

Grassroots capacity development for REDD+: Approaches and key lessons from Nepal

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Key messages

- *Using the cascade approach for capacity development on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) has been proved to be a successful way to reach out to a large number of grassroots stakeholders in a cost effective manner.*
- *Establishing collaborative arrangements with local partner organizations, including government agencies can mobilize grassroots and relevant stakeholders in understanding and planning for effective climate change mitigation strategies.*
- *Integrating of local and indigenous wisdom with scientific knowledge helps to internalize and collectively respond to the challenges of climate change.*
- *Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are multiple and go beyond subsistence use of forest resources, and therefore REDD+ capacity development efforts should also go much beyond forestry sector stakeholders.*

Context

The global discourse on climate change and REDD+ has progressed rapidly over the past years, but it has largely remained confined to international and national institutions, specifically academia, policy makers, and forestry technicians. The discourse has not yet reached the grassroots level, despite the fact that climate change and REDD+ are issues that directly affect grassroots actors¹ in several ways. Access to the global discourse on climate change, the complexity of the subject itself, and poor capacity of grassroots stakeholders to articulate their concerns and aspirations has created a disconnect between the global discourse on climate change and REDD+ and local issues, thus excluding grassroots stakeholders from the REDD+ discourse and related policy processes.

Community Based Forest Management (CBFM), particularly Community Forestry (CF), has been considered as one of the most successful and innovative models of forest management systems in Nepal. The CBFM has significantly contributed to regenerating forests, enhancing livelihood benefits and strengthening local institutions. These achievements can be attributed to the local peoples' active and meaningful engagement in managing their forests. The challenge is, therefore, how these communities can be involved in the REDD+ policy process and contribute to its successful implementation. In this context, the ability of the local

¹ Grassroots actors, referred in this brief include local communities dependent on forests for their livelihoods, such as women, indigenous peoples, Dalit, Madheshi and Muslim, local forest officials, local government officials, representatives of non-governments, civil societies, local media, and social activists groups, working with local communities.

communities to understand the scientific and economic rationale, institutional architecture, likely trade-offs and synergy between CF management and REDD+, and potential threats to their own interests are critical. It would ensure their effective participation not only in forest management but also in forest and REDD+ policy processes that ensure effective, efficient and equitable REDD+ outcomes.

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests - has been implementing a regional project on Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ in Asia since late 2009; Nepal is one of the five focal countries for the project along with Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam. The main objective of the project is to develop the capacity of grassroots stakeholders – mostly forest dependent social groups, local forest department officials, local government officials, media persons, women, children and youth, on climate change and REDD+. Through various trainings local people will be better equipped to contribute to REDD+ preparedness and be in a position to take advantage of any potential benefits from future REDD+ programs in their country.

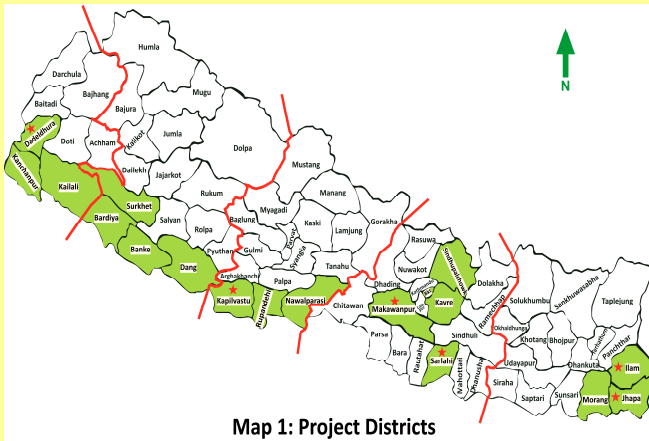
The project has implemented REDD+ capacity development activities in partnership with the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN), the Himalayan Grassroots Women's Natural Resources Management Association (HIMAWANTI) Nepal and ForestAction. The project has organized and delivered extensive capacity development activities on climate change and REDD+ in 18 districts, spread across all ecological and development regions through the partners.

The aim of this policy brief is to contribute to the ongoing climate change discourse and REDD+ preparedness process in Nepal. The brief builds on the lessons learnt from the project, particularly through the cascading down and cascading up approach of REDD+ grassroots capacity development and consultations with key stakeholders, including policy makers.

Methodology

Field visits were conducted in six out of eighteen districts to assess the effectiveness of the REDD+ capacity development activities delivered by the Grassroots project, and to document relevant lessons learnt; these districts included Dadeldhura, Kapilbastu, Makawanpur, Sarlahi, Jhapa and Ilam (See map 1). A combination of methods was used to document feedback on the capacity development approaches and strategies used by the project and identify key lessons. Participant observations, interactive discussions, focus group discussions, and semi-structured questionnaire interviews were carried out with grassroots stakeholders, officials from government and non-government organizations, civil societies and indigenous peoples organizations (IPOs), community forests user groups (CFUGs), media persons and social activists, resources persons and private sectors representatives.

