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Reframing CF planning practice: making it more effective and relevant in the new context of Nepal



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Our Cover

CF members in their tole meeting - Lakuri Rukh Bhulbhule CFUG, Bhumlu-4. Photo by Sarada Tiwari

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List of Acronyms

AAC	Annual Allowable Cut
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CF	Community Forestry
CFUG	Community Forest users Group
CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority
DFO	Division Forest Office
EC	Executive Committee
EnLiFT	Enhancing Livelihoods from Improved Forest Management
GS	Growing Stock
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LG	Local Government
MAI	Mean Annual Increment
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OP	Operational Plan

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Executive Summery

Community forestry (CF) planning process and plans are the political, legal and technical documents that govern the Community Forest Users Groups, regulate the forest management activities and shape the relation with its users and other stakeholders. Constitution, Operational Plans and Annual Plans are three major guiding documents of the CFUG operation whose planning process are clearly mentioned by the Community Forestry Guideline (2014) starting from discussion among users to endorsement from AGM. Based on 10-years learnings from the "Enhancing Livelihoods from improved Forest management in Nepal (EnLiFT)" project, this paper highlights on the existing planning framework, gaps in their practice, rationale for reframing the framework and also propose a new framework for effective CF planning with some process. In this paper, we have discussed on three major aspects of planning process.

i. General assembly of CFUG

Users interest on general assemblies of CFUGs are declining as a consequence of weakening forest-people relations, decreasing stake in forest management, and AGMs being less successful in complying the decisions made with practices. Mandatory reports such as progress reports, financial audit reports and proposed annual plans are not taken seriously. Majority of AGMs are just the gatherings which lack deliberative planning process.

ii. Revision of Operational Plans

The regulatory requirements for inclusive and democratic CF planning have become burden to CFUG which has affected in timely revision and review of OPs. In addition, everything seems to be perfect in paper but neither the ideal prescriptions of OP revision are followed properly. Both the technical process such as forest resource inventory and data analysis, and social processes are often manipulated to comply with the national standards and social factors respectively. Low participation of people and time limitation of the participating users in meetings and AGMs provide no opportunity to discuss on the forest management objectives, activities, and silviculture methods.

iii. CF planning and implementation

The implementation of OPs have been weak as the consequences of uncertainty of policy fluctuations, for example, withdraw of Scientific Forest Management Guidelines 2014, poor governance or inactive CFUGs, increasing CIAA cases, expiry of periodic plans of Division Forest Offices (DFOs) and volatile market. Regarding annual plans, even if they are prepared, they are not rarely implemented. Users demands although mentioned in annual plans are often ignored in top of the elites' interest on infrastructures development.

Based on the cases, we identified five major gaps in current planning: i) lack of scientific rigor and public voice, ii) Irrelevant and hardly used, referred, implemented OPs, iii) Absence of ambition for long-term change, iv) No appeal for stakeholders, and v) Conceived as costly burden to meet regulatory compliance. On these basis, we have also proposed new framework for CF planning which includes i) Decoupling strategic plan from legal contract, ii) Separate forest management plan from business plan, iii) Categorisation and differential treatment for different forests, iv) Increased collaboration with local government and experts, and iv) Inclusive and efficient process for developing a strategic plan. We are confident that the proposed new framework will effective in maintaining scientific rigour and participatory process on CF planning and implementation in future.

1. Introduction

Planning is at the heart of Nepal's community forestry (CF). Planning process and plans as political, legal and technical documents guide the organisational governance and statutory functions, define forest management activities, and shape roles and relations with its members and relevant agencies. While there has been strong focus in planning of forest management and organisational functions, there is relatively inadequate attention to its efficacy. Some research on the utility of forestry technical details have been conducted in the past pointing to limited use of proper science. However, there is relative scarcity of literature in putting CF planning in the broader context of local level planning and its overall relevance in CF development.

This report aims to analyse the contemporary planning practice of Nepal's community forestry, with a view to explore new ways to design and implement planning in the new context of Nepal. In doing so, it critiques three important assumptions embedded in Nepal's forestry policies and legislation: i) Community Forestry Operational Plan (CFOP) is and should be the basis of all forest management decisions and practices; ii) CFOP is based on high precision science and therefore should be strictly followed and monitored; iii) CFUGs have used and benefitted from CFOP practices. This report has been prepared based on a decade long action research on Community Forestry (CF) planning in three mid hills districts – Kavre, Sindhupalchowk and Lamjung. We use mostly qualitative data gained from participant observation, interview, and focus group discussions, complemented by review of relevant regulatory documents and wider literature on environmental planning. We start by reviewing to what extent Operational Plan (OP) development process follows the ideal prescriptions provided by the regulation. Where are the grey areas providing spaces for technical and bureaucratic manipulations? To what extent do these plans shape organisational and forest management related decisions and practices? And more importantly, whether the prescribed planning process has helped or constrained CF functioning in Nepal?

The report comprises of five sections. After the introduction, we review the current planning framework, their rationales and associated regulatory provisions. It is followed by examination of the gaps between those provisions and actual practice. Fourth section explains the gaps and need for moving away from current provisions and practices. In final section, we propose a new framework and some processes that could make planning more relevant and effective for CF development.

2. Community forestry in Nepal: context, issues and challenges

In Nepal, community forestry guidelines DoF 2014 provide the process of planning that every CFUG in Nepal should follow. For strategic plans such as preparation and renewal of operational plan (OP) and revision of constitution, a number of steps are advised: self-assessment of the previous OP and constitution, drafting of articles or provisions that required to be revised, taking those revision proposals to hamlets and interest groups to solicit their inputs, and finally endorsing the revision proposals from the general assembly. Similarly, the guideline gives a broader mandate that each CFUG required to collect the proposals from each *Tole* (i.e. hamlet) and interest groups during annual planning process.

The OP preparation and revision process is considered very costly in terms of time and financial resources required to undertake forest inventory and analysis of inventory data for assessing the growing stock and determining annual harvest. However, there are concerns that local communities have to fulfil very cumbersome and complex technical, financial and legal obligations before they could

exercise of their rights and roles in preparing periodic and annual plans and implement management plan ([Paudel et al., 2009](#), [Larson et al., 2010a](#), [Larson et al., 2008](#), [Colchester et al., 2006](#)). Despite considerable investment of time and resources spent for forest inventory, and a number of hassles around OP preparation, quality and usefulness of inventory-based OPs is found very low ([Toft et al., 2015](#), Baral et al., 2018). That is, these OPs are seldom considered during annual forest management and community development planning and implementation.

Questions are also raised about existing credibility and capacity of local communities to manage resources effectively and sustainably ([Bradshaw, 2003](#)). In most of the developing countries state officials co-opted local affairs and planning processes often using their advisory power as in Zimbabwe ([Mapedza, 2007](#)) or an ultimate signatory in the local management plans as in Nepal ([Paudel et al., 2008](#), [Paudel et al., 2009](#)) and India ([Balooni and Inoue, 2009](#)).

