

## Non-Timber Forest Products and Livelihood Linkages: A Case of Lamabagar, Nepal

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**Abstract :** Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) have attracted substantial interest in the recent years with the increasing recognition that these can provide essential community needs for improved and diversified rural livelihood and support the objectives of biodiversity conservation. Nevertheless, various challenges are witnessed in their sustainable harvest and management. Assuming that sustainable management with community stewardship can offer one of the solutions to existing challenges, the study assesses the linkages between NTFPs and rural livelihood in Lamabagar village of Dolakha, Nepal. The major objective was to document the status of NTFPs and their contributions in households of Lamabagar. For status documentation, vegetation sampling was done using systematic random sampling technique. 30 plots of 10 m  $\times$  10 m were laid down in six parallel transect lines at horizontal distance of 160 m in two different community forests. A structured questionnaire survey was conducted in 76 households (excluding non-response rate) using stratified random sampling technique for contribution analysis. Likewise, key informant interview and focus group discussions were also conducted for data triangulations. 36 different NTFPs were recorded from the vegetation sample in two community forests of which 50% were used for medicinal purposes. The other uses include fodder, religious value, and edible fruits and vegetables. Species like *Juniperus indica*, *Daphne bholua*, *Aconitum spicatum*, and *Lyonia ovalifolia* were frequently used for trade as a source of income, which was sold in local market. The protected species like *Taxus wallichiana* and *Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora* were also recorded in the area for which the trade is prohibited. The protection of these species urgently needs community stewardship. More than half of the surveyed households (55%) were depending on NTFPs for their daily uses, other than economic purpose whereas 45% of them sold those products in the market directly or in the form of local handmade products as a source of livelihood. NTFPs were the major source of primary health curing agents especially for the poor and unemployed people in the study area. Hence, the NTFPs contributed to livelihood under three different categories: subsistence, supplement income and emergency support, depending upon the economic status of the households. Although the status of forest improved after handover to the user group, the availability of valuable medicinal herbs like *Rhododendron anthopogon*, *Swertia nervosa*, *Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora*, and *Aconitum spicatum* were declining. Inadequacy of technology, lack of easy transport access, and absence of good market facility were the major limitations for external trade of NTFPs in the study site. It was observed that people were interested towards conservation only if they could get some returns: economic in terms of rural settlements. Thus, the study concludes that NTFPs could contribute rural livelihood and support conservation objectives only if local communities are provided with the easy access of technology, market and capital.

**Keywords :** contribution, medicinal, subsistence, sustainable harvest

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