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# Shreechhap Deurali CFUG

A case study of CFUG governance, planning and gender

(Revised in 25th April 2023)



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# **Shreechhap Deurali CFUG**

## **A case study of CFUG governance, planning and gender**

(Revised in 25th April 2023)

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# List of Acronyms

|          |                                                      |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------|
| CF       | Community Forest                                     |
| CFOP     | Community Forest Operational Plan                    |
| CFUG     | Community Forest User Group                          |
| COVID-19 | Corona Virus Disease                                 |
| DFO      | Division Forest Office                               |
| EC       | Executive Committee                                  |
| EnLiFT2  | Enhancing Livelihood from Improved Forest Management |
| FECOFUN  | Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal           |
| FGD      | Focus Group Discussion                               |
| GA       | General Assembly                                     |
| Ha       | Hectare                                              |
| HH       | Household                                            |
| I/NGO    | International/Non-Governmental Organisation          |
| KII      | Key Informant Interview                              |
| LPG      | Liquified Petroleum Gas                              |
| NTFP     | Non-timber Forest Product                            |
| OP       | Operational Plan                                     |
| PF       | Private Forest                                       |
| SciFM    | Scientific Forest Management                         |
| S-DFO    | Sub-Division Forest Office                           |

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## Executive Summary

Shreechhap Deurali CFUG occupying 78.30ha of forest area is located in Chautara Sangachowkgadhi municipality, ward no 13. The forest handed over to the community in 2055 BS (1998AD) is benefiting around 1,181 users from 256 households (HHs). The CFUG also has established a saw mill named "Ichhyadevi saw mill" in 2057 BS (2000AD) with an aim of employment generation and livelihood improvement.

The Operational Plan (OP) of the CFUG has mentioned several provisions regarding forest management and forest based livelihood supports. Selection and shelter-wood systems have been adopted for sustainable forest management. In addition, the OP has provisioned the concession, income generation activities, capacity and skill development activities and subsidies for pro-poor and women users. In practice, the CFUG has invested major part of income on community development, livelihood improvement and skill development activities. Timber is the major income source of the CFUG.

According to well-being classification in OP, around 95% of total household belong to medium class and remaining in poor. Although agriculture and livestock rearing has been mentioned as the main source of income of the households, the dependency of users on remittance based income is increasing along with the increasing out-migration. As a consequence, the dependency of residing HHs on forest products has decreased as they have gradually started adopting alternatives, for example, Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), modern and efficient agricultural tools, etc.

The fifteen membered executive committee of the CFUG chaired by women, includes 7 women and 8 men representation. Prior to COVID pandemic, the CFUG used to conduct their monthly meetings and assemblies regularly. However, there has not been GA of the CFUG since three years and meetings are conducted as per the requirement only these years. Having women chair in the CFUG has created comfortable environment for women members and users to share their issues during the meeting and other CFUG's events. Women have gradually started engaging in the technical forestry jobs as well in the CF.



## Introduction

The purpose of this case study report is to provide background information on community forestry planning and governance in Shreechhap Deurali CFUG, as well as to identify issues and opportunities for improvement. This report forms an integral part of the activities and reporting conducted under the Planning Studio at the CFUG level, according to Objective 2 of EnLiFT 2.

The report is based on various field visits, interaction with the Executive Committee, women and mixed-groups, observation of meetings and general assembly, Key informant interviews (KIIs) with EC members, gender study focused KII, EnLiFT's interventions, and formal and informal talk with various stakeholders. We also reviewed secondary source of data such as the Constitution, Operational Plan (OP), audit reports and meeting minutes of the CFUG.

Shreechhap Deurali CFUG lies in Ward number 13, Chautara Sangachowkgadhi Municipality. It occupies 78.30 hectares of forest area and was handed over in 2055 B.S. The major species found in this CF are Chilaune (*Schima wallichii*), Khote Salla (*Pinus roxburghii*), Pate Salla (*Pinus patula*), Lakuri (*Fraxinus floribunda*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron arboreum*), Lapsi (*Choerospondias axillaris*), Katus (*Castanopsis indica*), Mauwa (*Engelhardtia spicata*), Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Uttis (*Alnus nepalensis*), and others.