Despite some success in increasing representation of women in decision-making forums, inclusion and equity in forest governance have remained the key issues since the early stages of community forestry ([Ojha et al., 2014](#)). Elite dominated, poorly informed and ad hoc nature of planning and decision-making processes in community forestry are often criticised ([Agarwal, 2001](#), [Agarwal, 2009](#), [Paudyal, 2008](#), [McDougall et al., 2013](#)). The attempts were also made to improve planning and decision-making processes in Nepal in experimental basis with an aim to promote inclusive and deliberative approach in community forestry planning such as self-monitoring process ([Paudel and Ojha, 2007](#)), adaptive collaborative management ([McDougall et al., 2013](#), [Banjade, 2013](#)), scenario-based planning ([Bourgeois et al., 2017](#)). These approaches use shared vision of all the legitimate actors as the starting point for planning, which is backed by the information collection and analysis in order to extend informed choices for the planners.

Despite the success of these approaches in enhancing inclusion, improved awareness, contribution to empowerment of marginalised groups, use of information during communicative exchanges during deliberative processes, and thereby improvement in governance and improved implementation of plans, these processes demand highly skilled facilitation, and increase transaction costs ([Banjade and Ojha, 2005](#), [Ojha et al., 2013](#)). In the changing demographic dynamics and increased opportunity costs, planning processes need to be adapted to work in these changing contexts while maintaining the basic tenets of inclusion and deliberation.

A growing body of literature highlights a range of issues and challenges in Nepal's community forestry. Governance of natural resource management recognise and involve functional interdependencies of ecological and social systems ([Brondizio et al., 2009](#), [Ostrom, 2011](#)). When natural resources produce diverse goods and services, management should accommodate the resource-use systems at different spatial, temporal and organizational levels. Mosterta (2008: pp293-294) illustrates four different dimensions that encounter in the process of resource governance, which he calls as boundaries, namely: i) physical boundaries such as quantity and quality, water and land, different geographical and time scales; ii) interaction between administrative boundaries such as government levels and policy sectors; iii) social boundaries such as interaction between different social and economic groups, between these groups and government; and iv) cognitive boundaries such as between different disciplines, between technical experts and lay experts, and between different lay experts. As Feeny et al. (1990: p14) assert, complexity is normally too big to deal by single actor or by a single level that means multiple actors, holding diverse knowledge systems and across disciplines has to work together.

In many cases, a large section within the government bureaucracy is apprehensive of entrusting local people or other non-state actors (FAO, 2011), and many fear losing the techno-bureaucratic power once forest management responsibility is shared with local people (Ojha, 2006). The elected legislators are largely influenced by the argumentation and discourses strategically promoted by the administrators,

and policies thus formulated more likely to serve the interest of administrators rather than 'the discursively constructed interests of the people' (Fischer, 2003: p 15). When policy is defined beyond the texts of laws and regulations to include its implementation on the ground, technocratic/bureaucratic roles expand because the coded policies are being reconstructed throughout the decision-making possibilities of the implementers (Birkland, 2005: p 18) and in the negotiation with the people who are affected by them. Gilmour and Fisher (1991: p 183) with reference to Nepalese bureaucracy criticize the culture of decision making within the bureaucracy as illogical and irrational, in the sense that the decisions are influenced by political and personal interests.

Involvement of different stakeholders including communities, government, civil society and market forces in the process can bring diverse, often conflicting, interests, values and perspectives demanding more intense deliberation to arrive at consensus. In a way, this involves interplay of diverse sectors and actors, and purpose and strategies of community based natural resource management are constantly defined and negotiated during the process. In practice, however, dominance of single actor in the policy process, mostly the government techno-bureaucrats are observed in Nepal (Paudel et al., 2008, Bhattarai, 2007, Ojha, 2006), India, China, the Philippines, Botswana, Namibia (Shackleton et al., 2002) and many developing countries. According to Shackleton et al. (2002: p3), less government control is seen where NGOs or donors played strong role in the policy process.

According to Benjamin (2008) when certain policies and practices are not legitimized at the local level because of their inappropriateness, or the authority of certain locus is not recognized by the communities, they might express their dissatisfaction through active or passive resistance. Where state institutions have ignored this part, such as in many areas of developing world, non-state institutions and processes either ignored the state policies (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991) or manipulated with or without a nexus with state officials (Nightingale, 2005). The role of district and sub-district level government staffs are in key position to support local communities in organizing, mediating inter and intra community disputes and providing technical assistance (Pardo, 1995). Therefore, rather than rejecting or excluding them, constructive engagement could often help in developing and sustaining CBNRM initiatives. Nonetheless, actors and service providers other than government are equally, often more, important.

External support does not necessarily be negative provided they enhance local autonomy, i.e. are less deterministic, respect for local knowledge, values and norms, and support in promoting resilience of local communities, information exchanges and market linkages. External epistemic communities such as scholars, practitioners, donors and policy makers can bring new perspectives which could enhance the local capacity and resilience, and role of external actors is justified to this level (Murphree, 2006). These epistemic communities, he argues, could be the important allies for local communities as they could be in privileged position to policy influence. Forces outside the domain of local communities are significantly influencing local institutions and practices; globalization and processes at higher levels at times could promote coupling and render local institutions vulnerable (Berkes, 2002). In the context where nature of natural resources as well as the goods and services they produce cross the scale and capacity of single agency or single level, whether that be local or higher level, institutional arrangements for managing the resources should accommodate multiple levels, and multiple actors at each level, to allow cross-scale social interactions (Berkes, 2002: p293). Berkes (2002) refers to these interactions and linkages for both horizontal (across space) and vertical (across levels of organization) levels. This demands simultaneous interventions at various scales. When diverse interests and perspectives are interacting effective coordination, communication, deliberation, learning (social) and conflict resolution are the important issues to consider.

All the above issues share in common is a need of accommodating multiple interests, purpose, perspectives, ideologies and knowledge systems, functional co-existence of diverse actors, conscious

attempts of multi-stakeholder 'action and learning', flexibility and transforming possibility of issues, actor positions, meanings and ultimate outcomes of deliberation. When deliberative models are accepted in all the governance processes, the focus is on 'making institutions, elites and governments accountable to the plurality of voices' (Chambers, 2003: p315), interests and issues so that not only the processes are democratic but also are heading towards securing equity and justice.

3. Current CF planning framework

Currently, forest sector acts, regulations and guidelines primarily shape CF planning. While Forest Act 2019 and Forest Regulations 2022 along with provincial and local government level acts provide the general scope and priorities of planning, CF Development Guidelines 2014 provides a details process for preparing the constitution, forest operational plan and annual plan. Similarly, the CF inventory guidelines 2004 guides forest resource assessment and its analysis which becomes the foundation for OP. Besides, there are other policy and regulatory documents related to: tourism development, forest-based enterprises, fiscal laws among others.

We examine the CF development guidelines 2014 first. CF Development Guidelines were originally developed in 1995 (2052) and was revised in 2001 (2058), 2009 (2065) and 2014 (2071). The Guidelines, developed through multi-stakeholder process with an active involvement of key CF stakeholders suggests a rigorous process to ensure an inclusive, participatory, and democratic process. Based on the review of the Guidelines, the following steps are expected to be followed by during the OP preparation or revision (from left column to right in sequence).

