WHO BENEFITS? GENDER EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION AMONG COMMUNITY

FOREST USER GROUPS IN NEPAL: WHO BENEFITS?

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ABSTRACT

Community forestry programs in Nepal have been incredibly successful in terms of carbon sequestration, reforestation, and localized environmental conservation practices. Nepal's community forest initiatives are managed by national policies and a decentralized method of community-based natural resource management, community forest monitoring, and local leadership. The decentralized governance model of Nepal's community forestry initiatives has been replicated in several other developing countries, and there are numerous environmental benefits. However, the role of gender equity and social inclusion among these groups is unclear. Although substantial efforts in terms of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion initiatives have been undertaken and women participate in and lead community forest user groups (CFUGs), barriers to group entry limit social inclusion. This paper analyzes the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of participation in community forest user groups in Nepal, with a critical lens of gender equity and social inclusion.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Leala Rosen is from Dallas, Texas, and holds a Bachelor's of Arts in Sociology/Anthropology with a concentration in Environmental Studies from Hendrix College. Her deep love of nature, conservation, and sustainable food systems comes from her time as an undergraduate, where she fell in love with camping, hiking, traveling, and community gardening. After managing a demonstration garden at Heifer International, she served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal on a food security project, and chaired the Gender and Development (GAD) committee. She then worked in community development at non-profit organizations in Dallas, working primarily with marginalized populations in agricultural food systems, youth leadership capacity building, and business development for smallholder farmers. These experiences led her to pursue an MPS in International Agriculture & Rural Development at Cornell University, where she focused her studies on the intersection of community-based natural resource management, gender equity and social inclusion, and sustainable food systems. Passionate about environmental conservation, she enjoys birdwatching, hiking, foraging, cooking, and sustainable travel.

This paper is dedicated to my friends and family, both in the U.S. and Nepal - thank you for your

support. I cannot express in words how much I appreciate you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARE - Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

CFM - Community Forest Management

CFUG - Community Forest User Group

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FECOFUN - Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal

GESI - Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

NRM - Natural Resource Management

NTFP - Non-Timber Forestry Product

NTNC - National Center for Nature Conservation

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

WWF - World Wildlife Fund for Nature

INTRODUCTION

Community forestry programs in Nepal have been incredibly successful in terms of carbon sequestration, reforestation, and the transfer of knowledge about the importance of environmental conservation practices that rural populations can engage in. Nepal's community forest initiatives have been propelled by a mixture of national policies and PSAs over the radio and television, coupled with a decentralized method of community-based natural resource management, community forest monitoring, and participatory leadership at the local governance level.

The decentralized governance model of Nepal's community forestry initiatives has been replicated in several other developing countries, and the overall environmental benefits are numerous. However, the role of gender equity and social inclusion among these groups, as well as impacts on household food security outcomes, is less clear. Although substantial efforts in terms of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion initiatives have been undertaken, and women can actively participate in community forest user groups (CFUGs) as well as hold leadership positions, barriers to group entry limit social inclusion. While female and marginalized caste groups can participate and make decisions in CFUGs, social differences need to be considered. Otherwise, ignoring the intersectionality of class, caste, and gender among CFUGs makes elite capture more likely, furthering systemic inequality and excluding traditionally marginalized groups.

Most Nepalese are small-holder farmers, and 80% of the population is rural (Nepal DHS, 2016). With socioeconomic drivers such as migration and the flow of remittances, female-headed households are the norm for agrarian regions. As female-headed households have more responsibilities for education, household nutrition, and subsistence agriculture, this also

contributes to the "double bind" these women face – increased decision-making and responsibility, but a lack of power within Nepali society. Although many gender-mainstreaming development projects seek to empower women – and many community groups consist primarily of women – women are still excluded from access to cash crop production and markets, formal agricultural training, and land ownership.

Largely due to increased rates of out-migration, more and more private land is becoming fallow, but landless workers still do not have access to agricultural land. According to Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from the 2011 Nepal census, 89% of rural women in Nepal do not own land (Nepal DHS, 2016). At the local level, rural populations are increasingly excluded from accessing land, which impacts their food security. Gender, caste, and ethnicity-based forms of social exclusion exacerbate this problem. The result: marginalized populations having a greater likelihood of household food insecurity (Pain et. al, 2014:235).

Public forest management is another key piece to land use, food security, and gender. Community forest user groups (CFUGs), which are found in 74 of the 75 districts in Nepal, are allowed to harvest non-timber forest products for fuel and fodder for animals, resulting in indirect linkages to food security/household nutrition. Nepal and India were the first countries to form community forest user groups in the early 1980s to protect against poaching, deforestation, and illegal logging (Skutsch and McCall, 2011:10). Community forestry in Nepal developed in response to rural poverty, with the notion of "forests for the people" (ClientEarth, 2018). At the village level, individuals form CFUGs in order to practice sustainable forest management. Their main incentive to join these groups is access to fodder for their livestock and the use of non-timber forestry products such as fiddlehead ferns, gooseberries, stinging nettle, and other wild edibles and medicinal plants (WWF, 2019). Fodder and other natural resources have proven to be a more

equitable method of creating buy-in for CFUGs and distributing resources among participants (Karky and Rasul, 2011:113).

In Nepal, climatic variability of periodic droughts and flooding leaves smallholder farmers in the mid-hills and mountainous regions particularly vulnerable (Katri-Chhetri et. al, 2016). Sustainable land management practices are often implemented by top-down institutions, such as centralized government and non-governmental organization (NGO) stakeholders. In the case of community forestry in Nepal, however, it began from decentralized organization – local farmers at the village level began to form Community forest user groups, which have since been recognized by the government of Nepal and brought in to large-scale landscape management initiatives, such as the *Hariyo Ban,* or "green forest" program implemented by WWF-CARE and funded by USAID (WWF, 2019).

The *Hariyo Ban* program has several projects centered upon community-led natural resource management, conservation, development, agroforestry, rural livelihoods, emerging markets, and climate change mitigation (WWF Nepal, 2018). Community forest user groups, whether in the *Hariyo Ban* program or not, play a key role in climate change mitigation with their community forest management. However, the implications for food security, gender equity and social capital among these groups is unclear.

This paper analyzes the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of participation in community forest user groups in Nepal, within a critical lens of gender equity and social inclusion. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork completed in December and January of 2019-2020, information was gathered through observation and focus groups with female community forest user group members in Lamjung, Western Nepal. A thorough literature review and content analysis of GESI components based on work of the main implementing partners of the *Hariyo Ban* program

followed. The review and analysis substantiate the fieldwork as a case study within the theoretical framework.

The next sections of the paper will give a background of community forestry in Nepal, cover the socioeconomic and environmental outcomes of Nepal's community forestry program, outline the barriers to social inclusion and equitable participation among CFUGs, and analyze the indirect and direct benefits of CFUG participation on gender equity and social inclusion, food security, and livelihoods for rural women in Nepal. These sections will offer recommendations for more inclusive participation of marginalized populations such as landless tenants, ethnic minorities, and the ultra-poor.

