

REPORT ON ISSUE-BASED DISCUSSION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY FOREST USER GROUPS



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ABBREVIATION

CF	Community Forest
CFUG	Community Forest User Groups
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WRRN	Women Rights and Resource Network



On 14th September, 2024, an event entitled “Issue-based discussion between the local government and Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs)” was held by the team of Women Rights and Resource Network (WRRN) with financial aid of United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

PARTICIPATION

The team of WRRN included Chairperson of WRRN Ms. Aarti Pathak, Forestry Associate Ms. Pratikshaya Bhandari, and an Honorable member of Bagmati Province, former Chairperson of Federation of Community Forest User Groups of Nepal (FECOFUN) and Executive Advisor of WRRN Ms. Bharati Pathak as a special guest.

The Chairperson of Ward number 2, Makwanpur Gadhi Mr. Barwansingh Lama, representative of Ward number 5 Mr. Laxman Dahal, Chairperson of Hetauda War number 5 Mr. Sushil Ghimire and representative of Ward number 5 Mrs. Ranjita Silwal were present from the local government side. Altogether, there were 40 participants including members and representatives from three CFUGs, WRRN team and Local Government team.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

With the aim of aligning community needs with local government policies and support, the program of issue-based discussion was started. The program commenced with the general introduction of all the present participants followed by general briefing and overview of the program by Ms. Aarati Pathak. The first session of the program was focused with the key issues based on forest management, intergenerational involvement and sustainable use of resources, etc. that are being faced by CFUG members. The key issues faced by CFUGs are enlisted below:

1. Bungdal CFUGs

- Lack of availability of training related to women empowerment.
- Lack of information about the changing rules and regulations by local and central level of government.
- Not getting enough recognition and market value for their generated product i.e. ginger.
- Facing discrimination among educated and uneducated groups.
- Lack of knowledge and involvement of women in record keeping activities and lack of double record system in the CFUG.
- Lack of availability of agricultural equipment to collect and store agricultural products
- Lack of coordination between CFUG and local government.
- Lack of safety equipment for the maintenance of hygiene.
- Prevalent of Forest fire
- Lack of equipment for use during the disaster.
- Provision of triple tax system.
- Administrative hurdles for proper management of forest due to unclear and changing government policies.

2. Piple Pokhara CFUGs

- Encroachment of forest area
- Shortage of raw materials due to management rules of CF

- Provision of triple taxation system
- Rules and regulations barrier for community registration for enterprise establishment
- Documentation of policy enabling condition for strengthening community forest's resource management.
- Lack of capacity building trainings regarding financial management.
- Changing rules and regulations at national and provincial level acting as a barrier for sustainable forest management.
- Forest fire and lack of safety equipment during such disasters.
- Lack of capacity building trainings regarding forest management.
- Decreasing interest of CFUG members due to less dependency upon forest for their livelihood.

3. Chuchhekhola CFUGs

- Encroachment issue due to infrastructure development near forest boundary.
- Shortage of raw materials due to forest rules and acts.
- Issue regarding registration of saw mill.
- Lack of alternative source of income opportunities
- Lack of trainings for women empowerment for alternative source of income generating.
- Risk of forest fire and lack of safety equipment during disasters.
- Lack of training regarding proposal writing for fund raising.
- Problem of triple taxation system.
- Lack of proper and adequate knowledge about forest management.
- Human Wildlife Conflict
- Lack of proper disposal of waste materials inside forest area.
- Lack of training for record keeping of CFUG members.

After the open discussion session for all the three CFUGs for addressing their issues of forest management, the representatives from Government side were provided with the key issues for the advocacy from their side by the CFUG representatives. Those key and cross-cutting issues related with all the CFUGs are given below:

- **Advocacy for Tax Reforms:** CFUG leaders have urged local government officials to advocate for the reduction or elimination of 25% income tax on their earnings, emphasizing that such financial relief is essential for sustaining their conservation activities.
- **Collaboration in Resource Management:** Both parties recognize the need for improved collaboration in managing community forests. CFUG representatives have expressed a desire for local governments to take an active role in monitoring forest activities, which could enhance accountability and resource management.
- **Policy Engagement:** CFUGs are pushing for more inclusive policies that recognize their contributions to forest conservation. They seek a platform where their voices can be heard in policy-making processes at both local and national levels.

- **Capacity Building Initiatives:** Discussions have also highlighted the importance of capacity building within CFUGs to enhance their management skills and ensure they can effectively collaborate with local government agencies.

Through the discussions, there was a clear recognition of the need for reforms that support community forestry as a sustainable model for environmental management and economic development.

The representatives from Local Government also provided with the assurance to advocate for the issues that have been raised by the CFUGs since, those issues that were being discussed in the program are not only the issues of three CFUGs but are of all the CFUGs around nation. Hence, the issues need to be discussed in more detailed manner and needs to be go through advocacy process at national level as well. They also believed that the ongoing dialogue aims to foster a more collaborative relationship between CFUGs and local government, ultimately benefitting both forest conservation efforts and local communities.

CONCLUSION

The overall program was seemed to be very fruitful and the CFUG members were very positive about getting a platform to share their issues that needed to be kept in advocacy level. The representatives from Local Government also were very happy to know about the cross-cutting issues.

PHOTO PLATES

