



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PARTICIPATION OF FOREST USERS' COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN
COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE
MIDHILLS OF NEPAL**

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Participation of Forest Users' Committee Members in
Community Forestry Activities in the
Midhills of Nepal

By

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Dedicated to my mother, Hari Priya



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABSTRACT	xi
ABSTRAK	xiv
 CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Country Background	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Objectives	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Scope of the Study	8
Limitation of the Study	9
Definition of Terms	9
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	12
Forest Management Approaches	12
Participation	20
Participation in Forest Management	23
Leadership in Forest Management	27
Theories Related to Participation	34
Factors Related to Participation	39



Conceptual Framework	54
III METHODOLOGY	56
Location of the Study	56
Sampling Procedure	57
Development of the Interview Schedule	60
Pretesting of the Interview Schedule	61
Operational Definition of Dependent Variable	61
Operational Definition of Independent Variables	67
Data Collection	74
Data Analysis.....	75
IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	78
Formation of Forest Users' Committees	78
Description of Respondents' Characteristics	84
Perception, Awareness and Attitude of Forest Users' Committee Members	93
Participation	104
Association between Selected Independent Variables and Participation	110
V SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	118
Bibliography	133
APPENDIX A (Questionnaire)	141
APPENDIX B (Tables)	158
VITA	170



LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Distribution of Forest Users' Committees by District and Village Panchayats	58
2	Distribution of Respondents by Forest Users' Committees	59
3	Formation of Forest Users' Committees.....	83
4	Distribution of Respondents' Caste/Ethnic Groups by Panchayats.....	84
5	Distribution of Caste/Ethnic Groups by Forest Users' Committees	85
6	Distribution of Respondents by Age and Position in Forest Users' Committees.....	86
7	Distribution of Respondents by Length of Membership in Forest Users' Committees	87
8	Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education and Source of Income.....	89
9	Distribution of Respondents by Land Size and Family Size	91
10	Distribution of Respondents by Land Size and Number of Dependants	91
11	Distribution of Respondents by Types of Trainings Attended	92
12	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Perception of Roles and Functions of Forest Users' Committees	94
13	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Perception of Problems due to Deforestation.....	95
14	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Perception of Problems of Forest Management	96



15	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Awareness of Roles and Functions of the Change Agency.....	97
16	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on the Attitude towards Forest Users' Committees	98
17	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Attitude towards Change Agents	99
18	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Attitude towards Community Forestry	100
19	Distribution of Respondents by Political Affiliation	101
20	Distribution of Respondents by their Affiliation towards Organizations	101
21	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Cosmopolitaness	102
22	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Sociability	103
23	Distribution of Respondents by their Contacts with Change Agents	104
24	Distribution of Respondents by Extent of Participation in Decision Making	105
25	Distribution of Respondents by Extent of Participation in Resource Mobilization	106
26	Distribution of Respondents by Extent of Participation in Implementation	108
27	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Overall Participation.....	109
28	Association between Selected Independent Variables and Participation	115
29	Summary of the Result of Stepwise Regression Analysis	117



30	Distribution of Respondents According to the Perception of the Roles and Functions of Forest Users' Committees	159
31	Distribution of Respondents According to the Perception of the Problems Due to Deforestation	160
32	Distribution of Respondents According to the Perception of the Problems of Forest Management	160
33	Distribution of Respondents According to Awareness of the Roles and Functions of Forest Office	161
34	Distribution of Respondents According to the Attitude towards Forest Users' Committees	162
35	Distribution of Respondents According to the Attitude towards Change Agents	164
36	Distribution of Respondents According to the Attitude towards Community Forestry	165
37	Distribution of Respondents According to Cosmopolitaness	166
38	Distribution of Respondents According to Sociability	167
39	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Participation in Decision Making	168
40	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Participation in Resource Mobilization	168
41	Distribution of Respondents by their Scores on Participation in Implementation	168
42	Result of Reliability Test	169



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	A Theory of Willingness to Participate	38
2	Conceptual Framework Showing Dependent and Independent Variables of the Study	55



Abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti
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Participation of Forest Users' Committee Members in
Community Forestry Activities in the
Midhills of Nepal

by

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The objectives of this study were to determine: (i) forest
Users' Committee (FUC) formation process; (ii) the level of
participation of Forest Users' Committee members; and (iii)
association of personal, cognitive, attitudinal and situational
factors with the level of participation.