Exhibit 1. Map of Hariyo Ban Working Area
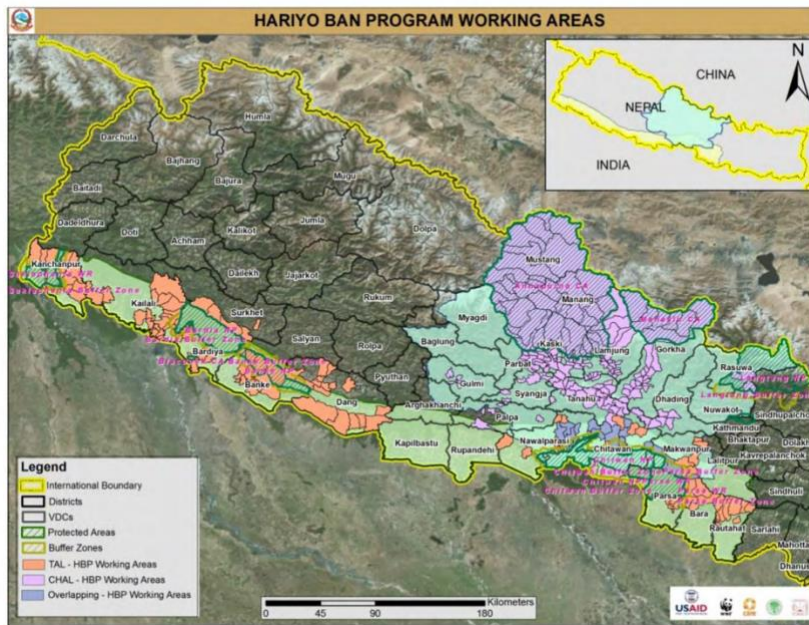
Source: USAID Nepal. 2015. "Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the Hariyo Ban Project."

BACKGROUND

The History of Community Forest Management

Community forest management (CFM) is a component of the community-based natural resource management practices formally introduced globally in the 1970s to promote forest management in partnership with local communities using the forest. These communities are often indigenous, rural populations. According to Pelletier et. al, 2016, the main components of community forest management include:

- the involvement of local people in forest governance and management
- sustainable forest management for wood or non-timber forest products for ecological or social value
- the recognized use of forest products for subsistence and income-generating activities among indigenous populations and local communities

Community forest management was created to increase reforestation efforts and rates of carbon sequestration around the world, and empower the poor through income-generating sustainable forestry activities at the local level. Nepal in particular is highlighted as a successful model of decentralized community-based natural resource management through the local governance of public forests for both environmental and social benefits (Karky and Rasul, 2011). According to the FAO, there are 3,636,000 hectares of forested land in Nepal, and 14,335,000 hectares of total land (FAO Country Report, 2019). Community forests account for over 1 million hectares of land, spread out across all ecozones and all but one district (Singh and Chapagain, 2005).

While forest governance strategies differ, the CFM governance model in Nepal is seen as participatory in nature. The central government owns forested land and develops contracts with

local forest user groups in rural villages. These user groups then engage in community forest monitoring, reforestation efforts, knowledge sharing regarding environmental conservation, and climate change adaptation efforts. Local forest user groups are formed at the village level; this decentralized forest management system has significantly improved forest conditions and rural livelihoods (Acharya 2002; Gautam et al. 2004a; Gautam 2009 as cited by Gurung et. al., 2013). The decentralization of forested land in Nepal, which came as a response to central governments' mismanagement of public forests, has enhanced local forest governance and promoted the "recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities over forest resources and for their greater role in managing local forests" (Pelletier et. al., 2016). Nepal's community forestry model is recognized around the world as a progressive, innovative form of community-based natural resource management – both for its biophysical benefits and the inclusion of rural, remote villagers throughout the country. Table 1 below gives more detail on the main concepts of community forest management (Pelletier et. al., 2016).

Table 1. Concepts of community forest management.

Definitions, Interpretations and Synonyms	Sources
An approach to forestry implying community or local control and management of forest resources	Glasmeier and Farrigan [20]
Any situation which closely involves local people in forestry activity	FAO [21]
The sustainable management of the forest for wood, non-timber forest products and other services with a social or environmental value, performed by forest-dependent families or smallholders, community groups and indigenous peoples	Growing Forest Partnerships [22]
Type of management in which communities have some degree of responsibility and authority in forest management that encompasses multiple uses involving subsistence and marketing with the goal to conduct an ecologically sustainable use of the forest	Charnley and Poe [23]
Associated terms: "community forestry", "community-based forest management", "social forestry", "participatory or collaborative forestry" or "agroforestry"	Arnold [24], Hajjar [25]

I.   Biophysical Components of CFM

Community forests provide a wide variety of environmental services, such as biodiversity conservation, water retention, improved soil health, reduced erosion, increased rates of

reforestation, and overall improved forest conditions (Gurung et. al., 2016). Numerous studies have shown that CFM effectively promotes sustainable forestry landscapes through sustainable forest management, environmental conservation, and reforestation efforts (Pelletier et. al., 2016). CFM has been shown to be effective at reforestation of degraded land, as well as increasing forest cover and carbon stock (Pelletier et. al., 2016).

According to WWF Nepal (WWF Annual Report, 2018), in the past 25 years of their work on community forest governance and environmental conservation in Nepal, 23,000 hectares of forest land were restored and 5,000 community forest user groups attended trainings on forest management, biodiversity conservation, and good governance to facilitate better management of community forests.

II.   Food Security and CFM

While the past 25 years have seen significant improvements among poverty rates throughout Nepal (Feed the Future, 2018), food insecurity is a major issue that affects over 20% of Nepalese – particularly among marginalized populations such as Dalits, indigenous tribes or *janajati*, and women (Pain et. al., 2014:226). Although current initiatives throughout Nepal seek to improve food security, households lack knowledge on how to attain good nutritional practices through nutrition-sensitive agriculture (Feed the Future, 2018). Gender, caste, and ethnicity-based forms of social exclusion further exacerbate this problem. This results in marginalized populations having a greater likelihood of household food insecurity (Pain et. al., 2014:235).

Forests are an important part of integrated agro-ecological systems, and have traditionally been a place that indigenous ethnic groups of Nepal have foraged for wild edible foods to diversify their diet and gain essential micronutrients (McDougall et. al., 2013). In addition to

direct benefits of forest use on food security outcomes, indirect benefits also contribute. Fodder harvested from the forest feeds livestock. CFUG participants gain knowledge on environmental conservation and sustainable landscape management that can be used when planting trees on their private agricultural land. CFUG members learn about agroforestry practices, such as the intercropping of *Nepalese alder* with cardamom, that generate income, contributing indirectly to food security. CFM contributes to reforestation, increased forest cover, and the reduction of erosion and landslides in the mid-hills of Nepal. CFUG members participate in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies ranging from planting trees to setting up stone barriers to reduce landslides during the monsoon season.

In addition to impacting food security for smallholder farmers, agroforestry ecosystems contribute to climate change mitigation, reforestation, and promote sustainable forest management (Bhatterai et. al., 2015). Efforts to increase household food security have hit roadblocks due to a lack of coordination between national and district-level agriculture, livestock, and forestry offices, which all have different agendas and stipulations regarding land use in the public or private sector. Adhikari et. al (2016) argue that while community-based land management practices are effective tools of public land management, the lack of coordination among sectors has hurt the nutritional outcomes and rural livelihoods of poor, rural households in Nepal.

III.   Social Capital and CFM

The primary social and economic benefits of community forest management are income-generating activities, enhanced rural livelihoods, increased decision-making power among local communities and traditionally socially excluded populations, and equity. Improved social capital,

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namely the inclusion of marginalized populations such as women, low-caste, and low-income populations in Nepal, is another proposed benefit of community forest management. Community forest user groups in Nepal have increased the participation of rural women and low-caste populations, likely improving their social capital at the community level. However, the extent to which community forest management has impacted socially excluded populations such as landless tenants, who are most likely to fall under the category of "ultra-poor," is debatable.