The forest is surrounded by road from Jalkeni to Kotdada and settlement of Dharapani in the East, settlement of Pokhari dil and third walk way in the West, collaborative forest and settlement in the North and Hadikhola, settlement of shreechhap khola and Majh khola in the South (see Figure 1). The forest features western and southern aspects at an altitudinal range from 1300 to 1600 meters from the sea level. Its slope ranges from 15 to 35 degrees. The forest is composed of both plantation forest of pine and natural mixed forest of broad leaved species.

Currently, there are 256 HHs with a total population of 1,181 individuals, among which 596 are women and 584 are men. The majority of the HHs belong to the medium-class (243) and the remaining 13 HHs are poor in their well-being rank. Tamang, Newar (Shrestha) and Dalits are the major ethnic groups residing in the communities. Almost 375 individuals are illiterate and the rest are literate, while an even smaller proportion are university-level graduates.

Basic facilities like schools, road, health post, and cooperatives are available within the community nearby the ward office. However, banks are located at the district headquarter, Chautara, which takes about an hour to reach. Other government offices like the Divisional Forest Office, the District Child Welfare Committee and the Land Revenue Office are also located in Chautara.

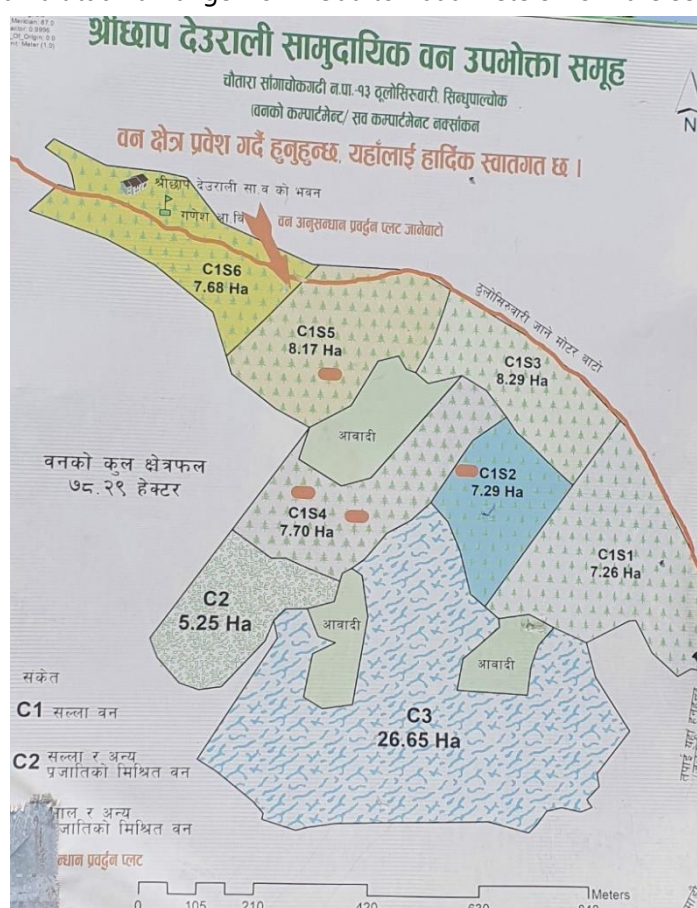


Figure 1: Map of Shreechhap Deurali CFUG

## Historical Background of the CFUG

Shreechhap hill in the past used to have a very dense forest. The forest was under the supervision of the so called superiors/elites of the village who allowed using forest resources to those who could make them happy. The forest was covered with species like Chilaune (*Schima wallichii*), katus (*Castanopsis indica*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ferrugineum*), angeri (*Melastoma malabathricum*), champ (*Michelia champaca*), mauwa (*Engelhardtia spicata*) and natural pines. Slowly the population started increasing which caused heavy deforestation.

Increased population, lack of awareness and illiteracy among the people depleted the forest areas. As a result of this deforestation, the community people had to walk about 2 - 3 hours to collect firewood from Sukute. Thus, in 2035/36 BS (1978/79 AD), Nepal-Australia Forest Project, in collaboration with the DFO, started a plantation program and assigned a forest watcher for forest conservation.

In 2055 BS (1998 AD), the forest was handed over to the user-group and the condition of forest started improving. At that time, Thulo Shiruvari 1 and 6, Sangachowk 2 and 7 and Irkhu 3, were all the same forest. Later, the forest was divided into two parts namely Shreechhap and Bhedigoth. In this way, the executive committee has been actively involved in the development of the CFUG. Later in 2057 BS (2000 AD), Ichhyadevi saw mill was established and it is still running very well.

