

Transforming forest conflicts: Learning from exclusion induced conflicts over forests in Nepal's Terai

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Abstract

Continued forest conflicts in Nepal's Terai have not only undermined sustainable forest management in the region but has also contributed to emerging social unrest that can destabilise political transition to the new federal republic state. Using an action research approach involving intensive participatory research methods, this paper shares experiences of current initiatives and their challenges in transforming conflict between the Northern and Southern communities in the Terai region of Nepal. The action research process helped to develop a shared understanding of biophysical and socio-institutional processes among the conflicting communities, bring the conflicting communities together, and help devise new benefit sharing arrangements that are widely acceptable. Consequently, there has been a substantial reduction in conflict through an inclusive and extended governance arrangement. Consideration of traditional use of forests by distant as well as adjacent communities will be essential to reduce potential heightening of conflicts in the face of policies that emphasise more on restoration and protection of forest as a response to historical trend of deforestation and emerging threats of climate change. Finally, we suggest that enabling policies including further devolution of forest management rights to local communities and adoption of adaptive approach to resource and institutional management can help mitigate North-South² conflict in Terai.

Keywords: forest conflict, Terai, action research, cooperation, climate change, enabling policies, transformation

Introduction

Conflicts over access, management and use of forest in the Terai (lowland) region of Nepal have significant ecological, economic and social ramifications. Terai forests are often regarded as the battlefields between competing land use (Shrestha and Conway 1996) and conflicts exist at multiple levels (Satyal and Humphry 2012). Accordingly, forest management in Terai takes central stage in policy debate (Baral et al 2006), academic exploration (Ojha, 2007; Sinha, 2011) and everyday struggle (Ghimire 1992; Conway et al 2000).

Terai has been an experimental field of multiple, sometimes competing and even conflicting, policies and institutions. Starting from the clearance of large tracts of forests and expansion of agricultural lands in the early 20th century to inviting people from across the border and the hills for populating the area whilst complementing with associated infrastructure coupled with strict protection since the 1970s are some of such experiments. However, in the post 2000 context, the government took a more centrally planned and controlled initiatives namely the the

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² We have used the term North-South conflict to refer to the long standing conflicts over access, management and use of forests along the Chure and its foothills. 'North' normally refers to the hill migrants settled along the East-West highway and its north and 'South' refers to the Madhesis population, traditional user of the same forests who largely settled in the southern part of terai close to Nepal-India border. In forest policy terminology in Terai; the people from the south are also called as distant users.

collaborative forest management (CFM)³ and public land forestry (PLF)⁴ to increase southern people's access to forests. At the same time, community forestry (CF) which was flourishing in the hills was seen to be a potentially incompatible scheme to the objective and therefore was promoted with high caution. There was hardly any genuine attempt to revisit the hill model of CF and explore its potential roles in increasing southern people's access to forest.

About 76.45% (314,660 ha) of the total forest in the Terai are outside the Protected Areas (DFRS, 2014) and more than 60% of it is under government managed forest which fall either under the CF or CFM regime. Given the huge scope of CF's potential contribution to increasing distant users' access to forest products, it is worth to examine such a possibility. What is the prospect of CF accommodating distant users? What can facilitate North-South dialogue in CF in Terai? What kinds of research and evidence help informed dialogue and facilitate negotiation between them? How can national policies and associated supports encourage such initiatives? This paper seeks to answer some of these questions so that further research and piloting can be encouraged and supported. We took a case from Chisapani community forest users group (CFUG) in Nawalparasi to illustrate the experimentation, its prospects and challenges, and lessons for any further piloting of such approach.

The paper is structured into five sections. The following section revisits policy interventions in Terai forest management- particularly those that were introduced in response to the North-South conflict. The third section highlights the Chisapani case, with details the nature of conflict, CFUG's initiative in fostering North-South dialogue, recent changes in institutional features and distributional arrangements, and observed outcomes. It is followed by the section highlighting key patterns of this experimentation and its lessons. Finally, we conclude the paper with few suggested areas that require policy discerning or further research.

