

Forest Products Pricing System in Community Forestry Program: An Analysis of Its Impacts on Forest Resources Management and Livelihood Improvement of Local People

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Abstract : Despite the successful implementation of community forestry program, a number of pros and cons have been raised on Terai community forestry in the case of lowland locally called Terai region of Nepal, which climatically belongs to tropical humid and possessed high-quality forests in terms of ecology and economy. The study aims to investigate the local pricing strategy of forest products and its impacts on equitable forest benefits sharing, the collection of community fund and carrying out livelihood improvement activities. The study was carried out on six community forests revealed that local people have substantially benefited from the community forests. However, being the region is heterogeneous by socio-economic conditions and forest resources have higher economic potential, the decision of low pricing strategy made by the local people have created inequality problems while sharing the forest benefits, and poorly contributed to community fund collection and consequently carrying out limited activities of livelihood improvement. The paper argued that the decision of low pricing strategy of forest products is counterproductive to promote the equitable benefit-sharing in the areas of heterogeneous socio-economic conditions with high-value forests. The low pricing strategy has been increasing accessibility of better off households at a higher rate than poor, as such households always have the higher affording capacity. It is also defective to increase the community fund and carry out activities of livelihood improvement effectively. The study concluded that unilateral decentralized forest policy and decision-making autonomy to the local people seems questionable unless their decision-making capacities are enriched sufficiently. Therefore, it is recommended that empowerments of decision-making capacity of local people and their respective institutions together with policy and program formulation are prerequisite for efficient and equitable community forest management and its long-term sustainability.

Keywords : benefit sharing, community forest, livelihood, pricing mechanism, Nepal

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