

# Working Title of the Book: Community Forestry in Nepal: Four Decades of Practice, Evolution, and Transformation

## Call for Chapter Proposals

### Scope and aims

Over the past four decades, Nepal's community forestry (CF) has evolved from an initial subsistence-oriented and informal practice to a complex system of local forest governance. Today, a variety of community based forest management models and practices are found across the country, which have evolved to accommodate changing preferences of local people and other stakeholders, as well as to adjust to shifting policy priorities in Nepal's forest and environmental sectors. While numerous studies have been produced on social, ecological, political, and environmental aspects of Nepal CF, there are too few up to date and comprehensive book-level publications that capture the most recent advances of Nepal CF across all key dimensions. Plethora of scientific articles offer insights into specific social or ecological aspects but interdisciplinary synthesis of Nepal CF research is rare. Particularly lacking is a book written in cross-disciplinary and accessible style that could inform community leaders, students, practitioners, policy actors, and researchers. Besides, most published work are framed in specific disciplinary interests rather than offering a practice-oriented synthesis of knowledge. Nepal CF literature too often overlooks – if not actively ignores - experiential wisdom of practitioners which has underpinned the actual evolution and transformation of Nepal's globally hailed community forestry development.

The proposed book "Community Forestry in Nepal: Four Decades of Practice, Evolution, and Transformation" will present a comprehensive review of Nepal's community forestry experience using a cross-disciplinary and practice-oriented approach. Through such a review of experiences and insights to date, the book offers critical insights into how CF systems can be better governed and managed in the light of changing contexts and new drivers impacting forest and people relationship in the country. The book offers new ways to understand and imagine community forestry through a critical synthesis of key achievements, successes, innovations as well as in-depth exploration of issues, challenges, and limitations. This book is

unique in that it draws on both high quality research and deeply engaged experiential reflections of those involved in promoting CF at different stages of its evolution. Its cross-disciplinary approach and focus on communicating key lessons and insights from practice also differentiates it from other work. It offers an analysis of CF in relation to the changing economic, social and political, environmental, and technological contexts, whilst also exploring possible future options for inclusive, sustainable and effective management of forest products and ecosystem services. Nepal CF evidence will also be cross-referenced to similar work around South Asia where relevant, thus enabling wider international audience to benefit from the rich and complex trajectory of CF development in Nepal. The book's insights will be relevant to policy and practice across several Sustainable Development Goals, as well as community oriented initiatives on climate resilience and biodiversity conservation within and beyond Nepal.

This book takes a critical and historical approach to the analysis of Nepal's community forestry, building on the large body of knowledge and evidence that has emerged over the past four decades. It will advance the analysis towards offering practical ways forward for community groups, service providers and regulators to re-organise governance, planning, and management operations in the changing context of Nepal. The book recognises the rapidly changing context of community livelihoods and the role of forested landscapes in Nepal and seek to provide fresh insights as how community forestry should move forward in future. The presentation of Nepal story in this book will be equally relevant to readers interested in the role of community in environmental management across the developing world.

## Themes

The book offers critical historical review as well as contemporary analysis of most significant threads and themes in the development of CF. These include:

**Theme 1: Silviculture and forest management:** Community forestry is primarily about forest management and application of silvicultural techniques. Over time, forest management practices have evolved to include timber as well as variety of non-timber forest products. These practices have emerged in response to diverse forest types, conditions, community needs and adopted various combinations of scientific, traditional, indigenous and local knowledges. Participatory technology development in forest management has also gained prominence. There are also issues and debates related to scientific versus other approaches to forest management, which have given rise to alternative and third way ideas applicable for community-based forest management in Nepal. The thematic synthesis chapters will present in overview of these forest management and silviculture in Nepal's community forestry. Research and case study chapters can focus on any one or multiple aspects of forest management and silviculture to report specific insights, findings and lessons that are of importance to community

groups, agencies and programs supporting community forestry and development, and policy makers.

**Theme 2: Institutions and policy:** This theme covers local institutions as well as policies developed and implemented by the government to support and regulate community forestry. Community forestry's policy and institutional landscape has become complex over the past 40 years. Institutions vary in terms of size, scale of organisations, forms of collective actions, modalities of representing women and disadvantaged groups, decision making processes, planning practices and so on. Diverse policy and regulations have emerge to offer contextually differentiated options for institutions – such as collaborative forest management in the Terai, conservation oriented community forestry in buffer zones surrounding the protected areas, and incentives for biodiversity conservation. Proposals are welcome for 1-2 thematic chapters, one covering local level institutions, and the other covering national and sub-national level policies and regulations. Policy synthesis chapter should capture most recent federal governance reforms, including the emergence and involvement of provincial and local governments in supporting and regulating community forestry practices. Multiple case study and research chapters can cover any aspects of policy and institutions in relation to community forestry, or a combination of policy and institutional aspects. Research related to local government and community forestry interface will be particularly welcome.

**Theme 3: Market and entrepreneurship:** With the rapid shift in livelihoods from subsistence agriculture to more diversified strategies involving jobs, migration, remittance, and enterprises, there has been profound changes in community forestry in terms of market penetration and entrepreneurial orientations in thinking and management of community forests. Numerous initiatives have emerged to demonstrate models of community forestry enterprises and several national and subnational programs have explicitly supported community-based timber and non-timber enterprises. These initiatives include diversity of ownership structures, often explicitly targeting the poor and the marginalized groups. They have targeted various product sub-sectors, at times linking some specialized products (such as essential oils) to overseas markets. With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting migration for overseas jobs, there is a renewed interest in agroforestry enterprises and natural product entrepreneurship. Growing eco-tourism industry has also provided a boost towards enterprise-oriented management of forested landscapes. However, community forestry's response to this market potential has been slow, and quite a few experimental work have not led to success. This situation demands a critical scrutiny of the existing policies and practices and offer a direction for promoting forest-based trade and entrepreneurship. A thematic chapter will synthesize key trends and practices in enterprise and entrepreneurship around community forestry. Multiple case study and research chapters will cover specific aspects of forest-based enterprises community forestry and rural economy.

