5.5 Constitution Procedure and term of committee member

User committee comprised of 15 members; among them 33 percent seats are secured for women. But in KCFUG, there are only 2 female members. It means 13.33 percent seats are filled by female in practice now. The term of committee member is of 5 years generally. The Users committee members are used to select by the consensus of the general meeting of the user group. If any opposition rises, members must be selected through election among the member of the user group.

5.6 Relationship between Users and Committee Members

The relationship between the people of the different interest groups and their EC representative is necessary to understand. Women who are more than 50 percent in the total population of the users, they don't have any knowledge that women are the separate interest group having the common problem, knowledge, opportunities and access. They don't have ever talk about the forest related issues formally or informally. Neither the EC member of the certain group's representative nor the users peoples have ever separately discussed about the women related issue. The women representative of the EC also disclosed that she has never discuss with other women about the women's related issues but what the other member of the EC decides it becomes the women's voice. Any women did not know the woman who was one of the women representatives of the last committee. By her name nobody knows her and it is not new in the rural community. But as the person of the same or neighbor community also nobody knows her that is very interesting.

Therefore, between the EC members of the different groups and the people of this group has not any special relationship as a representative and the users or as the representative of certain interest groups but it is the normal as they have with rest of this group's members.

5.7 Role of women in KCFUG general Meeting

In KCFUG, only 26.21 percent of women attendance is found in general meeting. Only physical attendance is not enough to make

decision in meeting. 38 women, who involved in general meeting, were taken in sample to study the role of women in decision making process. Following table shows the role of women in general meeting of KCFUG. (General Meeting is Supreme body of KCFUG)

Table 11

Role of Women in decision making in KCFUG general meeting

Role of women in general meeting	No. of Respondents by meeting attend	Percent
Like Audience	27	71.06
Giving Suggestion	7	18.42
Discussion	2	5.26
Decision making	2	5.26
Total respondent	38	100.00

Among 38 Female respondents, who involved in general meeting, 71.06 percent member used to attend meeting like audience, 18.42 percent member attend meeting giving suggestions, 5.26 percent member attend meeting taking part in discussion and 5.64% female attend meeting sharing in decision making.

5.8 Affecting factors for women's participation in CF activities

Affecting factors for women especially for study area is divided in two categories: Obstacles for women's participation and

motivational factors. Factors supporting to increase the women's participation are included in motivational factors and other factors, which are the barriers for women's participation, are mentioned in obstacles.

5.8.1 Motivational factor for women's participation

In this study, following 5 alternative factors was given for selection about the motivational factor, which factor motivates them to involve in community forest activities. Following table show the view of respondents about the motivational factor.

Table 12

Distribution of respondents by motivational factor for women in community forest activities

S.N.	Motivational factor	No. of Respondents	Percent
1	Local Political leader	12	31.58
2	Self motivational	8	21.05
3	Awareness program launched by NGO/INGO	4	10.53
4	Government Policies	5	13.16
5	Husband (Family member)	9	23.68
Total		38	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Above table shows, local political leader (31.58%) and husband (23.68%) (Family member) are more effective motivational persons to motivate women for community forest activities.

5.8.2 Obstacles for women's participation in CF activities

The main obstacles of women's participation in community forest and other local development activities in the study area are briefly mentioned in following topics.

(i) Traditional male dominated culture

In study area, there exists Hindu cultural system. In Hindu culture women are fixed to do household work and they have restriction to go and to stay away from the home without male family member. The concept of purity of female make limited for female to be near and to speak without hesitation with unfamiliar person. According to the culture, meeting attend, decision making and participate in public activities are the duty of male not of female. So this is one of the major problems for women's participation development activities.

(ii) Lack of time / Household work load

Higher involvement of women in child rearing, feeding household members and livestock, agriculture works make the women busier. If they participated in meeting and other development activities, they must left their household's works. So lack of time is also major obstacles for women's participation.

(iii) Lack of knowledge about the rules of community forest

Due to the lack of knowledge about the rules of community forest women couldn't share in discussion and decision making process properly. The lack of these knowledge women became passive in CF management activities.

(iv) Poor economic condition

In the study area most of the households are poor. They spend their time for substantial economic activities. Due to the poor economic condition they lack time and education. The poor women must be dependent upon wealthy person for livelihood, so they couldn't share their ideas if the views were against the view and interest of wealthy person, so they couldn't share their ideas if the views were against the view and interest of wealthy person. So poor women have obstacles to participate in Public activities and have problems to share their views independently in meeting. In this way poor economic is one of the major obstacles of women participation.