- Discuss OP preparation with users
- Identify and enlist users, CF members
- Identify interest groups
- Participatory resource mapping
- Boundary survey, resource assessment
- Assessment of environmental services
- Forest based enterprises plan
- DFO approval
- OP preparation/revision committee
- Training to users on CF rules, practice
- Prepare a detail plan of action
- Socio-economic data, HH survey
- Calculate GS and AAC
- Climate change adaptation plan
- AGM endorsement

Three major documents guide CFUGs operation: its constitution, OP and annual plan. Among these the OP has been recognised as the key planning document guiding all CFUGs activities -both forest management but also organisational functions and developmental actions. The regulations and guidelines have prescribed an expanded template¹ on the content of the OP. These days, beyond forest management issues, the OP contents also include forest trade, forest-based enterprises, tourism, community development, income generation, use rules and fines. Besides, climate adaptation, environmental and social actions are also made mandatory to be part of OP. Accordingly the size and content of OP has gradually expanded during last four decades – with just a couple of pages in the early 1990s to over 80 pages these days.

Current framework is designed assuming that CF members have a high stake in CF management and therefore provide their volunteer time in its organisational and forest management related activities. It also assumes that as CFUGs are managing government forests, they most work in collaboration with government forest agency in each and every step of their planning and implementation. Accordingly, they are discouraged to work independently and are expected to work as advised, guided by DFO staff.

¹ Annex 8 of CFOP Guidelines 2014 provides dozens of areas under four categories – i) forest management, ii) livelihoods improvement, iii) forest-based enterprises, iv) fund mobilisation

4. Analysis of Contemporary CF Planning Practices

Whatever are the regulatory provisions and enforcements in planning, the CFUGs have their own ways of manipulating and adjusting it to their own practice. We analyse three major aspects of planning practices:

- i) General Assembly of CFUGs,
- ii) Revision of Operational Plans, and
- iii) CF planning and implementation

4.1 General assemblies of CFUGs

General assemblies are highest authority and most legitimate body in CF decision making and planning. Accordingly, regulatory framework recognizes it as the central body for almost every decision in forest management, fund mobilization and developmental actions. In this context it is important to revisit how the general assemblies are organized, how the decisions are made and to what extent the GA engages in planning and approves the plans. We present three cases of general assemblies below.

Case 1: Kalapani

Out of 396 HHs of Kalapani CFUG, 237 (Women=129, Men=108) attended the GA. Ex-Minister (Mr. Gokul Baskota) was invited as chief guest. District Coordination Committee Coordinator, DFO, provincial chair of FECOFUN, ward chair and chief of Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project attended as special guests. Representatives of political parties, neighbouring CFUGs, school headmasters, representatives of NGOs/CBOs and women groups were also invited as guests.

The quorum for general assembly reached at 11:30AM. However, the assembly started at 12:45 PM due to the lunch time of chief guest. After the chief guest arrived, the program started with the seating of chairperson, chief guest, special guests and other guests followed by distribution of batches and *khada*. The opening of the program took place by lighting 16 candles as it was the 16th GA of the CFUG. After that, one minute silence was maintained for martyrs and then proceeded with national anthem. By then, it was 1:30 PM.

After that the chairperson shared his report in the form of speech. He had come up with his report in a small note. It took around 10 minutes for him to share his report which was endorsed by clapping by all the participants without any discussions. The event proceeded with the good-wish speeches starting with the neighbouring CFUGs (chair of Narayansthan Bethanchok CFUG), women group (one women member), NGOs (Mr. Kamal Bhandari from ForestAction), and representatives of political parties (3 representatives of ruling parties). By then, it was 3:15PM. After that, the secretary shared her report which took around 5 minutes. Since the treasurer was absent in the assembly, the secretary herself shared the audit report of FY 2078/79 which took around 10 minutes. She seemed less prepared to share the report. Both the reports were endorsed without any discussions. By then, it was 3:35 PM.

Then it was turn for other speeches starting from Chief of Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project, then with DFO, Ward Chairperson, Chairperson of FECOFUN-Bagmati province, Chief of DCC and then the Chief Guest of the assembly. By then, it was 4:30 PM. Since it was January (short days), majority of participants had already left the meeting. The executive committee in hurry formed a three-membered committee to write the minute but no one were caring about it. Since everyone were in hurry, the chairperson ended up the program by thanking all in one sentence.

Case 2: Chaurkuna Bhirpani

1st event (3rd Sep 2023): The program was called to be held at 11 AM. Out of 140 HHs, only 12 were present in the assembly including the ward chair, and seven members of the EC (secretary and 6 members). The chairperson was absent. They waited till 1 PM. No other users turned up. During this time, the participants were discussing the reasons for low participation. They shared that the outmigration of youths and active members to urban centres (Kathmandu and Banepa) have left the elderly groups in the village, some of which even cannot travel on their own and remaining are not much interested in such events. They also assumed that, since people are getting free access to forest resources even without the permission of the executive committee, they are not concerned about such events as there are no rules and restrictions that hinder their day to day forest product use. They discussed to circulate the notice to ban entry in the forest without informing to executive committee as it could increase their participation in the assembly. At 1 PM, they decided to postpone the event for 10th Sep 2023 and everyone returned to their respective works.

(Meanwhile, notice mentioning "*users are restricted to collect forest products from the forest until the executive committee is reformed through the GA being held on 17th Sep 2023*" was published and displaced in the public places in the community. (Through the same notice, everyone were asked to participate. The invitation was even circulated through phone calls)

2nd event (10th Sep 2023): Users were invited for 11 AM. Around 18 participants including ward chair, secretary and few members arrived by 12 PM. The chairperson of the CFUG was absent in the second event as well as he lives in Kathmandu. For the second time also, they waited till 1 PM and the assembly was postponed to 17th Sep 2023 due to insufficient number. During their stay, executive members were showing their frustration and majority were ready to leave from the leadership positions. As the third assembly will be automatically valid, it was postponed in consent of all.

3rd event (17th Sep 2023): Users were again invited for 11AM. By 12PM, around 40 participants arrived (ward chair, executives and members). Majority of executives were willing to handover their leadership, however none of the participating members were ready to take over them. Participants discussed on several agendas such as OP renewal, selection of new committee members, etc. Regarding the selection of new committee members, the blank space in the minute was kept so that they could finalize the potential members after discussing with the ward chair later. The secretary shared the audit report and their annual plan which was endorsed by the participants present there. The program started informally and ended by 2:30 PM. Since the attendance number was yet not legally sufficient for the General Assembly, the participants decided to sign the minute by visiting door to door.

Case 3: Thople Kamere

On 17th Sep 2021, 25 members out of 125 HHs were present in the assembly. Three were women. Mr. Dhruva Kunwar, ward member, was supporting the CFUG in organizing the meeting. They did not invite Sub-DFO. While asking, the CF chair said - "*We don't know whom to invite and who not to invite. We thought it is not necessary to invite from S/DFO.*" Only the chairperson and treasurer were present from among the EC members. They had no any plan, progress to share in the assembly, but a minute and the OP.

