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Community forestry models in Asia–Pacific

Community-based conservation areas in Nepal

Infosheet

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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. Community-based conservation areas aim to promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources along with community development. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation has ultimate responsibility for these areas, but it delegates authority over their management to local committees representing the users of each community-based conservation area. The main legal instruments covering this model of community-based forest management are the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1972 and the Conservation Area Management Regulation, 1996.

Key requirements

Who is eligible?

People living in and around a conservation area

Allocation process

1. The Government of Nepal, through the Cabinet, will declare a conservation area based on the recommendation of the Ministry of Forests and Environment. Once the government has published the boundary of the conservation area in its gazette paper, then the declaration will enter into force.
2. When the conservation area is declared, the conservation officer, under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, sets up a conservation area management committee in every local administrative unit in the area. These units were formerly called “village development committees” but are now known as municipalities or rural municipalities and are the lowest level of local government.

Main elements



Duration of tenure

- Tenure of a community-based conservation area is five years and can be renewed by following the same process.



Type and condition of forest

- Forests within conservation areas can be managed by a local committee.



Type and duration of management plan

- The management plan is for five years.



Internal governance

- The conservation area management committee consists of the chairperson of the municipality, at least one member from each ward of the municipality and five community members chosen by the conservation officer.
- The committee members choose the chairperson and secretary and should consider women, disadvantaged group members and social workers.
- Decision-making is by majority vote and requires the participation of at least half of the committee members. In the event of an equal distribution of votes, the committee chairperson has the deciding vote. The committee secretary verifies the decision.



Gender and social inclusion

- Conservation area management committees must include women and members of minority groups.
- The conservation officer must ensure the representation of women, social workers and disadvantaged group members in the community-based conservation areas.



Community-based enterprises

- Within a conservation area, any individual can open and operate a hotel, lodge, public transport service or an enterprise selling furniture, handmade paper or ecotourism services and can collaborate with other business enterprises, after obtaining consent from the conservation officer and the conservation area management committee.



Benefit-sharing mechanism

- The conservation area management committee deposits all revenue it generates into its bank account.
- The funds are to be used for community development activities, as agreed upon by the committee.



External support

- The conservation officer provides support or organizes external support to users' groups if needed.



Conflict-resolution mechanism

- Disputes within communities are resolved by consensus, with help from the conservation area management committee. The conservation officer also helps to resolve other types of disputes.
- The conservation officer can dissolve a committee if it violates any regulations or takes any decision that is against the welfare of the users' group members or if it cannot serve as indicated in the management plan.
- The conservation officer can then form a new committee.



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Rights and responsibilities of community members

Members have rights to:

- obtain permits from the chief warden for fishing, harvesting of non-timber forest products, grazing livestock and using natural resources—the management committee sets the fees that users must pay the committee to carry out these activities
- form subcommittees to better manage their work

Members must:

- prepare a workplan for community development and the sustainable management and conservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage
- provide the chief warden with statistics, such as the data on the use of forest products, the population of the users' group and the income levels of households
- organize workshops and activities for minimizing landslides and soil erosion, conserving forest products, conserving natural resources and wildlife, environmental sanitation and for community development where a users' group is located
- follow instructions that the conservation officer requires from time to time

Members cannot:

- hunt wildlife
- cut, fell, remove, blaze or debark any forest products or forest area, unless such activities are in the management plan and approved by the conservation officer
- cause a fire or do anything that harms the status of forest products
- establish mines
- remove any minerals, stones, concrete, soil and so on
- harm wildlife, birds or public areas
- use poison or weapons inside the conservation area
- use electrical currents in rivers and other water resources inside the conservation area
- land a helicopter or any other type of aircraft in the conservation area
- damage public roads, bridges, houses, offices, fences, marks or signals

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.
- The Protected Area Management Strategy 2022–2030 mentions that the protected area authority will generate information on climatic variables, climate change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities for integration into the management of protected areas. In particular, it will:
 - Collaborate with academic and research institutions and conservation partners
 - Develop climate-smart species conservation action plans
 - Conduct periodic carbon inventory and designate carbon-neutral protected areas

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.

RECOFTC


P.O. Box 1111
Kasetsart Post Office
Bangkok 10903, Thailand
T +66 (0)2 940 5700
F +66 (0)2 561 4880
info@recoftc.org



@RECOFTC

recoftc.org

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