(v) Lack of Permission to attend meeting

In study area, women are fixed for their duty to clean the house, to make food, to wash clothe sand agricultural works. Mainly newly married bride, daughter-in-law and daughters of family are lack of permission to go public activities due to the concept of purity. If someone wants to participate, it may be problem of permission for her to attend meeting.

(vi) Lack of Empowerment among Female

Females have humiliation feeling in the study area. They feel they are unable than the male for discussion, decision-making and forest rearing due to lack of empowerment. They feel they could not make good relation with district forest staff and they are not capable to do managerial task than male. The humiliation feeling makes the women passive in CF (Community forest) management activities.

(vii) Feeling of needless to participate

Some female's respondents of study area viewed that attend in meeting, discussion, decision-making are the work of male member of CFUG. Male member of community forest user group are capable to manage the community forest. So they feel needless to participate in meeting. This feeling is also a obstacles in women's participation.

(viii) Less chance to keep view for women in every development activities

In the study area male are playing dominant roles in every development activities. In the every meeting they do careless for women and minimize the ability of women. Male used to give less chance to keep view for women. So these causes make women unwilling to participate and didn't want to put their views in meeting. So this is one of the main obstacles of women's participation.

(ix) Illiteracy

Women are more illiterate than male in study area. Illiterate women have problems to read and write the rules, regulations and minutes of the CF meeting. Due to the illiteracy they have problem to learn forest management skills also. Illiteracy is one of the major obstacles of women's participation.

Above mentioned any single causes are not responsible for the low participation of women in CF management activities in the study area. The combination of, all of the causes are main problems for women participation.

5.9 Participation of Women Having the Heterogeneous or Diverse Identities

As already discussed in the literature review section, women's roles, access, rights, position and the involvement in the FUG is determined by the their position and status in community. The socio-cultural background, educational status, economic and the class/ethnicity plays major roles to shape the women's involvement in the community forest management.

The macro government level policy as well as the micro FUG level policy has addressed the need of women's participation in forest resource management like - 'Priority will be given to the poor, women and disadvantaged group of the community (Garib, Mahila tatha bipanna barga lai prathamikta). But it has not addressed and sufficiently recognized the different interest group among the women like poor women, so-called lower caste women (dalit

women) and the socio-economically disadvantaged group's women. The FUG level policy also has repeated the same sentences in their operational plan and the constitution. Those have focused on the representation of the women in management in decision making. But the OP and the constitution have not made specific condition as according to the social diversity and the interest of the all users. It has also categorized women a single interest group supposing all women have same background and characteristics.

This superficial identification of the women as the single category has made the chance of the participation of the women from the dominant social group like the elite class women, high caste women, outspoken and the powerful women of the community. The women representative of the EC so far having the post are from the Brahman and the Chhetri caste. During the interview the other so called lower caste and the ethnic group's women expressed that they are never asked to be the women representative of the forest user group and nobody told them to be an EC member. Although all the women have the same access and right to hold the post and the take the benefit through the forest management, only the socially selected women are offered and accept the post. In other opportunities also same things repeats, like taking the post of the EC. For example the woman who has appeared on the some type of the forest management training in the range post is also from the Brahman caste. On the reaction of that, other women of the communities told that they didn't tell everybody or make discussion even with other users regarding that there are such kinds of the opportunities for the women. Rather they without

informing the women they selected a woman for the training. For this matter the chairperson's view was that although women make comment now for the decisions but they were neither interested nor capable to attend the trainings. Discussion within the few FUG members, we choose the most appropriate women for the trainings. According to the Tharu and the Blacksmith women they don't know that when the FUG formed and how the EC woman member become their representatives. In reality, according to the EC member women first the men of the communities gather at one place they discuss and called only those women whom they like to call. She was also called in such way and requested to be an EC member, not by calling all the women making discussion within them or making selection among them.

Therefore, in practice also there is no involvement of the women having heterogeneous background although the communities are heterogeneous in terms of various characteristics.

The policies are not effective to include all interest groups of women in community forest management. It has indirectly effective the overall women's involvement. If there will be specific provision to participate actively by the all caste/class, economic and education level women, and certainly there will be more women's involvement. Because it will make a suitable environment for all women equal participation even from the socially disadvantaged groups and can maintain the 'equity among women's in community forest management. But neither the policy in the government and the FUG level nor the field practices seem sensitive to make equity

among the women to make the women's involvement better. If the OP of the FUG has made any specific provision and the participatory strategy to apply according to the characteristics of the user women at the FUG level, it can fulfill the gap of the government policy and create a practical approach for the inclusion of the all interest group's women.

5.10 Views of Local people about women's role towards community forest

In this study, views of local people were collected from the key informants and in the course of data collection local people were consulted informally. Various kinds of views were found about the women' role toward the community forest management and other development activities. Views of local people are divided in two parts; positive views and negative views for presentation.