## Operational Plan and the Constitution of the CFUG

The operational plan of the CFUG has been approved in 2073 BS (2016 AD). The map of the CF area has been updated by using a GPS/GIS system and the forest is divided into blocks for systematic forest management. The previous OP was valid for 5 years, while the current OP has a validity of 10 years. It is written in more detail than in the past, including information on forest condition, forest management and the benefit distribution system in place. The current OP follows the Thinning Guideline of Pine (2064) for forest management. Income generation and community development activities are included in the plan to a greater extent than what the traditional OP consisted. The major objectives of the OP are

- i) Improve the condition of the forest through sustainable management
- ii) Sustainable and easy supply of forest products
- iii) Increase employment opportunities and reduce poverty
- iv) Convert pine forest into mixed broadleaved forest

The OP has adopted selection and shelter-wood as the major forest silviculture systems for sustainable forest management. Thinning, bush cleaning and weeding are the major tending operations included in the OP; while, forest fire management, biodiversity conservation and water source protection activities are also provisioned in the OP. The OP has envisioned pro-poor and pro-women oriented programs such as income generating/livelihood support, skill development (tailoring, aaran sudhar, livestock rearing, etc.) and financial or scholarship support. There are certain provisions for subsidies to poor users in timber and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Annual fee for firewood collection is Rs. 50 per HH. While dry firewood collection is free of charge, firewood from bush cleaning, timber harvest and other additional firewood demands is charged at Rs 5/bhari. Water pond, drinking water and tank construction, road, school, electricity are major community development activities included in the OP. The OP was reviewed, so that issues and opportunities were identified with the leadership of a few social elites within the community, mirroring the mechanism adopted when the CFUG was first developed.



The Constitution of the CFUG is similar to that of most other CFUGs. It includes the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee (EC), monthly meetings, annual General Assembly, dos and don'ts in the forest, fines and penalties, and detailed socio-economic information of users. But it lacks the segregation of well-being ranking by HHs which is summarized in the OP (only class wise but not in detail). When asked why they don't have the wellbeing ranking segregation in the Constitution, they said that the Consultant who came to help develop the Constitution missed it and they didn't notice it while undertaking an approval process.

## Livelihood of Users

Agriculture and livestock rearing is the main source of income of the households. The interest of the HHs on rearing goats and male buffaloes seems to have increased in recent years as quick benefits from them is possible in a short span of time. At least 1 goat can be found in each HH of Shreechhap CFUG, with 15 being the most. HHs also own 1 - 2 male buffaloes, in order to sell them for mo:mos in the market of Kathmandu. Local people are more focused on cash crops and hybrid crops in the recent years.

Besides this, some HHs earn income from foreign remittance, selling of home-made alcohol, selling of milk, as well as travel-sector works (purchasing vehicles to drive or renting them for transportation). There is a limited number of HHs with members who are engaged in government and non-government services. However, the HHs of the Dalit groups are mainly engaged in "Aaran," which is the preparation of iron tools using charcoal.

## Forest and People Relationship

Timber, firewood, grass, leaf litter, fodder, charcoal and agricultural instruments (halo, juwa) are the major forest products collected by the users. However, the use of LPG gas for cooking and supply from trees of agricultural lands has reduced the dependency of users on firewood. In addition, people have a notion that pine trees are not durable and strong enough to build houses. That is why they have bought Sal (*Shorea robusta*) timbers from other places and constructed the houses. Nearly 200 earthquake damaged HHs were distributed with 25 cubic feet of free pine timber. Around 60 cubic feet timber is required to construct a house. Although the timber of pine is available at Rs. 50 per cubic feet, people paid almost Rs. 7,000 per cubic feet for Sal timber to build their houses. This has resulted in a low utilization of pine timbers within CFUG. However, the CF has huge potential for the commercial harvest of pine trees.

Out-migration is very common in the CFUG. The dependency on remittance based income has increased. In addition half of the population living in the CFUG are elderly who cannot visit CF on their own for firewood and collection of other forest resources. Remaining residents, mainly from Janajati groups (Newar, Tamang) visit forest just to collect fuelwood to preparing alcohol. Even the blacksmiths who used to depend on the forest for charcoal have started collecting them from the HHs that produce charcoal while burning fuelwood for alcohol preparation. Buying charcoal from HHs is cost efficient than collecting it from the forest.

