COMMUNITY FORESTRY GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL: A CASE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS IN A COMMUNITY FOREST USERS GROUP

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Abstract

This study was carried out in Parbat district, Nepal at the Bhodkhore Community Forest Users Group (CFUG) with the overall objective to develop a clearer understanding of the role of service providers in Community Forestry governance. The focus of this research is on the identification of activities affecting good governance, on the share of contribution of service providers to these activities and to their effectiveness, and on challenges faced by service providers while working with this CFUG. The identified major activities of service providers seemed to be more effective in improving the situation of good governance when they had almost an equal share of contribution. There are challenges mainly in financial resource and time management, and adequate technical support in forest management. However, the role of service providers in this CFUG is found effective in improving the situation of good governance in spite of existing challenges.

Key words: Community Forestry, Governance, Forest Organizations, Poverty Reduction, Nepal

Zusammenfassung

Eine qualitative Befragung einer Gruppe gemeinschaftlicher Waldnutzung im Distrikt Parbat in Nepal diente dem Ziel, ein klareres Verständnis für den Beitrag von Anbietern von Dienstleistungen zur Praxis einer guten 'Community Forestry Governance' herauszuarbeiten. Zunächst ging es darum, Aktivitäten der Dienstleister zu identifizieren, die zu 'good governance' beitragen. In der Folge wurden der Beitrag der Dienstleister zu einer identifizierten Aktivität und ihre Effektivität untersucht. Herausforderungen und Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten ergaben sich insbesondere bei den finanziellen Ressourcen, dem Zeitmanagement und einer entsprechenden technischen Unterstützung im Waldmanagement. Trotz dieser Herausforderungen wurde insgesamt ein positiver Beitrag der Dienstleister zu 'good governance' bei der analysierten Gruppe gemeinschaftlicher Waldnutzung festgestellt.

Schlagworte: Gemeinschaftswald, Governance, Waldnutzung, Nutzungsgemeinschaft, Nepal

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1. Introduction

The introduction of Community Forestry (CF) programme in Nepal is a courageous, innovative and promising step towards participatory forest management and this has been well recognized throughout the world as a successful people centred programme (Gurung 2007). The Forest Act of 1993 and Forest Regulation of 1995 provide a clear regulation of the CF and the process of handing over forest to the local communities by forming user groups, the so called Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). The government transfers responsibility to CFUGs for managing the national forests and the right to use forest products in a sustainable way with the ultimate policy objective of improving livelihoods of rural communities (HMGN 2002). The CFUGs have been recognized as social institutions, legal entities and self-governing autonomous bodies which have legal rights to formulate their constitution and to take decisions regarding CF management (Adhikari 2001).

The District Forest Office (DFO), which works under the Department of Forest (DoF), is a responsible authority to hand over a national forest as a community forest to CFUGs and to provide them with necessary services for a better management of their forests. However, it alone is not able to provide the full supports needed. CFUGs are not fully capable of managing their forest on their own. They are increasingly stronger and gaining more confidence, and have started to make demands for more autonomy and services required for meeting their expectation of improving livelihoods through CF (Pokharel and Niraula 2004). Thus, they have to depend on external organizations/institutions (Ghimire 2005). Many of the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are now involved in the promotion of CF programme (Timsina 2003).

The Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), the largest CSO in CF, is working through its representatives as service providing and facilitating agent for CFUGs (Kanel 2006). NGOs and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are involved in strengthening the CFUGs through their necessary support services in CFUG formation and forest handing over process; and post- formation supports (Gurung 2007). As a result, many CFUGs have been receiving more facilitation and advisory services from these organizations through different type of activities but with a similar purpose of support, i.e. to achieve the primary objective of CF (improve the local people's livelihoods through sustainable management of forest resources). To meet this primary objective of CF, governance has to be improved (Kanel 2004). Thus, the activities of these organizations could have certain degree of influence on CF governance, either directly or indirectly.

The activities that are conducted by Service Providers (SPs) and have a direct effect to improve good governance may vary in their effectiveness. Many of these activities are jointly executed by SPs to meet their common objectives. Even in such common activities, the degree of SPs' share of contribution may be different and this difference can ultimately affect the optimum output of these activities. Thus, in-depth study to analyse the relationship between effectiveness of SPs' activities and the degree of share of contribution in each activity is carried out in this study. Furthermore, the support services provided by the government and other organizations have remained inadequate in comparison to the increasing demand of CFUGs. As a result, several second –generation issues have emerged in CF all around the country; one of such issues is good governance in CFUG (Bhatta and Gentle 2004). These emerging issues have it made more challenging for SPs to provide adequate support services to CFUGs. Therefore, it seems crucial to identify the major activities conducted by SPs that have a direct effect in improving the situation of good governance in CFUG, and the challenges faced by them while conducting these activities.

2. Background Information

Community Forestry is defined as a situation, which intimately involves local people in forestry activities (FAO 1978). In Nepal, CF was started in 1978 with the first amendment in Forest Act of 1961, in the name of *Panchayat*[3] Forest and *Panchayat* Protected Forest. It was initiated as an attempt by the government and aid agencies to provide an alternative way for the DoF to manage national forests by including local people (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). The Decentralization Act of 1982 empowered *Panchayats* to form people's committees and introduced the concept of 'Users Group' in 1987 (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003a). In 1988, the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS) was declared, which stated that all the accessible forests in the mid-hills (constituting 61 % of the total national forest) should be handed over to local people and it specified a facilitative role for the DoF to support user group formation, operational plan (OP) preparation, and others relating to the handing over of community forest. During the period since 1987, nearly 1.2 million ha have been handed over to more than 14,000 CFUGs (CFD 2006) – this is about 36% of the potential community forest.

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[3] The Panchayat was the administrative body on the local level during the monarchy period in Nepal (1960-1990).

After the dawn of democracy in 1990, the name of users group was reformulated as community forest users group. Every CFUG has its working committee called Community Forest Users Group's Committee (CFUGC), which should be accountable to the users (Kanel and Kandel 2004). The Forest Act of 1993 and the Forest Regulation of 1995 have entirely revised the Forest Act of 1961 and its first amendment of 1978 in line with MPFS of 1989. These policies formally mandate the CFUGs as "independent, autonomous and self-perpetuating institutions", responsible for both the management of community forests and the conduction of community development activities. CFUGs have the legal right to claim support services from the DFO, and are also free to collaborate with other organizations (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003b).

In Nepal, many organizations are involved to support the CF programme. Among them, the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation is responsible for policy formulation and the Department of Forest for policy implementation (Kanel 2006). The Community Forestry Division (CFD) and 74 **District Forest Offices** work under the DoF. As the government is not able to provide adequate services for CFUGs, there is an increasing demand of institutions for effective facilitation of CF processes (Luintel 2006). Forest Regulation of 1995 has explicitly encouraged CSOs to emerge and provide necessary services to CFUGs. Likewise, the newly prepared non-governmental service providers' guideline of 2003 has also clearly spelled out their roles.

FECOFUN has involved in advocacy campaigns to put pressure on the government for policy implementation; protesting against anti- CF activities; building alliances with donor-funded forestry projects for supports; and networking of CFUGs (Timsina 2003). According to Gurung (2007), **NGOs** and **CBOs** are involved in strengthening the CFUGs. Among others, two main visible benefits from their involvement are the acceleration of CFUG formation and the process of handing over forest. Besides, CSOs are contributing to the debate of good governance by facilitating discussions between marginalized groups and prominent citizens in national development planning, including CF process (Bhatnagar and Williams 1992). Furthermore, the establishment of good governance in the foundation of CF is required for the sustainable forest management and improvement of people's livelihoods (Osmani 2004).

