

## Equity in Collaborative Forestry in Nepal: A Case Study from Kailali District

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Equity is about the equal distribution of resources and opportunities to relevant stakeholders. In other words, equity is defined as fairness of treatment for all concerned stakeholders and right holders during procedures to form and implement policies (procedural equity), and in the distribution of resources and costs associated with these policies (distributional equity), according to agreed sets of principles (McDermott, Mahanty, & Schreckenber, 2012: RECOFTC, 2014). Inequity is commonly caused by the discrimination to the oppressed peoples by the power holders. There are many forms of discriminations arising from social differences such as based on dimensions of class, gender, caste, color, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, disability, region etc. Such social differences could lead to exclusion of certain individuals and group of communities from accessing resources, benefit and opportunities. In the case of forestry, issues of equity and justice are more important because it is the part of daily life of local communities. Especially in the case of community-based forest management, equity is one of the key issues that determine the success and effectiveness of forest management.

Many studies have highlighted how community-based forest management addresses issues of equity and justice. For example, Ostrom (1990) argues that community based natural resources can be managed by local people in equitable, efficient and sustainable way. Likewise, Richards and Kanel (2003) state that issues of equity and transparency have been handled and improved in Nepal's community forestry. There are different opinions among scholars about the equity in forest. Satyal (2006) observes the dominance of state rule and power in Terai forest management. According to Bampton et al. (2007) Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) is a unique forest management model in terms of inclusion of relevant stakeholders, distant users including women, indigenous peoples and Dalits in the structures and power. In contrast to this argument, Bhattarai (2005) claims that CFM is creating a gap between the users of the northern and southern belts and that a lot of investments were made to attract local people to CFM. On the other hand, there have been very limited empirical studies that focus on equity issues in Terai forest in general and CFM in particular.