5.10.1 Positive Views about women

Positive views of local people about the role of women are as follows:

- i) Women are also helping to manage community forest.
- ii) Women used to help for forest watchman to conserve forest.
- iii) Women respect and follow KCFUG rules.
- iv) Women can be active if they have chance to do something.
- v) Women used to participate in CF meeting and they share their ideas and used to take part in discussion and decision making process.

Women of study area are positive about community forest. Unless they are busier in their household work , they are helping to manage the forest. Women are actively participating in general meeting of CF and they follow and respect rules, they help for forest guard for forest rearing. They have no experience to take part in discussion in decision making but they are trying to keep their views in CF general meeting. If they have training, awareness programs, get support and encouragement from males they can play active role in forest management and other development activities. They must be included in development activities without gender bias.

5.10.2 Negative views about women.

In the study area, some of the local people's view that women can not play good role for forest management. The negative views do not want to participate in CF meeting.

- i) Women do not want to participate in CF meeting.
- ii) Women have no idea and ability to manage forest.
- iii) Women don't care about public concerns.
- iv) Women must manage their internal household tasks, it is not a duty of women to attend meeting and be active in social development activities.
- v) Women couldn't be able to be active and to play dominant and creative roles even they have chance to do something.
- vi) Women have no wide concept, to manage public concerns without bias.

According to the some local people views, women did not want to participate in development activities. They have no interest about the social development activities. They have no interest about the social development activities including CF management. By tradition, task of women is inside the household and agriculture field. Women are of narrow concept; they couldn't make social issues with neutral way. They couldn't play dominant role in public activities even they have chance to do so.

The negative views about women are affected by the traditional male dominated concept. The strong supporter of traditional male dominant cultural system has negative views about women's role towards public concerns. The next group of local people believes that social development is not possible without proper involvement of women in local development activities including the use and management of resources.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary and Conclusion

Women are taken as an important users and managers in the community forestry. The government policy has also emphasized to their certain percent compulsory representation in CF management. Many exemplary works have been done by women in different part of the country (HMG/N, 2000). But in the studied FUG, very nominal women are taking part in community forestry management and confined only within certain activities. Although FUG's constitution and OP also mentioned that priority will be given to women it doesn't seems being practiced. Practice is going to one way and policy is indicating to another way about the women's involvement in community forestry. Therefore there is the mismatch between the policy and practice.

The study is based on primary and secondary data and the nature of the data is qualitative. Among the total households, only 145 households are chosen by caste or ethnicity for the study. Female respondents were selected for interview and male as well as females were selected according to the convenience for household survey. Key informants and focus group discussion also used to collect information.

The total population of the users of the Kumroj FUG is the total population of this VDC. According to the census 2001, Total

population of Kumroj VDC is 7561. Among them males are 3644 and females are 3917 and average family size is 5.22.

According to the field survey, male literacy rate is 71.18 percent, Female literacy rate is 56.94 percent and total literacy rate is 63.86 percent. In study area, 67.59 percent sampled household heads are male and 32.41 percent household heads are female. In forest resource collection, females involved in firewood collection is 56.25 percent, in grass cutting is 66.07 percent, but male involvement in firewood collection is 15.18 percent, in Grass cutting is 8.03 percent in timber cutting and collection is 79.46 percent. In timber collection hired workers also has been used. In grass and firewood collection participation of female is high.

Participation of women in general meeting of KCFUG is 26.21 percent and participation of males are 73.79 percent. Participation of female in meeting was like audience is high. Taking part actively in general meeting, sharing in decision making and discussion is very low. According to the government policy (master plan, 1988) minimum 1/3 of the committee members must be female but in KCFUG committee there are just 2 female members among 15 members of the total committee.

According to the field study, obstacles for women to participate community forest activities are as follows.

- i) Traditional male dominated culture.
- ii) Lack of time/Household work load.
- iii) Lack of knowledge about community forestry.

- iv) Poor economic condition.
- v) Lack of permission to attend meeting.
- vi) Lack of empowerment.
- vii) Feeling of women needless to participate in public concern.
- viii) Less chance to view for women in every sector of development activities.
- ix) Illiteracy.

According to the field observation and view of all of the respondents the condition of forest is very good compared to the past condition.

In Kumroj CFUG, awareness program are not launched to make women's active involvement in forest management activities and there is male dominated cultural system is existing. So women's involvement in development activities is very low.