In addition, ForestAction, as an independent observer, observed several of the REDD+ capacity development events, including workshops and dialogues, organized both at the national and sub-national levels, and documented the key deliberations in order to synthesize and disseminate them.



Map 1: Project Districts

The REDD+ capacity development approach

The Grassroots project employed the cascade down model for climate change and REDD+ capacity development to conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) program at national level, which included the participants from the partner organizations. The national level ToT was followed by sub-national (district) ToT with the support of selected alumni from the national level. Similarly, climate change and REDD+ training programs were delivered, along with awareness raising at community level in 18 project districts with the engagement of selected alumni from national and sub-national ToT programs.

The project has also organized climate change and REDD+ training programs specifically for women stakeholders in two districts, namely Sarlahi and Makwanpur, in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming in REDD+ capacity development. Furthermore, refresher training programs were organized to keep the alumni updated about REDD+ developments at international and national levels.

By the end of 2013, the Grassroots project had reached more than 26,000 individuals at national, sub-national and grassroots levels in Nepal. Of the total participants, 90 percent of the training beneficiaries are from the grassroots level (See figure 1); about 44 percent of the training beneficiaries are women at all levels, including 53 percent trained women at national level.

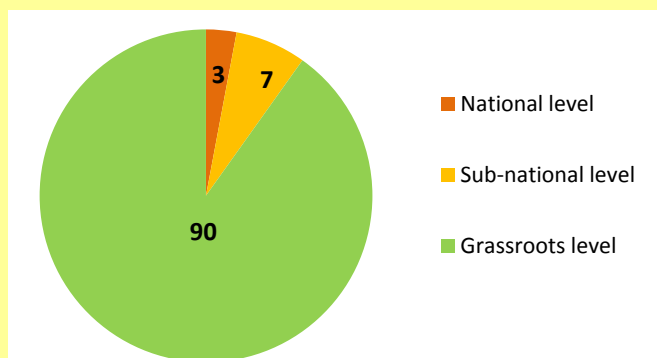


Figure 1: Percentage of training participants

Source: Progress reports of FECOFUN and HIMAWANTI, 2009-13

Climate change and REDD+ capacity development training contents

REDD+ capacity development training contents and approaches, particularly for grassroots stakeholders, are designed to be easy to understand and apprehend, particularly keeping in mind the low literacy levels among the grassroots participants. A variety of participatory tools were used to facilitate training sessions and

simplify the technical knowledge related with climate change and REDD+ (See table 1). The training package was customized for different sets of target participants. For example, the ToT programs for national and sub-national levels were organized for five days, while training sessions at sub-national level ranged from three to four days, and refresher training programs were organized for two to three days; grassroots level training and awareness programs were generally organized for one day.

Table 1: Major contents delivered in the grassroots capacity development program

Major Themes	Key contents	Delivery methods
Concept of climate change and REDD+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concept and context of climate change; difference between weather and climate; causes and impacts of climate change; experiences of local communities on climate change impacts; forest-based mitigation and adaptation approaches; role of forests in carbon cycles; concept of REDD+ and its historical developments; and sustainable forest management concept and practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> brainstorming; PowerPoint presentation; discussion; and role play
Implementation of REDD+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; forest carbon sequestration; concept of social and environmental safeguards and its mechanism; measurement, reporting and verification (MRV); REDD+ governance; and challenges and opportunities of REDD+. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group work and sharing; power-point presentation; question and answer session; fish-bowl exercise; diamond ranking; problem tree analysis; and gallery walk.
Forest carbon trading and benefits sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the market of forest carbon trading; mechanism of benefit sharing; and engagement of local, national and international organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> brainstorming; role play; PowerPoint presentation; and discussion.
Gender and Equity in REDD+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concept of gender and equity in REDD+; importance of gender and equity in NRM and role of local stakeholders in its promotion; and translating equity principles in reality - mainstreaming gender and social equity in policy and actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> brainstorming; group work; visualization; role play; and presentation.
Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in REDD+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concept of FPIC in REDD+; why FPIC is important; what are the processes and steps of FPIC; and role of community institutions to ensure FPIC in REDD+. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> brainstorming; group work; interaction; visualization; role play; and presentation.

Effectiveness of cascade approach of REDD+ training

The cascade approach of delivering climate change and REDD+ training proved very effective, as it helped in creating a cadre of in-country trainers at national and sub-national level. It also enabled the transfer of global knowledge and information on REDD+ to a large number of grassroots actors from national to the community level, in a short span of time and with optimal use of

resources. Similarly, cascade approach was used effectively to synthesize the concerns and issues of grassroots stakeholders on climate change and REDD+ and share them at national level with policy makers and other key stakeholders (See figure 2).