Government interventions and continued conflict

As the expansion of CF reached its climax in the late 1990s, the likelihood of undermining southern inhabitants' access to Terai forest emerged as the key policy debate. The policy orientation, legal provisions, support agencies' understanding and institutional practice of the CFUGs largely prioritized nearby inhabitants, and gradually excluded southern inhabitants from the process. The initial concerns gradually became evident so that the 'exclusion of distant users' became a critical limitation of the CF programme. Realizing this limitation, the government experimented with a number of policy interventions such as Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) and Public Land Forestry (PLF). However these management modalities have only limited impacts so far in addressing the forest product needs of the southern people (distant users).

Till date, only 28 CFMs with a total area of 70,138.52ha have been handed over across Terai involving 720,662 households (HHs) (personal communication with Mr. Shantaram Baral, Assistant Forest Officer, Department of Forest, April 2017). A large part of Terai forest is either under Protected Area (PA) system [96,921 ha] or under Chure environmental protection area [1,373,743 ha] (DFRS 2014) or has already been handed over as CF [314,997 ha] (DFRS 2014) leaving limited potential forest area for the expansion of the CFM. Given 50.27% population of Nepal reside in Terai (CBS 2011) of which more than half of the population lives in the southern Terai, supply of forest

³ CFM is a collaborative management modality between forest department, local government and local communities which include both northern and southern one.

⁴ The term PLF is used here to refer to the government programme to promote forestry in public land which are outside for legally recognised forestlands and are often owned by local public institutions such as local governments, schools, temples etc.

products from these few CFMs can be regarded as close to insignificant. Apart from timber, there is also a huge gap between demand and supply of fuelwood in the South.

Large and complex institutional arrangements and exhaustive regulatory provisions pertaining to CFM allows minimum involvement of local communities in decisions regarding forest management and benefit sharing. One single group covers over 25,000 (national average) HHs from hundreds of settlements so that the power disperses nowhere. As the Implementing Unit of the CFM is the key authority for almost all types of decisions, the group itself can exercise little influence over the decisions being made. The Implementing Unit is led by forest officials and therefore, the decisions and overall functioning of CFM is heavily skewed towards techno-bureaucratic approach. That means large mass of Terai are functionally excluded. While the recent scientific forest management may have substantially increased supply of forest products to the members, this is way below the overall demand in the region.

PLM is another important approach that the government has adopted in last decade or so in order to enhance forest products in the South. It has been one of the priority activities of the forestry projects and non-government organization (NGO) actions in Terai. These are small patches of barren lands, ponds, roadsides, river/canal banks (average size: 2-4ha) usually owned by local governments, schools, religious bodies and other public institutions at the local level (LFP, 2003).

Afforestation programmes through the formation of Public Land Management Groups (PLMGs) comprising of 75-100 HHs in each community and providing them with needed support including livelihood generating schemes are the key features of PLM. PLM are primarily led by forestry projects. For example, there are 235 PLMGs involving 37,143 HHs in three districts of Western Terai (Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilvastu) supported by the Multi Stakeholder Forestry Program (MSFP). Though project reports have hailed the scheme as a successful approach, given their small sizes and huge number of HHs involved, their contribution in terms of addressing the increasing need for forest product in the South is again close to insignificant. Moreover, the PLMGs are always at risk of having the assigned patches of public land and its resources taken away by the District Forest Office (DFO).

Similarly the lack of legal arrangements for sustainable management and utilization of forest products i.e. tenure rights has created a sense of insecurity with regard to resource utilization among these groups. With it, the unclear policy provisions on handover of public land to communities has created a sense of lack of ownership. For example, the ownership of the land lies with the Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality while the DFO provides approval for the utilization of the forest products. However, there is no clarity on whether the DFO is the appropriate institution for other land uses like construction of fish ponds and farming among others. Moreover, the scheme is still perceived as a developmental project launched by some NGO and thus has not been fully owned by the PLMGs.

The above discussion shows the limitations of two major strategies in addressing forest product needs of the South. In this context, it is logical to explore other available options. Since over 314,997 ha of forests are being managed under the CF regime in Terai (DFRS 2014), exploring its potential role in contributing to complement with the other approaches could be a good option. The paper brings field experiences of recent initiatives by Chisapani CFUG in Nawalparasi district.