The GA was said to be conducted at 11:00 AM considering the morning workload of users. When I reached the venue (School of Kodka), a few members were gathered. After waiting around half an hour, the participants decided that Kodka will be too far for majority of the members from Kavre (another

village). Accordingly, they decided to move to the midpoint for both the Kodka and Kavre members. We walked a kilometre to get to the mid-point. After waiting another half an hour meeting started in an informal manner at around 12:30 PM.

As they had no any progress to share, they discussed on grazing issue, however could not decide on it, as majority of forest dependent members were absent in the assembly. They decided on opening a bank account and deposit Rs. 10,000 that the CFUG have (Till then the money was with the treasurer). They decided to visit every HHs and get their signature on the minute. This responsibility was given to the treasurer. The meeting ended by 1:30PM.



Figure 1: AGM of Thople Kamere CFUG

Observation from the three cases of AGM

Three major observations can be made from the above three cases. First, there is general decreased interests of CF members to participate and contribute to the AGMs. There are two plausible explanations: i) because of the weakening forest-people relations and decreasing stake in forest management, they tend to prioritise something else not the AGM; ii) AGM's have little influence on the way the CF members access, manage and extract forest resources. Either AGM does not make any decision that shape their forest product use or its decisions largely remains in the paper and are rarely enforced. In such situation, attending in AGM for long hours is perceived as a waste of time.

Second, in all three cases the core mandatory functions of the AGM appeared to be weak. Mandatory reports – progress report, financial audit report, and proposed plan for the next fiscal year were neither prepared nor submitted. In Kalapani case, it was written in a small piece of paper prepared and shared by chairperson whatever came from his mind. In other two cases, these key documents were not prepared, submitted, discussed and endorsed. In legal sense they were not AGM, just gathering.

Third, there is general lack of deliberative process in planning. Populist political agenda largely driven by the emotional choice of key leaders has ruined the key planning process. The Kalapani case is just a political stunt and showcase of the chairperson that allowed forum for political and bureaucratic actors at the cost of deliberative discussion of CF members on core issues of planning. In fact, these two trends; one lack of needed numbers getting signature by moving the minute door to door; and second, spending whole day with political speech by fooling CF members are most common forms of undermining deliberative planning in CF.

Given the huge gaps between planning theories and expected mandatory procedures provisioned in our regulatory instruments on one hand and actual practice of AGM, EC meeting and other gathering on the other leads us to rethink the whole question of CF planning. Either, we are giving too much emphasis in planning process that CF members do not value. Or there is serious derail of CF planning practice what is needed and possible.

Our observation and data have shown that the very provisions that are aimed at ensuring an inclusive and democratic CF planning have become burden to CFUG. Consequently, thousands of CFUGs have not been able to revise and renew their OPs. Similarly, none of the OP revision process has followed these ideal prescriptions. Studies from other parts of the country confirm that these processes are rarely followed.

4.2 Processes of revising operational plans

Operational Plans (OP) are the key legal, contractual document and also apparently a product of rigorous scientific exercise of forest resource assessment and socio-economic analysis. Accordingly, understanding of OP development/revision process gives a good reflection of CF planning process and plans. Below we present three case of OP revision: from Kalapani, Dharapani and Shreechhap CFUGs in which EnLiFT team was involved and has made good documentation.

Case 1: Kalapani CFUG

OP revision work began in early 2020. However, COVID lockdown began on 24 March 2020. Despite mobility and social distancing related restrictions, boundary survey and inventory work continued. Based on the analysis of the forest inventory, the growing stock of the CF was 223.2m³. However, information on slope, water sources, proximity to the river, etc were absent. A community meeting was held in late June. Only 10-12 people attended. COVID related restrictions such as mandatory masks, social distance, and maximum number of allowed participants, CF members were discouraged from gathering. Draft OP with inventory results was prepared. Later it was shared with sub-division officer, who reviewed and forwarded it to the DFO. However, the DFO did not accept the results because it was above the national average of 178m³/ha. We had to revise the figures. We played around inventory data, manipulated it and brought it 183.8m³. Similarly, though the forest was formally divided into five blocks, we requested it to divide only to three block and allow harvesting accordingly. It was approved. This was how we were able to increase the AAC so as to fulfil the CF member's internal demand.

Social process was also manipulated. Unlike the ideal process in which a GA has to make a formal decision and request to the DFO, the EC had advanced the revision process. In most of the *toles* only four-five members attended the meeting. Even in the GA only 14 people attended. As people had limited time, there was no opportunity to discuss on the preferred management objectives, silviculture methods and forest development activities. Members were interested only on the AAC figures. Despite these limitations, in paper we reported of good discussion with full participation of CFUG members and in proper sequence. The minute was taken door to door for signature. Everything looked good in paper.

Case 2: Dharapani CFUG

The EC leaders, DFO and EnLiFT team decided to prepare a new OP focusing on piloting of intensive harvesting of mature pine plantation forest. In the meantime, a group of senior officials from DoF led by Rajan Pokhrel (DG) visited Chaubas. They agreed that these forests needed intensive harvesting. Accordingly, a training programme was planned. A five-day training was organised for the local DFO staff and CFUG leaders. Two experts on scientific forestry -Ishwary Paudel and Bijaya Subedi from DoF -delivered the training.

It was followed by forest inventory (stem mapping, with 3'x4' number tags made for each tree above 10 cm dbh). The OP was prepared adopting Scientific Forest Guidelines 2014. After its endorsement by the general assembly, it was submitted to the DFO. However, the DFO was reluctant to approve it. He argued, "Pinus patula would make the soil acidic and no regeneration will come out. I do not want to take any risk. In this case, we cannot go with this intensive harvesting."

During the same time, another visit of senior forestry officials from the Department of Forest, the Ministry of Forest and FECOFUN was organised to review the performance of four research plots in Chappani CFUG. In all four treatments, visiting officials including the DFO observed a rich regeneration in Pinus patula plots. They were fully convinced that there was no risk of poor regeneration and that similar thinning could be expanded in pine plantation forest.

In the subsequent step, Shambhu, Madan, and DFO discussed potential SFM options. Accordingly, the Dharapani forest, with an area of 40ha was divided into 5 sub-divisions, so that felling would be carried out in 8 hectares, making it a 5-year rotation cycle. A revised OP integrating these aspects were prepared, submitted and approved by the DFO. The CFUG members were little aware of the complex inventory, analysis and harvesting plans. Of course, the broader messages were conveyed and they provided their consent on it.

Case 3: Shreechhap CFUG

Proposal for establishing research plots was discussed at DFO on 2Jan, 2020. Accordingly, details of proposed activities were outlined and presented to the meeting of the executive committee on 12Jan, 2020. It was endorsed by the General Assembly on 13th Jan. Afterwards details of activities to be conducted under each research plots were developed. However, the OP, especially the AAC of different blocks had to be adjusted as per the proposed harvest volume in the research plots. Though the OP was developed based on the thinning guidelines, the three available options given by the guidelines put us in confusion. There was 240 trees/ha, 200 trees/ha and 135 trees/ha. We agreed to go with the first option. However, DFO was not ready. He opined that as the forest had over 600 trees/ha, bringing it down to 240 may be unacceptable to the stakeholders. Politicians and media in particular might not subscribe such practice. After four days of consecutive discussion, the DFO suggested us to keep 300trees/ha as a midway between people's expectations and regulatory provision. We revised the OP and the harvesting plan accordingly. The figure 300 trees/ha was purely an arbitrary, neither based on the legal text nor any scientific analysis.

