

Process Documentation:

CFR Documentation and Management Planning: Vasundhara

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Introduction

This project primarily pertains to a deeper understanding of community forest resource management after integrating Tenurial rights and ownership entities. The project was

initiated in the CFR areas of the Ranpur block. Ranpur block of Nayagarh district in Odisha is a heavily forested area containing various groups of forest-dwelling communities, primarily of the tropical deciduous forest type. These forests are unevenly aged, natural forests heavily populated with indigenous plants and creepers. The ground cover is high for these forests, making these rich resources of forest foods like tubers, nuts, stems, and medicinal plants. Recently, 24 villages constituted of 14 committees have presented their CFR/CR titles under the FRA act. Most of these villages have a history of conserving and protecting the forest lands due to various dependent and mutualistic benefits. These titles help preserve their cultural identities and traditional knowledge systems for many Adivasi communities. Different user groups have been identified in the detailed documentation process. The documentation has been done for the following villages/hamlets for the next user groups:

Village Name	Historical Documentation	User Group Identification	Village Profiling	Resource Mapping	Current Status	Problem Analysis	Needs to Assessment	Rules and Regulation
Dasa Mauza	✓	✓					✓	✓
Sinduria and Kodalapalli	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gundurabari	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hatibari and surkabadi		✓		✓				✓

Methodology

Phase 1:

Historical Documentation

In the first phase of the program, our idea was to primarily document the traditional methods of forest conservation that have been practiced amongst various user groups of forest-dependent communities. We Specifically aimed at reaching descriptive objectives through recollection method interaction with community members of each village:

1. Understanding the different adaptive methods that have been used so that we can gain some clarity about the various changes that have occurred in the past century, including biogeographical changes pertaining to natural resources, ecological changes pertaining to landscape, and political changes pertaining to society and culture.
2. Have a deeper understanding of needs-based consumption of natural resources, changes in resource need over time, and community needs over time.
3. Understand the effects of the colonial allocation of forest resources in the past centuries the need for rights-based conservation as an alternative to funds-based and protected area-based conservation of natural resources.
4. Significance of traditional conservation methodologies that sustainably allocate resources and needs instead of militarizing resources and rationing them for needs by non-user group bodies.
5. Traditional conservation and culture- changes over time.
6. Various traditional Rules, regulations, and preservation techniques are available in the communities that similar user groups can use under distress.



Image: Historical Documentation in discussion with village elders.

Data Collection Methodologies used:

Individual discussion

Individual interviews have been one of the most resourceful methods for the collection of historical data through the recollection method. We had targetted older people of the community, who can give us clarity about the naming of the place, some cultural and political history, and how it all connected to today.

Focus Group discussion (small groups)

Focus Groups were formed of the following broad categories of people in each village:

1. Women (young, married into the village): Young married women have been observed to be very proactive in all selected Adivasi villages, taking on duties and roles as the village customs are. Most young married women inherit the knowledge about forests from their in-law homes, where they are in constant conversation with the village elders. Most knowledge about NTFP collection, forest areas, issues, and protective mechanisms is shared. Among these women, we can often see women village influencers and potential influencers from this women section. Most of the women who are seen to be very proactive belong to the rich/wealthy category in the wealth index, which often points to the time value of money. We encourage such participation as it increases the participation of the more silent minority. This is possible because smaller villages have a better collective understanding than larger villages. In the context of larger villages, we see an often stricter and more formalized system, including higher caste males as leaders and influencers of the congregation (in the case of village congregations like Dasa Mauza)Women (young, unmarried): Young unmarried women are excluded from the villages' non-cultural collective activities like committees, SHGs, and forest protection. The narrative remains that these women will be soon married off and will eventually adapt the cultural associations and customs of the in-law houses and take on roles and responsibilities as per that requirement. This is broadly a patriarchal and patrilocal narrative but has been observed to be present even in areas with high degrees of women participation. These women can often give an alternative perspective to understanding patriarchal values and identify the need to alter this dynamic progressively.
2. Women (old): Older women, can give a clear perspective about the various kinds of data important to understanding the development and growth of forests ecosystems in and around the villages. They can give insight into the changing and altering climates, the lack and need of NTFPs, the changes in their nutritional and

dietary intakes, political and social changes accompanying geological changes, etc. These focus group interactions have been extremely significant in forming an interactive and functional forest conservation committee, a robust plan, and productive expectations for the particular villages.