Chisapani CFUG - an overview

With the forest area of 495 ha managed collectively by 3,350 HHs, the Chisapani CFUG was established in 1997 and formally registered in 2009. The CFUG lies in the Bardaghat municipality in low land Terai of Nawalparasi district covering five wards. The vegetation cover comprises of roughly 70 per cent of natural Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest with significant number of trees, poles and saplings in addition to a moist deciduous vegetation type of the Terai region. The forest is concentrated on the Northern part from the East-West highway up to the foothill of the Churia. The settlement ranges from the Southern part from the forest up to 18 km far, all the way to the Indian border (Figure 1).

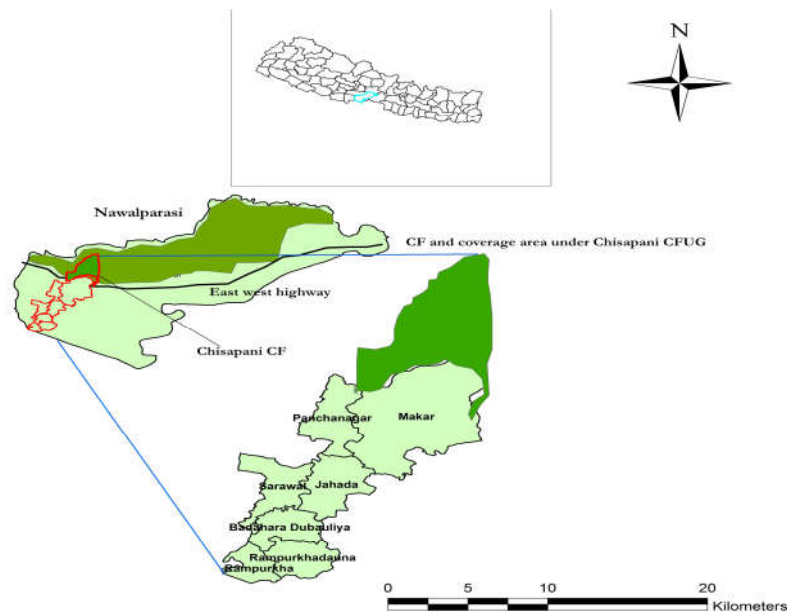


Figure 1: Map of Chisapani CF and settlements of member HHs

The CFUG provided the households living around the forest with formal rights to timber, fuelwood and other forest products. However, the formation of the CFUG led to the exclusion of 60% of traditional users (about 2,000 HHs) as far as 18 km to the South- popularly referred to as 'distant users', these people were utilizing the forest traditionally for fuelwood, timber and various non-timber forest products (NTFPs). These distant users need timber and fuelwood as they have no alternatives for construction and cooking. Consequently, they have been forced to illegal/unsustainable measures whereby they collect resources often during the night in order to meet their urgent needs. In doing so, they have been caught and fined several times. Gradually, conflict emerged between the CF users and distant users. The growing conflict sometimes turned into violent fights with large number of distant users coming in mass and transporting unsustainably harvested cartloads of timber and fuelwood that posed challenges to the very sustainability of the forest itself.

Upon realising multiple threats from this growing conflict, the CF leaders in consultation with the government forest authority and other stakeholders decided to take a more inclusive and accommodative approach to forest management. It invited leaders of the distant users and began to explore ways to include them in forest management and benefit sharing. During this process, ForestAction embarked on a participatory action research (PAR) (Figure 2) aimed at understanding and mitigating conflicts through adaptive learning. First, the research team initiated a dialogue with Chisapani CFUG leaders and jointly analyzed the nature of the conflict and its potential consequences. We also offered support through resource assessment, stakeholder (SH) meetings, reflective workshops with CFUGs and distant users, and exploring efficient and equitable distribution arrangements, with the aim to help mitigate the conflict. The meeting of the executive committee (EC) was called on April 15, 2014. After the initial review of the situation, the executive members appeared enthusiastic and committed to support the adaptive learning approach. We formed an Adaptive Learning Group (ALG) comprising of CF leaders, distant leaders and research team (altogether 20 people). We then developed a step-by-step plan of a collective inquiry, reflective workshops, mutual visits between North and South, joint planning and implementation of management plan and monitoring the progress.