As forests are under local control, the prevailing assumption is that a greater proportion of money from income-generating non-timber forestry products (NTFP) and other benefits will reach formerly excluded marginalized groups (Pelletier et. al, 2016). This assumption is driven by the idea that enhanced local governance will lead to greater social and economic benefits for all those involved in forest communities. Pelletier et. al (2016) state that the logic behind this claim is that, "central governments are more likely to prioritize national interests and industries, while local communities will favor their own interests; local institutions are able to respond to community needs more efficiently than central governments because of better information and accountability; and local control provides more opportunities for marginalized groups to influence policy."

However, this does not take into account that local forest governance in Nepal has also led to social disparity, elite capture, the exclusion of the most marginalized populations, and inequitable benefit-sharing among forest user groups (Gurung et. al, 2013). While Nepal's forest groups have been inclusive of rural women and low-caste groups, restrictions on participation and limitations on firewood, fodder and non-timber forest products that can be harvested from community forests appear to have led to inequitable benefit sharing (Gurung et. al., 2013).

Livelihoods of local forest users have not improved to the extent expected, and the funds gained from CFUG participation at the local level are not significant; current community forestry policies do not fully support the market-oriented and environmental management of community forests (Gurung et. al, 2013). Community forest user groups consist of a representative proportion of men and women, and spaces are reserved for Dalits and disadvantaged groups. However, socially inclusive participation and decision-making power in terms of group member selection, leadership, and participation is still unclear. Although CFM may enhance social capital for some community members, more research needs to be done to determine if forest user groups are truly equitable and inclusive for the most marginalized populations in Nepal – the ultra-poor, landless tenants (Gurung et. al, 2013).

IV.   Emerging Trends in Gender Equity & Social Inclusion (GESI) & CFM

In the 1990s, gender equality and "women's empowerment" were the prevailing development strategies to enhance women's participation and decision-making power in agriculture, education, forestry, governance and other programmatic sectors. In the past 30 years, it has become widely recognized that "women's empowerment" schemes are prone to elite capture and fail to decrease social disparities among rural, marginalized populations. Approaches to women's empowerment sought to be inclusive, but the sole focus on women – at the expense of gender-based programming for men and women – limited their efficacy. Emergent trends in gender and development now prioritize gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) as the primary framework for inclusive development work. Inspired by feminist and intersectionality theories, within the development context GESI centers on including traditionally marginalized, disadvantaged

populations – going beyond "women's empowerment" to include gender, class, caste, and a variety of other demographic characteristics.

Proponents of GESI state that gender equity and social inclusion can transform community development when GESI programs are context-specific and consider both cultural and historic context (UNDP, 2016). The Government of Nepal committed to following a GESI framework, and seven ministries (Agriculture, Education, Forest, Health, Federal Affairs and Local Development, Urban Development, Water Supply and Sanitation) are implementing GESI policies and guidelines, which are being monitored by specially trained staff in each ministry (UNDP, 2016).

Nepal is a diverse country with over 100 ethnic groups represented. Caste, class, and gender must be considered in development planning and implementation in order to reduce social disparities and the resulting likelihood of elite capture. Otherwise, these development initiatives will be prone to "white washing" their programs, using gender as a shield of inclusiveness.

It is easier to count the number of women in development programs, such as Nepal's community forestry program, then to ensure that all class, caste, and genders are participating equitably – including the most marginalized poor who have traditionally been barred from participation. Structural barriers such as land tenure status further limit equitable participation of the "ultra-poor" from CFUG membership. According to Gurung et. al (2013), many CFUGs are led by elite groups in rural villages; while women participate and are involved in decision-making, systemic issues of socioeconomic stratification contribute to the exclusion of poor, marginalized populations from participating in the system altogether.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Community forest user groups and Nepal's *Hariyo Ban* program are often highlighted as success stories within community forest management, primarily for their reported rates of carbon sequestration and reforestation, participatory carbon forest monitoring at the village level, and opportunities for cash crops to be grown as part of agro-ecological forestry models (Karky and Basul, 2011:110). While CFUGs in Nepal serve as successful models for other countries in terms of community-based forest management, the implications for gender equity and social inclusion among these groups is less clear. Previous research indicates that women's participation in community forest user groups increases their decision-making power, but the role of social difference among women participating in these groups – and its resulting impact on elite capture and benefit sharing – has not been studied to the same extent (McDougall et al., 2013).

With regards to gender equity and social inclusion, what are some of the challenges and successes of community forest user groups in Nepal in relation to land management, natural resources (carbon sequestration, reduced effects of land degradation, erosion and deforestation)? How can this program improve social inclusion, and how can this case study shed light on community forest groups, gender equity, and social inclusion for other parts of Nepal? This research will look at the opportunities and constraints of community-based natural resource management, identifying direct and indirect social and environmental benefits of participation in community forest user groups, with a focus on gender equity and social inclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary goal of this literature review is a thorough discussion of gender equity and social inclusion in Nepal, as well as the barriers to equitable participation that perpetuate elite capture among community-led natural resource management groups. This literature review will discuss the topics mentioned above, as well as share gaps in relevant literature. Finally, we will discuss recommendations for additional research as it pertains to gender equity, social inclusion, elite capture, and benefit sharing as they impact community forest user groups in the mid-hills of Nepal.

Community-Led Action & Natural Resource Management

Community natural resource management (NRM) in Nepal through community forest user groups (CFUGs), has been highly successful in terms of reforestation and carbon sequestration efforts (Paudel et. al, 2017). Through CFUGS, community-based natural resource management in Nepal has contributed to reforestation, forest monitoring and management, and sustainable land management through the approved harvesting of non-timber forestry products by CFUG members, with indirect links to household food security and livelihoods (Paudel et. al, 2017).

The Nepali government has formalized these natural resource management systems, , but commercial food production through agroforestry, or indigenous foraging practices, has not been legalized (Adhikari et. al, 2016). This policy shortcoming has resulted in restricting local communities' use of the forest for sustainable food production and decreasing reliance on the forest as a source of medicinal plants and wild edibles (McDougall et. al., 2013).

According to Karki et. al (2018), there are four pathways in which community-based forest management can improve food security:

- Forests as a source of income and employment, providing means for managing food;
- Forests as inputs (leaf litter, fodder), increasing food production;
- Forests as a source of direct food, providing means of daily diet
- Forests as a source of readily available renewable energy, converting food into consumable forms;

Also worth noting is the importance of land ownership in the context of community forests; low-income farmers without land depend on community forests for food security more than community members who own their land (Karki et. al., 2018).

To understand the linkages between community forestry, land ownership, and food security, gender and social inclusion must be considered. That is because marginalized populations – low-caste groups and women – are less likely to own land, and therefore more likely to depend on community forests. Early community forestry programs did not explicitly connect to gender and social inclusion, which limited equitable participation of women and other marginalized groups (McDougall et. al., 2013).

Gender, Food Security, and Community Forestry Management

Critical to the understanding of community forest management in Nepal is the contextualization of gender, social inclusion, and marginalization. Feminist political ecology (FPE) is a theoretical framework that developed through political ecology, women's studies, environmental justice, and feminist development studies in the 1990s, primarily in cross-

disciplinary schools of Western thought (Rocheleau 2010). Three major themes emerged within fpe: gendered knowledge and sciences of survival; gendered rights and responsibilities with respect to land, resources, and environmental decision making; and gendered social movements and organizations (Rocheleau 2010).