*"We have to pay Rs 1500 per day wage to harvest and prepare charcoal where we can hardly collect 4 bag (compost bag ~ 50 Kgs) of them. But in village, we buy 1 bag (rice bag ~ 30Kgs) in Rs 150 from the HHs that burn fuelwood for alcohol and livestock food." - said Mr. Man Bahadur Biswokarma, a user working as a blacksmith.*

# Existing CFUG planning and governance: Issues and Opportunities

## Governing Structures and their functions

### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) is the main governing body of the CFUG which is responsible for conducting meetings and programs, calling/informing for meetings, making/renewing membership cards, controlling access to forest resources, making sure that the funds of the CFUG is utilized according to the CFUG guideline 2065 i.e. 25% in forest development, 35% in income generation and 40% in social development activities.

The EC has decided to conduct regular meetings on the last Saturday of each month, as mentioned in the Constitution. The regular meetings of the EC is conducted every month, however not limiting to a single meeting a month. During the period between 2074 and 2077, and especially so during the initial month of the newly formed EC and the timber-selling period, meetings were conducted even four times. However, gaps of 1 to 2 months in regular meetings can also be observed in the record. Few meetings have also been cancelled and postponed due to the absence of the representatives from previous the EC, which were aimed at resolving the existing issues of the EC.

The EC has prepared a plan of activities on its regular meeting. The Constitution of the CF has mentioned that 25% of the annual income from the forest should be spent on CF development; 35% on pro-poor, disadvantaged women and poverty reduction activities; 15% on institutional development; 20% on infrastructures development; and 5% as a capital amount. Following this, the EC has mobilized the CF's income as such: on forest development activities (16.5%), which includes the preparation of harvest plans, appointing a forest guard, plantation, renewal of the Constitution and the Operational Plan (OP), and so on; on livelihood improvement activities (27%), which includes well-being ranking, conducting trainings on enterprise development, handing over agricultural techniques and tools, and so on; on community development activities (6%), which includes scholarships for the poor and hardworking students, health treatment trust, emergency trust for disaster management, GESI activities, and so on; on institutional development activities (16%), which includes furniture management at the office, management of the training-and-meeting hall, mobilizing assistants, buying stationary supplies and hiring computer, printer, and so on; on infrastructures development activities (26%), which includes management of equipment that run on solar, road improvement, financial support for the development of toles, and so on; and on miscellaneous activities (8.5%).

### General Assembly

The General Assembly is an important and more inclusive platform for decision-making. At the Shreechhap CFUG, the General Assembly (GA) is generally conducted once a year. The provision in the Constitution of the Shreechhap Deurali CFUG mentions that the General Assembly will be conducted before the month of Shrawan, each year. However, in practice, the GA is held during the months of Mangsir/Poush, each year. The emergency assembly was conducted in Chaitra (2075), where 108 individuals participated. To conduct a General Assembly, the CFUG adopts the following steps and processes:

- a. **Audit report preparation:** Since the annual income of the CFUG seems to be more than Rs. 50,000, the Executive Committee hires a certified auditor for the preparation of an audit report. For this, the EC meets and decides to request the auditor for an audit. The auditor prepares an audit report, which is again discussed and approved by the EC. Shreechhap CFUG having annual income of more than Rs 50,000 conduct its audit through a registered auditor.
- b. **Tole meetings:** Before the general assembly, the CFUG ask tole committee to conduct tole meetings in their respective community to collect the livelihood demand and issues of users from the CF's income. The tole committee representatives are responsible to list out those demands and submit during the planning meeting of executive committee of the CFUG that is conducted prior to the general assembly.
- c. **Planning or preparatory meeting:** Before the General Assembly, meetings are conducted among the representatives of each tole, intellectual persons and executive committee, in order to prepare the draft of decisions or plan of activities that is to be proposed and potentially approved by the GA. The interest of users collected by the tole representatives are submitted to the EC and discussed for their prioritization. During the meeting, the available funds are allocated to prioritised activities that the users have shown interest in. If there are no or little funds available, then simple and less costly activities are planned in which the voluntary contribution of the local users are expected, such as for road maintenance, clearance of bushes in the forest and fire-management. The meeting also decides on the date, venue and time of the general assembly.
- d. **General Assembly:** The general assembly is conducted in the CFUG office premises every year. Stakeholders such as S/DFO, local government officials, FECOFUN, EC representatives from neighbouring CFUGs, representatives from schools and other local organisations, local police officers, and so on are invited in the assembly. The assembly starts with formal programs such as seating and speeches from various stakeholders. After that, the audit report is presented and the income-expenditure status is made public. The EC asks the users if they have any comments on the audit report. They discuss the issues raised by the users and provide clarifications. Then, the next year's plan is presented to the users. Sometimes, they make a formal written plan and sometimes they just present some activities to the users, discuss it and agree on it through consensus. If the OP has been revised, it is also presented and approved during the GA. Overall, the major decisions and plans such as audit report, revised OP and Constitutions, harvest plan, annual plan and budget allocations are discussed during the program and approved by the GA. The assembly of the CFUG since 2020 have been quite controversial since the financial transactions of the previous EC was not transparent. Even a special assembly was planned by the GA of 2020 to clear on those issues. However, the issue has yet not been solved.  
*"It has been more than two years since the new EC has formed. The financial transactions of the previous EC yet remain to solve."* - said Mr. Ramsharan Biswokarma, a user of the CFUG.