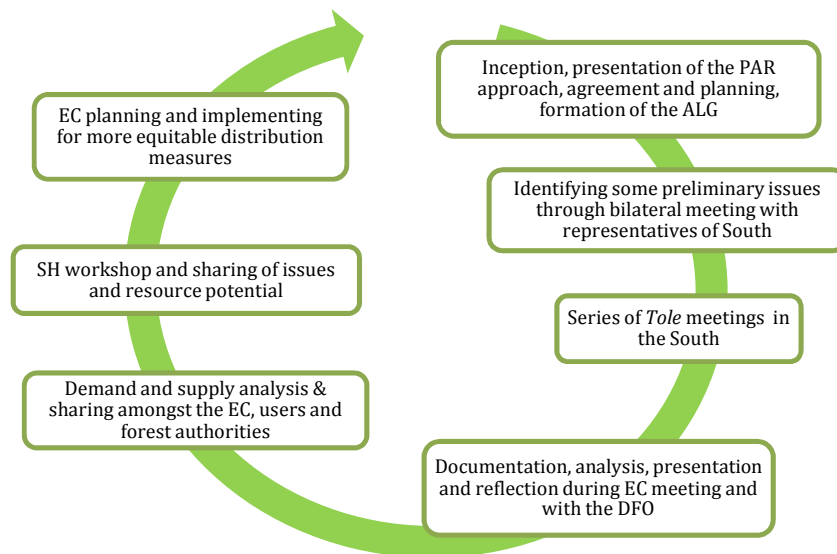


Figure 2: Participatory action cycle deployed at the research site (Chisapani CFUG)

CFUG initiatives to foster N-S dialogue, biophysical analysis and increased understanding

The ALG undertook consultation meetings with nearby users and distant users on their perception of their rights and roles in management, access to forest resources and relative benefits that people are deriving. The meetings were held in every village covering all wards. During the meeting, people from nearby communities claimed that they are nearby and are natural custodians of the forests, have invested their time and labour in protecting the forest, have put off forest fire that occurs every spring, have opted for alternative sources of energy instead of fuelwood to reduce pressure on forests, have to keep their cattle in shed as they cannot graze, and only used timber for constructing

houses. They also accused distant users for unsustainable harvesting, that they do not value forest sustainability, do not contribute to its protection but instead they illegally take cartloads of timber, fuelwood and other forest products by often coming in large numbers. Contrary to these statements, we found very different claims when we organised meetings with the distant users. They claimed that they were the traditional users of that forest while the Northern communities who migrated less than 30-40 years ago now controlled the forest in the form of CF. They also said that since losing their access to forest resources, they are compelled to use cow dung for cooking. Furthermore, they said that they cannot find timber even if they are ready to pay for it. These distant users also claimed that the forest is far so they only go to collect forest products once or twice in a year while the nearby communities go anytime as they wish. It was further claimed that the nearby users have benefitted from the forest with very little inputs. We observed that most of these perceptions were based on inadequate understanding of the actual situation and were largely based on perceived inequity regarding access to forest resources. These meetings were followed by reflections during the next rounds of EC meetings involving all the stakeholders. These meetings provided effective platforms for the southern communities to share their views, concerns, and grievances which they had been experiencing over the years. The EC leaders also had the opportunity to better appreciate their real situation and hence to clarify many of their limitations.

Collective inquiry of biophysical and social aspects

The ALG then analysed forest inventory, growing stock, mean annual increment and annual allowable harvest based on the approved management plan. We also assessed the broader ecosystem services including sources of water, soil conservation and greenery through which both CF members and distant users benefit. These figures provided the potential of the forest in supplying key products. In consultation with the leaders of the CF and those of distant users, we then analysed the fuelwood need of both communities based on everyday use in cooking, religious and social functions, wedding parties and funeral rituals (Table 1). The annual fuelwood need was 1,999 tonnes and supply from the forest was only 508.4tonnes. Similarly, timber need based on estimated house construction each year was calculated at 25,125cft, while the supply as per the management plan was only 1,300cft. These figures show the massive gap between actual need and supply of both timber and fuelwood.