Acharya (2002) reports the following **challenges** that Nepal's CF is presently facing: redefining of policy objectives from basic needs to poverty alleviation; mechanisms ensuring benefits and access in decision-making for disadvantaged groups; shift to active forest management; restructuring of DFO to

deliver quality extension services; reviewing CF process and practices to maintain people's participation, etc. Fourth CF workshop identified following major challenges concerning CF governance: ensuring inclusion at every level of CF governance, unclear role of all stakeholders in policy-making, one-way flow of information, lack of appropriate mentality for promoting good governance, etc (DoF 2004). DFO, Parbat (2006) has mentioned the following major issues which led to the challenges for SPs to work in CFUGs: low representation of women and *Dalit*[4] in CFUGC as well as passive participation of their representatives in decision-making; ineffective implementation of OP and constitution; difficulty to amend OP and CFUG's constitution on time, and passiveness of CFUG to submit audit reports on time, etc.

3. Governance in Community Forestry

Governance is defined as the complex of mechanism, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interest, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP 2002). **Forest governance** is defined as the set of principles and rules under which power is exercised and practiced in all spheres from private to public, in the management of forest resources and "the relationship between the state and its citizens, civil society and private sector" (Brown et al. 2002). Governance is a neutral term, and it becomes good if the governing process has positive characteristics of its attributes or the process is in accordance with the principles of governance (Gurung 2002). People's participation, accountability, transparency and pro-poor policy change are considered as crucial dimensions of governance in forest resources management (Dahal 2003). The tenth five-year plan (2002-2007) and poverty reduction strategy paper (2002) have envisioned 'good governance' as one of the four strategic pillars[5] of development objectives. CF essentially cross- cuts the three layers of governance: micro- (local, community level); meso- (district or provincial); and macro- (national) level (Pokharel et al. 2002). The Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002), both affirm the importance of good governance at local, national and international levels (Brown et al. 2002).

In Nepal, the term 'governance' has been used in economic, social, administrative, and political literature since the mid-nineties (Sharma and Acharya 2004). Though the concept of good governance

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[4] Socially deprived group of people. In this study area, lower caste people are included in this group
[5] The Tenth Plan (2002–2007) has formulated a poverty reduction strategy based on four pillars: board-based growth, social sector development, targeted programmes with emphasis on social inclusion, and improved governance.

is old, its assessment is relatively new in CF of Nepal. SAMARPAN Team (2003) assessed the four basic attributes of governance, namely transparency, accountability, participation and predictability to explore the status of good governance in CFUGs of its project area. Chowdhary (2004) assessed the governance status by using similar attributes in Sarlahi and Mahhotari districts of Nepal. Upadhaya (2006) also assessed the status of good governance in CFUGs by taking its two attributes (participation and transparency) in Dhading district of Nepal. Similar studies were done assessing a certain part of the CF governance of Nepal (e.g., Giri 2005, Bhatta and Gentle 2004, Dhital et al. 2004, Maharjan et al. 2004, Pokharel and Niraula 2004, Sharma and Acharya 2004).

UNDP (2002) points out that an effective democratic form of governance relies on public participation, accountability and transparency. In this study too, participation, transparency and accountability are considered as important attributes of governance and thus assessed through key indicators to explore the present status of CF governance using a case study of Bhodkhore CFUG, Parbat district. CF governance has three broad actors who provide support services to CFUGs: the state, private sector and civil society (USAID 2002, UNDP 1997).

4. Research Issues

A current issue in CF governance is to assess how SPs have been contributing towards improving its present situation at management level of CF. To address this issue, this research has been carried out with the main objective to develop an understanding of the role of SPs in CF governance and the challenges they have been facing while working towards improving its situation. In this study, the challenges for SPs while working towards improving the situation of CF governance in Bhodkhore CFUG are analyzed in detail. DFO from state/GO (Governmental Organization), and district FECOFUN and National Educational & Social Development Organization (NESDO) from CSOs were selected as SPs to be analysed to understand the SPs' role in CF governance. In the analysis, their activities affecting to good governance are identified and their share of contribution on major activities and their effectiveness in improving the situation of good governance are assessed.

Key indicators for an assessment of basic attributes of CF governance include: active involvement of all users mainly in decision-making, planning, forest management activities and benefit sharing (under **participation**); availability and clarity of information to all users mainly about the fund, annual programme, OP and constitution, major decisions and notices, and benefit sharing (under

transparency); and roles and responsibilities of CFUG/C, accountability of CFUG towards poor users and equity-based benefit sharing (under **accountability**). Using these indicators, the present status of CF governance is assessed and the major activities of SPs affecting it are identified. A relationship between the SPs' share of contribution to the major activities and their effectiveness in improving the situation of CF governance, as well as the challenges for SPs from their own and users' perspectives, are also analysed in this study.

The research issues are summarized below:

1. To explore the present status of CF governance at its management level (CFUG)
2. To identify major activities of the SPs affecting good governance
3. To assess the share of contribution of the SPs to the major activities
4. To analyse the effectiveness of the SPs' major activities in improving the situation of CF governance
5. To identify the challenges for the SPs while working towards improving the situation of CF governance

5. Study site

Bhodkhore CFUG of Parbat district was selected as study site considering following criteria: legal tenure, direct involvement of SPs, and CFUG's heterogeneity. In this district, CF is considered as a successful programme and 45 % of the total forest was handed over till mid of 2006 to 299 CFUGs, and consequently 24908 households have benefited from this programme. The SPs of the district being involved in Bhodkhore CFUG and having been conducting their activities including CF management are DFO, FECOFUN and NESDO. A brief introduction of each of them is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Service Providers in Bhodkhore CFUG

Description	Service Providers		
	DFO	**FECOFUN**	**NESDO**
Address	Siwalaya VDC, Kushma	Siwalaya VDC, Kushma	Siwalaya VDC, Kushma
Establishment	2042 B.S.	2054 B.S	2052 B.S
Staff	1-DFO, 1-AFO, 11-Rangers and 40-Forest Guards, not a single female staff	3 Regular staff (2 male and 1 female) and 25 Facilitators (10 male and 15 female)	One programme coordinator and 16 animators (6 female) for Animation Programme
Working area and number of CFUGs	Parbat district	Parbat district, until field study, 265 CFUGs Out Of 320	Parbat district, until field study, 145 CFUGs out of 320

The Bhodkhore forest covers 57 ha of land, is basically a pole stage, predominantly natural Sal *(Shorea robusta)* forest. It was traditionally managed under the *talukdari* (a *talukdar* was responsible for it and for controlling forest management) system of land revenue collection. After it was nationalized in 1957, the *talukdar* was no longer able to resist the state's decision and as a result this forest turned into an open access for all. The role of the villagers was similar to that of the herder's as described by Hardin (1968) in "The tragedy of the commons". Continual ruining of this open access natural resource resulted in a large landslide in 1977. After this, villagers realized the importance of forest cover and agreed to protect it through indigenous forest management system. Officially, it was handed over to the CFUG in April 1993 with OP and constitution. The CFUG has a working committee of 13 members and CFUGC should be reformulated every two years.