Around the same time, Indian feminist environmentalist Vandana Shiva created the theory of ecofeminism, which has many similarities to fpe with a critical difference: ecofeminism looks primarily at the developing world with a lens on gender, natural resource management, forestry, and agriculture (Mies and Shiva 1993). Since the establishment of fpe and ecofeminism, ecofeminism has been incorporated largely into the fpe, and there have been prevalent cultural shifts to emphasize social inclusion, difference, marginality, and equity. In the 1990s, however, these two theories differed significantly on their approach to sustainable development, gender, and power.

In the 1990s, natural resource management (NRM) development initiatives began to incorporate gender-mainstreaming techniques, with mixed results (McDougall et al., 2013). Women were empowered through enhanced participation and increased decision-making power. However, they faced a "participation trap": women participated more in these development projects, but there was no significant increase in women's agency and power in Nepali society (Bhatterai et. al., 2015). At the same time, female-majority CFUGs saw a rise in women's participation and leadership at the local level, but the barriers to formal agriculture extension resulted in a lack of food security-forest linkages. This resulted in greater participation of women – as well as increased responsibilities at home and in community groups (Bhatterai et. al., 2015). Finally, although gender-mainstreaming initiatives began to take hold in Nepal, other drivers of

social exclusion – such as caste – were not considered, which served as a barrier to participation in forest management programs.

Gender-equitable agriculture can have significant impacts on women's power, social inclusion, and household decision-making for female farmers in rural Nepal. Using a contemporary framework of feminist political ecology, which has shifted focus to incorporate social inclusion and equity (Mollett and Faria, 2013), food security-forest linkages can be better explored as development programs shift from a gender mainstreaming approach to one of gender-transformative adaptation (Hillenbrand et. al., 2015). This theoretical approach to gender equity reflects a commitment to move beyond "women's empowerment" for individuals, and argues that gender equity can only be achieved by transforming the power dynamics and societal structures that reinforce prevalent gendered inequalities (Hillenbrand et. al 2015:5). CARE USA states that this change is measured by three forms of empowerment: agency, relations, and structures (Hillenbrand et. al., 2015:5).

Gender equity and social inclusion practices have potential to increase women's power and equitable participation at the CFUG and smallholder farm level. Incorporating these strategies without an intersectional focus on gender, caste, class, and marginalization at the societal level in Nepal, however, will not show a significant impact in women's empowerment.

Bhatterai et. al (2015) utilized gender and agrarian contexts in Nepal as a case study to analyze this question. The authors identified three gaps in the literature: most studies treat women as individual actors without looking at the broader socio-ecological context; while there is a history of development/aid programs on agrobiodiversity management practices, they fail to link gender in a changing context; finally, changing socio-economic contexts affect the way that gender is reproduced - such as out-migration leading remittances, and female-headed households

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that make the primary decisions of agriculture and household nutrition, with only 8% of women in Nepal owning land (CBS, 2007).

For the scope of this research project, the theoretical frameworks of feminist political ecology and gender-transformative adaptation will be used to further explore food security-forestry linkages among women in rural Nepal. Participatory gender-transformative adaptation approaches that are socially inclusive of gender, caste, and class could influence household food security outcomes and women's power at the local level. However, there are significant limitations to the primary gender-mainstreaming that occurs within community forest user groups.

Barriers to Social Inclusion and Equitable Participation

Gender, caste, and ethnic exclusion in Nepal can constrain the health outcomes, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and access to resources for marginalized populations, such as Dalits (lowest caste) and women (World Bank and DFID, 2006). Agarwal (2001) states that, "while women overall have less access to resources and less input to decision making than men in community forestry throughout South Asia, women's household and public power vary." Societal structure in Nepal - which is multidimensional and hierarchical - categorizes difference in terms of relational power. This categorization of difference has strong implications for social participation, agency, and decision-making within Nepalese society. For example, while Brahmin women are higher caste, Dalit women may have more agency to voice their opinions, due to cultural norms that limit the public voice of Brahmin women (Agarwal, 2001). As a whole, the caste system and gender discrimination "pose significant challenges to the

development of effective participatory decision making in Nepal" (World Bank and DFID, 2006).

Although the government of Nepal has acted to increase gender-mainstreaming initiatives, many policies and societal practices still actively exclude marginalized caste groups, women, and the poor. Traditionally marginalized populations, which include the poor, Dalit and lower caste groups, women, and low-caste indigenous populations, tend to be socially excluded from forest governance (Agarwal 2001). Lachapelle et. al (2004) assert that, "despite Nepal's well-established devolution of forest use rights, marginalized peoples – such as women and the poor – who rely deeply and directly on and affect forests tend to have little effective voice in community-based forest governance," (Lachapelle et. al., 2004 as cited by Pelletier et. al., 2016).

Social Capital and Elite Capture

Community-based development was proposed as a more effective poverty reduction method than traditional, top-down approaches to alleviating poverty in developing countries. Locally managed community user groups have a better understanding of local context as well as social capital, which Platteau (2004) describes as "the dense network of continuous interactions among individuals that constitute community life." Social capital consists of relationships, power held in a community or group, social norms, social bonds and bridges, and the networks that make up a community.

However, several studies have shown that community-based development initiatives caused greater social disparities within a community. In instances of high inequality, marginalized groups are more easily oppressed by local power groups or those with higher socioeconomic status, who likely have larger social capital within the community as well

(Platteau, 2004). This is referred to as elite capture; in community-based development programs, the dominant group can leverage its social capital against the poorest, most vulnerable members of the community. While this is rarely the intended outcome of community-based development initiatives, decentralized governance limits the likelihood of marginalized populations' participation in community-based development initiatives. The lower the level of government, the higher the rate of elite capture, due to the decentralized nature of community-based development (Platteau, 2004). Local governments tend to over provide services to local elites, which further enhances social disparities among poorer and more affluent groups within the community.

Elite Capture and Social Disparities in Nepal's Community Forestry Programs

There are 400,000 local-level community groups in Nepal. The community forest program is one of the oldest and most successful, but the decentralized community-based governance model extends to mother's groups, women's groups, farmer groups, and local politics. In Nepal, elite capture can limit the extent to which gender equity and social inclusion is incorporated among these locally-governed groups. A study by Gurung et. al (2013) showed that participation in community forest user groups led to increased income-generating activities by group members, but social disparity and inequitable benefit-sharing challenges persisted. Over the course of their research in three districts in Nepal, most of the CFUGs were led by elite groups, and socioeconomic inequality paired with barriers to entry for poor and marginalized groups perpetuated their exclusion from community forestry (Gurung et. al., 2013).

Gurung et. al (2013) also found that the community forestry programs further exacerbated economic disparities among the elite and marginalized, as policies to protect

community forests limited the livelihood strategies for poor community members who previously utilized forest resources without restriction (Gurung et. al., 2013).