Table 1: Estimated demand and supply of fuelwood and timber in Chisapani CFUG

Firewood (quintal/year)		Timber (cft)		
Purpose	Demand qt/yr	Supply	Demand	Supply
Funeral rituals:187 dead bodies (assuming 1% die per year) x 8 qt of fuel wood for each	1488	4800 qt/yr (base on OP)	House construction (assuming 15% = 502 HHs require timber @ 50 cft):	1300 cft (based on OP)
For marriage:928 (assuming 5% of HHs per year) x 4 qt for each	3712		3350*15%*50 =	
For religious occasions: (1% of HHs per year which is 335 HHs) x 4 qt per yr	1340		25125 cft	
For schools: public purposes 50	50			
Regular cooking: 3350 HHs x 4 qt per yr	13400			
Total	19990			

* Based on CFUG yearly demand and supply system of last five years.

Reflections on the demand-supply gap, actual uses and differing perceptions

After completing the assessment of the users' need and that of CF's potential to supply the key forest products, the workshop realised that there were two important aspects fuelling the conflict. First, there were serious gaps in forest product supply and demand so that people had to resort to illegal and unsustainable harvesting measures, or had to cope with costly and inconvenient ways of making the living such as using cow dung cake for cooking instead of using it in the farmland for manure. Second, and equally important, is the unpleasant and intolerant behavioural aspects often based on poor knowledge of the actual situation. After analysing the demand supply gaps and the conflicting perceptions of proximate and distant users, the team developed a concrete workable and acceptable strategy to mitigate the conflict. The strategy included change in CF institutional features, governance process and rules with regard to accessing forest products.

Recent changes in institutional features and distributional arrangements: Outcomes

The ALG worked out strategies to i) ensure adequate representation and meaningful participation of distant users in CFUG governance; ii) revise rules regarding access to forest products; and iii) Planned for plantation and protection of forest in the South. These strategies have resulted in some significant outcomes. They have now changed the CFUG's constitution that now recognises distant users as legitimate members with full rights to participate in all institutional processes including the general assembly, EC and sub-committees. This was also in line with the government encouraging inclusion of distant users. This has helped to develop a sense of ownership among the distant users too. There is now a reserved quota for distant users in the EC (increased by 30%) and other sub-committees that ensure their representation.

The CFUG has also revised forest management rules. This include change in opening time, the process for applying and collecting timber and fuelwood, better communication of forest opening times etc. They also opened a new depot of timber and fuelwood in the South for the convenience of the distant user. Moreover, they have developed a monitoring mechanism of these actions, formed five member sub-committee which include all southern users for the management of the depot. In addition, they have also improved information flow about key institutional processes, and forest product harvest and distribution. Distant users have benefitted from these measures and have received significantly more timber and fuelwood than in the past and in a much easier way (*for marriage, funeral rituals, religious events and during winter: about four quintal/HH for each event*). This has increased their participation in forest management and livelihood generation activities (in forest patrolling, plantation, regular thinning, weeding of forest, minimized grazing, fish farming, different livelihood and entrepreneur groups) and decreased haphazard and illegal collection of timber and fuelwood.

“Recognizing and strengthening our situation has changed our ways of collecting firewood. We used to collect it haphazardly and whenever and however we wanted to, but now, we get it from the depot nearby. This has reduced our time and effort and saved the money that we previously had to invest for transportation of fuelwood from forest along the highway which was approximately 18 km far”. One of the distant users, Chisapani CFUG

Similarly, they have increased their investment (*a plant nursery was founded to produce more than 100,000 seedlings each year*) in the South to develop plantation and protection activities in public land that could contribute to addressing part of the forest product demand in the South. They have incorporated these strategies into the CFUG forest Operational Plan (OP) and have acquired approval from the DFO. Similarly, the DFO has expanded the existing CF areas by adding remaining adjacent forest. This has helped in including more Southern inhabitants as members and helps them to meet their needs. Additionally, they have also started scientific management of forest and can now harvest more volume of timber and fuelwood.

