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Nepal's Forestry Organization: Are they Gender Sensitive?

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Key Words: Community forestry, gender sensitive budget, gender audit, focal person, Nepal

Abstract: Nepal has adopted a participatory forest management policy for three decades. Community Forestry belongs to the key forest management practices. Equity and sustainability considerations have led the policy maker to target women and enhance their visibility in forest management. Policy has aimed at having one third of the executive member positions held by women in every participatory management unit.

This study examines the policy, working procedure, organizational culture and delivered services of the four government forestry related offices in Makwanpur district to assess the achievements as well as problems of gender mainstreaming and possible ways to make the forestry organization gender sensitive in service delivery. Participatory self assessment (Gender Audit) was conducted from August 2007 to October 2007 using the different tools including document scanning on gender debate in forestry, policy and legal provision analysis, group discussion and interviews. This study finds that the legal assurance of one third women representation in community forest executive committee has created a space towards gender equity. However, the present representation of women is limited in many cases. Three fourth of the key positions in executive committees (Chair person, secretary and treasurer) are hold by male members.

The traditional practice of gender biased social and cultural norms has also affected the organizational culture. Low level of knowledge about on gender sensitive budgeting of the officials and patriarchal thinking of male dominated forestry organizations are found major barriers in making the organizations gender sensitive.

The study concludes that three actions may make the forestry organization gender sensitive:

- a) Assignment of a gender focal person with appropriate terms of reference in every office:
- b) Development of range posts as a gender information center and
- c) Increasing the representation of women in key positions of executive committees that make most of the decisions on behalf of forest user groups.

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