### Special Assemblies (sub-heading without any content)

Special assemblies are organized by the CFUG if necessary. During such assemblies, the executive committee, LG representatives, intellectual peoples from the CFUG, and representatives from users are invited. Therefore, the participants are comparatively very less in number than that of the general assembly. For example, the special assembly was conducted by the executive committee of the CFUG in 2021 when several questions were raised on the financial transactions of the previous EC during the GA of 2020. The assembly was conducted among the selective participants (ward chair, intellectual elites, previous and current executives, FECOFUN representatives, etc).

## Sub committees

Sub committees have been formed for specific tasks when necessary with the representation from the EC. Several sub committees like community development sub-committee, livelihood improvement sub-committee, etc have been formed among the executives of the CFUG.

## Tole Committees

The CFUG have formed nine tole committees representing each of its toles. The tole committee consists of one coordinator who also has representation in the executive committee and other two members. The tole committees are responsible for maintaining the network between the CF executive committee and users. They are responsible for sharing the issues and decisions to and from their respective toles. They are also responsible for monitoring the activities on CFs and punish to control the activities in the forest that are not allowed.

## CFUG planning process

The CFUG has its own planning process, which starts with the OP preparation. The OP is the major planning document based on which the CFUG makes its annual plans and designs various activities. Legally, the CFUG cannot implement any activities not written in the OP. A detailed planning of activities is expected to be written into the OP. Even if details cannot be made available, at the least, the OP should contain provisions for such activities, which can be later elaborated on through a separate plan.

The OP of Shreechhap was revised in 2016. The revised OP is valid for 10 years i.e till 2026 AD. The decision for an OP revision was taken by the EC, and later, the OP was endorsed by the general assembly. The OP of Shreechhap CFUG was revised by a private consultancy named "NRM group for Social Development", for whose services the CFUG paid Rs. 100,000. The executive committee members engaged with the consultant forestry technician(s) during the boundary survey, the inventory, and most frequently, during the OP and Constitution revision. At the tole level, tole representatives collected the socio-economic information for the OP and the Constitution, discussed the major provisions such as forest management, fines, and rates of forest products. Forest management activities such as bush cleaning, pruning, fire line maintenance and construction, and timber harvest are clearly spelled out in the plan. Provisions are also made on other minor products and activities such as leaf-litter collection, fodder and grass collection, firewood collection, livelihood improvement and community development, but no details are mentioned. These provisions are developed into detailed plans during the preparation of annual plans, most commonly during the general assembly.

Prior to the general assembly, a meeting is conducted in which EC members, tole representatives, intellectual persons, and other relevant stakeholders sit together and discuss the planning of forest activities. They prepare a list of activities that are provisioned for by the OP, and allocate available funds for the planning process, without which plans are not developed. If they have no funds or income, then they propose urgent forest management activities that can be conducted with voluntary support from users. They actively allocate the budget and propose various activities if they have some income. The CFUG planning process is largely dependent on the availability of financial resources. If they have the funds, they conduct planning process; otherwise, they will simply conduct activities based on what is detailed in the OP or through decisions made by the EC meeting or the GA. In this case, there is no fixed schedule of planning; it is performed whenever necessary.