The cascade approach enabled the linking of issues and concerns of climate change and REDD+ between national and grassroots level and vice versa; both national and grassroots stakeholders take ownership in REDD+ knowledge sharing processes.

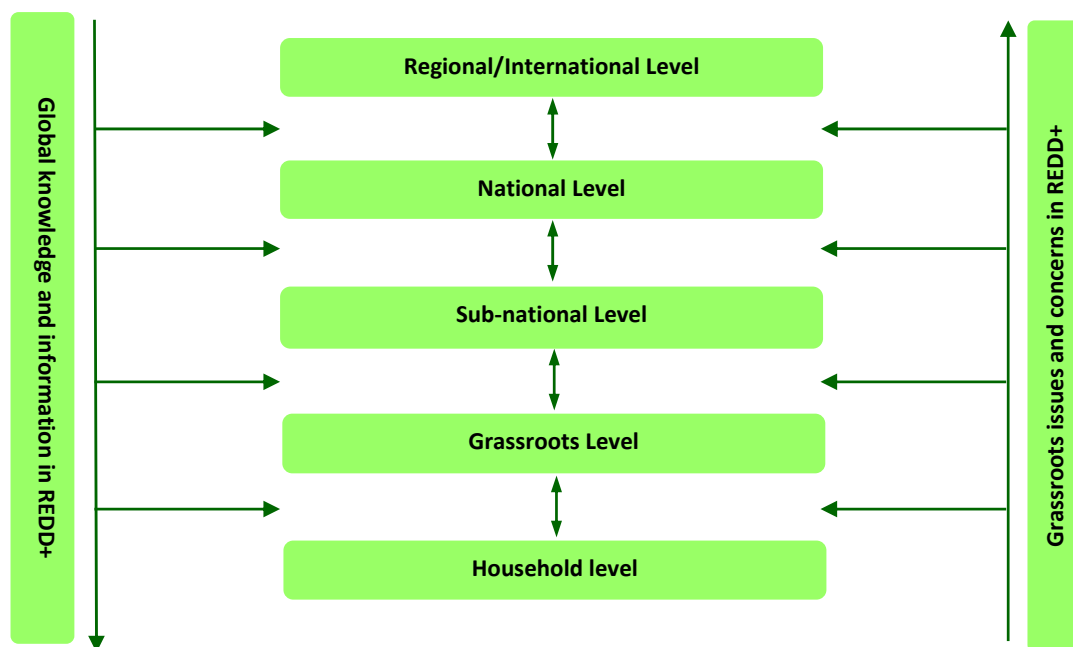


Figure 2: Cascade approach of REDD+ capacity development

Rama Paudel, HIMAWANTI, Sarlahi district says “... after REDD+ program was implemented in the district, HIMAWANTI team developed confidence to talk to other institutions for collaborative efforts to expand the REDD+ capacity development. We learnt about several new and interesting topics about climate change and REDD+ and forest policies and in turn we supported REDD+ knowledge dissemination to the grassroots and community levels...”

Source: Field Survey, 2013

REDD+ capacity development process. Additionally, both the partner organizations collaborated with district and local government agencies i.e. District Forest Office (DFO), District Agriculture Development Office (DADO), District Soil Conservation Office (DISCO), District Development Committee (DDC) and Village Development Committees (VDCs) while delivering training as well as organizing consultation programs at the district level. The project also engaged with district chapters of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) (See figure 3). These collaborative initiations have proved instrumental in adding value to the trainings and consultations in terms of their effectiveness at grassroots levels, and working together for the emerging issues and concerns of climate change and REDD+ in Nepal.

Partnership and collaborative arrangement

One of the core approaches of the Grassroots project is to build in-country partnerships at national and sub-national levels with Government, networks-based civil society and non government organizations, grassroots institutions, and research and policy analysis institution, for achieving various outputs of the project. For example, at the national level, the project collaborated with REDD-Forestry and Climate Change Cell under the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC) to design and publish trainers’ manuals on climate change and REDD+.

FECOFUN and HIMAWANTI implemented the cascading approach for capacity development on climate change and REDD+, by engaging with their respective district chapters. The partnership with HIMAWANTI also aimed to mainstream gender into the

Hom Gurung, FECOFUN, Nawalparasi district shares “...partnership with FECOFUN is an effective way of integrating global knowledge of climate change and REDD+ into the local context and build understanding accordingly, which can be disseminated at grassroots level quickly. The approaches and strategies, we are adopting, can help to reach thousands of households in a single attempt because they are the real custodian and manager of the forest since many generations...”