6. Questionnaire development and data collection

Primary data was collected through personal interviews, group discussions and direct observations. Secondary data was obtained from OP and constitution, minutes and other records of the CFUG and records from the SPs. Forest documents and reports, and relevant scientific articles were also reviewed in detail. The data set from personal interviews (with 49 respondents from CFUG and 12 from SPs) along with other social research methods concerning the role of SPs in governance of this CFUG, have served as a basis for this analysis.

During the field study conducted in 2006, 49 households were selected out of the total 115 and one person from each household was interviewed. Stratified random sampling was adopted to select

respondents. At least 40 percent of the respondents were taken from the total households of each well-being category (see Annex 1 for detail). In addition, 12 respondents from SPs (2 were from DFO, 4 from FECOFUN, 2 from NESDO and the remaining 4 from RP who also represent DFO) were also interviewed. Purposive sampling was adopted for selecting respondents from SPs. Separate sets of questionnaires including both closed and open-ended questions were used for respondents from SPs and CFUG. The questionnaires prepared for interviews are briefly described below.

6.1 Interview schedule for CFUG representative

For assessing **participation**, users' opinion on their active participation in CF activities during different time periods - from OP constitution preparation process until before the 1st amendment process (2050-2054 B.S.[6]), 1st amendment until before the 2nd amendment process (2055-2059 B.S.) and from 2nd amendment process to date (2060-2062 B.S.) - was collected. Detailed information about the users' participation in trainings, workshops or study tours other than those organized by this CFUG, and participant selection procedure was also gathered. The users were asked about decision-making process in GAs (since the handing over process of CF to date) and their own participation in them. Furthermore, the effectiveness of SPs' activities and share of contribution of SPs to these activities, which have a direct effect on participation in this CFUG were assessed quantitatively.

The effectiveness of the SPs' major activities to improve the situation of good governance in terms of participation, transparency and accountability was quantified through scoring method. Interviewees from both CFUG and SPs were asked to assign a score between 1 and 5 (1 for the least effective and 5 for the most effective) to each activity based on its effect in improving the situation of good governance. The average score for each activity from these two groups of respondents is calculated and analysed thereafter. Furthermore, each respondent was provided with 10 cards of equal value that represented a total of 100 % for each of the three categories. The respondent had to allocate the number of cards on the basis of share of contribution of SPs to the major activities. The researcher then averaged the total number of cards for each SP in each activity and expressed it in terms of percentage. Thus, share of contribution of SPs in each major activity is obtained.

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[6] Bikram Sambat (B.S.) is the official calendar of Nepal, which was started in 57 B.C. by King Bikramaditya in India. It runs from April 16th to April 15th. It is about 56 and a half-year ahead the Gregorian calendar. However, Fiscal Year starts from the 16 July to 15 July of next year.

For assessing **transparency**, users' opinion on their knowledge of CF management, CFUG's fund management, OP, constitution and annual programmes, and forest management situation was collected. Furthermore, effectiveness of SPs' major activities, which have a direct effect on transparency and their share of contribution, was assessed quantitatively. Likewise, for assessing **accountability**, users' opinion on their own roles, responsibilities and status of performance, and their attitude towards the accountability of CFUG/C members was studied in detail. Furthermore, users' knowledge about the distribution system of forest products and special provisions in budget allocation and/or benefit sharing for women, poor, *Dalit* in this CFUG was also identified. The effectiveness of activities and share of contribution of SPs to these activities, which have a direct effect on the accountability in this CFUG, was also assessed quantitatively.

6.2 Interview schedule for SPs representative

Respondents from SPs were asked to explain the present and past relationship between their organizations and Bhodkhore CFUG as well as the existing situation of governance (in terms of participation, transparency and accountability) in the CFUG. Regarding **participation**, number of active users in CF activities during different time period and decision-making process in GAs and meetings were asked to interviewees. Furthermore, CF related training, workshops or study tours along with number of participants from this CFUG, was also noted. Concerning **transparency**, SPs were asked about the number of users who are sufficiently informed about CF management. For **accountability**, interviewees were asked about the number of members from CFUG/C accountable on their roles and responsibilities and special provisions in budget allocation and/or benefit sharing for women, poor, *Dalit* in this CFUG. Like in personal interviews with CFUG, the respondents from SPs were also asked to rank the effectiveness of their activities which have a direct effect on CF governance in terms of participation, transparency and accountability. Finally, the users' and SPs' perception on the challenges for SPs along with recommended future activities for them to improve the existing situation of governance in this CFUG was also analyzed.

Besides personal interviews, group discussions, matrix ranking, direct observation and key informants interviews were also conducted for data collection. Separate discussions were held with each homogeneous group (consisting of 7 to 10 people) in the CFUG and with representative group from each SP. Meanwhile, a checklist constituting the following was used to track discussions on given issues: Leadership development and handover to target group; Planning and decision making process;

Participation in forest management activities; Benefit sharing; Women, poor and *Dalit* participation in CF activities; Trainings, workshops and study tour; Situation of CFUG's fund management; Record keeping and file management system; Information sharing system; Roles and responsibilities of CFUG and CFUGC; Poor- focused programmes; Special provisions for poor, women and *Dalit*; Equity-based approach in benefit sharing.

A matrix of four-point Likert-type scale was used to measure criteria and indicators of CF governance. The users were asked to rank each indicator on this scale to reflect existing governance situation of their CFUG. The researcher also observed a GA and a CFUGC's meeting during the field study. Nine key informants from CFUG, SPs and LFP were selected and interviewed using the following open-ended questions: - What is the role of SPs in the present status of CF governance in Bhodkhore CFUG and what should be done by them for its improvement in future? What are the opportunities and constraints for SPs while working towards improving the situation of CF governance in this CFUG? What should be done by users to improve the present status of good governance in this CFUG?

Pre-testing of tools and questionnaires was done in neighbouring CFUG to find out any ambiguities and inadequacies in the interview schedule. Furthermore, the data collected by different methods and from different sources was cross-checked through triangulation to improve the reliability of the results. Both qualitative and quantitative tools are used for data analysis. Information from group discussions and from open-ended questions of personal interviews is transcribed and presented in tabulated and textual forms. The results obtained from matrix ranking are tabulated and produced as column diagrams. Data from close-ended questions of personal interviews is analysed using Microsoft Excel programme to produce descriptive statistics in the form of line graphs and column diagrams.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Status of Community Forestry Governance

The status of CF governance in Bhodkhore CFUG is studied in terms of participation, transparency and accountability. The results obtained are presented under following sub-headings.

