

Editorial

Countries in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region have historically taken diverse initiatives towards sustainable forest management (SFM) aimed at conserving critical ecosystems. To protect resources by regulating access to these resources, indigenous people and local communities of the HKH region have developed diverse and well-established norms and procedures. Given the rich diversity in ecology and society in the region, the specific institutional and technological practices and innovations are also diverse. At the same time, most of the countries in the region have also actively involved in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) readiness process.

REDD+ has been identified as the cheap and fast scheme to climate change mitigation. In addition to many traditional forestry projects, several newly initiated REDD+ projects are now being implemented in the HKH region since the last few years. Such projects have been producing important scientific, policy and practical lessons useful for the improvement of the current and future initiatives related to REDD+ and sustainable management of forest. However, lessons from such projects are not well documented and shared widely, constraining the potential contribution of such initiatives in policy, practice and scientific arenas. Against this backdrop, ForestAction Nepal in collaboration with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is pleased to publish this special issue of the Journal of Forest and Livelihood entitled, “*REDD+ in Hindu Kush Himalaya*”.

The nine papers in this Special Issue discuss about REDD+ practices from four countries in the HKH region namely Bhutan, India, Myanmar, and Nepal. Two papers focus on Myanmar, three on Nepal, and one each on Bhutan and India. Moreover, two papers in this Special Issue compare and contrast the national REDD+ strategies and Forest Reference Levels (FRLs) in multiple HKH countries.

Myanmar's forest management system, timber production and trade have been criticised for being exclusionary and responsible for forest loss in the country. In this context, the paper by Banikoi *et al.* shows that Myanmar's strive for SFM through a value chain approach can serve as an example for other countries in the HKH. Additionally, Basnet *et al.* recommend the establishment of community forestry management system for improving forest condition and livelihood opportunities. The paper by Bhattarai *et al.* focusing on the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (D&D) in Mizoram of India show that forest ecosystems and drivers of D&D vary across countries and regions, and even within countries. For this reason, developing a subnational level REDD+ plan in consultation with local stakeholders will support in REDD+ readiness as well as implementation at the local level. In addition, the authors argue that addressing drivers of D&D following this process plays a bridging role between the local and national level for the implementation of REDD+ activities. In Nepal, the inclusion of the gender issue in REDD+ (Bhandari *et al.*) and strengthening subnational capacities (Chand *et al.*) are crucial for successful REDD+ implementation. Furthermore, Laudari *et al.* show how REDD+ in Nepal has been institutionalised at the sub-national level by stimulating the existing enablers and addressing associated issues hand in hand. The paper by Amatya *et al.* focuses on how Bhutan has

shifted to accommodate to the needs of the diverse contemporary global requirements by adopting a multi-purpose and holistic forest health monitoring system in the form of the National Forest Inventory. Finally, two papers in this issue (Karki *et al.*, and Poudel and Poudel) compare and contrast the processes and contents of the REDD+ strategies and FRLs in India, Myanmar, and Nepal. These papers show that whilst there are standard procedures that are expected to be followed while structuring their REDD+ strategies and FRLs, their national contexts and capacities play a vital role in their choices of methodologies and overall processes.

We are hopeful that this Special Issue will contribute to building a REDD+ bridge between the wealth of experiences at the local level in managing forest resources and land-use change, and ideas on REDD+ policy frameworks and incentive programs within the HKH region. This is important because REDD+ will be successful to the extent that it creatively integrates successful and transparent instruments and lessons into new policy approaches of how to cooperatively manage natural resources and the pressures on them, and how to share burdens and benefits.