The Assistant Forest Officer at Nawalparasi shared, “*...there are potential areas around existing CFs in Nawalparasi which are de facto open access and can be brought under the existing CF. Out of 35 registered CFUGs in the Southern part of Nawalparasi, all have potential areas that can be expanded as CFs*”. He added, “*Apart from reducing the demand-supply gap, this would ensure that all the forests in the area are sustainably managed. The Chisapani CF has set an example on this issue and I think it can be scaled out and adopted in other CFs across the Terai region of Nepal*”.

Discussion

From the previous sections, it has become clear that forest conflicts in the Terai region of Nepal have received central stage in academic literature, policy debate and everyday struggle. Moreover, the conflicts exist at all levels. The paper took a specific form of conflict- the conflict between the hill migrants (Northern people) and the traditional forest users in the South. While the conflicts emerged and sustained due to the loss of traditional access to forest of southern people, there are other additional factors that contribute to the North-South divide. These are migrants vs. traditional identities, differential access to state organs and resources, and the recently emerged identity-based politics among others. While the identity politics appear in the face value, the forest conflicts are part of the substantive conflict on the ground.

Review of the previous initiatives by the state in increasing access of the Southern people to forest products shows that there has been limited achievement in actually addressing the issue. Still, a large section of the Southern population is devoid of forest products– timber and fuelwood. Early policies on migration, resettlement, construction of the East-West highway often contributed to distancing traditional people from the forests. Expansion of CF in Terai since the mid-1990s also did not help much as it was conceptualized and constituted in such a way distant people gradually got marginalised. As a desperate move to stop CF and promote alternative modality, the government introduced CFM. However, CFM’s potential to serve the Southern populace was constrained by three factors. First, its institutional arrangement is too large, complex, and controlled by a bureaucratic process which is hardly accessible to any ordinary citizen. Second, the expansion of CFM was quite slow. Third, as most of the forests have been allocated to other management modalities already, often serving conservation objectives, there is limited potential for further expansion. Similarly, limitations of the PLF have also been presented above. In summary, the paper urges the need for exploring other available options and CF seems to have a good complementary role in addressing the issue.

We are also aware that government has declared the Chure, as an environment protection areas and aims at protecting the landscape with minimizing biomass withdrawal. However, the Chure landscape has also diverse types of forests and some section of this can be managed under CF with

different management intervention and some of which can be put into minimum use along with good conservation measures. In fact, Chisapani represents hundreds of CF in the region with such expanded and inclusive approach which can get more forests from remaining government managed forests and can accommodate more people from the South.

The case of Chisapani CFUG shows how extended and inclusive CF can help to address the question related to access of forest products of the Southern population and therefore, reduce conflict. Originally, CF was meant for communities residing nearby any forest patch(es). However, this approach has largely left out the traditional users of forests that usually fall along the Chure and those living North of the highway. This CFUG has now included members from up to 18km away to make this 'extended' or 'inclusive'. By accommodating the distant users as members of the CFUG and also in ECs, Chisapani has now formally become a unique case of a CFUG differing from most of other CFs. They have made three important changes in the standard CF. Firstly, they included distant users which is normally not the norm. Secondly, they have revised the arrangements for distributing forest products – mainly timber and fuelwood. Thirdly, they have allocated some of their funds aimed at forest development in the South. These initiatives have helped to reduce both material injustice and perceived exclusion of the people in the South. Consequently, we observed substantially improved collaboration between the Northern and Southern communities in forest management.

One of the major observations that can be from this case is that restructuring of the institution (CFUG) and changing of the benefit sharing arrangements was possible due to decentralized forest management. The CF policies and laws have entrusted the CFUGs as a self-organized entity to identify its own members and develop their own rules of forest management and benefit-sharing. Due to collective action at the local level, the leadership can take decisions on behalf of the group and negotiate with distant users. The CFUG leadership took the initiative due to a strong sense of ownership over the institution and the forest. The CFUG was a fully authorized and legitimate entity to initiate dialogue, make amendments in its own constitution and change the rules of forest management and access by revising the OP. This assured the Southern leaders to engage with the CFUG and support its revised initiatives. This was how the conflict was substantially reduced.