Participation

Regarding participation of users in this CFUG, there is a proportionate representation of target group (55% women and 15% *Dalit*-consisting of both men and women) in executive committee and decisions usually are made through consensus. Furthermore, there is a gradual increasing trend of users' attendance in GAs during the last 13 years. 75% respondents from SPs acknowledged that decision-making in GAs and meetings usually were done through consensus while the rest replied that it did by majority. Participant selection for trainings/workshops/tours has been done according to the need of CFUG and participants' willingness. In addition, trend of active participation in CF management activities is also increasing except in forest management as shown in Figure 1.
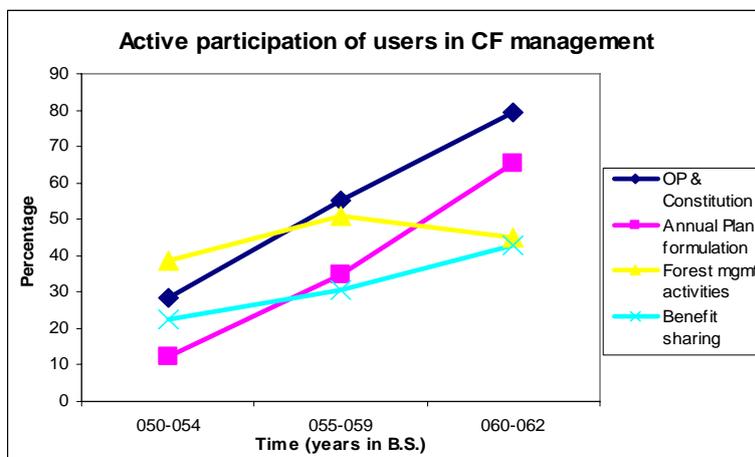
Active participation in annual plan formulation and OP and constitution preparation/ amendment is increasing steadily. In benefit sharing, it gradually increases until 2059 B.S. but then increases sharply, whereas in forest management it increases during 2054 to 2059 B.S. but decreases afterwards.

Figure 1: Trend of active participation in CF management
(Source: Field study 2006)

Transparency

The CFUG has a joint account of the chairperson, secretary and treasurer in Nepal Bank Limited in district headquarter. It has maintained registers and record books separately for specific purposes. It has been using different media to disseminate information such as delivering letters, broadcasting by

Katuwal[7]*,* putting notice on common places, holding quiz contexts and singing competition, etc. About 88 % of the respondents from users and 83 % of those from SPs acknowledged well-maintained and accessible records in the CFUG. Furthermore, almost all users could explain sources of income and areas of expenditure. Many users are well informed about CF management. The researcher questioned users to assess the extent of information they have in different aspects of CF management. The results of their responses are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2: CF management information to users

Do you think you are sufficiently informed about CF management in your CFUG?	Yes (%)	No (%)
	81.6	18.4
If yes, which aspects of management do you have sufficient information?		
In I, II and III	53.06	
Only in I and II	10.2	
Only in II and III	10.2	
Only in I and III	0.0	
Only in I	0.0	
Only in II	4.08	
Only in III	2.04	

[*]*Note: I = CFUG's fund management, II = OP, constitution and annual programme; III = Forest management situation*
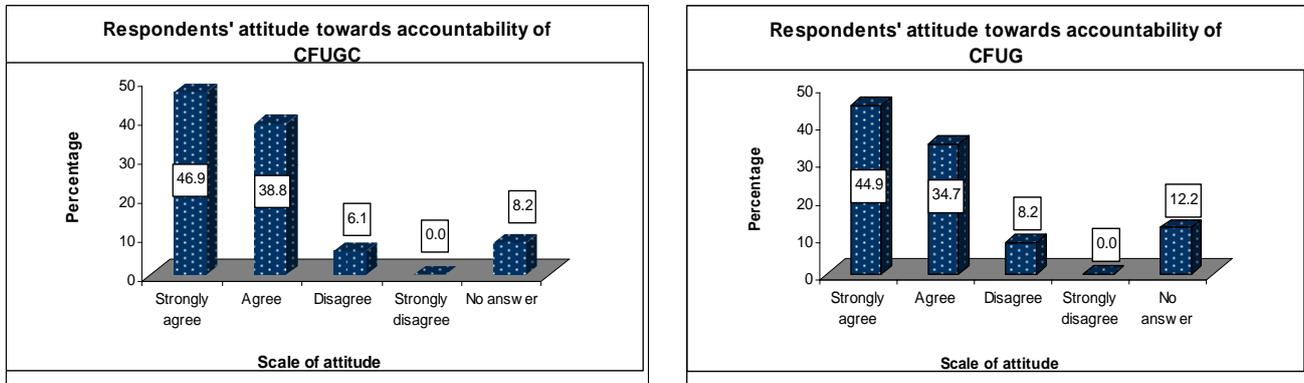
(Source: Field Study 2006), (n=49)

Table 2 shows that nearly 82 % of the total respondents think that they are sufficiently informed about CF management and 53% of them expressed that they have sufficient information about its main aspects. Furthermore, very few respondents are aware of only one aspect of the CF management. Many of the respondents who do not have sufficient information of CF management seemed to be keen in being informed about the fund management.

Accountability

Concerning accountability, out of the total respondents, 81.63 % were aware of their roles and responsibilities in CFUG of which only 73.47 % of them agreed to their better performance and the rest (8. 16 %) denied to it. In addition, attitude of respondents towards the accountability of CFUGC

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[7] Katuwal is a person appointed (mainly from lower caste) by the society for information dissemination. In Bhodkhore CFUG, users are notified of CF information first by a musical instrument and then with a loud voice of Katuwal.

and CFUG was measured based on a four point scale - strongly agree to strongly disagree; and the results obtained are presented in Figure 2a and Figure 2b, respectively.

a)   b)
Figure 2: Respondents' attitude towards accountability of: a) CFUGC, and b) CFUG
(Source: Field study 2006), (n= 49)

Figure 2a shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the accountability of the CFUGC (nearly 47 % strongly agreed). Only about 6 % of the respondents disagreed to this whereas 8 % remained unanswered. Likewise, Figure 2b shows that about 79 % of the respondents agreed to the accountability of the CFUG (nearly 45 % strongly agreed) and about 8 % of them disagreed whereas 12.24 % remained unanswered.

The CFUG has provision of allocating its fund for poverty reduction programmes. One of such programmes currently running is 'Revolving Fund for Poor'. Since 2058 B.S., NRs[8]. 12,500 from this revolving fund has been provided to 10 poor users (from *Gha* category) to invest in income generation activities such as goat farming, poultry farming, bamboo-basketry, etc. To monitor this programme, CFUG formed a sub-committee of 3 members which submitted a report (in 2063 B.S.) stating that all were benefited except two users from this programme. The CFUG has also started a 'land allocation for poverty reduction' since 2062 B.S, keeping the poorest of the poor users in priority. It has allocated one ha of land inside forest and NRs. 5,000 for NTFP species cultivation.

The CFUG has a provision of scholarships for talent children of poor. Furthermore, it has allocated some special provisions for poor users in membership entry fee and distribution of forest products as illustrated in Table 3. This provision reflects that CFUG is accountable towards poor users.

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[8] All prices quoted in this study are presented in Nepalese Rupees (NRs). The exchange rate between NRs and US Dollar ($), as stated in exchange rate of Nepal Rastra Bank on 11-09-2007 is: UD$ 1 =NRs 64.70 (buying) and 65.29 (selling).

Table 3: Fee for membership entry and forest products

Items	Well being categories			
	Rich *(Ka)*	Medium *(Kha)*	Poor *(Ga)*	Very poor *(Gha)*
Entry fee	100	75	50	50
Timber per cubic feet *(sal)*	50	40	30	15
Grass *(bhari)*	200	40	30	15
Firewood *(chatta)*[9]	50	30	20	10
Halo[10]	20	10	5	3

Note: Currency for all items is in Nepalese rupees   *(Source: Field Study 2006)*

Concerning benefit sharing, products like firewood, fodder and leaf litter are divided into portions equal to the number of households and then shared. However, the distribution of timber, agriculture implements and allocation of forest area for grass cutting is different. For example, right to grass cutting is given to those users who do not have any grass production marginal land. There are no restrictions in collecting NTFPs for subsistence use. The CFUG gives 20 *bhari* (1 bhari is a bundle of firewood weighing roughly about 35 kg) of firewood each year to blacksmith. Regarding indirect benefits, the CFUG is adopting the participant (in trainings/workshops/tours) selection system based on the interest of participants and the need of CFUG. However, observation of the CFUG's records shows that often the same users participated in such programmes. Furthermore, the investment of CFUG fund is also oriented towards the benefit for poor (e.g. drinking water in *Godam tole*).