In 2019, the EnLiFT 2 project prepared a silviculture research and harvest plan which was annexed to the OP through an amendment. A meeting was organized with the EC and the EnLiFT team conducted an orientation on the research program. The EC of Shreechhap decided to collaborate with EnLiFT. The EC members and users were consulted at various steps during the preparation of this research plan. EC members and users were engaged during the measurement, research plot establishment, boundary and tree marking activities. Finally, the research plan was endorsed by the GA and was approved by the DFO.

The CF rules, rates and activities are prepared by the EC in consultation with the users through tole meetings and EC meetings. This is presented at the General Assembly, then revised, finalized and approved based on users' consensus.

## **Stakeholders role in deliberative planning**

Shreechhap CFUG conducts its activities in collaboration with several stakeholders. Local Government or ward office, sub-division/division forest office (S/DFO), FECOFUN, Timber traders and some of the I/NGOs such as EnLiFT/ForestAction are currently the major external stakeholders of the CFUG. Previously, various agencies such as UNDP, JICA, WFP and RED Cross supported this community in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, with various reconstruction and livelihood programs. Now there are no such significant projects or organisations working in the area. In addition, EnLiFT is the only project working in the Shreechhap CF and CFUG.

Different stakeholders have different roles and have supported the CFUG in various activities. Generally, S/DFO have a role in monitoring and supervision as well as providing technical support during OP preparation, annual plan preparation, guiding them in forest management activities, providing nursery seedlings, providing or inviting them to trainings and orientations and so on. Likewise, the local government (ward office) has invited them to collaborate in development activities in the form of fund-matching. The Ward chairperson has long experience of working in community forestry and shows his readiness to support on CF management from the ward. He participate in major events of the CFUG like general assembly, special assembly, etc. FECOFUN also support the CFUG with advocacy of their CF rights, orientation on various forest related issues and networking. The current chairperson of the CFUG herself is the secretary of FECOFUN municipality chapter. EnLiFT/FA has also been supporting the CFUG on visioning and planning, forest management activities, capacity building for tree harvesting, improved governance and timber market linkage.

### **Sub-division/Division Forest Office**

CFUG has coordinated with Sub-Division Forest Office during the revision of the Constitution and the preparation of the Operational Plan. The DFO has a role in the approval of the OP and the Constitution. The annual plan, parts of the OP concerning ecotourism and timber harvest planning, are prepared by the CFUG with support from the Sub-division and are approved by the DFO. Generally, forest staff guide them on what they can include in the OP and the Constitution, what activities they can plan, and what they can't in the CF. The CFUG plans its annual activities during the General Assembly based on the OP. S/DFO staff participate in this program and guide them in planning activities for that Fiscal Year.



## Local Government

Most of the meetings and events of this CFUG have been conducted with the participation of representatives from the local government. However, their relationship is limited to participation in the programs but there is no meaningful cooperation in planning, budgeting, and joint activities with the local government. The CFUG coordinates with the LG in limited areas only. The CFUG pay 10% of the sale of the timber to LG.

The local government has mentioned that it wants to collaborate with the CFUGs. The Ward Chairperson is a CF leader as well. He had long experience of working in CF since Nepal-Australia Forestry Project. Therefore, he is positive towards CFUGs and wants to collaborate with CFUGs in community and livelihood development activities. However, the different planning cycle of LG and CFUGs and the uncertainty of the income have been a challenge to collaborate. The Local Government has a regular planning process and they finalize it before the end of the Fiscal Year (by mid-June). But, since the CF planning is based on funds generated through timber harvest and sale, it is not regular and, most of the times, it is uncertain. Generally, their planning takes place in Sept-Dec for that fiscal year.

Having said this, both CFUG and LG admit that there is a huge potential in collaborating with the local government, such as in community and forest development activities, fire control and awareness raising, human-wildlife conflict management, ecotourism, livelihood and skill enhancement programs, and forest-based enterprise establishment.

## FECOFUN

FECOFUN advocates for the rights of CFUGs and invites them to participate in various campaigns. Also, they are invited to celebrate FECOFUN-day and sometimes to take part in the plantation campaigns or interaction programs; although, this doesn't happen frequently. Shreechhap CFUG invites FECOFUN regularly to the general assembly but not regularly in other programs. There were no specific collaborations found with FECOFUN, in terms of joint project planning, design and implementation.

