

**National Report to the Third Session of the
United Nations Forum on Forests**

Nepal

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

General

Decision-Making: Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation is the central level agency responsible for decision-making in the forestry sector. Department of Forests, and Department of Soil Conservation and watershed management, and their district offices, District Development Committees, NGOs and local communities (user groups) are involved in local level decision-making process. The long-term concept of the forest sector development has been adopted following the 21-year long-term forestry development Master Plan 1988. The National Conservation Strategy 1988, Nepal Environmental Policy and Action Plan 1993, Agricultural Perspective Plan 1995, revised Forestry Sector Policy 2000, and Nepal Biodiversity Strategy 2002 are other main documents guiding the various decisions for the conservation and management of natural resources. The periodic plans prepared by National Planning Commission and Annual budget of the Government generally guides the policy matters. Strengthening the capacities of both the governmental and semi-governmental organizations at all levels, central to local level, is essential for the successful implementation of these plans and strategies.

Programmes and Projects: HMG/Nepal has adopted various programmes approach in their development endeavour and launched various programmes categorized as sub-sector programmes and supportive programmes (Master plan for forestry sector 1989). The sub-sector programmes include: Community and Private Forest Development; National and Lease-hold Forestry; Development of medicinal and aromatic plants and non-wood forest products; Development of wood based industries; Soil conservation and watershed management; and Conservation of ecosystems and genetic resources. The supportive programme includes: Policy and legal reform; Institutional reform; Human resource development; Forestry research and extension; Resource information and planning assistance; and Monitoring and evaluation.

Donor assisted projects under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation include: Biodiversity sector programme for Siwaliks and Terai funded by the Government of the Netherlands; Terai arc landscape project funded by WWF-Nepal; Strengthening governance of natural resources and selected institutions funded by USAID; Nepal biodiversity landscape project funded by UNDP/GEF; Natural resource management sector assistance programme funded by Danida - Department of Forests (Community and private forestry component, Community forestry field implementation component, Tree improvement and silvicultural component, Central level support component) with Danish support; Hills leasehold forestry and forage development project with IFAD support; Nepal Australia community resources management and livelihoods project with support from Australia; Churia forestry development project with German support; Nepal-Swiss community forestry development project supported by the government of Switzerland; Livelihoods and forestry programme with support from DFID. Under Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management the ongoing projects include: Bagmati integrated watershed management project with the support from EU; Churia watershed management project with CARE-Denmark support; Community development and forest/watershed conservation project with JICA support; Natural resource management sector assistance programme -soil conservation and watershed management component; Upper andhikhola waterhsed management project with CARE/Nepal support. The projects under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation are CARE /Nepal assisted Buffer zone development project; Kanchanjunga conservation area project supported by WWF/Nepal; Shey-phoksundo national park and buffer zone programme supported WWF/Nepal; Sagarmatha national park and buffer zone programme supported by WWF/Nepal and Participatory conservation

programme funded by UNDP. In addition to these projects, other line ministries, NGOs, INGOs and local governments also launch various integrated projects inclusive of forestry, natural resources, biodiversity and watershed management.

Status: The forestry sector has a pivotal role in the environmental conservation in Nepal. The forestry sector used to cover more than 45 percent area of the country according to the statistics of 1964; the forest area was 43 percent around 1979 and 37.4 percent in 1986; and a survey concluded in 1998 shows that forest area is around 40 % of the total land area of the country, which includes 10.6 % shrub area. The rate of deforestation in the country was 1.7 percent per year between 1978 and 1994. It is 1.3 percent in the Terai, but 2.3 percent in the hills and mountains. It is estimated that more than 50,000 hectares of forest area is converted into non-forestry uses. The shrub land, which was 4.8 percent in mid 1980, has increased to 10.6 percent in mid 1998 is also an indication that the forest degradation is continuous. This has resulted in various environmental problems including the soil erosion, landslides and floods. Other major environmental concerns include the pressure on biological diversity. The drying up of the water sources like the springs and wells is another area of concern.

In recognition of the increasing environmental issues in the forestry sector HMG/N has formulated policies, made legislations, and developed guidelines and implemented forestry development programmes. In 50's the policies aimed at using natural resources without taking care of environment. However, the recent policies and programmes have become pro-environment. The focus of the policy has shifted from consumption or utilization to strict conservation. The policy shift is clearly noticeable from command and control approach to people's participation and empowerment of the beneficiaries. In other words, the importance of people's participation in the conservation of natural resources is duly recognized. The Revised Forestry Sector Policy 2000 also aims to the conservation, management and sustainable use of forest products through peoples' participation. The guiding principles for forest management are to promote participatory and ecosystem-based management, sustainable forest development and poverty alleviation, and to establish a national forestry fund. Besides the Revised Forestry Sector Policy 2000, the Agriculture Development Policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Hydropower and Irrigation Policies emphasizes the need of conservation of forest resources with proper watershed managements to meet the objective of sustainable development. Even though the macro level survey shows continuing rate of deforestation and degradation, micro level studies show that the hills and mountains are recuperating with trees and forests mainly due to the successful programme of community forestry.

Capacity Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising:

Training, extension, education and capacity building programmes related to forestry sector are widely implemented by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation through its departments, and forestry development projects; NGOs/INGOs; and other line agencies. Institute of Forestry produces middle level technicians and forestry under graduates. The institute has recently started the Masters level programme aimed at producing qualified forestry graduates. Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation through district forest offices and Regional Training Centres provide variety of trainings to middle level technicians on skill development, community mobilization and forestry related topics. Similarly the Ministry in cooperation with development partners provides its staff with in-country as well as overseas career development opportunities. The departments and forestry development projects have also implemented various types of trainings, extension and awareness raising campaigns related to sustainable forest management at grass root level. It is intended that through training, extension and awareness programmes the institutional capability of community-based organizations namely the user groups will be strengthened in better managing the resources and yielding fruitful results.