Source: Field Survey, 2013

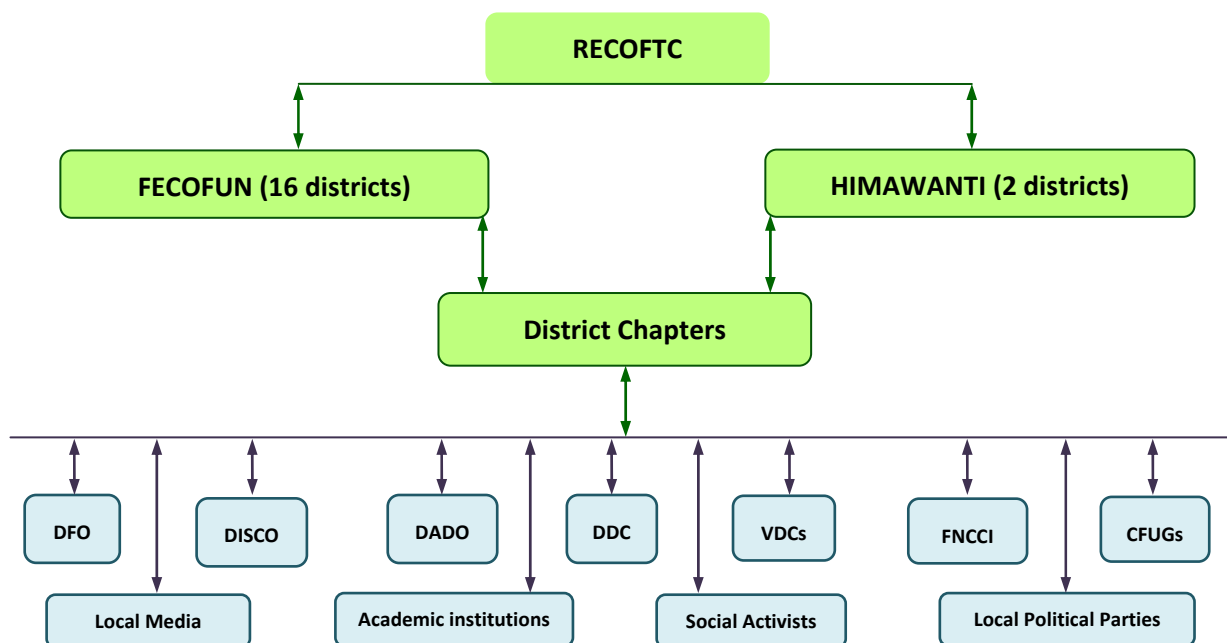


Figure 3: Partnership and collaborative approach for REDD+ awareness program

Connecting the dots

As mentioned earlier, REDD+ has evolved rapidly during the last few years at the global level, and knowledge dissemination on this mechanism has remained limited to few stakeholders, mainly at the national level. The Grassroots project has played an important role in transferring that knowledge to the local level, using innovative methods and by simplifying the knowledge sharing process. The cascade approach, building on local knowledge about forest use and management, and bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and local knowledge to share climate change and REDD+ knowledge, have proven to be crucial for the successful capacity development of multiple stakeholders. All these activities have been supplemented by the production of simple and easy-to-read communication materials, such as question and answer booklets, pamphlets, posters, radio programs, and the use of local tools including street plays, drama and songs.

Recommendations

- The cascading approach has been proven to be effective as evident in the experience of capacity development and awareness raising programs conducted in 18 districts of Nepal. The approach is complimented by an integrated feedback mechanism at all levels of the learning process, from grassroots up to the national level. Therefore, we recommend the cascade approach for conducting training and awareness campaigns on climate change and REDD+ in the remaining districts of Nepal.
- A collaborative, partnership-based approach brings all concerned rights holders and/or stakeholders to one forum to work together for climate change and REDD+ and to build a common understanding on these issues. Hence, partnership and collaborative arrangements, from grassroots to national levels, must be promoted and replicated to gain a wider outreach for any initiative that is undertaken for climate change and REDD+, which is also cost effective and time-saving.
- REDD+ capacity development should also target political leaders and key policy makers in order to ensure that

climate change and REDD+ policies and strategies adequately reflect grassroots issues and concerns.

- Despite some good progress made with regards to REDD+ capacity development in Nepal, the discussions and consultations on climate change and REDD+ have remained limited to national level and not yet, reached to the district or village level because of limited resources and lack of accessibility to new knowledge
- It is also evident that the integration of local wisdom with scientific knowledge brings common understanding and helps in simplifying the concept of REDD+, thus enhancing the understanding of grassroots stakeholders. Similar integration and collaboration must be encouraged, promoted, and adopted through cascade approach in future endeavors.

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