4.3 CF planning and implementation

Currently, OP and annual plans are the major planning documents, along with the constitution of the CFUG. The OP details the wide range of silvicultural actions – harvesting, protection, cleaning, weeding, prevention of forest fires, conserving water sources, conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. Annual plans detail activities on community infrastructure, social services and income generation depending on the available funds. However, there are huge gaps in resource assessment and harvesting prescription, implementation of forest operational plans and annual general plans. Below we identify three key issues around planning and their implementation.

4.3.1. Grey areas in forest resource assessment

Above three cases demonstrate that there are several grey areas in the resource assessment and calculation of GS and AAC. DFO's judgements seem to have dictated the resource assessment and calculation of GS/AAC. Quite often the DFO judgements are implicitly influenced by potential CIAA actions. For example, since the national average GS in Nepal's forests has been estimated as 178m³/ha, the CIAA sometimes uses this figure as upper limit and tend to ask clarification questions to DFOs whenever AAC calculations involve GS above this figure. In case of Dharapani, the possibility of acidic soil in pine patula forest was DFOs personal judgement. Similarly, in case of Sreechhap, DFOs advice to maintain 300 trees/ha was just to be safe side. Though the thinning guidelines clearly states 240 trees/ha for a 40yr age stock, DFO feared that lowering number of trees from roughly a 600/ha to 240/ha could attract criticism from various actors and therefore suggest to maintain a minimum of 300.

Forest inventory functions as the core scientific exercise to inform the OP. Though the regulation prescribes 0.5% sampling, this has been rarely followed. Critiques of inventory points to the facts that most of the inventory data are derived from last one, based on rough information from third person or cursory visit at best.

Legal aspects dominate calculation of growing stock. As the Kalapani case shows, DFOs would not approve any calculation if the growing stock comes above 178m³ per hectares. This is well known issue associated with CIAA ceiling which puts DFOs at risk of providing needed clarification for such case. In many of the dense forests, technicians tend to manipulate the tree heights or even the number of saplings to decrease the growing stock.

Calculation of mean annual increment (MAI) provides another area of judgement. The regulation has provided three categories of forests: slow growing, moderate growing and fast growing and a range of 1-3%; 2-4.5; and 3-5% MAI based on actual forest conditions. Here the technician has to use his/her judgement to define the quality of the forest.

AAC is calculated based on MAI. However, calculation is differentiated based on three different types of forest quality: Quality A (seedling >5000; Sampling >2000; GS >200); Quality B (seedling = 2000-5000; Sapling 800-2000; GS 50-200) and Quality C (seedling <2000; Sampling <800; GS <50). These measurements are costly and hardly be precise. There are several spaces where technicians use their good judgement.

However, even after estimation of AAC, DFO permits vary sometimes based on mode of use. In case of internal use, they may allow up 85% of the calculated AAC. However, for outside sale, they tended to be conservative and will rarely allow above 60% of the calculated AAC.

The multiple grey areas that invite good judgement from technician entails the nature of forest science in general and suggests embracing such good judgements as inherent to OP development. This means we have to move away from too much reliance on regulatory control and prioritise on capacity development, socio-institutional governance tools for ensuring good practice in OP development. At the same time, the whole burden over DFO must be reduced and instead a whole range of actors including the technicians, CFUG officials and DFO staff should be oriented and held accountable for any malpractice in OP development.

4.3.2. Operational plans are limited to just forest resource harvesting

We have analysed the OPs and annual progress reports of three consecutive fiscal years of three CFUGs. These CFUGs were the one in which intensive timber harvesting was carried out. This implies they did not have any financial constraints in implementing forest management activities that were proposed in the OP. List of proposed forest management related activities are presented in Table 1 below (for details see Annex: 1). Out of 14 activities proposed by the three CFUGs only two: one of regeneration promotion and another forest protection by forest guard were implemented during the last three fiscal years. This begs the question: why we put so much efforts and resources in developing such details in the OP? What is the utility of the investment by the CFUGs and DFO in such a rigorous planning of forest management?

Table 1: Summary of proposed activities in OP and actual progress

S.N.	Planned Activities in OP	Dharapani	Sansari	Shreechhap
1	Tree harvest as per Thinning guidelines	0	0	0
2	Fire lines construction	0	0	0
3	Regeneration promotion	0	1	1
4	Forest protection by forest guard	0	1	1
5	Forest management equipment purchase	0	0	0

6	Forest fire control equipment purchase	0	0	0
7	Fire lines maintenance			0
8	Technical support for forest management	0	0	0
9	Cleaning of unwanted species	0	0	
10	Log yard improvement	0	0	0
11	Edible species plantation for wild animal control			0
12	Water source protection			0
13	Land allocation in CF			0
14	Fodder species Plantation in private land			0

Reasons for weak implementation OPs

1. OPs prepared based on previous legal basis for example specific guidelines. Currently, there are dozens of OPs in the districts which were prepared based on the Government's Scientific Forest Management Guidelines 2014 (2071). Since the government withdrew the Guidelines all the OPs prepared based on that Guidelines have remained defunct.
2. Poor governance or inactive CFUGs: If CFUGs are unable to govern them properly, they are not able to conduct regular meeting or AGM. Nor they have audit reports, progress report or plan for the next year. In such case, the CFUG won't get harvesting permit despite a functional OP.
3. CIAA case: Any CFUG with CIAA case cannot go for new harvest irrespective of its OP status. DFOs usually won't approve the harvest request unless the CIAA case is resolved.
4. DFO's five-year plan has been expired and DFO won't approve harvest permit even within the technically sound and legally valid OP. For example, in case of Sindhupalchowk, DFO plan has been expired. Unfortunately, the DFO cannot develop a plan as there is no Bagmati Province level strategic plan. Again, Bagmati government level Management Plan cannot be prepared because of the lack of federal strategic plan.
5. Volatile market: Many CFUGs are unable or disinterested to harvest timber if there are indications of unstable market. In some cases, where timber demand appears to have slowed down, contractors communicate such signals to the respective CFUG leaders. Accordingly, the leaders hesitate to harvest timber.

4.3.3. Annual plans are rarely implemented

The variation between plan and implementation is not limited to forest management. Similar gaps exist outside the forest management issues. For example, Table 2 below shows such gaps in implementation of the annual plans.

