

Strengthening pro poor for their livelihood enhancement through effective community forestry fund mobilization

1. BACKGROUND

Nepal's geography is the barrier for economic development and the remoteness contributed for poverty. In addition, Nepal has long political transition and faced harsh condition of economic blockage and terror of earthquake with loss of huge physical property as well as human lives. All these has contributed towards increasing poverty of Nepal by 7 % and became 28.63 % (National Planning Commission, 2017). Poverty alleviation has been a key focus for the government in a planned way since the inception of 8th five-year plan of the country. Despite several efforts, the achievement till the date has not been so encouraging due the limited contribution of various sectors including forestry. It was envisioned that forestry sector will have significant contribution to national poverty reduction. Community based forest management (CBFM) was introduced to improve the livelihood of forest dependent communities. The key feature of CBFM is sustainable utilization of forest products as means for livelihood enhancement.

Nepal is considered as an example for CBFM initiatives. Community Forestry is a dominant forest management regime. Till date, 22,266 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) are managing 2,237,670.52 hectares of National forest; more than 2,907,871 households have benefited (DoF, 2018). Despite seemed attractive facts and figures, pro poor of the CFUGs are still not mainstreamed in terms of economic development and social empowerment. Guidelines for Community Forestry Development Program 2011 has been a key to focus on such marginalized and poor households with the clear statement that at least 35 percent of the CFUGs fund should be invested in livelihoods enhancement activities for pro poor users. However, most of the funds were used for community development activities in general with focusing more on road construction and education support. Though it is clearly stated in the guidelines, the ineffective implementation and weak monitoring has not resulted in expected outcomes till date. Some communities are also spending their fund to construct temples and other religious activities rather investing on enhancement of pro poor livelihood opportunities. A study conducted by Hariyo Ban Project in five districts and 15 CFUGs reflects that, the area of expenditure in poverty reduction and pro-poor livelihood program was only 22% while in forest protection and development (35 %), infrastructure, social development (21%), administrative (17 %) and miscellaneous (5 %) (COFSUN & FECOFUN, 2014). The expenditure amount in livelihood is only 13 % which is lower than the amount mentioned in provision (35%).

2. JUSTIFICATION

Nepal's half (53%) of the population live on poverty line in 2003-04 and made significant progress achieving the first MDG reducing to 25% poor people in 2011-12. Despite this, Nepal still is the second poorest country in the Asia and 18th in the world (IMF, 2014). In 2015, earthquake caused great loss to Nepal pushing growth down and added 3% more poor. CF has played imported role in rehabilitation of earthquake victims providing construction materials for housing and others.

Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) is a vital pool of biological resource and important for landscape conservation approach. The livelihood style of community and their participation in conservation is crucial. According to CBS 2017, the poverty of Province no 5 and 7 are 29.92 % and 33.56 % respectively. Mostly fund allocation is only in documents. A study in 15 CFUGs of five districts in Midwestern Nepal reflects that, 22% fund was invested LIP (COFSUN & FECOFUN, 2014) which is 13% lower than the provision i.e. 35%. There is clear gap and need of facilitation and support to both the CF committee and the poor for their livelihood enhancement. Therefore, the proposed project is highly relevant to enhance forest based pro poor's livelihood.

3. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The main goal of this project is to strengthen pro poor for their livelihood enhancement through the sustainable utilization of forest resource in the community forests. The specific objectives of the program are:

- To empower the poor members/users of the communities making them able to claim their rights provided by the policy, rules and regulations of CF;
- To identify the needs and interest of pro poor and facilitate them in the development of livelihood improvement plan
- To strengthen local capacity to develop and implement the LIP
- To facilitate in reflection of the learning to other CFUGs.

4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES:

The proposed project will be implemented in Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts in coordination of Division Forest Office (DFO), FECOFUN, CFUGs and other relevant stakeholders.

Following specific activities will be conducted to achieve the project objectives and goal.