Nepal's community forest program is inclusive – for those that are able to participate or serve in leadership roles among local community forest user groups. Participants experience many benefits, such as ecosystem services, improved forest conditions, and income-generating opportunities from the sale of non-timber forestry products. However, the community forest program has widened socioeconomic disparities between elite and marginalized populations at the village level, as well as exacerbated barriers to participation for traditionally socially excluded populations. According to Gurung et. al (2013), "the community forestry policy does not optimally support the sustainable and market-oriented management of the forest resources….more attention needs to be paid in making forest user groups more equitable, inclusive and pro-poor in practice." While women's participation has greatly increased in community forest groups, elite capture perpetuates the social exclusion of poor, marginalized populations.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Overview

Both community forest user groups (CFUGs) and the *Hariyo Ban* program are often highlighted as success stories within community forest management, primarily for their reported rates of carbon sequestration and reforestation, participatory carbon forest monitoring at the village level, and opportunities for cash crops to be grown as part of agro-ecological forestry models (Karky and Basul, 2011:110). However, the implications of gender equity, social inclusion and food security within community-based natural resource management in Nepal has not been a priority in previous research. Looking at community forest user groups in Nepal with regards to land tenure and gender equity, how does CFUG membership influence food security outcomes at the household level? To what extent, and in what ways do CFUGs influence social inclusion, especially among women?

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach, relying on both primary and secondary data collection. Primary research in the form of qualitative focus groups and observation was done in Lamjung, Nepal, over the course of three weeks. Primary data collection and its resulting analysis was further substantiated with an in-depth content analysis of annual reports, evaluations and publications written by CARE Nepal, USAID and WWF. The literature review provided context and justification for the research, as well as highlighted gaps in the literature. For the scope of this capstone, primary research in the form of fieldwork was conducted in Nepal for three weeks over the Cornell winter session. Two focus group discussions were facilitated with female-headed households and CFUG members in Chiti, Lamjung, in Western Nepal, where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in 2014-2015.

Research Setting

Lamjung, a district in the mid-hills of Western Nepal with a population of 167,724, is a medium-sized district within the mountainous agro-ecological zone (NepalMap, 2019). Approximately 49% is covered by forestland (DFO 2014 cited in Gyawali et. al., 2017). Within that forested area, about 28% (18,849.96 Ha) of that land is included in the Annapurna Conservation Area, which is managed by the National Trust for Nature Conservation (DFO 2014 cited in Gyawali et. al., 2017). 30% of the remaining forest land is community-managed forest land (DFO 2014 cited in Gyawali et. al., 2017), and the rest of the forest land is managed by the Lamjung District Forest Department. Lamjung has 317 CFUGs, made up of 25,284 households (84.68% of households in the district) which manage 39.1% of the district's total forest area (DFO 2014 cited in Gyawali et. al., 2017).

Much like other mid-hills regions in Nepal, Lamjung is abundant in natural resources; this has led to recent natural resource extraction projects, such as hydropower dams on the Marshyangdi River. Road infrastructure development – including the China-India transnational highway – has led to a decrease in public forested land in the past few years. Lamjung is comparable to other districts of similar size in terms of household size, home/land ownership, and migration patterns (NepalMap, 2019). Lamjung is mixed-caste, and has the largest Gurung population (ethnic minority group) by district in Nepal.

Within Lamjung, two villages within the *nagarpalika*, or local government region, of Chiti were selected for the research setting. The villages are Siaut and Chiti Tillahar. Chiti, Lamjung is an ideal typical case for examining the research questions, as it is a mid-size area of 5,166 residents, consisting of many small villages, and a main town bazaar (NepalMap, 2019). The demographic makeup in particular is what makes Chiti an ideal typical case study: it is very

mixed-caste, comparable to Nepal's overall caste makeup, as well as mixed in terms of socioeconomic status and land ownership. I served as a Food Security Volunteer with Peace Corps Nepal in Chiti in 2014-2015, and am familiar with the region, community members, and community leaders of different groups in the area; this all contributed to research setting selection.

Sampling Plan

With the support of my research assistant, I met with community forest user group leaders at the research site of Chiti, Lamjung. My research assistant and I organized focus group discussions, which the research assistant facilitated. Observation was also done throughout the three weeks to better understand how rural populations utilize forests for daily life, livelihoods, and food security outcomes. I am familiar with the research setting and the prevalent food security and gender equity and social exclusion issues there. I established rapport with community leaders, who helped organize times for the focus group discussions. Focus group participants with diverse caste groups, age, and socioeconomic status were selected. All participants were women as well as members of the village community forest user groups of Siaout and Chiti Tilahar, respectively. Focus group questions were developed in part from the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (Pandey and Bardsley, 2019) as well as key indicators from the Nepal DHS regarding food security, gender equity, land use and tenure, and community-based forest management.

This sampling plan is based on a literature review of natural resource management and socio ecological research conducted on forest user groups, gender equity, and/or food security, such as the study on collaborative governance among CFUG members by McDougall et. al

(2013), the work of Bhattarai et. al (2015) on gender adaptation and climate change resilience, and forest-food security implications for forest group members by Khatri et. al (2017). These three articles used case studies as the primary methodology for qualitative data collection. McDougall et. al (2013) and Bhattari et. al (2015) both used mixed-methods approaches in their case study assessments. I plan to model my mixed-methods data collection approach on their studies. Although I would love to conduct participatory action research (PAR) and collect data from longitudinal case studies, as was the case of McDougall et. al (2013), due to time constraints of this research, these longer qualitative data collection tools are beyond the scope of this work.

Data Collection Tools

I.   Interviewing Methods

In Nepal, I facilitated focus group interviews with community members from two villages in Chiti, Lamjung. Participants in both focus groups had similar demographics (caste, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.). Discussions consisted of groups of 5-10 participants per session, and took place at community centers in town on Saturdays, as individuals were typically more available on Saturdays to meet. Questions ranged from more general (name, age, household size) to more specific (related to forest usage and foraging habits, household dietary habits, land rights, and household-level agricultural practices).

Specifically, questions centered on three main themes:

1) How do rural smallholder women describe the impact of recent changes in household composition (specifically the large-scale out-migration of men) – how does this change household resources and time allocation?

2) How do households utilize forest resources (such as non-timber forest products) and what are the perceived effects on household nutrition and food security?

3) How does CFUG membership change community participation; how do the caste makeup of these CFUG groups compare with their village's caste demographics?

II.   Observational Methods

Every day, observation was done to see how households incorporate forest usage into their day-to-day activities. Guiding questions included: how many villagers go to the forest to collect fodder for livestock, compared to collecting fodder from their private land? How many people forage in the forest, and what are commonly foraged foods? Are these foods used primarily for medicinal purposes, or to improve household nutrition? Daily deliverables for the observation stage of fieldwork included walking through forested land, joining community members to collect fodder and/or forage in the forest, and visiting farms to see agroforestry practices used and how forest products factored into agricultural production among households.

III.   Content Analysis

The community forestry program in Nepal, a USAID-funded project, is in its second stage – *Hariyo Ban Phase II*. A content analysis was conducted to analyze the ways in which gender, caste, and class were discussed among the main program donors, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and implementing agencies involved: Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) Nepal and World Wildlife Fund. The content analysis provided insight into the community forestry donor landscape. It relied on communications materials and annual reports from the international agencies involved. Local partners, Federation of Community Forest Users in Nepal (FECOFUN) and National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), did not have publicly available annual reports or publications in

English. Due to the lack of relevant publications to analyze, and because their work is more involved in community governance and biodiversity corridor management, they were not included in the content analysis.

The main question guiding the content analysis was, "how are marginalized groups involved in community forestry in Nepal?" A longer discussion of the ways in which components of gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) is included – or not – is found in the findings/discussion section of this paper. Finally, the table below (Table 2) highlights the primary stakeholders and their respective roles in the implementation of the *Hariyo Ban Phase II* project.