Table 2: Variation between annual plans and their implementation

CFUG name	Planned activities	Reason
Chapani	Livelihood improvement revolving fund (for goat farming, turkey farming, etc)	In the GA, the plans were not discussed properly, however was endorsed simply after reading the plan. In 2nd GA, the community demands were replaced as one of the leaders of the CFUGs asked the committee to allocate CF fund for community building (elite capture)
	Capacity building activities for women	
	Support for enterprise establishment	
	Construction of temple (Pokhari and Gairi tole)	In the GA, the plans were not discussed properly, however was endorsed simply after reading the plan but were not implemented because of following reasons: i) Priorities of the reformed executives were focused on harvesting and timber selling. b) the issue of financial embezzlement by previous executives not solved, c)tourist executives
	Irrigation pond renovation (Pokhari tole)	
	Support to install electric pole	
	Drinking water tank construction support (Gairi tile, Dharapani, Yakpa, Okharbot and Bajartole)	
Fagar Khola	Enterprise of Allo thread extraction	Lack of sufficient fund in the CF (money from expected source have not been collected yet)
	Charcoal extraction	
	Cardamom plantation and management	
Sansaridanda	Construction of road	COVID pandemic, passiveness in CFUG
	Fireline construction	
	Construction of CFUG building	
	Drinking water supply	
	Salary for one teacher in school	
	well-being ranking and providing Rs. 10,000 per person in 10% interest in supervision of EC	

5. Gaps in current CF planning

The above cases on general assemblies and operational plan preparation offer great insights of how currently CF planning is wrongly conceived framed and practiced so that it voids some of the fundamentals of planning theories and practices. We identify five major flaws in current planning.

5.1 Lack of scientific rigor and public voice

The above cases show that forest resource assessment and its analysis are often manipulated to fit to the political correctness and regulatory guidance. For example, the arbitrary figure of 178m³ per hectare have been blindly followed without questioning. Instead, the scientific data and analysis are undermined and manipulated. Several other studies have shown this sub-standard practice in resource assessment, analysis and prescription of harvesting regime and volume (Srijana Baral, Bijendra Basnyat, Rutte...). Similar is the case with annual development plan; which often are products of a few leaders' strategic choice including pleasing their allies or even opposition leaders with token resource allocation. Usually there is no dedicated time for general CF members to question, express their view and contribute to planning process. At best scenario they allocate maximum of 1-2 hour in a year during the AGM for their members and there is no guarantee that those suggestions are responded or adopted. In normal case, such deliberation are largely replaced by political stunt, leaders capturing the forum or simple rituals in which only the members signature is valued not their inputs.

5.2 Irrelevant and hardly used, referred, implemented OPs

The Operational Plans are narrowly framed around timber harvest, where as a range of non-timber forest products, ecosystem services, and biodiversity are largely ignored. Consequently, these plans are not relevant to large number of people who use and benefit from forest biomass other than timber. On fact, the OP is hardly referred in forest management activities apart from revising the AAC to ensure timber harvests rests within the prescribed volume. Also, as there is little monitoring from DFO and local governments, CFUG leaders do not see any incentive to properly implement the plans. Quite often having a good plan does not necessarily ensure forest management and harvest permit. In many cases, OP developed through investing huge costs have gone waste because of DFO inaction or higher-level policy decision.

5.3 Absence of ambition for long-term change

From these cases we also learnt that none of the CF plans, either forest management OP or the annual plans consist of any planned change forest or in their communities. The whole planning process is legally constrained and there is little space for innovation. Timber harvesting and investment of the income: either confined by regulatory requirement or by leaders narrow developmental view and petti self-interests. The planning process and legally required planning document lack the sense of long-term planning horizon and any deliberative move to a next stage.

5.4 No appeal for stakeholders

It appears that neither the CF members or stakeholders such as DFO, local government and other local institutions are interested in CF planning. While they have strong stake in how these CF's are manages, these groups are little interested on currently planning events or the key planning document such as OP. Of course, a few leaders may attend the meeting just to capitalize on the gathered mass to advertise their political agenda or their positions. As long as CF planning is not integrated into the broader local

planning process or landscape level plans, these stakeholders won't have any interests on the OP or their annual plan. Though some legal instruments are increasingly aware of the need of these integration, these are not fully implemented yet.

5.5 Conceived as costly burden to meet regulatory compliance

Planning has become a headache for CF leaders. Most of the CFUG leaders are tired of meeting planning related compliance. Their central worry is that they are failed to prepare and timely revise OP, progress report, financial audit or annual plan. OP preparation appears costly for given scale of business – most of them rely on DFO, NGO, project support. Only few have invested on their own. Huge OP backlog is mainly due to high cost and low utility of the OPs.

6. Ways forward: Developing a new CF planning framework

Informed by the ten year of action research, we propose a radical shift in both structural and procedural aspects of CF planning. On the structural question, we propose two develop a simple and concise contract between the DFO and CFUG outlining key standards of forest management, legal compliance and respective roles and responsibilities. At the second level, there should be a CFUG long-term strategic plan comprising two components: forest management plan and business plan. While the contract will ensure legal compliance from CFUGs, a separate strategic plan will increase CFUG autonomy in planning, result in a relevant plan, and this will ultimately improve its effectiveness. Similarly, we propose three procedural changes: i) CF categorisation and differential planning weightage, ii) collaboration with local government, and iii) efficient yet deliberative planning. The diagram below presents a summary version of the revised structure and procedure of CF planning.

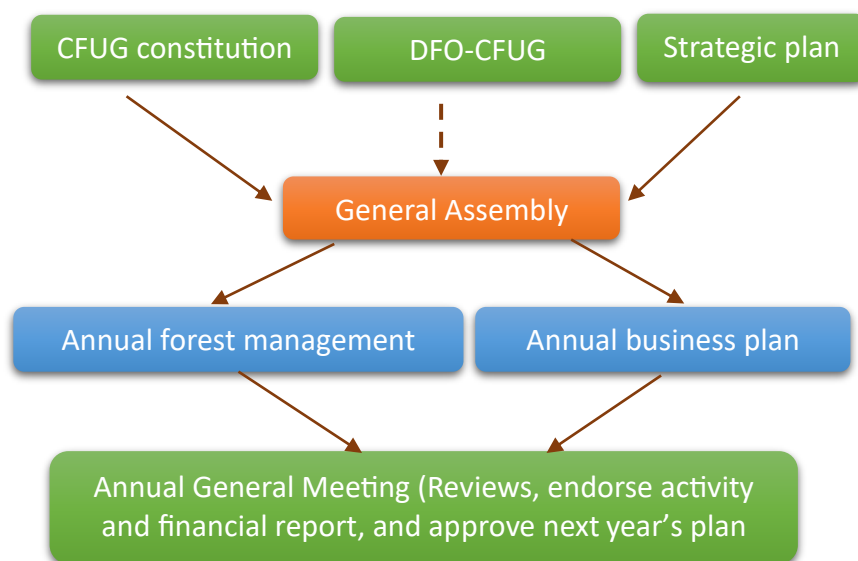


Figure 2: Proposed structure and procedure of CF planning

6.1 Decoupling strategic plan from legal contract

Community forests operation plans (CFOPs) are the legally binding contractual documents between DFO and CFUG. However, they are also technical plan which CF members develop, implement and monitor. Since under the CF programme, CFUGs manage part of national forests, there is a good rationale for a contractual document specifying: i) The scope of CFUG management rights; ii) The environmental standards that CFUG must maintain and comply with; and, iii) Clarifying roles and responsibilities of DFO and CFUG towards achieving CF goals and complying with the standards. The contract provides a strong safeguard against any risks of unsustainable management. Duration of such contracts should be unlimited. However, it can be short two-page document and can be revised based on mutual understanding.