Results from Matrix Ranking of participation, transparency and accountability

Matrix ranking was done independently by small groups of 3-4 users from four well-being ranking categories. Then, a representative group from all categories developed the final score to reflect the present status of CF governance. The results obtained are presented in Figure 3.
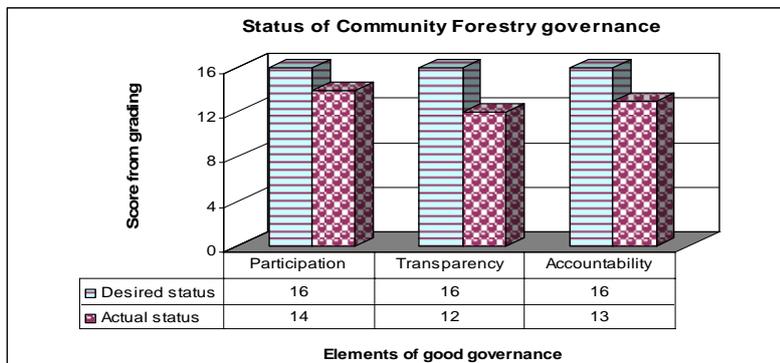

Status of Community Forestry governance

	Participation	Transparency	Accountability
Desired status	16	16	16
Actual status	14	12	13

Figure 3: Results from matrix ranking

The figure shows that there is a gap between the desired and actual status in terms of participation, transparency and accountability. In comparison to accountability, considerably more gap is observed in transparency and little less in participation.

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[9] Stack of firewood usually of dimension 3 x 5 ft

[10] Wooden agricultural implement used for ploughing, roughly of 15 kg

The major reason for a bigger gap in transparency could be due to insufficient information to most of the users about major decisions. Moreover, insufficient information of fund management and the special provisions in benefit sharing to some users also contribute to this gap. Although the equity-based approach is adopted on benefit sharing, and some poor-focused programmes are launched, all the poor users could not be benefited from them. Moreover, all of the general members are not accountable, giving rise to a gap between the desired and actual status of accountability. In case of participation, lack of active participation of some users in major decisions, forest management activities and benefit sharing have reduced it from reaching to the desired level; however its actual status is better than that of transparency and accountability.

7.2 Major Activities of SPs Affecting Good Governance

Service Providers' activities, conducted since forest handing over process (2050 B.S.) till 2062 B.S., including second amendment in OP and constitution (2061 B.S.), and having a direct effect in good governance were noted under 3 categories- participation, transparency and accountability. Furthermore, major 5 activities from each category were identified through group discussions by using the following two criteria:

1) Activities conducted with more support from SPs
2) Activities conducted within the last 3 years and their influence in good governance that has been realized by users

Table 4: Major activities of SPs affecting good governance

Elements of Good Governance	Major Activities of SPs Affecting Good Governance
Participation	PA1) Sensitize elites, empower target group for its proportional representation in CFUGC
	PA2) Facilitate annual plan formulation process
	PA3) Attend/facilitate meetings and general assemblies; encourage users from target group to put its agenda and take part in discussions
	PA4) Organize or conduct trainings/workshops/tours/orientation programmes focusing on forest management activities
	PA5) Help to formulate and implement fair rules and regulations to increase the access of target group in benefit sharing
Transparency	TA1) Facilitate to make users informed about CFUG's fund mobilization, income and expenditure
	TA2) Provide trainings or orientation to develop/maintain better record keeping and file management system
	TA3) Facilitate to make users aware of content and subject matter of OP and CFUG's constitution through trainings, workshops, informal visits, etc
	TA4) Help to make easy access for users to major decisions, notices and annual programmes
	TA5) Facilitate to make users informed about benefit sharing system
Accountability	AA1) Facilitate to raise the awareness level of CFUGC members in their roles and responsibilities and help them for their better performance
	AA2) Facilitate to raise the awareness level of general members in their roles and responsibilities and help them for their better performance
	AA3) Provide capacity building and skill development trainings/workshops to users
	AA4) Facilitate to make CFUG more accountable towards poor users
	AA5) Facilitate in equity-based benefit sharing

(Source: Field study 2006)

7.3 Share of Contribution of Service Providers to Major Activities

The respondents' view towards the share of contribution of SPs in terms of participation, transparency and accountability are presented in Figures 4, 5 and 6.
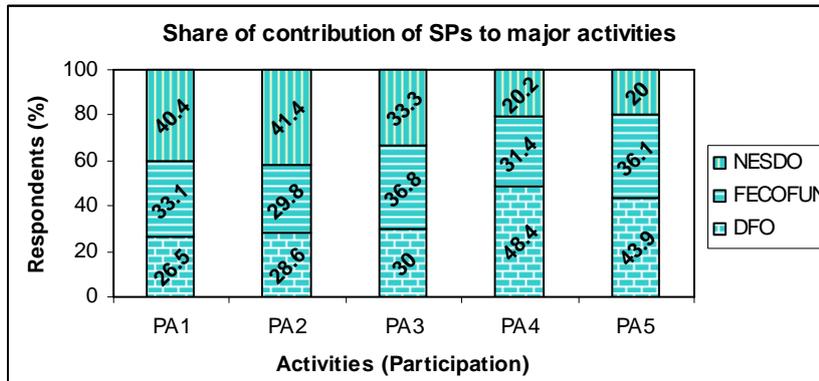
Figure 4: Share of contribution of SPs to participation

(Source: Field study 2006), (n= 49)

Figure 4 shows that NESDO in PA1 and PA2, DFO in PA4 and PA5 and FECOFUN in only PA3 have leading share of contribution. However FECOFUN has medium share of contribution in all other activities.
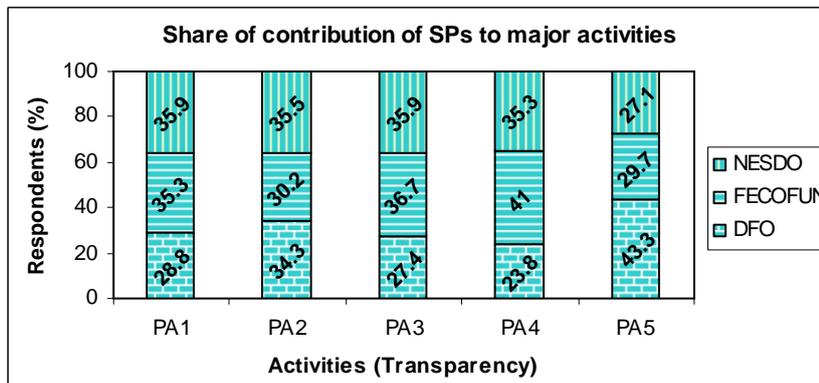

Figure 5: Share of contribution of SPs to transparency

(Source: Field study 2006), (n= 49)