Information: Department of Forest Research and Survey is obtaining and developing information base and research activities. Concerned Departments implement awareness raising and educational programme

on conservation, management, development, people's participation and project specific matters through Radio, T.V and other media.

Research and Technologies: Technology is provided to the target group for forest management, plantation and nursery operation techniques, cultivation of Non-timber forest products, participatory watershed development, buffer zone management etc. Department of Forest Research and Survey has been implementing demand-driven forest management research activities. The emphasis of the forestry research has been to promote participatory approaches to forest resource management that aims to generate income and create employment opportunities. Generally Department of Plant Research (DPR), Department of Forest Research and Survey and Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) are involved in research on Flora and Fauna, whereas Department of Forests (DoF) and Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management are engaged in research on social and managerial aspect. The outcome of the research is disseminated to target communities through district level offices and users organization.

Financing: HMG allocates resources for the forestry development activities. Development Partner's support is also channelised through government's system in this effort. Allocation to different forestry development programme is made on the basis of bottom-up planning and is reflected in the annual budget.

Cooperation: Forestry sector has benefited from the generous support of Development partners namely Denmark, Australia, European Union, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, USA, UNDP, GEF, FAO, IFAD, ITTO and international non government organizations like WWF and CARE in implementing forestry sector development programmes.

Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

Revised forest sector policy 2000, National Biodiversity Strategy 2002, periodic plans (tenth five year plan 2002-2007) are guiding documents of the forestry sector. Revised forestry sector policy 2000 has clearly outlined following development imperatives;

Satisfaction of Basic Needs

Effective conservation and utilization of forestry resources can be enhanced by: encouraging people's participation in forestry programmes by: establishing user's group-based community forestry; promoting private forestry; involving underprivileged groups in leasehold forestry; and implementing community development activities around the peripheries of protected areas and government managed forests.

Sustainable Utilization of Forestry Resources

Forest resources are a gift of nature and are bound by laws of nature. It also belongs to our next generation hence must be managed for future. The importance of present generation's requirements must not outweigh the importance of conservation.

Participation in Decision-making and Sharing of Benefits

The immense energy and numerous resources of the people can be released and mobilized into constructive management activities through participatory forestry programmes. When decision-making power is given to the users who must depend on the forestry resources in question, the decisions made have a good chance of actually being implemented. For instance, every individual member of Forest Users Group (FUG) and Community Development Group (CDG) are made able to participate actively in decision-making process. Presently the usufruct right of the national forest is been provided to the actual users- the people in the vicinity of the forest - to fulfill their basic livelihood needs. Furthermore,

Government through community forestry programme is making every effort to enhance the user's capacity in the democratization of users group and the society as a whole.

Socio-economic Growth

The numerous resources of the forestry sector must be exploited in ways, which provide maximum benefit to both the local and the national economies. Special attention must be paid to the poorer and deprived section of the society.

The long term objectives of the revised forestry sector policy are to: meet the people's basic needs for fuel wood, fodder, and other forestry products on a sustained basis; contribute to food production through effective interaction between forestry and farming practices; protect land from degradation by soil erosion, floods, landslides, desertification and other ecological disturbances; both conserve and use in a sustainable way biological diversity and genetic resources for the maintenance of prevailing ecosystems; and contribute to the growth of local and national economies and thereby improve the quality of life of the people by managing land and forest resources, developing forest-based industries, and by creating opportunities for income-generation and employment.

Nepal Biodiversity Strategy 2002 prepared with wide consultation of all walk of life and development partners has adopted cross-sectoral strategies such as landscape planning approach, integrating local participation, institutional strengthening, *in-situ* conservation, strengthening the national biodiversity unit, increasing support for biodiversity research and conservation, endorsing indigenous knowledge and innovations, cross-sectoral co-ordination and implementation of policies, enhancing national capacity, *ex-situ* conservation and biotechnology, securing intellectual property and farmer property rights, biodiversity prospecting, environmental impact assessment, women in biodiversity conservation, developing eco-tourism, increasing conservation awareness and biodiversity registration for sustainable management of diverse biological resources that exist in the country. Similarly the sectoral strategies for protected areas, forests, rangelands, agro-biodiversity, wetlands and mountain biodiversity are developed and implementation plan prepared in order to ensure that biodiversity resources in the respective sector are protected and managed sustainably.

Tenth five-year plan 2002-2007 has identified poverty reduction as its main objective and all sectoral plans are guided by this overall objective. The forestry sector component of the tenth five-year plan is tuned in this direction. It has the following objectives: increasing the income and employment opportunities for improved livelihoods of poor, women and deprived groups in order to contribute in national poverty reduction objectives from forestry sector; increasing the productivity of forest land for sustainable supply of forest products through intensive management of community, government-managed, leasehold forests together the promotion and research of trees species and plant resources; managing protected and buffer areas in order to conserve and protect biodiversity; and managing and conserving soil and watershed areas focusing more on Churia region to increase ground water recharge. Major programmes that are identified to meet the stated objectives are:

- Community and Private Forestry
- National and Leasehold Forestry
- Medicinal and non-wood Forestry Product Management
- Soil and Watershed Management
- Conservation of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources
- Research and Extension
- Human Resources Development
- Policy and Legal Reforms
- Monitoring and Evaluation

This is expected to lead higher level of contribution by forestry sector in poverty alleviation through improved income and employment opportunities.

Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has prepared this report after extensive consultation with concerned stakeholders. In addition, input from wide range of audiences were received and incorporated, where applicable, to make it participatory and authentic.