"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."

—Native American Proverb

Reframing local institutions:
Linking justice & sustainability for food security in Nepal
Question:

Whether and how responsive are local community forestry institutions in Nepal to enhance justice and sustainability outcomes for food security?

Conclusions:

1. Local institutions have failed to enhance justice and sustainability outcomes in Nepalese community forestry;
2. This failure is due to the continuation of: a) conventional knowledge, b) top-down regulation, & c) practice flaws;
3. Deliberative champions are needed for ‘reframing local institutions so that so-called ‘participatory policies’ can actually work to enhance justice & sustainability for food security.
Inequity & elite capture (Shrestha, 2011), participatory exclusion (Agrawal, 2009)

No contribution to food security:
- Expansion of community forestry have posed restrictions on fodder production and grazing (Dhakal et al., 2010, Thoms, 2008)
- Contributed to declined number of cattle per household (Dhakal et al., 2010, Thoms, 2008)

Celebrated success (by many):
Environmental conservation
Community forestry context in Nepal …

• Celebrated community forestry (CF) > 18,000 user groups
• Protection-oriented forest management
• Elite capture
• REDD+ & community forestry

Broader context …

• Food insecurity & poverty
• Remittance economy
• Social hierarchy & exclusion
• Increasing urbanisation
• Political uncertainty
• Large dependence on foreign aid – India & China
Research approach – Institutions for equitable food security?

- Critical ACTION RESEARCH
  - Participatory
  - Critical
  - Pragmatic

Research methods:
- Literature review
- Review of policy and legal documents
- Case studies of community forest user group (operational plans of six selected forest user groups)

ACIAR project (2013 – 18): Research in progress

Political ecology (Blaufie and Brookfield, 1984; Forsyth, 2003)
New Economic Sociology (Polanyi, 1944; Granovetter 1985)
Communicative planning and action (Habermas, 1984; Forrester, 1999)
Deliberative governance (Fischer, 2003; Dryzek, 2008)
Actor-oriented approach (Long and Long, 1992)
CF institutions & equitable food security
ACIAR project
Framework for Analysis:

Institutions
- Actors
- Voice
- Resource management, development

Processes
- Production
- Distribution
- Use
- Marketing

Drivers
- History: path dependency
- Ecology: space, constraints, resources
- Culture: knowledge, values
- Economy: markets
- Scale: embeddedness, interactions

Outcomes
- Equitable Access to Land, Forest, Food and Livelihoods
**Historical approach**
- Define time scale
- Identify and document trends, patterns & lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1957</td>
<td>Nationalization of forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1957 - 1978</td>
<td>Until early forms of CF initiated through Panchayat Forestry Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1978 - 1995</td>
<td>When the new Forest Act was enforced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1995 till now</td>
<td>Diverse actors, complex field, diverse issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning from deliberation at work ...

- Identify key actors
- Interact with actors to identify issues and opportunities related to voice, representation, accountability & deliberation
- Synthesise & document common and conflicting priorities among actors
civic voices ...
3 fundamental issues

- 1. Issues of knowledge
- 2. Issues of policy & regulation
- 3. Issues of practice
Local institutions facilitate the implementation of mainstream forestry science focused on enhancing bio-mass productivity, revenue and biodiversity (Westoby, 1979; Kennedy et al. 2001), not on food, food justice etc.

Local forestry institutions implementing Nepal’s approach to forest management: Declaration of 23% forest area as protected area, & timber-focused management other areas (even in the community managed forests)

Undermined differential local concerns relating to forest for food security (Dhakal et al., 2010)
Institutions are embedded within the broader policy framework focused on: revenue and expansion of forest areas through aforestation.

- Forest legislation prohibits the use of forest land for agriculture production [and no explicit focus on agroforestry and food security].

- Implementation framework is more restrictive for food security (i.e. Forest Regulation prohibits to grow cash crops in forest land and requires too many steps to harvest and trade timber).

- No explicit provision on production and use of wild foods inside forests.
Issues of practice: Complex & fragmented institutions

- MOFSC/DOF
- MOAC/DOA
- MOAC/DOLD
- National level

- DFO
- DADO
- DLDO
- District level

- RP
- CP
- SC-A
- SC-L

- Village level

- livestock
- Agriculture, Forestry and AF Group
- CFUG
Local forestry rules restrict food production possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection of ground grass</th>
<th>Grazing</th>
<th>Fodder management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass collection is allowed in specified time period</td>
<td>Grazing is prohibited in most of the CFs and provision of fine if rules are violated</td>
<td>Provision to promote fodder but no explicit plan on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some forest groups have provision to promote improved grass</td>
<td>Provision of rotational grazing in 2 local groups in specified forest block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Conventional forestry mindset foresters and local power relations prevail in forest groups rule making process (Operational Plan)
What’s really happening with local institutions?

It’s a “Double-edge sword”

On one hand,
Local institutions are providing much needed services to the local community and forests with a view to enhance equity & sustainability;

On the other hand,
Local institutions are constrained by conventional knowledge system, regulation and implementation flaws to consider food potential of forests.

There is a ‘LOST OPPORTUNITY’ to enhance justice & sustainability
What can be done about it?

1. Rethinking of orthodox forestry science
2. Democratisation of bureaucracy
3. New form of collaboration: linking research, policy & practice

Local institutions in CBNRM

Food security & embedded in social & political factors

PROCESS

OUTCOMES

Justice
- Critical engagement & Adaptive management

Decentralisation in NRM

Sustainability

1. Rethinking of orthodox forestry science
2. Democratisation of bureaucracy
3. New form of collaboration: linking research, policy & practice

DELIBERATIVE CHAMPIONS needed for LOCAL INSTITUTIONS
Conclusions

• Local institutions have failed to facilitate the equitable & sustainable food security in Nepal;

• Yet, Nepal has hardly any choice but to open up forestry system for promoting sustainable food production and equitable access.

• However, the current knowledge, regulation & practice does the opposite, largely restrictive of the food values of the forest.

• Institutional fragmentation between forestry and agriculture, as well as corresponding knowledge across these two sectors, seriously affect the prospect of enhancing food security
Acknowledgement:

Dil B. Khatri
Hemant Ojha
Naya S Paudel
Govinda Paudel

EnLift Nepal Project

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