Activity 1. Identification of CFUGs for project implementation and joint commitment

- CFUGs will be selected for the project in support with following discussions with the DFO, FECOFUN district chapter, COFSUN district chapter, DFO and relevant. Final selection of the CFUGs will be made after reviewing the resource of CFUG, limited capacity for preparation and implementation of LIP and need for livelihood support. In the same meeting, joint commitment from DFO and District FECOFUN to ensure support and facilitate on the allocation 35 percent fund for ultra pro poor within the CFUGs. Five CFUGs will be selected from each of four districts of TAL (Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts) for the project implementation.

Activity 1.2 CFUG level orientation

CFUG level orientation will be conducted by forest facilitators in each CFUGs of the working area. CFUGs will be oriented on major provisions of CF guidelines, CCA and DRR guidelines, capacity enhancement of pro poor user group, preparation of plan for livelihood enhancement and other important provisions

Activity 2 Facilitator selection and Capacity enhancement

- The forestry facilitators will be selected on the basis of following criteria:

Activity 2.1 Selection of forestry facilitators

The forestry facilitators will be selected in co-ordination with COFSUN, DFO and FECOFUN.

- Criteria for forestry facilitator's selection
 - At least 50% representation of women, dalits and marginalized community.
 - At least SLC passed or forestry facilitators skill test level 1 passed.
 - Experience of community forestry will be preferable.
 - Having willingness to work in community forestry sector.

Activity 2.2 Facilitators training- 3 days

- Selected facilitators and CFUG representative will be trained by expert trainer.

- The training will be focused on CFDP Guideline 2011 and 35% fund mobilization for livelihood enhancement as mentioned in the provisions of CFDP Guideline, (Revised) 2011.
- The training will be conducted on theoretical as well as practical approach.

-One Skilled Forestry facilitator will be selected from each project district. They will be oriented to develop capacity on CF Guideline orientation, Participatory Well-being Ranking, review reflection and effective conversation skill etc. Capacity enhancement training for the FFs will be organized for 3 days.

Activity 2.3 Mobilization of forestry facilitators (FF)

The selected forestry facilitators will be mobilized to facilitate in the revision/preparation of OP of the CF addressing the LIP for the pro poor. They will facilitate poor to prepare the LIP and also facilitate executive committee for the allocation of budget of CF for the LIP along with the implementation of LIP and OP.

Activity 3.1 Pro poor sub group formation and empowerment

Proposed project aims to form a pro poor group in each working CFUGs. The procedure of pro poor identification will be made through Participatory Well-being Ranking. The idea behind the pro poor sub group formation is to unite voice of poor to demand their rights from user committee. The pro poor group will play supplementary role for allocation and mobilization of 35 percent fund for livelihood improvement as per CF Guideline. At least 5 pro poor from each CFUGs will be selected for the livelihood enhancement program. Following steps will be followed during this process:

- 5 relative ultra pro poor from the CFUG members list will be selected on the basis of PWBR from each CFUGs of the working areas.
- The selected pro poor will be oriented on the CF guideline and the provisions for the livelihood enhancement as per the guideline.
- The initial income and expenditure of the selected pro poor will be recorded.
- The need, interest and capacity of the pro poor will be analyzed.

Activity 3.2 Livelihood improvement plan preparation orientation

The facilitators will facilitate the pro poor for preparing Livelihood improvement plan. They will coach and identify the interest of the pro poor for making effective LIP. They will be mobilized for regular monitoring and support along with facilitating the fund allocation of community forest.

Activity 3.3 Household level livelihood improvement plan preparation and implementation

For every ultra pro poor households, separate LIP will be prepared and will be supported financially by respective CFUG as per the allocated fund. The project also supports them partial finance for the LIP implementation. Household level livelihood improvement plans will be made based on the interest, capacity and market access of relative ultra pro poor household. Following steps will be carried out for this purpose.

- Household survey (pro poor) and empowerment
- Record of initial income and expenditure of the selected poor.
- Capacity and interest assessment of poor household.
- LIP with business plan in collaboration with other supporter agencies.

- Sharing with pro poor sub-group and user committee.
- Submission of the plan to the CFUGs.

The facilitators will be mobilized to assess and selected pro-poor.