Figure 5 shows that NESDO in TA1 and TA2 and FECOFUN in TA3 and TA4 have leading share of contribution. DFO leads other SPs in TA5.
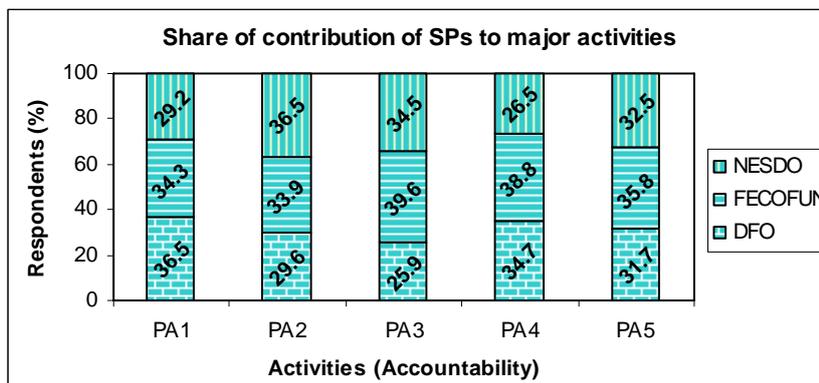

Figure 6: Share of contribution of SPs to accountability

(Source: Field study 2006), (n= 49)

Figure 6 shows that DFO in AA1, NESDO in AA2 and FECOFUN in AA3, AA4 and AA5 have leading share of contribution.

NESDO is found more concerned in inclusion of target group; participatory planning; better record keeping and file management system; and accountability of users. FECOFUN has bigger share of contribution in facilitating meeting and GAs, making easy access to major decisions and notices, poor-focused resource mobilization, equity-based approach and capacity building programmes. For other activities too, though not in leading position, it has almost uniform contribution. DFO has the biggest share of contribution in forest management trainings/workshops/tours, rules and regulation formulation, sales and distribution of forest product, and accountability of committee members.

7.4 Effectiveness of SPs' Major Activities on Good Governance

Effectiveness of the SPs' major activities to improve the situation of good governance was quantified considering both the users' and SPs' perspectives. The respondents ranked the effectiveness of the SP in the activity from 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective).
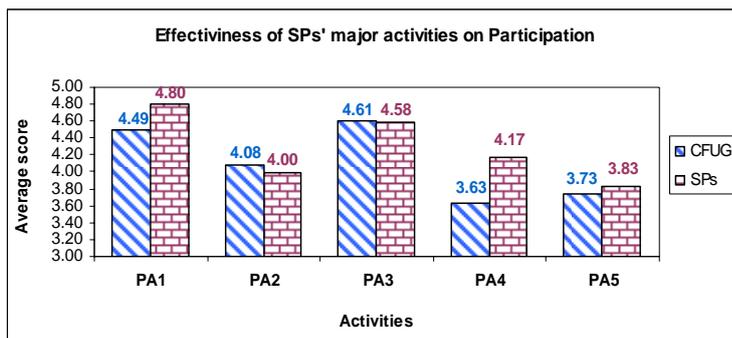

Figure 7 shows that in PA2, PA3 and PA5 both have perceived similar effectiveness but slightly different for PA4. SPs found it more effective to provide trainings/workshops to increase active participation of users in forest management, but users disagreed to it.

Figure 7: Effectiveness of SPs' major activities on participation
(Source: Field study 2006), (CFUG, n: 49 and SPs, n: 12)

Concerning transparency, except TA1, SPs realized other activities to be more effective than users did.

Among these, significant difference is seen in TA5. SPs reported that almost all users are well informed about of the forest product sales and distribution system, which helps to improve the situation of transparency; however the users did not find it much effective in this case.
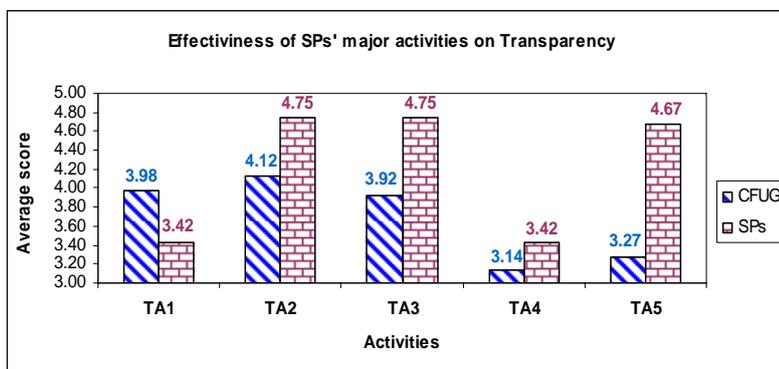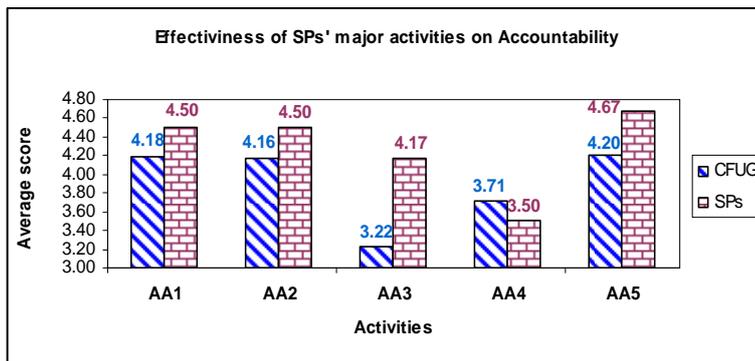
Figure 8: Effectiveness of SPs' major activities on transparency
(Source: Field study 2006), (CFUG, n: 49 and SPs, n: 12)

Here too, except AA4, SPs realized other activities to be more effective than users did. Among these activities, AA3 showed a significant difference in their perception.

Figure 9: Effectiveness of SPs major activities on accountability

(Source: Field study 2006), (CFUG, n: 49 and SPs, n: 12)

SPs provided different types of capacity building and skills development trainings/workshops to users and expected these trainees to be more accountable. But users perceived this activity to be less effective.

7.5 Relationship between SPs' Share of Contribution to Major Activities and their Effectiveness

A linear correlation coefficient is calculated between standard deviation (STD) of SPs' share of contribution and effectiveness of that activity in improving the situation of participation, transparency and accountability in this CFUG and obtained results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation between STD of SPs share of contribution and effectiveness of activities

Elements	Participation					Transparency					Accountability				
Activities	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	TA1	TA2	TA3	TA4	TA5	AA1	AA2	AA3	AA4	AA5
STD	6.94	7.19	3.41	14.16	12.16	3.96	2.80	5.13	8.77	8.70	3.71	3.50	6.91	6.24	2.16
Effectiveness	4.49	4.08	4.61	3.63	3.73	3.98	4.12	3.92	3.14	3.27	4.18	4.16	3.22	3.71	4.20
Corr. coeff, r	**-0.95**					**-0.98**					**-0.92**				

(Source: Field study 2006)

Table 5 shows a strong negative correlation between STD of share of contribution and effectiveness of that activity in all the three elements. The linear correlation coefficient (r) is respectively - 0.98 for transparency, - 0.95 for participation and - 0.92 for accountability. This implies that effectiveness of activity increases when there is an equal share of contribution among SPs for that activity, i.e. when the STD decreases and vice versa.

