

Association Between Renewable Energy and Community Forest User Group: A Case of Siranchowk Rural Municipality, Nepal

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Abstract : Community forest user groups (CFUGs) have been the core stone of forest management efforts in Nepal. Due to the lack of a smooth transition into the local governance structure in 2017, policy instruments have not been effectively cascaded to the local level, creating ambiguity and inconsistency in forest governance. Descriptive mixed-method research was performed with community users and stakeholders of the Tarpakha community forest, Siranchowk Rural Municipality, to understand the role of the political economy in CFUG management. The household survey was conducted among 100 households (who also are existing members of the Tarpakha CFUG) to understand and document their energy consumption preferences and practices. Likewise, ten key informant interviews and five focus group discussions with the municipality and forest management officials were also conducted to have a wider overview of the factors and political, socio-economic, and religious contexts behind the utilization of renewable energy for sustainable development. Findings from our study suggest that only 3% of households use biogas as their main source of energy. The rest of the households mention liquid petroleum gas (LPG), electricity, and firewood as major sources of energy for domestic purposes. Community members highlighted the difficulty in accessing firewood due to strict regulations from the CFUG, lack of cattle and manpower to rear cattle to produce cow dung (for biogas), and lack of technical expertise at the community level for the operation and maintenance of solar energy, among others as challenges of the resource. Likewise, key informants have mentioned policy loopholes at both the federal and local levels, especially with regard to the promotion of alternative or renewable energy, as there are no clear mandates and provisions to regulate the renewable energy industry. The study recommends doing an in-depth study on the feasibility of renewable energy sources, especially in the context of CFUGs, where biodiversity conservation aspects need to be equally taken into consideration while thinking of the promotion and expansion of renewable energy sources.

Keywords : community forest, renewable energy, sustainable development, Nepal

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