Table 2

HB Partner Roles and Responsibilities	Role
World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF)	Prime awardees Technical leadership Program management and reporting, grant management, and monitoring & evaluation Natural resource, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem-related activities Lead on biodiversity and sustainable landscape components
CARE	Lead on climate change adaptation component plus GESI and governance
National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)	Protected area and buffer zone management
Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN)	Mobilizes participation of Community Forest User Groups (CFUG) Issues-based advocacy and governance

Source: Gyawali, Saroj, Acharya, Sujan, Rajan Koirala, and Shrestha, Basanta. 2017. "Final Evaluation Report of CARE Nepal, Hariyo Ban Program." Social Welfare Council Nepal. Pp. 1-126.

DATA ANALYSIS

Primary: Findings from Qualitative Fieldwork

Evidence of Direct Benefits

Focus group participants in both groups discussed several direct benefits of participating in community forest user groups in Chiti, Lamjung. The primary direct benefit mentioned by both focus groups was improved household nutrition from the availability of wild, edible foods from the forest. Depending on the season, a variety of wild, edible plants can be foraged in community forests. These plants include mangos, fiddlehead ferns, gooseberries, lamb's quarter, stinging nettle, taro, among others. Participants stated that the availability of these wild foods improved their family's nutrition; they also shared that they would sell some for extra income.

Income-generating activities were one of the most frequently discussed direct benefits. In addition to wild foods foraged and sold by CFUG members, other income-generating activities were mentioned, including non-timber forestry products, medicinal herbs, and the contribution of fodder to households' livestock health. Women shared that they will sustainably harvest and sell extra firewood, medicinal herbs, and non-timber forestry products for additional household income.

Agroforestry practices were also mentioned, both in relation to income-generating activities and learning about sustainable landscape management. Several women mentioned that they took agroforestry techniques learned through attending CFUG meetings and incorporated them into their private agricultural land. For example, the main agroforestry practice discussed was intercropping Nepalese alder *(Alnus nepalensis)* trees with shade-grown cardamom for increased cardamom production. A nitrogen fixer, Nepalese alder is utilized in companion planting and green manure practices throughout the country, and encourages cardamom growth

when intercropped. Women learned about the benefits of intercropping these two plants during CFUG discussions, and visited the District of Forestry office to get Nepalese alder trees to plant. This agroforestry practice was highly sought out by CFUG members, as cardamom is expensive, and the demand is high.

Fodder, another important direct benefit, was mentioned several times. The availability of nutritious fodder for livestock was said to improve their livestock's milk production, benefiting household nutrition outcomes as well as providing an extra source of income, as several CFUG participants said that they sell extra milk to their neighbors. Participants stated that the availability of fodder, as well as the income generated from selling milk, contributed to their decision-making around the purchase of additional small ruminants.

In terms of social benefits, women spoke about spending time outside of the home with friends, being able to learn about forest conservation during monthly meetings, being seen as knowledgeable on environmental conservation throughout the community, and the social learning that is gained through group participation.

Evidence of Indirect Benefits

Focus group participants discussed a variety of indirect benefits gained from community forest user group participation. These included access to improved soil health and water retention, climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge gained, to the role of forests in sustainable landscape management.

Several women mentioned improved soil health as an indirect benefit. Participants used nutrient rich forest soil in their kitchen gardens at the household level. An emphasis on organic gardening was brought up by both groups, and they shared that improved soil impacted their organic vegetable yields as well. Related is the perceived benefit of water retention on soil

health, and in turn produce yields. One focus group participant shared that, "The forest preserves moisture so the water stays on the farm and there isn't run-off," highlighting the environmental knowledge developed through group participation, as well as this indirect participation benefit.

Focus group respondents shared several climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that are indirect benefits of their participation. Many climate change approaches are cross-cutting both adaptation and mitigation, so they will be discussed together. This is also an indication of the indirect benefits at a landscape level, representative of sustainable landscape initiatives that Nepal facilitates in part through climate change strategies that community forest user group members engage in.

In one focus group, members talked about building stone retention walls before the monsoon season to prevent landslides, as well as mitigation measures taken after two major earthquakes in the spring of 2015. Community forest user group members shared that role assisting in disaster management and mitigation, as well as teaching others in their community how to prevent erosion and landslides at the onset of the monsoon season. Focus group participants shared the importance of planting trees, as well as educating others in their community on how to sustainably source firewood rather than cutting down trees in the forest. Respondents seemed proud to talk about their role in reforestation efforts and community outreach.

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Among CFUGs

Previously, women were not allowed to join community forest user groups. Focus group respondents discussed women forming their own, informal groups seven to eight years ago because they were denied entry to the local CFUGs. Women's participation and leadership among CFUG members interviewed has significantly increased in the past five to six years. This

was most apparent when speaking to CFUG members of Siaout. They recalled that seven or eight years ago women were unable to participate in community forest user groups. They expressed frustration at not being able to join previously. "Compared to men, women use the forest more and get more benefits than men, so it was important for women to be able to join the group," one respondent stated.

A few respondents said they were directly involved with the establishment of early informal CFUGs for women, as well as worked to petition the male CFUGs to disband and establish new groups that allowed women to formally participate. They petitioned the previous group to disband and allow women to join, and five or six years ago women first became members. Over time, the rules have changed, and now leadership (president/vice president) must be composed of one man and one woman. While gender mainstreaming efforts have increased women's participation, most women I spoke to in the Siaout group were high-caste Brahmin, with the exception of one low-caste Dalit woman.

The other focus group, consisting of women from the more mixed-caste community of Chiti Tilahar, an area that includes the town's main bazaar, was much more integrated in terms of caste. Although a Brahmin woman was the vice president, the group was fairly diverse, and included disadvantaged groups, Dalits, and higher-caste women. Women of all caste groups were chatting and joking with one another openly.

In terms of social benefits, women from Chiti Tilahar shared that they enjoyed the social aspect of the group. They said one of the best parts of group participation was being able to meet with one another and discuss environmental/forest conservation issues. They also shared that others in the community see them as a source of knowledge on forest conservation, and that it is

their responsibility to teach people about environmental issues, which they learn about during monthly forest user groups meetings.

Participatory Exclusion (Social Exclusion and Elite Capture)

Although the past five or six years have seen women included in CFUGs and increased representation of Dalit women and members of disadvantaged groups is found among these groups, social exclusion still persists. An exclusive selection process of CFUG members by members of the local village government office, as well as restrictions placed on participation eligibility perpetuate elite capture. In order to participate in community forest user groups, people must own their own land, either in their own name or their husband or family's name. While policies that seek to include women, Dalits, and other marginalized populations in CFUG participation exist, the exclusion of low-income, landless tenants continues to exacerbate elite capture in Chiti, Lamjung.

Landless populations, composed of low-caste and "ultra-poor" households, are ineligible for CFUG participation, which has not been discussed much in previous CFUG literature. When focus group respondents were asked about landless tenants' perceptions of CFUGs, several women shared that they did not think landless tenants would be interested in CFUG participation; this statement can likely be attributed to class-based perceptions of interest in formalized utilization of community forests in the area.

Statements such as, "If anyone wants to participate, they can bring land rights documentation saying that they started living there, but they have to show documentation that they are living here in order to join," highlight the societal reinforcement of land tenancy for inclusion in CFUGs. It also highlights the social norms that influence elite capture among CFUGs, and the barriers to inclusion that are normatively enforced by group members. The next

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section analyzes gender equity and social inclusion as the topics are discussed throughout a

content analysis conducted of the primary project implementing partners: CARE Nepal, USAID,

and World Wildlife Fund.