7.6 Discussion on Elements of CF Governance

Participation

Among the major five activities of SPs, which have a direct effect on participation, PA3 i.e. attend/facilitate meetings and GAs, encourage user from target group to put their agenda and take part in discussions is found to be relatively more effective, with comparatively less difference on share of contribution of SPs (i.e. FECOFUN has 37%; likewise NESDO 33% and DFO has 30%). In contrary, activity PA4 i.e. organize or conduct trainings/workshops/tours/orientation programmes focusing on forest management activities is found relatively less effective with comparatively more difference on share of contribution of SPs (i.e. DFO has 48%; likewise FECOFUN 31% and NESDO has 20%). This reflects that the difference on share of contribution of SPs have influence on the effectiveness of their activities. This finding is also supported by statistical analysis (high negative linear correlation coefficient, $r = -0.95$).

Regarding PA3, all the SPs attended most of the GAs and meetings within the last three years and also encouraged passive users as well as target group to take part in discussion. Facilitative role of SPs helps to increase the active participation of target group in decision-making (Gauli and Parul 2004). In the CFUG analysed in this study, there is an increasing trend of users' attendance in GAs, and proportionate representation of target group in the present committee and this is mainly due to motivation from SPs. Representation of women and *Dalit* in CFUGC helps to increase their active participation in decision-making (Baral 2001), and other users from their groups are encouraged to put their views in discussions and to participate actively in every aspect of CF (Paudel 2003).

In the CFUG studied here, most of the users, including target group, take part in discussion in GAs, and usually decisions (in GAs, meetings) are made through consensus. This kind of decision- making process is considered to be participatory (FAO 1986). OP and CFUG's constitution are approved by users' consensus in GA after series of meetings and discussions. The annual plan formulation process is also done in a participatory way. Active participation of users during OP and constitution preparation/amendment and annual plan formulation sharply increased in the last three years compared to the previous years. Thus, almost an equal share of contribution of SPs' to this activity (PA3) has made it relatively more effective than others in improving the situation of users' participation.

Regarding PA4, some users have participated in trainings/workshops/study tours related to forest management. Each year, DFO, Parbat has been conducting demonstration of harvesting and providing

technical assistance in plantation area (Acharya 1997). DFO emphasizes its support on technical trainings for individuals, usually CFUGC members (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003b). As a result, the opportunities to participate in these programmes are limited to some of the users (who too are mostly repeated). On the other hand, NESDO and FECOFUN are not much concerned in conducting such programme. However, they conducted very few orientations and workshops, which could produce very few skilled users on forest management who can not fully support to increase active participation of all users. Therefore, active participation of users in forest management activities is in a decreasing trend in the last three years than was in previous years (dropped from 51 % to 45 %). Thus, a big difference (a maximum difference of 28 %) in SPs' share of contribution to support forest management activities has made this relatively less effective to improve the situation of users' participation.

Transparency

Among the five major activities of SPs, which have a direct effect on transparency, TA2 i.e. provide trainings or orientation to develop/maintain better record keeping and file management system, is found relatively more effective, with comparatively less difference in the share of contribution of SPs (i.e. NESDO has 36%; likewise DFO 34% and FECOFUN has 30 %). In contrary, TA4 i.e. help to make easy access for users to major decisions, notices and annual programmes, is found relatively less effective with comparatively more difference in the share of contribution of SPs (i.e. FECOFUN has 41%; likewise NESDO 35% and DFO has 24%). This reflects that the differences in the share of contribution of SPs have an influence on the effectiveness of their activities. This finding is also supported by the statistical analysis (high negative linear correlation coefficient, $r = -0.98$).

Concerning TA2, NESDO provided an orientation to the treasurer on record keeping and file management, and also helped to develop standard formats for records keeping. DFO provided training on accounting and facilitated in using double entry system. FECOFUN helped to arrange registers and documents in a systematic way, and also provided training on accounting. Thus, all SPs have almost an equal share of contribution to improve record keeping and file management system. The influence of this activity can be seen in well-maintained record keeping and better file management in the CFUG which have helped users to understand records clearly, thereby improving transparency. It was found from personal interviews that more than 80 % of the respondents from both users and SPs acknowledged good file management and record keeping system in this CFUG.

Concerning TA4, FECOFUN motivated CFUGC to put the decisions of committee meetings and emergency meetings in the forthcoming GA. NESDO motivated some users to visit CFUG office to get information about major decisions. DFO didn't have much concern in this activity. Major decisions are not reached to all users, and those who have access to these decisions do not have sufficient information about them. Thus, a this big difference (a maximum difference of 17 %) in SPs' share of contribution in helping to make an easy access for users to major decisions, notices and annual programmes have made this activity relatively less effective to improve the situation of transparency. This situation lowered the present status of transparency and this is also supported by the results obtained from matrix ranking.

Accountability

Among the five major activities of SPs, which have a direct effect on accountability, AA5 i.e. facilitate in equity-based benefit sharing is found relatively more effective and has almost an equal share of SPs' contribution (i.e. FECOFUN has 36%, likewise NESDO 33% and DFO has 31%). In contrary, AA3 i.e. provide capacity building and skill development trainings/workshops to users, is found relatively less effective with comparatively more difference on share of contribution of SPs (i.e. FECOFUN has 40%; likewise NESDO 34% and DFO has 26%). This again reflects that the differences in the share of contribution of SPs have an influence on the effectiveness of their activities. This finding is also supported by the statistical analysis (high negative linear correlation coefficient, r = -0.92.

Concerning AA5, SPs have been actively involved in raising awareness on equity-based approach and convincing users (including elites) to adopt this approach. They motivated users to adopt need based distribution system in forest products and facilitated to run this system in grass-cutting land and agriculture implements. Specific criteria set by SPs for participants' selection in trainings/workshops/tours has also helped to bring equity in indirect benefits. Thus, the priority given for needy users in equity-based forest product distribution system and opportunities provided for target group to participate in programmes organized by SPs has raised the ownership feeling in them and encouraged them to better perform their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, having active involvement of all SPs in this AA5, this activity is found relatively more effective to improve the overall situation of accountability.

Concerning AA3, FECOFUN provided trainings on furniture making, agriculture implements, and the like to more users in comparision to NESDO and DFO. However, these trainees could not utilize

further their knowledge and skills as a profession. This was because they could neither launch any micro-enterprises on their own nor get any financial assistance from SPs. So the users seem to be discouraged to participate in such programmes, and as a result this activity is relatively less effective in improving accountability. Thus, the big difference (a maximum difference of 14 %) in share of contribution of SPs on conducting capacity building programmes and lack of their financial resources has made AA3 relatively less effective to improve the accountability in this CFUG.

NESDO has female animators and FECOFUN has local facilitators working in this CFUG. Social mobilisation with female motivators (Basnet 2004), local animators and resource persons (LFP 2004) and a more inclusive policy-making process (Timsina et al. 2004) are examples that are practised for the establishment of good forest governance. The women and *Dalit* facilitators are able to reach to their respective groups and help them in identifying their issues and concerns and to support them in enhancing their advocating capacity (Acharya and Gentle 2006). In the analysed Bhodkhore CFUG as well, the activities with almost an equal share of contribution of all SPs and that too with leading share of FECOFUN or NESDO, are found to be relatively more effective.

7.7 Challenges for Service Providers

Out of the total 61 respondents comprising 49 from CFUG and 12 from SPs, 42 of them expressed one or more challenges whereas the rest of them did not see any challenges beholding for SPs. Responses of similar concern are grouped under 9 different topics of challenges (see Table 6); some of them have been successfully overcome (4, 6), some still exist but in a lesser extent (1, 5, 8, 9) and some are still intensive (2, 3, 7). These challenges and the total respondents' number for each of them are presented in Table 6. Response to each of these challenges from both SPs and CFUG perspectives is graphically presented in Figure 11.

