

CLIMATE SOLUTION:

Community Forestry Campaign for Restoring Degraded Lands in Nepal



Type of action

Community forest management

Groups and organizations involved

22,266 Community Forestry User Groups (CFUGs) across Nepal. This comprises about 30 million households in rural and urban communities.

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Location

The community forestry program is implemented across Nepal based on the national forest legislation (Forest Act 1993).

MORE THAN 22 MILLION HECTARES OF FOREST AREAS in Nepal, including almost all mid-elevation forest areas, are established as sustainable community-owned and managed forests, providing multiple climate and social benefits. Many communities are also organizing campaigns to establish community rights in the lowland forests in order to control deforestation and forest degradation.

The Nepalese Government's Divisional Forest Office, or in some cases local government and NGOs, provide funding for the development of forest management plans by CFUGs. After the transfer of forest ownership, the CFUGs generate income by mobilizing their forest resources for domestic use or commercial purposes. Almost all CFUGs have their own fund to implement forest management plans and to invest in community development.

Forest management plans formulated by each CFUG and carried out according to local contexts include provisions for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. This is covered through, for example, natural regeneration of forest for flood control, conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, and conservation of freshwater. The national forest legislation and community forestry guidelines also include provisions to recognize and ensure community-focussed approaches.

Some of the key actions undertaken by CFUGs are wild-fire control, open grazing management, controlling illegal

encroachment, native species regeneration and planting, and forest management. At least 25% of the income of the CFUGs is allocated for the sustainable management of forests, and 35% of the income of CFUGs is allocated for poverty alleviation. The remainder of the income is invested in actions such as establishment of solar energy and micro-hydro systems in rural areas, community health and education, early warning systems in flood-affected areas, maintaining rural roads, and fulfilling basic social security at the community level.

The Nepalese community forestry campaign is instrumental for the operation of a large number of community-based forest enterprises and eco-tourism at local level. This generates employment and income for poor forest-dependent households.

A large number of people are involved in the CFUGs and associated decision-making bodies such as general assemblies, executive committees, monitoring committees and sub-committees focusing on gender equity and social inclusion. Capacity building programs are implemented at community level, in order to increase the capacity and awareness of local people, and to emphasize the connections between climate action and safeguarding rights.

In this sense, community forestry in Nepal is one of the main methods for securing community tenure rights in forest resources within the country, and is simultaneously also one of the main actions being taken for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Impacts of this action on...

Carbon emissions (mitigation)

The main goal and objective of the community forestry campaign in Nepal is to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, to increase ground covered by native forests, and so contribute to increased carbon capture. Each CFUG has made a specific provision in their forest management plan for this purpose.

Climate resilience

Almost all CFUGs are implementing community-based adaptation programs that consider the community context and vulnerability to climate impacts. Improved access to local food throughout the seasons, and healthy ecosystems in which plants, animals and water sources are protected help to increase climate resilience across the country.

Social and economic factors

According to the community forestry legislation, either the chairperson or secretary in the executive committee of CFUGs should be a woman. Currently, there are at least 11,000 women holding lead positions. During the last local government elections (2017), many women who held CFUG positions were elected. As such, community forestry provides a driving force for positive transformation in Nepalese society.

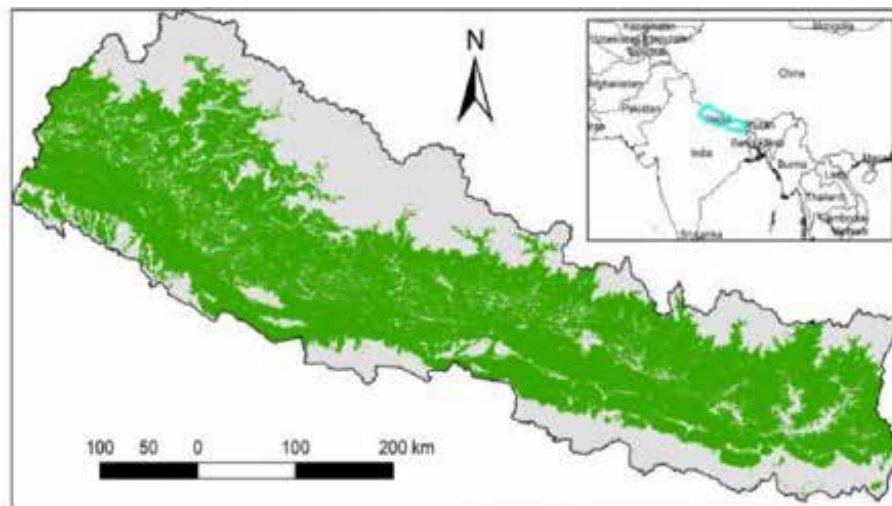
Secondly, at least 35% of the community forestry projects' income is allocated for poverty alleviation activities (small scale agriculture, livestock, vegetable production, micro-enterprise, cooperatives, food production etc.) and for providing subsidies to poor households.

Food security

Many CFUGs, through their sustainable management of the forests, conserve wild fruits and vegetables for the production of juice, wine and vegetable harvests. Community forests are furthermore one of the most important sources for clean drinking water, as they filter water, contributing to cropland irrigation and the preservation of wetlands. These systems ensure that communities have access to food, and that soil for growing crops remains healthy and fertile.

Biodiversity and ecosystem resilience

Government legislation, policy and programs have recognized CFUG community forestry as a key national strategy for the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity beyond the protection which is already provided by government-protected areas. CFUGs' management of forests ensures that native species continue to grow and proliferate with minimal disturbance, and also provide habitats to a range of native fauna that are necessary to the health of local ecology.





This action is transformational because...

The community forestry campaign in Nepal is based on the self-motivated collective actions of local people, and thus demonstrates longevity for the future. Not only are there clear environmental benefits in terms of carbon sequestration through forests, and the protection of biodiversity; CFUGs have established well-functioning governance systems (general assembly, gender-balanced and inclusive leadership selection systems, benefit-sharing and funding support systems, community-based monitoring systems) over the last 30 years. Community forestry is clearly recognized in national legislation, demonstrating the level of importance granted to this project. The project contributes to Nepal's climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, thus appearing not only as a local and short-term action, but as a long-lasting solution.

This action could be scaled up through...

Government assistance for securing tenure rights; external technical assistance, particularly to aid with the generation of income; further empowerment of women, youth, indigenous peoples and socially marginalized groups in other legislation and areas of life; increased natural regeneration and planting of native species; policy reform to recognize the value of local community climate actions, and removal of disincentives.

The CLARA network includes climate justice advocates, faith groups, conservation groups, land-rights campaigners, agroecologists, and representative of peoples movements around the globe. Our commitment to social justice brought us into the climate debate and informs our approaches to climate solutions. For more information about CLARA, visit climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org.

CLARA
Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance

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