Secondary: Content Analysis Findings – Table 3

Organization	Discussion of Gender, Caste and Class	Direct Quote
CARE Nepal[1]	- Lead on GESI mainstreaming for *Hariyo Ban* program - Programmatic outcomes: improved policies that promote climate adaptation approaches that are gender sensitive and socially inclusive; greater discussion of social inclusion, emphasizes differentiated forms of marginality - GESI mainstreaming: adopted by multiple national policies, women and traditionally socially excluded populations including youth increased their participation and decision-making within CFUGS - GESI outcomes were stated to increase participation of poor, vulnerable women, and socially excluded groups to improve livelihoods and natural resource management - CARE has most appropriately incorporated GESI (not just gender) as a cross-cutting theme in the *Hariyo Ban* program, as well as effectively described GESI strategy and project outcomes	"GESI is mainstreamed in the climate adaptation component through addressing differential impacts of climate change on women, poor, marginalized and other vulnerable groups." (pg 36) "CARE has vast experience and capacity in GESI, and strongly recognizes that empowerment of women and socially excluded groups are essential for strengthening their stewardship role in biodiversity conservation and climate change." (pg 60)
USAID[2]	- GESI is mentioned but gender, class and caste are conflated; for example, the quote highlights a 30% increase of leadership among women, ethnic and marginalized members – but this could refer to any of these groups; does not address issues of social exclusion, elite capture - GESI mainstreaming is said to promote and scale up successful approaches of *Hariyo Ban* Phase I but approaches are not listed - This report conflated gender, caste and class; needs improvement	"Over 30% increase of women, ethnic and marginalized members in leadership positions of local groups" (USAID's *Hariyo Ban* Phase II Fact Sheet, page 3)
WWF[3]	- GESI's scope was limited in *Hariyo Ban* Phase I; WWF states that it has been made a cross-cutting theme for Phase II with the anticipated outcomes of improved internal GESI policies, greater rates of women, youth and marginalized populations' leadership in CFUGs, and more equitable access to community forestry, benefit sharing - Focus on equitable benefit sharing, enhanced participation of women and marginalized populations - Overall this report sometimes differentiates between gender, caste and class; occasionally includes them all as one group	"More equitable access to and benefit sharing from natural resources for women and marginalized groups" (WWF *Hariyo Ban* Fact Sheet, page 4)

1 Gyawali, Saroj, Acharya, Sujan, Rajan Koirala, and Shrestha, Basanta. 2017. "Final Evaluation Report of CARE Nepal, Hariyo Ban Program." Social Welfare Council Nepal. Pp. 1-126.

2 USAID Nepal. 2016. "Hariyo Ban Program: Phase II." Retrieved April 20, 2020.
(https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/Hariyo_Ban_II_-_Fact_Sheet_-_Draft_09142017.pdf).

3 WWF Nepal. 2016. "Hariyo Ban Program." Retrieved on April 20, 2020.
(http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/hariyo_ban_program_second_phase_brochure.pdf).

Main Takeaways:

I.   CARE Nepal

CARE Nepal most effectively discussed the integration of gender equity and social

inclusion (GESI) within the *Hariyo Ban II* program, citing that, "Hariyo Ban highly focused on

GESI and major GESI actions include: promoting improved internal governance of forest

groups; increasing women and decision makers' engagement in promoting leadership of women

and marginalized groups of change agents for social transformation," (CARE Nepal Mid-Term

Evaluation). CARE Nepal was the only organization to explicitly mention both gender

mainstreaming and the empowerment of women and marginalized populations, which makes

sense as CARE took the lead on gender equity, social inclusion, and governance of the *Hariyo*

Ban II program.

While GESI outcomes were appropriately stated throughout the report, and examples

were cited that GESI led to increased participation of poor, vulnerable women, and socially

excluded groups to improve livelihoods and natural resource management, the extent to which

women and marginalized populations were differentially impacted by gender-mainstreaming and

socially inclusive practices over the course of the project is unclear. CARE was the only

organization to appropriately discuss gender equity and social inclusion as a cross-cutting theme

in the *Hariyo Ban* program, describing the GESI strategy and project outcomes with a lens of

social stratification and difference.

II.   USAID

Although gender equity and social inclusion are mentioned throughout *USAID's Hariyo*

Ban II reports, gender, class and caste are conflated. The quote in the table above highlights that

programmatic outcomes included a 30% increase of leadership among women, ethnic and marginalized members, but this statistic could consist of any of these groups. It could refer to a 30% increase of leadership among high-caste women, or a mixture of males of various ethnic minorities, or marginalized populations regardless of gender. USAID's report failed to effectively address issues of social exclusion, elite capture, and social difference among community forest user groups.

Finally, although gender-mainstreaming approaches are said to promote and scale up the successes of *Hariyo Ban* Phase I, there are no references to specific approaches from the *Hariyo Ban* I phase of this program. The WWF report discussed the lack of gender inclusion in *Hariyo Ban* I, but the USAID publication makes a vague reference to its successes in terms of gender equity. Overall, this report conflates gender, caste and class; it needs improvement, and fails to discuss gender equity and social inclusion, instead contributing vague statements about the increased leadership of traditionally socially excluded groups – women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized populations.

III.   WWF

According to WWF's most recent publications, gender equity and social inclusion had a limited scope in *Hariyo Ban Phase I*. WWF states that it has been made a cross-cutting theme for Phase II. Anticipated outcomes are improved institutional governance, enhanced gender equity and social inclusion policies, greater leadership rates of women and marginalized populations, and more equitable access to benefit sharing of community forestry. There is an implicit focus on equitable benefit sharing and enhanced participation of women and marginalized populations throughout this publication. However, gender, class and caste are at times treated differently and

other times conflated as one topic. The WWF report does a better job noting the limitations of gender inclusion in *Hariyo Ban Phase I* compared to USAID. However, the conflation of gender, class and caste signifies that WWF could improve upon its discussion of gender equity and social inclusion outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Community forest user groups in Nepal have significantly improved the reforestation of degraded landscapes, local communities' knowledge and prioritization of environmental conservation, and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies at the landscape level. However, gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) have had mixed results. While the participation of women, Dalits, and other marginalized groups has increased among CFUGs in the past decade, these trends are limited to middle and upper-class groups that are landowners, and landless tenants – primarily the "ultra-poor" – lack equitable benefit sharing among CFUGs. This exclusionary practice perpetuates elite capture, and is likely not limited to this particular community forestry development initiative in Nepal. Nepal's community-based forestry program has been replicated in other countries, but in terms of GESI, there is still work to be done in order for these groups to be socially inclusive, incorporating class and social differences to limit elite capture. Gender mainstreaming has allowed women to participate and lead community forest user groups. This enhances their decision-making power by creating environments for gender-inclusive policies and practices. While gender mainstreaming is one component of GESI, social inclusion must be considered as well.

Social difference – including age, caste, class, and ethnicity – is harder to measure than gender. The conflation of gender equity and social inclusion as one term within international development makes it complicated to analyze the measurable impact. It is easier to count the number of women than it is to critically examine social differences in the context of who benefits from programs like Nepal's community forestry initiative. The government of Nepal, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and private sector implementing organizations, needs to create an enabling environment for policies that promote gender equity and social

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inclusion, and see them as two different components of inclusive development. At the local level, benefit-sharing must be inclusive of caste, class, and gender, both in community forest user groups and other locally governed groups. Building upon the environmental conservation benefits of Nepal's community forestry program, incorporating gender equity and social inclusion as two distinct markers of social difference could be a powerful example used to improve inclusion in other development programs around the world.

