

Synthesis Report

Civil Society Perspectives on Long Term Forest Sector Strategy

Rajesh Bista

Niru Gurung

Dil Bahadur Khatri



ForestAction Nepal



FECOFUN

Synthesis report

July, 2011

on
Civil Society Perspectives on Long Term Forest Sector Strategy

Local Development Training Centre, Jawlakhel, Lalipur.
24th July 2011

Organized by:
ForestAction, Nepal
FECOFUN

You can always amend a big plan, but you can never expand a little one. I don't believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation which we can't possibly foresee now.

Harry S. Truman
33rd US president

1. Introduction:

Master Plan for Forest Sector (MPFS) launched in 1989 by then His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) provided long-term strategic direction for forest sector. The long term objectives of this plan were to: 1) Meet the people's basic needs for forest products on a sustained basis; 2) conserve ecosystems and genetic resources; 3) protect land against degradation and other effects of ecological imbalance; and 4) contribute to local and national economic growth. This plan was operationalized with enactment and enforcement of various act and regulations. Mixed results of success of this plan have been reported by sporadic studies, albeit rigorous and independent study is yet to be conducted. Upon termination of its 20 years of period in 2010, there has been growing pressure to Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) for the appropriate replacement of the MPFS with next long-term plan. Because of such constant pressure and realizing the context of transitional political situation of Nepal, MoFSC has initiated the process for preparation of interim forest sector strategy. For this, the ministry has formed a multi-stakeholder committee including representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs). However, there has not been a significant achievement of drafting the interim strategy and MoFSC has not seemed to be pro-active to accelerate the process. On the other hand, the CSOs have been calling for immediate action to review the achievements of previous MPFS and provide strategic direction to the forest sector. In this context, ForestAction and Federation of Community Forest Users' Nepal (FECOFUN) jointly organized a half day workshop to build civil society perspective on long-term forest sector strategy of Nepal. The financial support for the half day workshop held on 24th July 2011 was provided by Rights and Resources Initiatives (RRI). The workshop focused its discussion on the following key questions.

- What were the broader achievements of the MPFS 1988 and what were the aspects it could not do as expected?
- What were the key achievements of MPFS in terms of promoting community based forest management in Nepal?
- How the government is preparing for providing long-term strategy for forestry sector of Nepal?
- What are the concerns of CSOs for upcoming long-term strategy?

2. Participants and program:

A total of 22 participants representing community networks, NGOs, private sector and MoFSC participated in the workshop. The complete list of participants and program schedule is attached in Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively. The following table provides a brief overview of the program (detail of which is provided in Annex 2).

Program	Presenter/Moderator
Paper presentation: Review of achievements and lessons of Master Plan for Forest Sector	Dr. Netra P Timsina
Paper Presentation : Review of Forest Sector Interim Plan development process	Mr. Ram Prasad Lamsal

3. Presentation:

There were two presentations in the workshop. The first presentation was by Dr. Netra Timsina, president of NGO federation of Nepal. He presented the critical review of the MPFS. Similarly, the second presentation was by Mr. Ram Prasad Lamsal, joint secretary of MoFSC who highlighted on the current status of proposed Interim Forestry Strategy. This section summarizes the key message of both presentations.

Review of Master Plan for the Forestry Sector:

The focus of Dr. Netra Timsina's presentation was on the strengths and weaknesses of MPFS and also suggested some strategic ways forward. He pointed out the following achievements of the MPFS.

- Enactment and enforcement of progressive legal framework like the Forest Act, 1993 and Forest Regulation, 1995. These documents have provided legal ground for community forestry (CF) and other community based forest management regimes. Therefore the CSOs still do not want to change the act.
- Empowerment of marginalized communities including women and their inclusive participation in forestry decisions. This has help to symbolize the CF as democratic system in Nepal.
- Formation of robust community organizations – around 17,000 to 18,000 local forestry groups actively managing forests.
- Provision of a platform, through which the initiation of collaboration and coordination has been started.
- Provided space for the networks like FECOFUN, to engage in defending community rights and participate in the policy processes.
- Provided platform for the NGOs to collaborate in the forest sector to strengthen community governance.