Altogether 105 respondents were selected using a simple
random sampling technique from 16 committees in Lamjung and
Dolakha Districts. Data were collected by means of personal
interviews. Data were analysed using computer sub-programmes of
the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS PC+).



The findings revealed:

members were among the elites in the Nepalese rural social system; (ii) some committees were formed under the initiation of villagers while some were induced by the forest office; (iii) the overall level of participation was low; 40 percent of the respondents were non-participants; 22 percent, 21 percent and 17 percent of them were low, medium and high participants respectively. (iv) The following factors were found to be significantly related with the level of participation: level of education ($r=.42$), trainings attended ($C=.28$), source of income ($C=.33$), perception of the roles and functions of Forest Users' Committees ($r=.62$), awareness about roles and functions of the change agency ($r=.58$), perception of problems ($r=.48$), attitude towards Forest Users' Committee ($r=.76$), sociability ($r=.66$), cosmopolitaness ($r=.53$), extension contact ($r=.42$) and political affiliation ($r=.47$).

Among eighteen variables, only six variables were the important predictors of the FUC members' level of participation. The most important predictor was the attitude towards FUC. The other predictors of the FUC members' level of participation were: Sociability, Awareness about the roles and functions of change agency, perception of the problems, political affiliation, and perception of the roles and functions of FUC.



The study recommended that the indigenous committees (if in existence) should be strengthened. Further, the formal committees should only be formed with the full consultation of the users. The Forest Users' Committees should be given legal status and that the procedure for its formation, its duties, functions and legal authority should be well defined. Also, the extension programme should be aimed at helping users to help themselves, facilitating a two-way flow of information between foresters and users, and working with the users rather than for the users.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Pertanian Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

Penglibatan Ahli Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan
Dalam Aktiviti Perhutanan Masyarakat di
Kawasan Pertengahan Bukit, Nepal

oleh

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May 1990

Ketua Penyalia : Dr. Bahari Yatim

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Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk menentukan: (i) proses pembentukan Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan (JPH); (ii) tahap penglibatan ahli Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan; dan (iii) perkaitan peribadi, kognitif, sikap dan faktor situasi dengan tahap penglibatan.

Sejumlah 105 orang responden dari 16 buah jawatankuasa di daerah Lamjung dan Dolakha telah dipilih dengan menggunakan kaedah persampelan rawak yang mudah. Analisis data telah dibuat dengan menggunakan "Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS PC+)" komputer sub-program.



Hasil kajian menunjukkan: (i) ahli Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan adalah terdiri daripada kumpulan elit di kalangan sistem sosial luarbandar Nepal; (ii) beberapa jawatankuasa ditubuhkan di bawah inisiatif penduduk manakala yang lainnya oleh pegawai perhutanan; (iii) tahap penglibatan secara keseluruhannya adalah rendah; 40 peratus daripada responden tidak terlibat; manakala 22 peratus, 21 peratus dan 17 peratus daripada mereka telah terlibat secara rendah, sederhana dan tinggi; (iv) faktor-faktor berikut didapati berkait rapat dengan tahap penglibatan: tahap pendidikan ($r=.42$), latihan yang dijalani ($C=.28$), sumber pendapatan ($C=.33$), tanggapan terhadap fungsi dan peranan Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan ($r=.62$), pengetahuan tentang fungsi agensi pembangunan ($r=.58$), tanggapan terhadap masalah ($r=.48$), sikap terhadap Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan ($r=.76$), pergaulan ($r=.66$), kekosmopolitan ($r=.53$), kontak dengan agen pembangunan ($r=.42$) dan keanggotaan dalam pertubuhan politik ($r=.47$).

Di antara lapan belas variabel, hanya enam variabel sahaja yang mustahak untuk mengukur tahap penglibatan ahli-ahli JPH. Pengukuran yang paling mustahak adalah sikap terhadap JPH. Pengukuran lain untuk melihat tahap penglibatan ahli-ahli JPH adalah: pergaulan, pengetahuan tentang fungsi agensi pembangunan, tanggapan terhadap masalah, keanggotaan di dalam politik, dan tanggapan terhadap fungsi dan peranan JPH.



Kajian ini mengesyorkan supaya jawatankuasa-jawatankuasa tempatan (jika ada) hendaklah diperkukuhkan. Seterusnya jawatankuasa-jawatankuasa formal patut ditubuhkan melalui perundingan yang sepenuhnya dengan pengguna-pengguna. Jawatankuasa Pengguna Hutan perlu diberikan taraf perundangan di mana prosedur penubuhan, tugas, fungsi dan kuasa undang-undangnya dinyatakan dengan jelas. Program pengembangan juga patut ditumpukan ke arah membantu pengguna-pengguna menolong diri mereka sendiri, memudahkan aliran maklumat dua hala di antara pegawai perhutanan dengan pengguna, dan bekerjasama dengan lebih rapat dengan pengguna-pengguna.



CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Country Background

Nepal is located between 26° 22' and 30° 27' north latitude and 80° 4' and 80° 12' east longitude. It lies between China in the north and India in south, east and west. It has an area of 14.7 million hectares and a population of about 18 million. Ecologically Nepal is divided into three regions, namely, Tarai, Hills and Mountains.

Administratively, Nepal is divided into five regions viz, Eastern, Central, Western, Midwestern and Farwestern Development Region. It has fourteen zones and 75 districts. Each district is further divided into several Village and City Panchayats. The Village and City Panchayats are the grassroot-level administrative and political units. The Village Panchayat denotes rural area where as City Panchayat denotes urban area. City Panchayats are larger in area and population than Village Panchayats. Nepal has 2913 Village Panchayats and 29 City Panchayats. About 94% of the population live in the rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Thus, Nepal is basically a rural country.



Importance of Forestry in Nepal

Forestry plays a vital role in the economic and social life of rural Nepal. Although the share of forestry to the GDP is only 15 percent, fodder from forestland provides more than 40 percent of livestock nutrition (Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC), 1988:1). Firewood comprises over 78 percent of the total energy consumption in Nepal (Wallace, 1988:5) and 90 percent of the wood that is extracted from the forest is used as firewood (Martens, 1983:19). Forestry also provides employment for 1.33 million people (MFSC, 1988:1). The mode of employment may be either non-monetary such as collection of fodder, firewood and leaf litter for the household use or for earning livelihood through selling firewood and other forest products. The forest also provides the raw materials for industries.

Forests prevent soil erosion, conserve water and regulate monsoon or rainfall. The timbers from the forest are used for building houses and manufacturing several types of farm equipments and implements. Forests in Nepal are also used for supplying compost to the crop fields. The forests are also the source of medicinal herbs as well as fruits and vegetables.



Deforestation in Nepal

On the basis of available data the estimated forest area is 5.5 million hectares (MFSC, 1988), 37 percent of the total area of Nepal. If the crown cover is considered to estimate the forest area, Nepal has only 5.6 percent of the total land area having 70 percent or more crown cover.

Estimates indicate that about one half of Nepal's forest decreased within a 20 years period (UNDP/ World Bank, 1983). It is also estimated that if the same rate of deforestation continues, Nepal's forest will disappear by the year 2000 (calculated from World Bank's estimation of 1978). The annual rate of deforestation of closed forests in Nepal from 1981 to 1985 was 4.1 percent (World Resources, 1987:285), which was the highest in Asia.

Rapid deforestation has been a serious problem in Nepal. Severe soil erosion, floods, landslides, water scarcity, decreased agriculture and livestock production are some of them. Generally, the factors responsible for deforestation in Nepal are increased demand for forest and forest products due to population growth, clearance of the forest to increase the agricultural land, and grazing livestock in the forest.