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A. Interview Questions for Focus Groups

Introduction: (परिचय)
- Please share your name, age, and household size, as well as what ward you live in

१ तपाईंको नाम, उमेर र परिवारको संख्या अनि तपाईं कुन वडामा बस्नुहुन्छ भन्नुहोस्।

- How long have you participated in the program, and what is your favorite thing about the program?

२ तपाईं समुदायिक वनमा सहभागी हुनुभएको कति समय भयो ? अनि यसमा तपाईंलाई सबैभन्दा मन पर्ने कुरा चाहिं के हो?

Part 1: Participation in Community Forest User Groups (भाग १ : प्रयोगकर्ता समूहहरुको सामुदायिक वनमा सहभागिता)

- How did you join this program?

१ तपाईंले सामुदायिक वनको कार्यक्रममा कसरि भाग लिनुभयो ?

- Why did you want to join this program?

२ तपाईंले सामुदायिक वनको कार्यक्रममा भाग लिनुको कारण के हो ?

- What are the benefits of the program?

३ सामुदायिक वनको कार्यक्रममा भाग लिएर तपाईंलाई के फाइदा भयो ?

- What kinds of things do you get from the forest, and what do you use them for?

४ तपाईं सामुदायिक वन के को लागि प्रयोग गर्नुहुन्छ ?

- What are the challenges of participating?

५ तपाईंलाई यो कार्यक्रममा भाग लिन केही कुराले गाह्रो बनाएको छ?

- How do you think participating in this program has helped your income, family, and/or nutrition?

६ यो कार्यक्रममा भाग लिएर तपाईंलाई के फाइदा भयो?
अ) आम्दानी बढ्यो।
आ) घर परिवारमा राम्रो भयो।
इ) स्वास्थ्य खानेकुरा प्राप्त भयो।

ई) केही फाइदा भएन।

Part 2: Migration (भाग २: बसाइ सराइ)

- How many of you have a family member working abroad?

१ तपाईंको परिवारको कोही व्यक्ति नेपाल बाहिर गएर काम गर्दै हुनुहुन्छ ?

- Does your spouse live with you? In a different city? Abroad?

२ तपाईंको श्रीमान्/श्रीमती तपाईंसँगै बस्नुहुन्छ?

- How has your household changed over time?

तपाईंको परिवारमा श्रिमान् र श्रीमतीको काममा के फरक छ?
यो कार्यक्रममा भाग लिएपछि पहिला र अहिले गर्ने काममा के-कस्तो परिवर्तन भएको छ?

Part 3: Land Rights (भाग ३: जमिनको अधिकार)

- Do you own your house? Do you own your land? Who owns the land/house - you or your spouse?

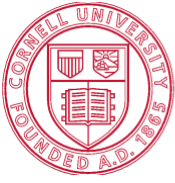१ तपाईंको आफ्नै घर छ?
२ तपाईंको आफ्नै जमिन छ?
३ तपाईंको घर वा जमिन कसको नाममा छ?

- If you do not own land/house, how do you grow your food?
  - How does this influence your use of the forest?

४ तपाईंको आफ्नै जमिन हुनु र नहुनुले सहभागितामा के फरक पर्छ?
५ तपाईंको आफ्नै जमिन छैन भने कसरी बालीनाली लगाउनुहुन्छ?

Cornell University

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled "Forest Usage among Women in Nepal." I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by Leala Rosen, Global Development candidate at Cornell University. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Sarah Giroux, Development Sociology at Cornell University.

What the study is about
The purpose of this research is to understand the ways that women in community forest user groups use the forest – daily and weekly use, what supplies are collected and for what purpose, what the benefits are to participation in forest groups, and what the challenges are.

What we will ask you to do
For the next hour, I will ask you to share your experience as a member of the community forest group, and answer some questions about it. I ask that you share your honest opinion of the program, and that you respect other group member's opinions. We will be talking in a group, so if someone else is speaking please wait for them to finish before sharing your opinion.

Risks and discomforts
I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits
We hope to learn more about the role of community forests in food and nutrition in Nepal. This research may benefit other people in the future, by improving community forest and agriculture programs. An indirect benefit of participating is the time for you to reflect on your experience as a member of the community forest group.

Compensation for participation
You will be given a stipend of 200 rupees for participating in this study. We appreciate you taking the time out of your day for this study.

Audio/Video Recording
This focus group will be recorded so that the responses given can be transcribed. The audio recording will not be shared with anyone, other than the researcher and her Nepali professor, who will help with translation.

Photo Recording

Photos may be taken during or after the focus group, which may be shared in future presentations on this research in the U.S. Your name or any other identifying features will not be shared at any

time. If you are agree to have your photograph taken, please sign below. You will not receive compensation for any photos taken.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview recorded, and photographs taken.
   ▢   I am willing to have this interview recorded and my picture taken:

   Signed: _____
   Date: _____

   ▢   I do not want to have this interview recorded, or my photograph taken.
   ▢   I am willing to have this interview recorded, but do not want my picture taken.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security
The researcher will not share your name, identity, or other information with anyone. Only the researcher will have access to any information used to identify you. De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community. We will remove any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers so that no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Taking part is voluntary
Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and your information will not be shared with anyone. You can refuse to participate at any time, or stop participating during the focus group if you no longer want to participate. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

If you have questions
If you have questions contact Leala Rosen or Ramila Baral in Chiti Tilahar, Besisahar-11, Lamjung until January 3rd 2020.

अनुसन्धानको लागि अनुमति पत्र

मेरो नाम लिला हो। म अमेरिकाको कर्नेल युनिभर्सिटीमा एम. ए. को अध्यायन गरिरहेको छु।

मेरो अध्यायन पूरा गर्न, अनुसन्धानको लागि म यहाँ आएको छु। मेरो अनुसन्धानको शीर्षक " कसरि मानिसहरूले दैनिक जीवनमा, खानेकुरा र जीवनको लागि वनजंगलको उपयोग गर्छन्" भन्ने हो।

अन्तर्वार्तामा सहभागी हुन तपाईंको खुशी हो, बाध्यता होइन।

अन्तर्वार्ताको समय १ घण्टाको रहेको छ। यसमा सोधिएका प्रश्नको जवाफ र अनुभव इमान्दारीपुर्वक बताउनको लागि अनुरोध गर्दछु।

यो अनुसन्धानले समाजका अरु थुप्रै मानिसहरुलाई फाइदा पुग्न सक्छ भन्ने लागेको छ।

सहभागीहरुको लागि खाजाको पनि व्यस्था गरिएको छ र भाग लिनुहुने प्रत्येक सहभागीलाई २०० सय रुपयाँ पनि प्रदान गरिने छ।

तपाईंहरुबाट प्राप्त भएको कुनै पनि जानकारीलाई अनुसन्धानको लागि प्रयोग गरिनेछ, तर अरुको लागि भने गोप्य राखिने छ।

यो अनुसन्धानको लागि फोटो खिच्न र अन्तर्वार्ताको रेकर्ड पनि गर्न चाहान्छु। यसको लागि तपाईंको अनुमति चाहिन्छ।

यदि यी माथिका सबै कुराको लागि अनुमति दिनुहुन्छ भने यो कागजमा तपाईंको नाम लेखी सही गरिदिनुहोस्।

सहभागीको नाम र सही:_____ मिति:

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको नाम र सही:_____ मिति: