

Pricing Effects on Equitable Distribution of Forest Products and Livelihood Improvement in Nepalese Community Forestry

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Abstract : Despite the large number of in-depth case studies focused on policy analysis, institutional arrangement, and collective action of common property resource management; how the local institutions take the pricing decision of forest products in community forest management and what kinds of effects produce it, the answers of these questions are largely silent among the policy-makers and researchers alike. The study examined how the local institutions take the pricing decision of forest products in the lowland community forestry of Nepal and how the decisions affect to equitable distribution of benefits and livelihood improvement which are also objectives of Nepalese community forestry. The study assumes that forest products pricing decisions have multiple effects on equitable distribution and livelihood improvement in the areas having heterogeneous socio-economic conditions. The dissertation was carried out at four community forests of lowland, Nepal that has characteristics of high value species, matured-experience of community forest management and better record-keeping system of forest products production, pricing and distribution. The questionnaire survey, individual to group discussions and direct field observation were applied for data collection from the field, and Lorenz curve, gini-coefficient, χ^2 -text, and SWOT (Strong, Weak, Opportunity, and Threat) analysis were performed for data analysis and results interpretation. The dissertation demonstrates that the low pricing strategy of high-value forest products was supposed crucial to increase the access of socio-economically weak households, and to and control over the important forest products such as timber, but found counter productive as the strategy increased the access of socio-economically better-off households at higher rate. In addition, the strategy contradicts to collect a large-scale community fund and carry out livelihood improvement activities as per the community forestry objectives. The crucial part of the study is despite the fact of low pricing strategy; the timber alone contributed large part of community fund collection. The results revealed close relation between pricing decisions and livelihood objectives. The action research result shows that positive price discrimination can slightly reduce the prevailing inequality and increase the fund. However, it lacks to harness the full price of forest products and collects a large-scale community fund. For broader outcomes of common property resource management in terms of resource sustainability, equity, and livelihood opportunity, the study suggests local institutions to harness the full price of resource products with respect to the local market.

Keywords : community, equitable, forest, livelihood, socioeconomic, Nepal

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