In this case, we can see that the DFO has offered its implicit support for an extended and inclusive CF. Their initial encouragement followed by handing over of some additional forest area helped a lot to address the massive demand-supply gap. It can be argued that the legal recognition and institutional support to the CFUGs to take such initiative by the forest authority would help to scale out such experiences elsewhere.

The case of Chisapani shows that adaptive learning approach to CF management can forge dialogue within CFUG and also with distant users and forest authorities. Two aspects – a strong commitment to include distant users and adoption of the adaptive approach that helped them to think outside of the box, on questions of how can the conflict between nearby and distant people be resolved, has helped to achieve these outcomes. The commitment to transform Chisapani as an inclusive CF drove them to change their constitution to allow members from the South, increased representation in the EC from the South and increased participation in general assembly and other important decision making forums. Similarly, the adaptive learning approach was useful in integrating biophysical and institutional knowledge that substantiated discussions and helped in reaching negotiated

arrangements. The assessment of the resource potential, that of the demand situation and costs that people are putting in CF management all helped the group to change its current distributional arrangement. Presentation of a clear picture of the demand-supply situation helped the leaders to appreciate and understand each others positions and prepared them to rethink about their own positions which made negotiations possible.

Conclusion and policy implications

The paper has identified multiple drivers of forest conflicts in Terai emanating from biophysical features of landscape to government policies on migration, infrastructure development and forest management. It is learnt that while major chunk of remaining forests are in and around Chure- the Northern part, densely populated settlements of traditional users are in the far South. In between the two are the hill migrants, whose population is growing fast. With the expansion of the CF programme in Terai, these newcomers have organized themselves and have proactively taken control of the forest and its management. Unfortunately, this resulted in dwindled access of the Southern populace to their traditional resource base.

The paper also examined the diverse strategies to increase Southern people's access to forests. Introduction of CFM and investment in PLF are some of the major strategies. However, these approaches faced multiple changes and have their respective limitations. Therefore, the need to explore an alternative, viable and acceptable approach to increase Southern people's access is established in this paper.

The expansion of CF is often restricted in many parts of Terai as it has not facilitated the aforesaid objective. In fact, this has become one of the most appealing critiques of CF in Terai. However, the case discussed in this paper showed the prospects of increasing Southern people's access to forest and thereby addressing the conflict. While some debates and inadequate attempts have been made in the past, this has become the first successful case. The case showed that extended CF can be a preferred strategy to help increase access and use of forest products by those who are otherwise devoid of it.

Evidence being presented in the paper showed that centralized and bureaucratic approach to handle forest conflict have little success. Wherever, such approach worked, there are trade off to the Northern communities. As the case showed, the CF leadership was able to capitalize on its legitimate authority to mobilise Northern communities, negotiate with the Southern leaders, and also take a number of initiatives in rearranging institutional architecture and distribution arrangements. This was possible due to the CF programme and the recognition of CFUG to handle such issues. The DFO's encouragement including handover of additional forest areas further facilitated the process. The CFUG leaders had the ambition to become a model in the district by showcasing this approach. As the CFUG is at the core of this initiative, it has become much more grounded and shows the prospect of sustainability, and can inspire many others. At the same time, the intensive interactions with other neighboring groups, the DFO, and other stakeholders has also provided them critical feedback and in turn are inspired by their approach to include distant users. This also shows the prospects of scaling the experiences to other similar groups in the region. As the paper shows, forest tenure reform can be attributed to such local initiative in redesigning the governance and distributional arrangement.

Not all CFUGs have taken such initiatives, however. Therefore, one can attribute this case partly to external interventions. It is clear that approaches such as PAR and adaptive learning help to understand biophysical and socio-institutional dimensions of conflict and ultimately contribute to the design of a fair benefit distribution arrangement. In this case, external influence could not be over-estimated. As the paper showed, initial encouragement by the DFO which was later complemented by the action research intervention had critical influence. However, in this case, these methodological approaches have been further tested, refined and can be implemented by other potential groups in the Terai. Apart from the political will of the CF leadership, PAR and ALG can prove to be a useful tool to systematically approach the conflict, understand it and craft a mutually agreeable institutional arrangement(s).

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