CFUGs need a long-term strategic plan for the management of the forest and a whole range of economic, social and institutional activities. The forest and ecosystem management can include long term vision of their forest, ecosystem, level of harvest, enhancement and enrichment activities, choice of silvicultural systems based on the natural features of the forest and collective choice of CF members considering long term socio-ecological security. Similarly, the business component of the strategic plan should outline vision of forest-people relations, forestry business, human resources, financial plans and other socio-economic interventions. Ideally, technical revision and implementation of those plans should not be subjected to DFO approval. This would lead to reduced transaction costs and increased profitability of CF, induce proactive leadership of CFUGs in better management of their forests and reduce administration and monitoring costs of DFO.

AAC has remained the most contentious part of the OP. In a 100-page OP document, DFO has to be sensitive on the specific figure – the AAC. Many CIAA actions against CFUG leaders or DFO staff are based on the calculations of AAC. As a result, whole process of OP development, approval and implementation has become more an administrative issue than a technical and management one. In this context, it is important to separate the technical forestry professional work away from too much of contentious legal/administrative procedure. Equally important is that these issues should be left to the internal operational aspects so that DFO concerns are not in everyday management but just to ensure the standards agreed in the contracts are not violated.

6.2 Separate forest management plan from business plan

Currently, CFUG function under two documents: constitution (no time limit) and operational plan (usually 10yrs). In practice, constitutions are mostly in dormant state and are rarely referred to. These are revisited only in cases of conflicts or when DFO/CIAA has to take any action. The reality of OP implementation is not very different except the AAC related provisions. Normally, OPs are of 80-100 pages long. Nearly one-third are related to forest resource assessment and AAC calculations. Rest is populated with diverse contents: review of previous OP implementation, climate change, biodiversity, enterprise, community development programmes, income generation activities, rules on forest resources uses and offences.

We suggest CFUGs should operate under four documents.

1. **Constitution:** This will govern the CFUG as an organisation. It describes the structures and process decision making, rights and responsibilities of various entities, conflict resolution and dealing with outside agencies.
2. **Contract with DFO.** Since the government has transferred forest management rights to organized CFUGs, this transfer should be based on certain terms and condition. A two-pager contract between DFO and the CFUG leadership forms this basis. It is already in practice. It should mention some basic principles, minimum environmental conditions and standard operational practices. This is perpetual

and no need to periodic revision. This will substantially reduce the burden to DFO and CFUG, both parties do not have to fight with details of AAC or specific silvicultural interventions.

3. **Strategic Plan:** CFUG strategic plan can be a ten-year plan in which they define the vision for the future and identify the goals and objectives. The planning process includes establishing mile stones or key performance indicators (KPI) following which should help the CFUG to reach its stated vision. We have conceptualised it as a substitute of current OP, plus CFUGs business plan in which it can set direction of its prosperity through forestry business. It may include forest development, harvest, forest-based enterprise or trade, financial mobilisation, human resource development, stakeholder collaboration, and socio-cultural interventions. The strategic plan should be in line with the DFO-CFUG contract but is adequately broad enough so that the specific annual plans can be developed under its direction and targets.
4. **Annual forest management plan:** Forest management plan primarily draw from the OP. In conventional language it is a kind of harvesting plan. However, the plan integrates whole range of silvicultural activities including the silviculture methods, harvest plots, quantity, forest management activities, fire line, ecosystem conservation activities, plantation etc. Besides, it also consists of monitoring of harvesting.
5. **Annual business plan:** This is an investment plan in areas of infrastructure, forest-based enterprises, livelihoods improvement, climate change adaptation, social services and other locally planned activities. Activities are discussed and decided during the AGM based on CFUG revenue, support from local government, DFO and any other external agency. The annual business plan will be more realistic and achievable plans, reduces their dependency with forest technicians, adaptative and flexible depending upon emerging priorities.

6.3 Categorisation and differential treatment for different forests

There are huge variations among community forests in – size of forests and volume of forest products, level of transaction with the market, amount of annual revenue, nature of forest products/services, etc. Currently, we have used largely the same regulatory requirements and administrative procedures for all types of CFs irrespective of these variations. As a result, thousands of CFs with low resource potential and small annual income have felt it as a burden. To address this issue, one plausible proposal is to set differentiated treatment to different categories. Any CFUG with no transactions with the market and have low annual income can be allowed to operate with minimum formality. On the other hand, those with good income and high transaction with the market can be asked to furnish detailed documentation. The rationale is, as larger forests with intensive transaction with the market implies high environmental risks and possibility of fund mis-management. Moreover, they can afford to pay for technical and financial services they require.

6.4 Increased collaboration with local government and experts

As per the regulations CFUG are required to organise their annual general assemblies within three months of new fiscal year. However, farmers are still busy with their farming activities until this time – mid-September. In some years, there may still be some effect of monsoon. As a result, most of the CFUG organise their AGM later in November. Those who aim to accomplish it on time can hardly find needed minimum members and have to postponed, or get the signature by taking the meeting minute door to door. Moreover, this results in a long-time gap between planning and actual implementation of the plan, thereby resulting in poor implementation. All these practices significantly compromise the essence of AGM, the key forum in which CFUG members could have discussed and endorsed institutional, forest management and development related agenda through a deliberative approach.

We therefore, propose to shift the AGM to November when CFUG members are relatively free, weather is more convenient for mobility and larger gathering. Also, by then leadership may develop a better idea of internal timber demand. This will help for an inclusive, participatory and realistic planning.

6.5 Inclusive and efficient process for developing a strategic plan

CFUGs are looking to minimise the trade-off between efficiency and deliberation in the context of increasing opportunity costs and decreasing interests to participate in the CFUG institutional and forest management related activities. Out of the five documents presented above, the constitution and DFO-CFUG contracts are long term permanent documents and may not require periodic revision. Also, these are largely guided by legal framework and therefore they will have limited space to identify and elaborate their plans. Strategic Plan is the most important plan that needs both comprehensive assessment of the biophysical features of their resource base, socio-economic situation of their community and individual members, and market dynamics. Similarly, it demands active engagement with its own members and relevant stakeholders.

The CFUG executive committee can form a *Strategic Plan Committee* comprising the EC members and the Tole representatives. After its formation, the Committee can seek technical support from diverse sources: government, private sector or NGOs under an agreed financial arrangement including a negotiated fee. The technician conducts biophysical assessment of the forest through a detailed forest inventory and boundary survey. In case, there is boundary conflict, the Committee has to resolve it, getting support from DFO if it is necessary. The technician presents a broader picture of their forest including its condition and potentials. Similarly, experts/consultants with relevant expertise on socio-economic and market analysis can develop those analysis and present it to the Committee. After discussing on these analyses, the Committee identifies forest management objectives - timber production, biodiversity conservation, tourism, watershed and ecosystem protection or a combination of these, and a business plan comprising forest enterprise, trade, income generation, welfare activities, capacity development, human resource management.

The technicians then develop management options and business strategy to achieve those identified objectives and presents it back to the Committee. After discussion, the Committee then endorses the Strategic Plan which will be tabled in AGM and will be endorsed along with any suggested minor revision. A copy of this plan will be shared with the DFO through sub-DFO. There should be no need of approval of this Strategic Plan. Annual forest management plan and business plans are developed by EC with support from experts and will be presented and endorsed by the regular AGM.



Figure 3: Proposed strategic plan preparation process

7. Conclusions

This report examined the CF planning framework and practice especially at the CFUG level using their AGM and the OP as the mandatory planning body and key planning document. We made three key observations and made a few proposals towards a radical shift in planning framework considering the pressing economic rationale and market opportunities.

First, we learnt that the AGM as the highest authority and most legitimate body in CFUG planning has become almost defunct or is largely captured by a small group of elites that hardly represents the entire members and their interests. While the AGM is legally mandated to finalise the plan in forest management (OP), the annual activity and financial plan and any other planning related decision, these bodies are increasingly become incapable of handling and delivering those responsibilities. Even in cases, where AGM have occurred, there is little discussion, deliberation, argumentation and endorsement of important institutional and resource management related agenda.

Second, despite much emphasis on the OP, there are several grey areas in apparently scientific exercise around resource assessment, its analysis and harvesting prescriptions. Apart from raising questions on the central argument of science-based forest management planning, these practices also cast doubt on the relevance of costly process of resource assessment and monopoly of forestry technicians in CF planning.

Third, we found huge gaps in development of plans and their actual implementation. Upon examination of the implementation of plans, it was found that neither the forest OP nor the annual plans were implemented. While the whole OP is narrowly conceived and implemented as forest harvesting, even the harvesting has not been carried out in several CFUGs. Key reasons for poor implementation of these plans remain: lack of CFUG autonomy in managing and harvesting their forest products, weak participation of the members resulting in poor ownership of the plans, poor CFUG governance leading to no action, weak institutional capacity of CFUG and poor monitoring and support from DFO and LGs.

Based on broader review of CF programme in Nepal and especially the challenges around planning, we propose a radical shift in planning in three ways: i) Replace the current OP with a Strategic Plan, which takes a more strategic approach considering resource potential, CFUG capacity and market opportunity especially in the medium term and in long term. ii) Decouple the legal, contractual aspects of planning from technical details of setting goals, mobilising available natural, human and financial resources and developing milestones and associated activities. iii) Do not rely solely on volunteer time of CFUG leaders, and instead mobilise available expertise in planning with good scientific rigour informed by CF members interest, experiences. Though these proposals are firmly proven from EnLiFT research sites, these are based on researchers' long engagement with the CF planning process. We are confident that the new framework will strengthen scientific rigour and optimal participation of CF members making the process effective with more relevant and implementable plans in the future. Of course, the most important point is moving away from rituals to making a major shift towards addressing economic rationales through capitalising on emerging market opportunity.

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9. Annexes

Annex 1: Plan Vs forest management progress of CFUGs

Dharapani (FY 2074/75 to FY 2076/77)

S.N.	Planned Activities in OP	Unit	2074/75		2075/76		2076/77	
			Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress
1	Tree harvest as per Thinning guidelines	Ha	8	5	8	3	8	0
2	Fire lines construction	KM	5	2	5	1.5	5	0
3	Regeneration promotion	ha	0	0	8	0	16	0
4	Forest protection by forest guard	Nos	1	0	1	0	1	0
5	Forest management equipment purchase	Nrs	200000	0	50000	0	50000	0
6	Forest fire control equipment purchase	Nrs	0	0	50000	0	50000	0
7	Technical support for forest management	Nrs	200000	0	200000	0	200000	0
8	Cleaning of unwanted species	ha	4	0	4	0	4	0

Sansaridada CF FY 2077/78 to 2079/80

S.N.	Planned Activities in OP	Unit	2077/78		2078/79		2079/80	
			Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress
1	Tree harvest as per Thinning guidelines	Ha	3	3	5.9	0	6.9	0
2	Fire lines construction	KM	3	0	0	0	0	0
3	Fire lines maintenance	KM			3	0	3	0
4	Regeneration promotion	ha	5	0	8	3	15	3
5	Forest protection by forest guard	Nos	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	Forest management equipment purchase	Nrs	150000	0	50000	0	50000	0
7	Technical support for harvesting plan preparation	Nrs	100000	0	100000	0	100000	0
8	Cleaning of unwanted species	ha	2.5	0	2.5	0	2.5	0
9	Log yard improvement	Nos	0	1	0	0	0	0

Shrichhap CF 2077/78 to 2079/80

S.N.	Planned Activities in OP	Unit	2077/78		2078/79		2079/80	
			Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress	Planned	Progress
1	Tree harvest as per Thinning guidelines	Ha	3	3	6.7	0	6.29	0
2	Fire lines construction	KM	5	0	5	0	0	0
3	Fire lines maintenance	KM	5	0	5	0	5	0
4	Regeneration promotion	ha	5	0	10	3	10	3
5	Forest protection by forest guard	Nos	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	Forest encroachment control	Ha	1	0	1	0	1	0
7	Log yard improvement	Nos	1	1	0	0	0	0
8	Edible species plantation for wild animal control	ha	4	1.5	3	0	3	0
9	Water source protection	Nos	2	0	2	0	2	0
10	Land allocation in CF	Nos	10	0	10	0	10	0
11	Fodder species Plantation in private land	nos	5000	2000	3000	0	3000	0

Annex 2: Plan Vs progress in development actions

CFUG	Sectors	Planned activities	Evidence	Status of activities	Reason
Chapani	Livelihood improvement	Livelihood improvement revolving fund (for goat farming, turkey farming, etc)	Annual Plan (2021)/planning meeting minute	Not implemented	In the GA, the plans were not discussed properly, however was endorsed simply after reading the plan. In 2nd GA, the community demands were replaced as one of the leader of the CFUGs asked the committee to allocate CF fund for community building (elite capture)
		Capacity building activities for women		Not implemented	
		Support for enterprise establishment		Not implemented	
	Community development	Construction of temple (Pokhari and Gairi tole)		Not implemented	In the GA, the plans were not discussed properly, however was endorsed simply after reading the plan but were not implemented because of following reasons: i) Priorities of the reformed executives were focused on harvesting and timber selling. b) the issue of financial embezzlement by previous executives not solved, c) tourist executives
		Irrigation pond renovation (pokhari tole)		Not implemented	
		Support to install electric pole		Not implemented	
		Drinking water tank construction support (Gairi tile, Dharapani, Yakpa, Okharbot and Bajartole)		Not implemented	
Fagar Khola	Livelihood improvement	Enterprise of Allo thread extraction	26th GA's minute 2021	Not implemented	Lack of sufficient fund in the CF (money from expected source have not been collected yet)
		Charcoal extraction		Not implemented	

		Cardamom plantation and management		Not implemented	
Sansaridanda	Community development	Construction of road	15th GA's minute 2020	Not implemented	COVID pandemic, passiveness in CFUG
		Fireline construction		Not implemented	
		Construction of CFUG building		Not implemented	
		Drinking water supply		Not implemented	
		Salary for one teacher in school		Not implemented	
	Livelihood improvement	well-being ranking and providing Rs. 10,000 per person in 10% interest in supervision of EC	15th GA's minute 2020	Not implemented	