Activity 4. Sharing Project's learnings

The lesson learned and success story of the project after the completion will be done at national level to disseminate the project's learnings to the public which will be helpful in the replication in other CFUGs of the district.

Activity 5. Report writing and submission

The mid term and final technical report will be prepared and submitted including all the interventions, outcomes and learnings. Financial proposal will also be submitted along with bills and vouchers.

5. EXPECTED PROGRAM OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

From the proposed project, following outcomes could be expected to be observed:

- Skilled team of Forestry Facilitators (FFs) will be developed;
- The selected pro poor household will be capable of accessing internal (35 percent of the CFUG income) and external resources for the operation of feasible enterprises and will reduce their poverty and deprivation.
- Community forestry's contribution on livelihood enhancement will be remarkable.
- Prepared and implemented LIP.
- Empowered pro poor for the development of LIP based on the guideline and its implementation.
- Developed process on fund mobilization for livelihood enhancement.
- Each CFUG will have allocated 35 percent fund mobilization as per the CF guideline within the CF.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The monitoring and evaluation of the project will be done in following two steps.

- Outgoing Monitoring
 - Joint monitoring by COFSUN, DOF and FECOFUN.
 - The indicators of monitoring will be based on the activities from the beginning till the end of the project.
 - Forestry facilitators monitor and facilitate the poor for conducting project activities.

- Output level monitoring

The output level monitoring will be done with the help of pre-assessment and post assessment of the pro poor households. The pre and post assessment form will be developed at the beginning of the project. With the analysis of the pre and post assessment will show the success or failure of the project. The documentation of the events will be done and mid-term progress report will be submitted. Lastly, the final report of the project will be submitted after the completion of the project.

The other regular monitoring will be done in the household level livelihood improvement plan implementation with the support of CF fund and regular coaching with review reflection. The effectiveness of the fund mobilization will also be monitored and coaching will be carried out. The joint evaluation and impact assessment will be made periodically.

7. COORDINATION

An effective project implementation model will be developed primarily led by DFO to ensure effective coordination with all relevant stakeholders and government ownership of the project. Effective mobilization of the forest facilitators will ensure that the project does not add additional burden on the DFO and key points for coordination required for the project. The project will be in integration of annual program of the DFO which will sustain monitoring the activities of CFUGs beyond the project life.

8. SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental and social impacts of the project implementation is the most important for the project's benefit. The implementation of the LIP based on the forestry may have negligible impact on environment degrading of the forest with the use of the forest products. However, forest degradation will be reduced with sustainable forest management. The harvesting forest product will be based on the OP of CF approved by the DFO. So, this project will certainly maintain the good environmental condition of the project area with healthy forest.

The LIP of the project is only designed for the pro poor of CFUG which creates the source of income supporting their livelihood. The capacity building and orientation of the guideline empower the users and executive committee providing them knowledge and benefits of implementation of the project. The project will give the priority to the women, Dalits, IPs and other marginalized people of the community making them prior beneficiaries.

9. BENEFICIARIES

The proposed project will be implemented in 5 CFUGs of in each proposed districts of TAL (Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur Districts). So, the community forestry users of the 20 CFs will be benefitted through this project implementation. The project considers allocation of the CF's fund for the livelihood improvement program and strengthen the poor for the implementation of LIP. This project will directly benefit to 100 poor through sustainable resource utilization of forests benefitting women, dalit, IPs and other marginalized groups of people. The project will simultaneously benefit all members of 20 CF.

10. Budget

The estimate budget of the project is USD 49,920.

SN	Description	Unit	Rate in USD	Quantity	Amount in USD
1	Forestry Facilitators Orientation Training	Nos	\$80	4	\$320
2	Community Forest User Group Orientation	Nos	\$100	20	\$2,000
3	Participatory Well Being Ranking	Nos	\$80	20	\$1,600
4	Pro Poor Capacity Building	Nos	\$150	100	\$15,000
5	Livelihood Improvement Plan preparation	Nos	\$140	100	\$14,000
6	Support in LIP implementation	Nos	\$170	100	\$17,000
Total Budget					\$49,920