However, he also pointed out number of issues that MPFS has not been able to address, which are as follows:

- The foremost one is the degree of acceptance of community forestry by state (bureaucrats) despite of its achievements in many fronts.
- MPFS implementation could not give adequate attention on forest based industries. Its aim of creating 2.5 million job creations has not been met. The policy and legal framework were also not much supportive for the forest based enterprises.

- There has been inadequate coordination with agriculture sector for supporting livelihoods of local people. The MPFS has strengthened the sectoral development undermining the prospects of synergy among the sectors.
- The MPFS seemed to be silent about the governance of the forest sector including that of local forest user groups.
- There have been conflicts among various laws and regulations which have created some negative impacts in the sector.

Dr. Timsina has also highlighted few emerging aspects to be incorporated in the upcoming long-term strategies like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), Pilot Project for Climate Resilience (PPCR), Climate change, Payment for Environment Services (PES) and many more.

Towards his last presentation, he called for a comprehensive study to assess the impact of the MPFS and wider consultation for devising upcoming long-term strategy. The key ways out suggested by Dr Timsina are:

- Land ownership to communities
- Right based approach in forest sector
- Organizational restructuring and reformation for democratizing forest bureaucracy
- Better reorganization of role of CSOs in forest sector with developed capacities
- Need for holistic approach to develop forest sector to address poverty
- Concept of integrated NR management rather than sectoral approach
- Multi-stakeholder mechanisms for policy and implementation
- Enhanced governance (accountability, transparency, real participation etc.)

Progress of developing long-term forest sector strategy

Mr. Ram Prasad Lamsal, Joint Secretary of MoFSC gave presentation about the proposal of Forestry Sector Strategy Development Program (FSSDP). The proposed content of the forthcoming forest sector strategy proposal covered the scope objectives, principles, processes and elements of forthcoming forestry strategy including budget and activities. He also highlighted the key issues related to development of the strategy.

Based on the guiding objectives and scope Mr. Lamsal highlighted the following key considerations for forthcoming forestry sectors strategy.

- Aligning with periodic plan
- Consideration on the suggestion and directives of parliamentary committee
- Necessitating a revision of existing MPFS
- Reviewing other policies
- Conducting research and study
- Embracing multi-stakeholder process

- Restructuring forestry institutions (through O & M study)
- Linking sector, subsector and highlighting inter-sectoral linkages
- Specific policy for different management regimes
- Integrating forestry and REDD
- Bringing private sector together
- Introducing land use policy
- Mainstreaming forest policy into political and development process
- Internalizing international agreements
- Drafting acts and regulations
- Building capacity of policy formulation team
- Addressing changing policy process.

Moreover, the presentation was also focused on how the new strategy will be drafted and how different stakeholders will be engaged up on. He stressed the need for multi-stakeholder process to finalize this strategy. At the end, he also pointed out the challenges and issues for preparing it. He has clarified that the multi-stakeholder forestry program has overshadowed this process.

4. Comments and Discussion:

Participants of the workshop expressed their views representing their own constituency. The discussion was focused around tenure, collective rights, forest management modalities, policies and their implementation and few emerging issues like REDD, PES and climate change.

Collective rights and tenure:

Community rights and tenure got prime position in the discussion. The participants stressed on the need for community ownership in new strategic plan and subsequent policies and regulations. Similarly, they have also put emphasis on ensuring equitable access and rights of local and indigenous people who are completely dependent on natural resources for their livelihood. Few of them also stressed to take into consideration treaties like ILO169 and UN DRIPP.

Productive vs. protection oriented forest management:

The discussion pointed out the need of focus on the productive forest management instead of too much focus on protection. The participants called for the government to devise clear policies and guidelines for productive management of the valuable forest like Terai forest. Concerns were also shown on the need of clear guidelines for declaration of new protected areas.

Policy formulation and implementation:

Few participants pointed out the past experiences of ineffective policy implementation, raised voices to have effective implementation mechanisms. Participants have also criticized the MPFS for not touching upon the issue of structural transformation and democratization of forest sector. There pressing concern was that the forest sector programs should be guided by the long-term strategy instead of other way around.

Similarly, issue of policy formulation has also been raised by participants. They called upon the wider consultation and independent review of previous plan before drafting the next long-term plan. CSOs are happy to participate in the process of forming the new strategy provided they have given adequate space.

