

Hemant R Ojha has over 15 years of experience in research studies and development actions. He is a founder of ForestAction Nepal and continues to be its advisor.

Netra Prasad Timsina's development and research experiences encompass diverse aspects of natural resource management for the last 20 years. He worked in ForestAction as the Coordinator from 2003-2005.

Chetan Kumar has a background in forestry management and human geography. His work is focussed on various 'community-based' approaches to forest management and livelihoods improvement.

Mani Ram Banjade has over 12 years of experience in research, publication and social mobilization. He has worked for government, bilateral projects and (I)NGOs.

Brian Belcher has a background in ecology, resource management and economics. His work focuses on understanding and improving the role and potential of natural resources to meet development and environmental objectives.

This fascinating book compares outcomes from six types of donor-supported government / civil-society partnership arrangements in forest management or conservation: community forestry, collaborative forest management, leasehold forestry, watershed management, buffer-zone forestry, and integrated conservation and development.

There is enough experience from them all to draw conclusions about the most valuable and durable arrangements and institutions born from these interventions, and those that offer the most sustainable support to livelihoods and biodiversity. The comparison also yields interesting insights into differences in outcomes between forestry-focussed and conservation-focussed interventions.

The book deserves a wide readership and will perhaps be of especial value to those planning ecosystem approaches to conservation.

— **Dr Gill Shepherd**, IUCN

This publication continues the tradition of Nepali academic-practitioners actively and fearlessly participating in the policy-practice dialogue which has been evident for several decades. The book addresses the underlying power relationships associated with governance of natural resources in the country under the different modalities that have been experimented in the recent past. These issues are critical to understanding the successes and failures of participatory resource management, particularly forest management, in contemporary Nepal, and the authors pull no punches in their analysis. Nepal continues to be a world leader in this area, and this book will ensure that this leadership will continue.

— **Dr Don Glimour**, Author of the book "Villagers, Forests and Foresters"

This book provides a timely update on community forestry in a country that has been a global leader in this sphere and has also recently experienced dramatic political changes. Three aspects of the book are particularly noteworthy. One is the emphasis on participatory approaches in the resource-rich *terai* (a relatively new phenomenon). The second and third revolve around the issue of power. The book deals very thoroughly with the marginalization of some social groups/categories in these programs, despite many efforts to strengthen equity; and it also addresses the ways government and donors have influenced events in interaction with the less powerful communities. It will make a good read for anyone interested in South Asia, community forestry, and/or the impacts of governance and power relations on conservation and development.

— **Dr Carol J Pierce Colfer**, Principal Scientist, Center for International Forestry Research, and author of "Lessons in Forest Decentralization"



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COMMUNITIES, FORESTS AND GOVERNANCE
Policy and Institutional Innovations from Nepal

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Editors

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Over the past few decades, Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) has evolved as a key strategy of conservation as well as promoting local livelihoods, especially in the developing countries. Nepal has been designing various policies and programmes to support somewhat different but complementary strategies of CBFM over the past three decades. This book draws from these experiences to document lessons from different CBFM initiatives that have taken place over the past few decades in Nepal. The book analyzes not only the dynamics of community-level interactions but also how policy and programme processes shape, determine and influence the practices and outcomes of community-based natural resource management activities.

Together, the eight chapters of the book demonstrate the pitfalls and potentials of community-based and collaborative management programmes. In particular, the analysis highlights the slow progress achieved when programmes are implemented without a basic consensus on the broad framework for decision-making, making them highly contested in practice. The Nepal experience shows the importance of deliberation on policy and programme agendas with affected people, including local communities. While community-based approaches are often assumed to be more equitable, the case studies in this volume show the limits of devolution (moving power from state to community) and the importance of strengthening the capacity of community organizations to become effective and equitable managers of forests. At the same time, the cases show the degree of autonomy that is needed to provide the conditions for effective local-level collective action and resilient local institutions. Perhaps what is most important is that these stories show how, over time, community-based forestry programmes move beyond a narrow conception of a 'government programme', to an independent social arena where civil society groups, state agencies and international actors contest each other for diverse resources, power and positions. Nepal's experience shows the potential of civil society action at multiple scales to make forest governance transparent, accountable and democratic. The degree to which community-based programmes address issues at upper layers of governance, such as district or other sub-national arenas is rarely considered by programme planners, yet the empirical examples illustrate the importance of integration of these levels. This kind of integration and accountability is crucial in order to combat the ways in which subtle agendas of centralization are promoted in the name of participation, devolution and decentralization. Finally, the book demonstrates the importance of learning, negotiation and experimentation to achieve successful, sustainable and democratic forest governance in Nepal.