3. Men (young, working): Young working men can often give a perspective on the current socio-economic issues, and the ongoing political pressures coming from various directions. It is important to note, young working men are often unavailable during work hours, and extremely spent after a day of work, so it is often difficult to conduct discussions with this particular group. We opt for having such discussions on evenings/nights, alongside the Gram Sabha, so that they can contribute to the discussion constructively, without being hassled, and without feeling embarrassed.
4. Men/women (young, agriculturists/entrepreneurs): Young businessmen/women, or smallholding farmer groups are important focus groups to understand the seasonal economic changes in the village, which is (in the case of NTFP dependent/ Adivasi villages) quite dependent on the bio-geo cycles of many species/trees. It also gives a perspective on the income potentials related to NTFP marketing and the amount of interest the residents of the village take in systematic agriculture or entrepreneurship ventures.
5. Men (old): Older men of the village are another very important focus group, who can often give a robust historical account of the village. This is especially important, in order to understand the Adivasi heritage of Adivasi villages, the political struggles of marginalized groups, and the origin story of the village. In traditional villages, the village elders are also people who are highly admired for their experience and gave a certain amount of influence in the village, and can be of great support when it comes to raising awareness about a certain issue.



Image: Group Discussion with the women members of Surkabari-Dasamauza



Image: Discussion with young kids about their relationship with the forest ecosystems

Rules and Regulation Description

After the distribution of 14 titles to 24 villages of Nayagr, we conducted a drive, in which we have documented the rules and regulations of forest protection and governance in 14 Gram Sabhas, among which many consists of a congregation of 2 or more villages, that have collectively protected the same piece of forest land. Most of these multiple village forest protection and conservation committees have a history of patrolling and conserving forest areas for over 3 decades. The documentation of these rules and regulations has been uploaded to the drive.

We have conducted several video series with some of these villages too, the compilation of which is uploaded in the drive.

Issues

These issues were primarily faced in Phase 1, which contributed to the second phase of the project. The issues are as follows:

- Traditional rules and regulation documentation through the recollection method needed to be more thorough and thought-provoking in order to generate newer ideas from the communities for the sustainable development of the forest and its people
- There was a need for people to identify the gaps and potentials in their own lands, and relink their rules/regulations, cultural identities with their forest land, in order to rediscover the relationship with their lands and address the gaps in the institutions established by them.
- In many areas, the cultural disintegration has entirely dismantled the cultural identities of Adivasis/forest dwellers, thus dissolving the passion for forest preservation amongst the youth.

Thus, a deeper understanding and analysis was needed in order for the Gram Sabhas to have collectively come up with Management plans, that can really help them address the current issues being faced, and further contribute to the livelihood and income generation of forest-dwelling communities

Phase 2:

Gram Sabha Discussion

We approached Phase 2, with bringing all the focus groups together, to have a conversation, sort out any socio-political issues (if any) and really clarify their need of the degree of formalization and structure they would desire in their forest conservation and protection planning.

Phase 2 has been initiated in three areas:

1. Gundurabari
2. Kodalpalli and Sinduria
3. Hatibari and Surkabari

Thus in each area, we requested the village leaders to arrange for a Preliminary Gram Sabha discussion, which can be a conversation started of ' How Should we approach forest conservation and protection currently'. Vasundhara fundamentally only facilitated these conversations by

- Training for attendance keeping
- Training for MoM
- Conducting the discussion in case of conflicts
- Helping identify issues that have been concurrent in these areas
- Identify their relationship and dependency with forest resources

Data Collection Methodologies used

User group discussion

After the Gram Sabha discussions, various user groups were identified and approached, in order to form a clearer understanding of the current degrees of dependency and the future of dependency on forest resources. Various user groups were identified in the three areas:

1. Groups with partial dependency on NTFP
2. Groups with full dependency on grasslands and grazing lands for livestock rearing
3. Groups with partial dependency on livestock raising
4. Groups with partial dependency on agriculture and labor work (low dependency on NTFP)
5. Groups with high dependence on agriculture (high dependency on water resources of the forest and other bio-geo cycles)
6. Groups with dependence on firewood from the forest
7. Groups with a sense of pride and glory for their forest

Marginalized group discussion

For Socio-politically marginalized groups like the of Dalits in Hatibari, it has been a constant struggle to establish themselves as people who are heavily dependent on forest resources, and also marginalized labor. These groups (especially the Dalits) lived in general/mixed villages, where they have been historically located in these areas as cheap labor providing groups. Thus, their dignity is still an everyday issue that they struggle with, resulting in hidden agendas by institutions, false pretenses of equity, and layered discrimination. Thus, the understanding of these communities can only come from exclusive separate discussions with them.

