



RECOFTC

Community forestry models in Asia–Pacific

Pro-poor leasehold forests in Nepal

Infosheet

In Nepal, there are five types of community forestry models: buffer zone community forests, community-based conservation areas, community forests, partnership forests and pro-poor leasehold forests. In the pro-poor leasehold forest model, the government allocates an area of national forest to a group of households living on income that is below the poverty line. Pro-poor leasehold forests enable users to produce raw materials, sell forest products, practise agroforestry, raise livestock, farm insects or operate ecotourism businesses in a way that is compatible with the conservation and development of the forest. The model's legal basis is laid out in Forest Act, 2019 and Forest Regulation, 2022.

Key requirements

Who is eligible?

Under this model, the government leases areas of national forest to community members living below the poverty line who have registered as a leasehold forest users' group. The Division Forest Office may form a leasehold forest users' group, using the Human Development Index to identify people living below the poverty line. A users' group should include at least five households to be eligible to take over the forest as a leasehold forest.

2. The users' group must prepare a workplan and can receive support from technical staff appointed by the Division Forest Office.
3. The users' group then submits the workplan to the Division Forest Office for approval.
4. The Division Forest Officer provides the leasehold forest certificate to the leasehold users' group.

Allocation process

1. Interested groups of people living below the poverty line should apply at the Division Forest Office regarding their interest in forming a group and preparing a workplan, using a letter template included in Forest Regulation, 2022. When applying, there should be at least five participating households, which the Division Forest Officer can verify through the local ward office.

Main elements



Duration of tenure

- Tenure of the pro-poor leasehold forest management is ten years and is renewable.
- The Division Forest Office hands over the forest to the same group for another ten years if the group wants it and their performance has been satisfactory. For this, the Division Forest Office repeats the assessment using the Human Development Index to ensure it is handing over the leasehold forest to people living below the poverty line.
- A valid workplan is needed to harvest forest products.



Type and condition of forest

- Any part of the national forest can be handed over as a pro-poor leasehold forest.



Type and duration of work plan

- The workplan is for 10 years and is renewable (see duration of tenure).



Internal governance

- The users' group must set up a committee to oversee governance of the leasehold forest. The legal framework does not say how many members the committee must have.



Gender and social inclusion

- Using the Human Development Index, the Division Forest Office verifies and confirms whether interested groups are living in poverty.
- A leasehold forest users' group membership must include male and female household heads, who both must take part in the group's decision-making.



Community-based enterprises

- Leasehold forest users' groups must conduct income-generating activities, such as setting up forest-based microenterprises and ecotourism, under the provisions of their approved workplan.



Benefit-sharing mechanism

- In the pro-poor leasehold forest model, users do not need to share benefits with the government or any other institution.
- There is no requirement for benefit-sharing among community members. They may have their own mechanism for sharing benefits internally.
- After completing ten years of tenure and if the government sells timber from the forest, the leasehold forest users' group receives 50 percent of the total revenue.



External support

- Local governments may provide financial and technical support to help forest users form a group, prepare a workplan and implement it effectively.



Conflict-resolution mechanism

- If the Division Forest Office receives a complaint from any source about unwanted activities of a leaseholder, it will send a team to inspect the situation in the presence of the head of that leasehold forest users' group. The Division Forest Office can cancel a group's registration and take back the leasehold forest. The users' group has up to 15 days to clarify the situation in writing.



Rights and responsibilities of community members

Members have rights to:

- sustainably harvest and sell non-timber forest products according to the workplan.

Members must:

- protect the forest and ensure that the forest's quality does not decline.

Members cannot:

- transfer rights over the forest to other parties.
- block water resources or change the direction of any rivers and streams that flow inside the forest.
- clear forest areas for agriculture purposes
- build huts or houses, except those needed for security reasons and with the approval of the District Forest Officer.
- take any action that can cause soil erosion
- hunt, capture or kill wildlife in contravention of the law.

- damage the natural and physical beauty of the forest.
- obstruct the growth of plants .
- do anything that has an adverse effect on the status of wetlands.
- use poisonous chemicals that affect wetland wildlife or any wildlife or birds .
- extract soil, rock, sand, stones or establish mines of any kind.
- do anything that disturbs the social, ethnic and cultural well-being of surrounding inhabitants and their religious and cultural sites .
- disturb or create disturbances in the historical right to use roads, rivers and water resources .
- convert the surface of roads inside the leasehold forest to asphalt.

Links with climate change policies and targets

- There is no legal requirement for leasehold forest users' groups to integrate climate vulnerability, adaptation or mitigation activities into their workplan.
- Nepal's National Adaptation Programme of Action 2010 recognizes community-based forest users' groups as stakeholders managing community adaptation funds and identifying and implementing adaptation programs at the community level. Its priority actions include supporting the implementation of adaptation priorities of the forest users' groups.
- The National Climate Change Policy 2019 recognizes the past contributions of community forestry to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It aims to mobilize community organizations to manage climate-induced disasters and enhance the capacity of these organizations to mainstream climate resilience into development programs. However, the policy does not refer to the community forestry program specifically.
- Nepal's National Adaptation Plan 2021–2050 notes that forests under community-based management made up 42.7 percent of the forest areas in 2019, which indicates that these groups have an important role in mainstreaming climate adaptation into forest management plans.
- Nepal's second Nationally Determined Contribution (2020) under the Paris Agreement on climate change states, under the mitigation component, that forests with community-based management will comprise at least 60 percent of forest area by 2030 and that women will make up 50 percent of management committees, along with proportional representation of Dalits and Indigenous Peoples in key posts.

Read more

- RECOFTC, *Special Report: How community forests boosted pandemic resilience across Asia-Pacific*, www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-boosted-pandemic-resilience
- Find out more about RECOFTC's work in Nepal at www.recoftc.org/nepal



We believe in a future where people live equitably and sustainably in and beside healthy, resilient forests. We take a long-term, landscape-based and inclusive approach to supporting local communities to secure their land and resource rights, stop deforestation, find alternative livelihoods and foster gender equity. We are the only non-profit organization of our kind in Asia and the Pacific. We have more than 30 years of experience working with people and forests, and have built trusting relationships at all levels. Our influence and partnerships extend from multilateral institutions to governments, private sector and local communities. Our innovations, knowledge and initiatives enable countries to foster good forest governance, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

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