The policy has not made the identification of the different interest groups women in CF management but all the women have been considered as a single category. So that policy and implementation strategies of this FUG seems insufficient to make compulsory involvement or pull the women having diverse social identities in CF management. So, policy is ineffective to address social differentiation of women and not sensitive to the heterogeneity of the women with in this single identify as 'women'. Therefore, replacing the reorganization of women a single interest group to women has diverse interest group can be a next important

step of the Policy. In FUG level, strategy having participatory approach not only for the user but having sensitivity to social diversity can include all the interest group's women in community forest management.

6.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the major findings of this study, the following specifics are recommended.

- The peoples who are really involved in the forest resource collection, must be persuaded to attend the general meeting of community forest management.
- Awareness program must be launched both for male as well as female to make active participation of women in forest management level.
- Forest resources mainly timber and firewood must be collected by skillful hired workers and distributed being conscious about family size also.
- Focus should be given to introduce alternative strategies to bring women in to main stream of development in general and their role in decision making process in CF management in specific for gender equity.
- Focus could be made on delivering non-formal education to women of the area so that the importance of CF management for the present as well as for future generation could be well understood.

- Training such as gender and equity training could be organized to increase women's involvement in community forestry and decision-making process.
- Male and Female motivational program should be launched to make man more helpful and feeling of housework is not only of female's duty.
- Female are real user of forest resources and real victims of deforestation. So they must be encouraged in forestry field.
- Empowerment program must provided to female users of CF.
- Literacy program must provided to female users of CF.
- Income generation from forest resources should be launched and opportunity should be given to women users.

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APPENDIX: I

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Date: HHs No: Surveyor Name:

1. VDC Ward No..... Village..... FUG.....

2. Name of Respondent

3. SexAge

4. Education

(i) Literate (ii) Illiterate

If literate, which grade?

5. Occupation

(i) Agriculture (ii) Jyaladari

(iii) HH work (iv) Study

(v) Unemployed

6. Household size and Composition

Age Group	No. in Each age group	Sex		Educational Level	Work/Role in FUG	Remarks
		M	F			
Below 15						
16-30						
31-45						
46-60						
61 Above						
Total						

7. Livestock

CattleBuffaloGoat.....

PigOthers.....

8. Farm Size

KhetBari.....Forest.....

Landless..... (in Khattha)

9. Crop Production

RiceMazeWheat

Potato.....Other.....

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

1. What kinds of knowledge do you possess about the CF policy?
 - a. Forest policy of HMG/N
 - b. Constitution and OP of respective FUG.

2. What is the different between past and present forest management system?

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3. What is the process of women member selection in your community forest?

4. Are you satisfied about the selection process? If yes/No give reasons.
 - (i)
 - (ii)
 - (iii)
 - (iv)

5. What is your opinion about women's role in the forest management committee?
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)

6. What do you think about your (women) role on forest management activities?
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)

7. What do you think about the present forest condition?
 - (a) Increase
 - (b) Decrease
 - (c) As it is
 - (d) Don't know

8. Did you use to participate FUG meeting?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

9. How many times?
 - a) Regularly
 - (b) Sometimes
 - (c) Frequently

10. If you participate in community Forest meeting, How do you participate?
 - (a) like a audience (moral support)
 - (b) Giving Suggestions
 - (c) Discussion
 - (d) Decision Making

11. If no, why don't you participate?
 - (a) Traditional culture (male dominated)
 - (b) Lack of time
 - (c) Lack of knowledge about Community Forest
 - (d) Poor economic condition
 - (e) Lack of Permission to attend meetings
 - (f) Community Forest management model is not good.
 - (g) Due to above a, b, c, d, e and f causes.
 - (h) Unwillingness to participate.

12. Role of Family member/Husband.
 - (a) Local Political Leader
 - (b) Awareness Programs Launched by NGO/INGO
 - (c) Government Policies
 - (d) Self Motivated
 - (e) Family Member/Husband

13. Do you know the Forest executive Committee Member?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No

14. If Yes, what types of relationship they make with common user group?

15. Do you know, how many times the meetings of forest user group held?

- (a) monthly
- (b) 3 monthly
- (c) Once in 6 month
- (d) Once in a year

16. Are you satisfied with the activities of FUG Committee at CF?
17. Do you think the forest should be protected?
18. Please suggest, how management can be improved?
19. In your family, have you taken part in any forest training?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
20. If yes, who have?
 - (a) male
 - (b) Female
 - (c) Both
21. If Female havenot participate in training what is the reason?
 - (a)
 - (b)
22. Have you any awareness program focusing women's participation in CF activity launched by HMG and other NGO/INGO?
23. Lastly, what is your opinion to make women's role effective in forest management activities in particular and community development activities in general?
24. Do you have any comments and suggestion, about it?