Transect Walk and Resource Mapping

We have conducted transect walks across these above-mentioned areas in order to identify forest patches and come up with appropriate resource maps that can help map the resources and they're potential even better. This also stays as a historical account of the current status of the forest, for future references of monitoring and evaluation by the communities. The resource maps contain the following information:

Resource map Contents:

- Reserve Forest
- Revenue Forest
- Local name of forest
- Areas with less dense forests
- Areas with more dense forests
- Areas with even-aged forests of a specific kind
- Plantations
- Food Gardens
- Streams
- Ponds
- Dams (functional/ non-functional)
- Private plots
- Areas rich in Economically important MFP
- Areas rich in food prioritized MFP
- Sacred Groves
- Waste Lands

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- Cattle Grazing Line
 - Other important areas as per the community



Image: Transect Walk and Resource Mapping Exercise in Kodalpalli-Sinduria



Image: Resource Mapping with young kids engagement

Current Status

The current status analysis of the given landscape from its forest resources, to its dependent people, has been established to be a primary step in order for the Gram Sabha to have consolidated information before suggesting any changes in the status quo. It is also possible that the changes be fully institutional, fully programmatic, or maintenance of the status quo. Thus it helps understand the current potential; and further evaluate the future potential for business, conservation, and cultural preservation of the given circumstances. The format for recording the current status of a given site as used in the ongoing project is given below

1. Basic Amenities and Facilities:

Road	
Water	
Electricity	
Animal Shelters	
School	
Toilets	
Burial Grounds	
Play Grounds	

Community Harvesting Grounds	
Common Function Area	
Skill Development Centres	
Village Tank	
Dam	
Medical Facility	
Women and Child Care	

2. Socio-Economic Profile of the village

- How many are landless
- How many people are entirely dependent on their forests
- How many people have access to phones
- How many houses have LPG connections
- How many SHG

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- How many people are BPL

3. Various Institutions in the village

4. Various schemes are currently available

5. Sources of Livelihoods·

6. How do you describe your forests

Needs Assessment

Firewood	
Grass for Grazing of animals	
Timber for house repair	
Tendu Patta	
Bamboo	
Mohua Flowers	

Timber for coupe felling	
Cashew	
Food species	
Medicine Species	
Others:	

Problem Analysis

Extraction by Neighbours	
Illegal Timber Felling	
Hunting and Poaching	
Uncontrolled Grazing	
Fire setting	
Coupe Felling by FD	

NTFP stealing	
Threat of Mining	
Degraded Forests	
Soil Erosion	
Loss of Economically important species	
Loss of Nutritionally important species	
Invasive Species in Forest	
Wildlife Conflict	
Anything Else	



Image: Gram Sabha discussion on current status, needs assessment and problem analysis at Kodalpalli and Sinduria



Image: Problem analysis at Gundurabari, with conflict arising from stone chip crusher machine installation near the forest entrance.

Management plan

A Sample Management Plan developed in this model is given below:

Gram Sabha CFM Planning

Term of Plan: 1 Year

Phase 1- Institutional Issues Redressal

Institutional Strengthening	<p>Primary Issue with this village. The Protection and Management committee is proactive and functional, but not very formalized. Nonetheless, women's participation is high.</p> <p>For strengthening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings need to be more regularised• Management Plan has to be constituted and followed• Increased effective participation is needed.• Documents have to be kept securely• Every year committee members can be revised (or relooked at)• Monitoring representative is the link between the CFR-MC and Village General Assembly (Gram Sabha)
Mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More Youth need to be involved• More awareness about the potential of NTFP business

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness about logging and harvesting operations (which the villagers are unsure of, and thus, never utilize any bamboo or other trees for commercial utilization)
Functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CFR-MC in Gundurabari can be made more functional, institutionally i.e, regularly update the Gram Sabha, conduct awareness programs, etc, and can also be an example in setting up a very effective and efficient management system.
Record-Keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the records, important documents and incidents should be recorded and kept. (for example, in January 2022, some timber mafia cut down 13 Teak trees from inside Gundurabari. The teak wood was left there before they could transfer it without getting caught. In these situations, it is important to collect pictures and keep them with the designated person of CFR-MC (secretary) so that at any time, evidence can be produced. A lot of people have smartphones, thus this can be a very efficient way of record-keeping). • The secretary has been handed over the responsibility of record keeping.
Monitoring Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Representative has been selected to redress the issue of communication between Gram Sabha and the CFR-MC. • This position can also give us a picture of how the process of institutional strengthening was brought about in a year's time, and help the GS manage adaptively.

