

Project Update: May 2016

Background

This project promotes awareness of agroforestry practices in farm, degraded and unused land for livelihood improvement of local farmers and biodiversity conservation. In the early phase of the project the formation and institutionalisation of different committees and groups is being focused and implemented to enhance the collective action for the sustainable implementation of the project activities. Similarly, the awareness and preparedness of community forest user groups has been continuously raised through different meetings and discussion. The identification of suitable place, appropriate time and species selection for developing demonstration plot and revitalisation of farmers groups are other activities under progress. The following description provides the clear picture on the progress and early outcomes of the project.



Accomplished Activities and Its Status

- **Formation of program management committees (PMCs)**

Program Management Committee has been formed from the existing executive committee of both Community Forest User Group (Dipdole Etapu and Balkumari Women Community Forest User Group). It consists of 11 members representing Dalit, marginalized, poor, women and elites from each hamlet.



The committee was oriented about project activities, objectives and expected outcomes. Each month committee discussion on the ongoing activities, reflect on the progress and plan for further activities. Recently the PMC formed the six member demo-plot management sub-committee for the establishment and management of demo plot in both CFUGs.

Figure 1: PMC meeting in Balkumari Women CFUG

- **Revival of small farmer groups (SFGs):**

Small farmers groups has been revived and formed in each hamlet (four in Dipdole Etapu and five in Balkumari CFUG) and conducted training and series of bilateral and multilateral discussion on their existing understanding and practices on agroforestry. Similarly, the gaps were identified during the discussion (training) followed by future plans.



During training about 60 users participated and actively involved in the discussion process.

During the discussion the users raised following queries.

Figure 2: Playing participatory games during training

1. What are the suitable varieties of fruit and fodder trees that can be planted in degraded land and in crop field?
2. What are the techniques to plant mixed crops?
3. Planting mixed crops and trees in same farm may decrease the productive of annual crops they are planting for daily food need.
4. Fruits trees in the crop field may increase the number of birds that destroy both crops.
5. How and what technical support we get from district forest and agriculture office.
6. Are there any other stakeholders that help small farmers and CFUGs to promote agroforestry?



Figure 3: Monthly discussion amongst the committee members

Establishment of demo plots:

The demo plot management committee has been formed and researchers discussed with the committee on the established process of demo plot. For the identification of suitable plot transect survey was carried out in the forest. The barren forest land is identified for demo plot. Similarly, the species like Tejpat (*Cinnamomum tamala*), Timur (*Zanthoxylum alatum*) and Elaechi (*Elettaria cardamomum*) were identified as a suitable species with some fruit and fodder species. The committee will carry out assessment of quality and quantity of species needed for demo plot with other essential materials with the help of researchers. The plot will be established at the mid of June (after monsoon starts).



Figure 4: Degraded forest area identified for demo plot establishment

Similarly, continuous consultation and bilateral discussion with district stakeholders like forest and agriculture officers has been carried out to get technical and administrative assistance and as a moral encouragement for users. Moreover the documentation of each process and activities has been maintained.

Activities under plan:

- Visit to some agroforestry plots in early June.
- Demo plot establishment in mid of June.
- School program and radio program July (30 minutes radio program on agroforestry importance and project progress).
- Dissemination through Poster and pamphlets and hoarding boarding.

Challenges

- It is always difficult to fulfill the increasing expectation of users towards project benefits.
- Increasing concern of users in reconstruction in Kavre somehow slow down the users participation and shifted the priority of district stakeholders.

Early outcomes

- All users agreed to plant at least 10 fodder and fruit species in and around their home and crop field.

- Formation of PMC and sub-committees for demo plot management has enhanced the sense of ownership among the farmers.
- Realizations of importance and gaps in agroforestry practice, (both in EC and Users/farmers).

Lesson learned

- Participatory action research (PAR) is quite helpful in introducing reflective learning process within users, between them and amongst the CFUGs and stakeholders. However, there needs a competent and committed facilitators to properly drive the whole process, drag key leaders in the process and attract attention of authorities and support agencies. Therefore, knowledge, skill and attitude of facilitators is critical to the success or failure of PAR process in bringing about desired changes in society.