## EnLiFT project

EnLiFT 2 has been supporting the CFUG in forest management, silvicultural plot establishment and measurements, harvest plan preparation, supporting the harvest process, documentation, visioning and planning of CFUG, various meetings, the general assembly and orientations on forest-related agendas. EnLiFT has facilitated the CFUG in conducting tole meetings, orientation programs, visioning and planning workshop, EC level meetings and invited executive members to local or district level workshops and meetings. EnLiFT has conducted a two-day visioning and planning workshop to prepare the strategic plan. Likewise, EnLiFT has supported the CFUG with the preparation of their annual and timber harvest plans.

# Women's participation and voice in CFUG planning and decision-making

## Participation in CF Management and decision-making process

Shreechhap Deurali CF is considered to have a good governance in comparison to other nine CFs of ward no 13. In addition, the leadership of women in the EC has aided the effort of ensuring meaningful participation of women in decision making. Various forest management activities such as the clearance of bushes, plot division, fire line construction, separation of blocks for harvesting trees, thinning in research plots, and such, are conducted in the CF. The participation of female members in forest management activities is gradually shifting towards the technical aspects too. The female members of the EC participate during separation and measurement of blocks and plots, measurement of trees, tagging of trees, measurement of logs and timbers. However, the general female users participate in forest management activities if they are asked compulsorily to join and if they can manage time from their household activities.

*"The system has been bound by the rules where 50% of women inclusion in the Executive Committee is being implemented. This has increased the participation and confidence of the females at the decision-making level."* - said Mr. Ram Prasad Gautam, Chairperson of Ward number 13. The existing executive committee is composed of 7 female and 8 male members where the chairperson is female. He further added- *"There is the role of female leadership in EC for increased participation of females because the female leadership emphasizes the participation of women. If there was male leadership in the committee, they would have asked for the presence of any one from HHs in community forest related events."* In addition, their voices are heard well by the committee and the issues are prioritized. *"Though all of their voices are not addressed, those which committee think to be important are addressed while making decisions. The decision of supporting HHs for goat farming was made as per the voice of female members of the committee."* -said Mr. Prem Prasad Chaulagain, Vice chairperson of the EC of the Shreechhap Deurali CFUG.

## Autonomy in HH decisions in forest governance

Most of the time, the decision is of women members themselves whether to participate in CFUG meetings. However, the presence of male members in the house and family size shape their participation in such activities. During our survey with female members of the EC of the Shreechhap Deurali CFUG, we found that their presence in the CFUG activities was easy because of the absence of male member in their house and because of their nuclear family structure. Kanchhi Giri Puri, a member of the EC said- *"Before I used to live in a joint family with father-in-law and mother-in-law. My husband is abroad since many years. During the time, I had to ask for permission of my in-laws in order to participate in meetings. When my husband married another woman abroad, I started living separately with my children here. And I decide everything by myself now."* Further, Anjumaya Shrestha, a member of the EC said- *"I am a single women. I have father-in-law who is 85 years old and cannot travel and mother-in-law in my house. Therefore, I participate in almost all events of CF."* However, on one hand some women at the decision-making level want to leave the position because of their workload in their household. On the other hand, male members at the decision-making level don't want to involve female members from their house in the EC. *"I would like to encourage my wife to engage in EC but she is not capable for it."* -said Vice Chairperson of the EC. Women share the discussions and decisions of the meeting when their family members ask them about it.

## Influence in Decisions

Every respondent was happy with the performance of the existing EC. Situational and time based decisions are taken by the EC. Some decision of the EC are to promote goat farming and vegetable farming, under poverty reduction activities. Decisions have been made to promote activities from the income of the CF that could enhance the living standard of the users. The committee has also supported seeds for vegetables farming. There has been broom-grass farming inside the CF, where the labor used for this activity received their wages.

Women members participate in regular meetings when the secretary calls and invites them. The communication charge has been allocated separately. However, during the time of general assembly, letters are distributed for each HH to participate. Generally, the meetings are initiated by the Chairperson, and then the representatives speak. *"During this time, some women didn't use to speak due to fear and shyness; but, nowadays, the situation has changed. Generally, they speak although they feel shy"*-said Anjumaya Shrestha, member of the EC. It was found from most of the regular meetings that females participate more than the males. The voice of every participant is treated equally during the meetings of the EC, where all have equal power to shape the decisions of the EC at the Shreechhap Deurali CFUG.