Youth Involvement and Gender Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Young people should be involved in the process of management and protection. • More unmarried but educated girls (daughters) should be involved, as they often don't feel like they're a part of the process. • More proactive involvement of men in programmatic issues can help share the burden of women when it comes to hard labor for protecting and conserving the forest.
Funds	<p>There are no sources of funds except for internal fundraising in case of any urgent requirement.</p> <p>The Gram Sabha has to come to an agreement on what funds it needs, and how it'll use them. Currently, they have decided, in the one-year plan, they won't require funds to support them but will require external support of schemes to carry out activities</p>

Phase 2: Programmatic Issues Redressal

Programmatic Intervention	
Wasteland Management	Baidhara - 3-4 acres of land for Mango Orchard Plantation Rathapada - 4 acres of land for Panasa Plantation
Grassland Management	Grassland- grazing limitation to

	Ramokhola Kaluchua Khola Dharia Mundiya
Protected Area management	Declared Protected Area: Baratangaratala (8-10 acres approx) Ostotoila (2-3 acres approx) Sambaratapa (5 acres approx) Dalaka- (5 acres approx)
Wildlife Management	Total Prohibition of any hunting or poaching activity Strict Patrolling against hunters and poachers Perrenial Sources of water streams kept exclusively for wildlife and village drinking purposes- (no irrigation water to be used from it) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bolangi Nala - Abowa Jharna - Denga Nala - Boro Dhora
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strict Thengapalli (ongoing) with CFR-MC monitoring - In case someone doesn't want to participate in Thengapalli, a CFR-MC meeting will be conducted - Currently, everyone is willing to participate in thengapalli without payment, if that changes in the future, the CFR-MC will sit and discuss the possibility of a paid position for forest patrolling. - The funds will be raised for amongst the village.
Polythene Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plaquards and posters at areas prone to pollution ● ● No drinking and littering posters in popular picnic spots (kaluasandho) ● ● If anyone is caught littering by the palias, they will be asked to clean the area and leave immediately

Phase 3: Long Term Plans

<p>Coupe Felling Plan</p>	<p>Some people have suggested the possibility of harvesting bamboo in the forest, but most people did not agree or have not commented, thus the decision remains uncertain</p>
<p>Plantations Plan</p>	<p>Long term full-grown tree plantation (growth period 9-20 years)</p> <p>Site Selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baidhara (3-4 acres) - Rathapada (4 acres) <p>Type of Plantation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix Plantation for both areas - Mango and Panasa tree plantation <p>Site Preparation in quarter 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearing the floor for plantation - Ensuring the area gets enough sunlight - Burning garbages and slashing unwanted shrubs <p>Soil Tillage and plantation in quarter 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hoeing and digging the soil - Discarding and burning stumps - Distancing the plantation drive - Plantation of mango and panasa in their traditional method <p>Post plantation: quarter 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fire protection by fire lines - Monitoring by monitoring representative for the survival rate of plantlings and saplings. <p>Further Planning Adaptively.</p> <p>Support Required:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MNREGA for the labor - Native Seed Procurement from the various agencies/another village
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Yearwise Planning:

Year 1	Institutional	Programmatic
1st Quarter-Meeting 1-Summer	<p>Record-Keeping by the Secretary of the Committee.</p> <p>She has the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All resolutions in place - List of rules and regulations in place - List of posters in place 	<p>Thengapalli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The president oversees the forest patrolling systems - Resolves various issues arising for Palia Badal, etc. - Decide on the possibility of a paid system for village patrolling
	<p>Meeting Attendance/ Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President overlooks the timely conducting and the full participation of CFR-MC 	<p>Limiting Grazing Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patrolling system ensures that the grazing area allocation is completed - Ensures that the rules are maintained. - Grazing Area declared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ramakhola <input type="checkbox"/> Kaluchuakhola <input type="checkbox"/> Dhariya Mundiya
	<p>Funds Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President discusses the other sources of funding that are available for sustainable forest resource management - Decision that no funds are needed at the moment, but service support is needed 	<p>Protection Patches</p> <p>→ The CFR-MC declares the following areas as protected areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Baratangaratala <input type="checkbox"/> Astotoila <input type="checkbox"/> Sambaratapa <input type="checkbox"/> Dalaka