Table 6: Challenges for SPs while working towards improving the situation of CF governance

S.N.	Challenges for Service Providers	Number of Respondents
1	Making CFUG and CFUGC more accountable	13
2	Financial resource management	36
3	Time management	34
4	Developing good working environment	17
5	Leadership development in target group	18
6	Convincing rich users for effective launching of poor-focused programmes	23
7	Providing adequate technical support in forest management	25
8	Working with women and *Dalit*	18
9	Making fund management more transparent	22
10	No challenges	9
11	I do not know	10

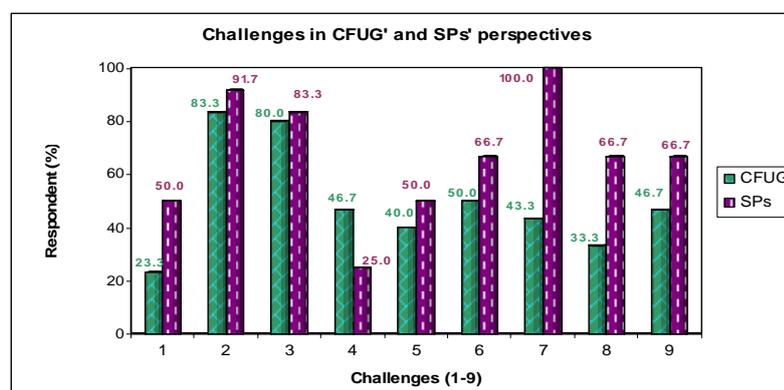*(Source: Field study 2006), (n=61)*

Figure 10: Challenges for SPs in their own and users' perspectives

(Source: Field study 2006), (n=42 of which CFUG=30 and SP=12)

Figure 10 shows that most of the respondents (> 80 %) from both the CFUG and SPs comprehend financial resource and time management (marked as 2 and 3 respectively) as challenges for SPs.

From CFUG' perspectives, all others except these two are reported as challenges by less than half of the respondents identifying at least one challenge. However, all SPs perceived providing adequate technical support in forest management (marked 7) as a major challenge for them.

7.8 Discussion of Challenges for Service Providers

Despite achievements and contribution of CF, there are many unresolved issues and challenges in all areas of capital as well as governance (Timsina 2002). Also, in the CFUG analysed in this study, since

their involvement, SPs have been facing several challenges while working towards improving the situation of governance. Convincing people to mobilize local resources for the benefit of the poor, *Dalit* and marginalized groups is difficult, and transformation of power from elites to the marginalized and poorer people is really a challenging task in CF (Maharjan et al. 2004). However, in this CFUG, difficulties in convincing rich users for effective launching of poor-focused programmes and developing good working environment have been successfully overcome now. Besides, making CFUG/C more accountable, leadership development in target group, working with women and *Dalit* and making fund management more transparent still exist as challenges but to a lesser degree. Kanel (2004) reports that making CFUG and its committee more accountable and responsive to all users including poor, women and disadvantaged groups is one of the major challenges in CF.

Providing adequate technical support in forest management, financial resource and time management are still major challenges for SPs. Acharya (2002) reports that shift to active forest management from the existing passive management system is one of the major challenges in Nepal's CF at present. Pokharel (2007) has reported that lack of technical knowledge and some policy implementation constraints have resulted in relatively 'passive' managements of forest. In the analysed Bhodkhore CFUG of this study, SPs with their limited number of staff involved for broader working area, have found quite a challenge to **provide adequate technical support to CFUG** for active management of forest. The limited capacity of the DoF for post-formation support to CFUGs has become the key constraint for the implementation and consolidation of CF (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003b).

SPs have difficulties to provide both the free-of-service together with the allowance to poor users who do not attend SPs' programmes at the expense of their daily work. With the increasing number of CFUGs in the district in recent years, the available financial resources of DFO has become insufficient to provide increasing and varied types of support as demanded by the CFUGs (Kanel and Kandel 2004). FECOFUN has also limited financial resources of its own (Timsina 2002). Moreover, CFUG itself can't provide allowance to participants in such programmes, as it does not have sufficient fund. Thus, **financial resource management** is one of the major challenges for SPs to work in this CFUG.

In the working hours (daytime) of SPs, most of the users (both farmers and service holders) can't be met. Therefore **managing the time** suitable to all users and SPs is becoming a difficult task for the latter. Ghimire (2005) reports that most of the NGOs have the scarcity of regular staff to work in CF, thus users have to wait for long time to get services from them. The poorest cannot afford to participate

and take leadership responsibility because they are not compensated for their time (Pokharel and Niraula 2004). Paudel (2003) reports that most of the poor and *Dalit* in her studied CFUGs of Parbat district are not able to attain all meetings and GAs of their CFUGs and participate in programmes organized by external organizations mainly due to time constraint; and this has not only lowered the overall leadership quality of the committees but also led to degradation of forest condition. Thus, to ensure poor people's meaningful involvement in CF process is one of the major challenges in CF of Nepal (Pokharel and Niraula 2004).

8. Summary

In 2006, a qualitative study with interviews of Members of Community Forest Users Group was carried out in Parbat district, Nepal with the objective to develop a clearer understanding of the role of service providers in Community Forestry governance.

The role of service providers in Bhodkhore CFUG is found effective in improving the situation of good governance. However, a gap is observed between the desired and actual status of governance in terms of participation, transparency and accountability. SPs have been conducting different activities in this CFUG since their involvement. NESDO is found more concerned with social sector while DFO with the technical and legal aspects of forest management. FECOFUN is almost equally concerned with both the social and technical aspects of CF management. SPs' and users' perception towards the effectiveness of the major activities conducted by SPs is different in some activities and in some they closely agree.

Statistical analysis on SPs' share of contribution to major activities and their effectiveness shows that the activities with almost an equal share of contribution of all SPs are more effective in improving the situation of good governance. Furthermore, activities with leading share of FECOFUN or NESDO are found to be relatively more effective. The effective lunching of their activities is obstructed by difficulties in financial resource management, time management and inadequate technical support in forest management, all of which are the major challenges for SPs to work with this CFUG. Though, most of respondents from CFUG and SPs considered financial resources and time management as major challenges, they had contrasting views on technical support. All SPs but nearly half of the users expressed it to be a major challenge.

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Note: The references, which are noted as undated in the reference section, are quoted with year of access in the text.

Annex 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents (CFUG)

Characteristics	Number of Respondent
1. Gender	
Female	20
Male	29
2. Ethnic Composition (Caste)	
Brahmins	22
Chhetris	10
Newars	8
Other	9
3. Age	
<40 years	16
41-60 years	27
>60 years	6
4. Primary Occupation	
Agriculture	30
Business	3
Service	10
Other	6
5. Education	
Illiterate	13
Literate	17
School Education	11
University Education	8
6. Family size	
1-4 members/HH	9
5-8 members/HH	34
>8 members/HH	6
7. Economic status	
Very Poor *(Gha)*	9 (out of 21)
Poor *(Ga)*	14 (out of 34)
Medium *(Kha)*	17 (out of 42)
Rich *(Ka)*	9 (out of 18)
8. Social status	
Presently in position	25
Not in position	24

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