## Access to and control over CF products (distribution and sale)

Since the household activities are mostly handled by women, they decide on the collection of forest products like firewood, leaf litter, grass and fodder. However, it is mostly the males that are found participating in timber harvesting activities during tree felling, logging and transporting. Females also participate in tree, logs and timber measurement, and tagging activities. In a majority of family, male members decide on the collection of required materials from the forest. In addition, one can collect leaf litter and grass on any day of the week, but firewood can only be collected on Saturdays. The tole committee controls the decision on access to forest products. The tole committee can also punish if they find any user violating the rule of the CF. However, at the users' level, it was found that they collected firewood even during other days of the week.

The Executive Committee doesn't distribute timber and firewood to others unless the quantity is primarily sufficient for the users of the Shreechhap CF. The decision for the distribution of forest products is made in the CFUG meeting of the EC. During the meeting, the voice of women is heard, the demand of users are collected and decisions are made in consensus of all participants in the meetings.

Timber is the only commercially traded product from the Shreechhap Deurali CF, for which the sufficiency at the users' HHs is ensured before trading. After the earthquake, each HH in need was supported with 25 cubic feet of timber from the Shreechhap Deurali CF, for the construction of the houses. To undertake this task, the applications from the need-identified households were collected and distributed. Women members who participate regularly at the meetings and other events of the EC have knowledge on the selling of timber. However, they were not satisfied with the delayed response of the DFO while selling timber. *"The documents are kept in hold by the DFO for a long time due to which we have to face loss."*-said Anjumaya Shrestha, a member of the EC. They feel that the voice of the DFO is dominant when it comes to timber-selling.

## Income

According to the EC women members, the annual income of the Shreechhap Deurali CF ranged from zero to 70 lakhs. The committee has decided to allocate 35% of the annual income on income generation activities, 25% on forest development and 40% on community development. They have mobilized these funds on road extension, construction of CFUG building, livelihood improvement activities, and so on. The issues, demands and ideas of women seems to have been prioritized by the EC during the planning for the mobilization of the funds. The support for goat farming was found to be on demand for the women groups, so that the decision was made by the committee to support Rs. 5,000 each for 378 HHs for goat farming. The supported HHs have already started earning profits up to Rs. 35,000 from this venture. However, some HHs of the poor-class have used that money to fulfill the immediate needs of their HHs. At the meeting, it was also decided that a support of Rs. 5,000 each be given to the cancer patients of the Shreechhap CFUG.

## Leadership

The members of the Executive Committee were found to have an affiliation with other different forums existing in and outside the community. The chairperson of the EC of the Shreechhap CFUG herself is the secretary of municipal FECOFUN. Other women members are also engaged in the tole committee of the Shreechhap CFUG, poverty eradication committee, and so on. Some also work as female health volunteers. They were all selected by the local people of their community for these positions. As leaders, they inform people about CF related activities, give advice, help to increase the participation of the people, and work as mediators between the user's tole and the EC of the CFUG. Despite such women have confident to speak in subjects of their knowledge, their participation in public speaking is still low due to lack of the opportunity to speak in public.

## Time

The out-migration of male members from the HH has increased the opportunity for women both to participate in CF related activities and the stress of the HH workload. Some women responded that because of the availability of less family members (some having shifted to Kathmandu, some having gone abroad for work), their workload has increased; as such, they could not participate properly at CF meetings or other forest management activities. Because of this, some women leaders also wanted to leave their position, so as to better manage their HH-tasks. However, they claim that the CF has made their forest-related HH chores more efficient.

According to a respondent, it has been easier to work on forest activities than before. Once the forest clearance of shrub is done, less shrubs in amount and height are available for the next year; besides, shrubs clearance is not required in some places. They have experienced that after incorporating the CF-practices, the management activities have been implemented rapidly. The CF has also supported in efficient accessibility of forest products for the users. *"Compared to the past (the time of our mother-in law), we now have a very easy access to the forest products. In the past time, our mother-in law used to reach near Sukute to collect firewood and it used to consume a whole day. We had to carry snacks since we needed to spend the whole day to collect one bhari of leaf-litter. But now, we can easily collect firewood and grass within half an hour from the CF. This CF has saved nearly 6 - 7 hours of our day, which we can utilize in other HH-works."* -said Anjumaya Shrestha, a member of the EC.

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