	for labor activities via MNREGA	
	<p>List of Services needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MNREGA ● Gramin Swach Bharath Mission (Completion of Toilet building activity) ● PMGAY ● PMGSY ● PMAGY 	Plantation Patches Identification Plantation Species Selection (Mango and Panasa)
	CFR-MC Functionality, meeting, and monitoring mechanisms review. (by the president, the monitoring representative, and the village pradhan)	Fire Protection
		NTFP Plan (1)
Monitoring Report	Monitoring Representative Selection (Loru Kishore Pradhan)	Submission of Monitoring Report to Gram Sabha
2nd Quarter-Monsoon-Meeting 2	Monitoring Report Review in Meeting	Plantation Activity (1)
	Participation of all user groups	
	Functionality Reporting	Protection of agricultural land from wild animals by Palli
	Participation Mobilisation	NTFP Marketing Plan (2)
		Review if water streams inside the forest have dried up or not. (if yes then Plan Waterhole)
Monitoring Report	Monitoring Report Preparation	Submission of Monitoring Report to Gram Sabha

3rd Quarter- Winter- Meeting 3		
	Review of Monitoring Report	Completing anything that is not completed in phase 1 or 2
	Revision of records	
	Meeting with Gram Sabha and updation of yearly activities	
	Further planning	Plantation Activity 2
		NTFP Marketing Plan (3)- ready to launch in next NTFP season
Monitoring Report	Prepared by representative	Submitted to Gram Sabha

New Committee List 2022, Roles and Responsibility:

Name	Caste	Gender	Role	Responsibility
Chetta Pradhan	ST	F	President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presiding over meetings - Maintaining participation and decorum - Conducting and scheduling meetings - Conflict Resolution - Gram Sabha discussion
Kausalya Pradhan	ST	F	Cashier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintaining Financial Records ● Discussion for raising Funds ● Funds Management

Chettalata Pradhan	ST	F	Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance of written records, meeting timings, meeting participants, etc. - Keeping all important documents (Resolution, CFR Title, Committee List, Planning)
Chatteini Pradhan	ST	F	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives.
Laxmi Pradhan	ST	F	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Janha Pradhan	ST	F	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying Representativematic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Shanti Pradhan	ST	F	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Kama Pradhan	ST	F	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Nityananda Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Subhash Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Guman Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Manoranjan Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Duryodhan Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives
Loru Kishore Pradhan	ST	M	Monitoring Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase-wise plan review every quarter • Progress and success documentation (one-liners, photos, activity in Oriya) • Submitting the reports to Gram Sabha after every quarter • End of the year progress report compilation for further planning
Arjuna Pradhan	ST	M	Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the programmatic functions if the committee • Discussing issues, participating in meetings and having meaningful inputs from various perspectives

Issues

- Limited time, loss of working hours, need for formalisation, lack of Institutional and technical know-how

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- Extensive working hours for women, overburdened with the workload of income, chores and meetings
 - Fragmented landscapes, conflicted territory, dispersing wildlife and impacts of climate change
 - Related to Odisha, which has led to a lot of primary research
 - Limited Human resource for CFM programme, with limited funds flowing in for post right's recognition processes

Discussion

This process has been following the approach of action research and analytical model building. Thus, most of the process is done adaptively, dynamically changing as the diverse communities and landscapes are taken into consideration. This document can serve as a guiding material for future documentation and planning facilitation in various areas that have formalized/informalized forest protection and conservation groups present,

With several titles lined up to be distributed in Nayagarh, CFR, and CR rights recognition has seen a new light. Good governance, management frameworks, and sustainable silvicultural operations have been a part of the process for these communities. Still, most of it has stayed verbal instead of well-formulated and defined in various languages. This has created multiple information silos and even conflicts amongst the government agencies and the communities. Vasundhara has advocated

for the rights-based approach for almost three decades now. At present when it has been established in well-researched literature that this approach can be the best alternative to the current global strategies, we intend to facilitate and support communities to claim their rights, govern their lands, manage their resources, and take ownership of what they have been denied for centuries. Participation and engagement of communities inside formal processes, with well-formulated management frameworks and robust institutional mechanisms can bring their efforts to light and help recognize the benefits of community-led forest management. This will take time as a part of a developmental process where there is a need to increase equitable social and gender participation in communities and increase primary stakeholder engagement at the policy level.