Community and forest:

Representatives from FECOFUN, put their voices on the need for more community rights for better forest management. They warned the government for not being regressive in terms of undermining the community rights in the name of monitoring and sharing of revenue. Some of the participants also highlighted for the need of identification of community's role in government manage forest.

Contemporary issues:

Issues like REDD and PES had also got space in the discussion. The participants voice their concerns stressing that the upcoming strategy should provide space for incorporating these issues into the mainstream forest management. In doing so, there should be enough space to CSOs and local communities to participate in the process and rights of locals should be ensured.

5. Conclusion:

Overall, the workshop was fruitful to inform the CSOs about the long-term forest sector strategy. It has provided overview of the achievements and challenges of MPFS and updated about the forthcoming strategy. The participants had shared understanding about need for the consultative multi-stakeholder process for next strategy with key focus on better community rights, institutional reform for making the forest sector democratic, productive management of valuable forests, more private sector engagement and commercialization of the products. Emphasis has been given to develop shadow strategy from the CSOs which can pressurize the government to accelerate the process. To conclude, there has been emphasis for giving more space to the CSOs in forest sector long-term planning and policy processes.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Rights and Resources Institute (RRI) for financial support and FECOFUN for their contribution in organizing the event. Thanks to all the participants for devoting time and providing valuable inputs. Similarly, we are grateful to Dr. Naya Sharma Paudel for facilitating the event, and Lalit Thapa, Anju Khad for logistic support.

Annex-1: List of participant

S. N	Name	Organization	Email	Phone
1	Netra Timsina	NGO Federation	nptimsina@gmail.com	9851000633
2	Tulashi P. Adhakari	FECOFUN	tulashiadhakari@gmail.com	9851044712
3	Nayna Jhaveri	RRI	njhaveri@rightsandresources.org	
4	Brikha Shahi	FECOFUN	birhashahi@gmail.com	9851124316
5	Bina Shrestha	COFSUN, Nepal	binabhojpur@yahoo.com	9841326697
6	Bhola Khatiwada	COFSUN, Nepal	bholacofsun@gmail.com	9841347450
7	Apsara Chapagain	FECOFUN	chapagainap@yahoo.com	9851086515
8	Bhim Prakash Khadka	FECOFUN		9843013062
9	Rama Ale Magar	Himawanti, Nepal	himawanti@gmail.com	9851102808
10	Ramu Subedi	Service Support Unit, SDC	r-subedi@msfp.org.np	9851034720
11	Khim Ghale	Nepalese Federation of Indigenous Nationalities	khimghale@gmail.com	9841068994
12	Krishna Murari Bhandary	Freelance Journalist	bhandarykm@gmail.com	9841277596
13	Ganesh Karki	FECOFUN	karkign@gmail.com	9851119561
14	Dil Bhadur Khatri	ForestAction	khatriadb@gmail.com	9841277596
15	Dinesh P. Wagle	Federation of Nepal Forest Based Industry and Trade	feufitnepal@gmail.com	9857063115
16	Bharati Pathak	FECOFUN	bharatipathak2006@yahoo.com	9851113829
17	Ram Prashad Lamsal	Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation	rplamsal@yajoo.com	9851019316
18	Naya Sharma Poudel	ForestAction	naya@forestaaction.org	
19	Bharat Pokharel	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation	bharat.pokharel@helvetasnepal.org.np	9851062002
20	Rajesh Bista	ForestAction	raajibista@gmail.com	
21	Niru Gurung	ForestAction	niru@forestaction.org	9803229391
22	Ganga Dahal	RRI		

Annex 2: Programme schedule

Civil Society Perspectives on Long- term Forest Sector Strategy

24 July, 2011

LDTA, Jawlakhel

Time	Program	Responsibility
8:30	Registration, breakfast	
9:00	Welcome, introduction of participants, objectives of workshop	Bharati Pathak or Ganesh Karki
	Chair	Apsara Chapagain
9:20	Paper presentation: review of achievements and lessons of Master Plan for Forest Sector	Netra Timsina
9:40	Paper presentation: Review of Forest Sector Interim Plan development process	Ram Prasad Lamsal
10:00	Questions, clarifications	
10:20	Tea	
10:35-12:30	Plenary discussion based on 2-3 key given questions	Moderated by Naya Sharma Paudel
12:30	Wrap up, lunch	