**Theme 4: Environmental sustainability:** Natural and anthropogenic factors have fundamentally changed the forest ecology and landscapes. Climate change has impacted forest landscapes and

at the same time mitigation projects have put forests back into the center of climate change. Values of forest ecosystem services are being recognized, marking a shift away from conventional timber centric management. As interactions between communities and ecosystems change, the new prospects for or challenges of biodiversity conservation have also emerged. In this context, it is useful to know how Nepal's community forestry has fared in terms of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and resilience building, and the promotion of ecosystem services. Also relevant is the analysis of how community forestry can better lead to environmental sustainability. One or two synthesis chapters are invited to provide an assessment of community forestry from environmental sustainability point of view. Likewise, case study or research chapters can include specific aspects of climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and adaptation strategies.

**Theme 5: Equity, Inclusion, and Gender:** The community in Nepal's community forestry is not homogenous. Over 100 ethnic groups and languages as well as multiple caste groups intersect with highly entrenched gendered roles, social norms, identities and differentiations. As a result, women and disadvantaged groups have been marginalized in decision making in community forestry. The questions of 'fair' distribution of livelihood benefits as well as 'fair' representation in community forestry practice are not settled. Nepal's community forestry has evolved in these complex social dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, and a wide range of policy and practice based interventions have emerged to address gender imbalance and social exclusion with regard to decision making in and benefit sharing from community forestry. Women's knowledge on management of the forest resources have been too often ignored, while the poorest members of the community struggle to get a fair share of benefits from community forests. In the recent years, the dynamics of gender relationship and social exclusion have been reshaped by new drivers, such as the outmigration of men, changing livelihood patterns, the arrival of federal governance. The recent COVID-19 context and the economic stresses have sparked new discussions around how gender and social equity can be enhanced to strengthen the resilience of women headed and the poorer households in the community. In this context, proposals are invited for 1-2 overall synthesis chapters, as well as for multiple case studies/research reports chapters covering specific aspects of gender equality and social inclusion in community forestry.

**Theme 6. Transforming Community Forestry.** Community forestry has come to a new crossroads as many aspects of the underlying contexts have changed compared to the time of the inception of this approach. Chapters in the previous five sections will reveal adaptation of community forestry to changing contexts and also identify areas of critical disconnect between the practice of community forestry and the wider contexts. Under this theme (6), we invite chapters which outline ways, strategies, planning, management practices, technologies, and systems for transforming community forestry in the changing political, environmental, social and economic contexts. As such, this theme is about reimagining systems and practices for community forestry so as to deliver inclusive and sustainable outcomes in future. Chapters may take holistic approach to answering what reimaginings are necessary or focus

on one or multiple aspects where CF needs transformation. Only one synthesis chapter and 2-3 research or case study chapters will be included.

## Types of papers

We are inviting researchers and practitioners to submit chapter proposals on any of the above five themes outlined above. The chapters should directly reflect the book's overall approach as outlined above, and authors are advised to present a critical and reflective analysis through cross-disciplinary lens, offering conceptual and practice-oriented insights with clear messages for policy audiences.

Specifically, we are looking for two types of contributions under each theme:

**1) Thematic synthesis paper:** This type of contribution will provide critical and reflective review research findings and policy and experiential insights from National perspective, highlighting historical evolution of CF development in one of the five thematic aspects, and synthesising most important advances in the thematic area. It will also summaries important issues and challenges in relation to the theme in question, and identify possible scenarios. The paper should clearly contextualize the work in relation to changing socio-economic situations and emerging environmental change. It should also outline policy priorities considering past lessons and future challenges. We will accept 1-2 synthesis papers and you may choose to focus on specific sub-themes within the given theme – e.g or focusing on silviculture under Theme 1, or focusing on gender on under Theme 5. Thematic chapters should not be longer than 7000 words, excluding figures and references.

**2) Case study or research reports:** This type of contribution is designed to showcase critical and reflective research or case study on any of the five themes mentioned above. You are encouraged to present your research or case report in an accessible way so that the messages of your work are clearly communicated. Case study or research reports should not be longer than 4000 words, excluding figures and references.

## Submitting a chapter proposal

Your proposal should cover the following:

- A clearly communicable title
- An abstract of not over 200 words
- Tentative section outlines
- 3 important messages (each not over 50 words) that you want to convey through your chapter.

Please submit your chapter proposal by 15 December 2021. Selected chapter authors will be notified (lead author) by 30 December 2021. Final chapters are due by April 2022.

Email for submission of the chapter proposal: [rahul@forestaction.org](mailto:rahul@forestaction.org), with a copy to [hemant.ojha@canberra.edu.au](mailto:hemant.ojha@canberra.edu.au)

## About the book

The editorial work is coordinated with support from the project “Enhancing livelihoods from improved forest management in Nepal (EnLiFT 2)”, which is a forestry research project with funding assistance from the Government of Australia through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The editorial board of the book includes:

- Hemant Ojha (University of Canberra)
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We look forward to receiving your chapter proposal.

Editor-in-Chief  
Hemant Ojha