Another frequently mentioned reason for accelerated deforestation is the Forest Nationalization Act of 1957 (Wallace, 1987). Before 1957, the forests of Nepal were



controlled and protected by the villagers themselves. In 1957 the Act placed ownership of all forests in His Majesty's Government (Wallace, 1988). Thus, before nationalization there had been villagers' responsibility for managing the forest. After nationalization, the government, by law took the responsibility. On the one hand, villagers reacted negatively to the nationalization, believing that their traditional rights of access and use of the forest had been curtailed (Wallace, 1987). On the other hand, government was not prepared to assume the technical and administrative responsibilities of forest ownership. There was no sufficient manpower to oversee the forest. In addition there were no land records and no forest administrative divisions. Therefore, the villagers started cutting the forest, clearing and cultivating the forestland so that the land could be claimed as private property (Wallace, 1988).

Forest Development Policy

His Majesty's Government of Nepal has attempted to address the severe degradation of forests by encouraging local communities to become involved in forestry development activities through the community forestry development programme. The need for the Community Forestry Programme was due to the loss of local responsibility for forest protection after 1957.

Legislation to involve the local communities for the conservation of the forests was passed in 1978 and amended in 1980. Since 1979 the Community Forestry Programme (CFP) has been launched in 29 Hill and 13 Tarai districts. Under the Department of Forestry, a separate Community Forestry and Development Division has been created. The coverage of the CFP has gradually increased to nearly 60 districts (Sharma, 1986).

The Decentralization Act promulgated in 1984 was intended to further establish and foster local participation in the community forestry activities. The legislation has made the provisions of providing government-controlled lands to the local panchayats. Also, seedlings, technical assistance and extension education for the development and conservation of forests have been provided (Prasai et al., 1987 and Wallace, 1987).

According to the legislation, "Forest Users' Committees" should be formed from among the forest users, and the responsibilities of conservation, development and utilization of the community forests should be given to these committees.

One of the main principles of the forest development plan (known as Master Plan for Forestry Sector) is:

Entrusting to Users' Committees the task of protecting and managing the forests, and the right to receive all of the revenue, with an obligation to spend at least half of the proceeds on forest improvement (Gilmour, 1988:4).



Thus, according to the present forest development policy of Nepal, the active participation of Forest Users' Committee members is sine qua non for forest development.

Statement of the Problem

Rapid deforestation has become a serious problem in Nepal. Social, economic and political factors have been identified as the causes of deforestation. The Community Forestry Programme has been launched since 1979 for the conservation and development of the forests. The main strategy of the Community Forestry Programme was to involve the local beneficiaries or users' group in the conservation and development of the forests. The decentralization policy, especially the Decentralization Act 1984, intended to further establish and foster users' participation in forestry activities through organizing Forest Users' Committees (FUCs).

Despite the government policy to involve the FUC members in community forestry activities, it has been reported that the FUC members are not participating effectively. Malla (1987:59) has stated that most of the forest committees have been ineffective. Some have not even had a single meeting in the last three to four years or since their formation.

Subsequently, Chand and Wilson (1987:23) also report that only a few committees have been active in Darchula district in



the Farwestern Region. The study conducted by Prasai et al. (1987:9) in five different committees of different districts also indicated that only a few members were participating actively.

Thus, on the basis of the above discussion and other related facts, the present study is aimed at discovering the reasons why some members participate more actively than others and what are the factors associated with the participation of the FUC members.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to determine the factors associated with the level of participation of the members of Forest Users' Committees in the community forestry activities in the Midhills of Nepal. The specific objectives are to determine:

1. the committee formation process;
2. the level of participation of Forest Users' Committee members in decision making, implementation and resource mobilization;
3. the association between some selected personal, cognitive, attitudinal and situational factors, and the level of participation of Forest Users' Committee members.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be useful to policy makers, forestry workers and academicians in the following manner:

1. The study examines the existing FUCs in relation to their composition and formation process. The findings therefore will be helpful for policy makers to devise policy for involving forest users in forest development activities.
2. The Forestry Extension is in its infancy stage in Nepal. The information generated through this study will be of great help to forest extension workers working in the Midhill Region in general and the study area in particular to select the appropriate extension approaches in forestry.
3. This study is specifically related to the user's committees. It will, therefore, strengthen the Nepalese knowledge base relative to local organization in forest management. Thus, it will be a foundation for academicians and researchers for further indepth research in this area.

Scope of the Study

The scopes of the study are:

1. This study was conducted in two districts of the Midhill Region of Nepal. This study did not cover other Midhill Districts.