

# LFP's Animation and Social Mobilisation



Empowering local communities  
to access benefits and resources

Livelihoods and Forestry Programme

# Livelihoods and Forestry Programme

*Improving the livelihoods of poor rural people by promoting equitable and sustainable use of forest resources*

The Livelihoods and Forestry Programme aims to contribute towards reducing the vulnerability of poor rural people by improving their livelihoods. It enhances the assets of rural communities by promoting more equitable, efficient, and sustainable use of forest resources.

## **Encouraging Linkages at All Levels**

Although LFP uses forestry as a vehicle to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor, we also seek ways in which to help address broader issues such as health and education. We encourage linkages between agencies and forest user groups and facilitate user groups to mobilise their own resources to respond to the broader livelihood concerns of their members. This broader perspective is especially important if we are to build the capability of the rural poor and socially excluded people to utilise the potential benefits offered by forestry.

This ten-year DFID programme started in April 2001 and operates in the following Hill, *Terai*, and Inner *Terai* districts: Dhankuta, Terhathum, Sankhuwasabha, and Bhojpur in the eastern Koshi hills; Baglung, Parbat, and Myagdi in the western Dhaulagiri zone; Nawalparasi, Kapilvastu, and Rupandehi in the *Terai* Lumbini zone; and Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Pyuthan, and Dang in the Mid-western Rapti zone.

## **Improving equity in Forest User Groups**

At the district level, LFP encourages Forest User Groups to move from passive to active management of their forest resources and assists poor, excluded, and women FUG members to assert their rights and improve group equity. LFP aims to mainstream equity issues into all programmes through social mobilisation and participation. Local people are both the beneficiaries and the main implementers of the programmes.

## **Enabling Effective Forest Management**

LFP works to develop an environment that enables effective forest management whatever the type of forest ownership. Although community forestry has brought many benefits to the poor, the enormous potential of the state-owned forests in the *Terai* is still not being realised under the current management systems.

In the *Terai*, LFP facilitates the development of District Forest Sector Plans and focuses on increasing the forest sector's contribution to poverty reduction within the districts. LFP is examining the potential of promoting public land management and leasehold forestry for excluded groups and other forest management modalities. Likewise, Community Forest land allocation and high altitude forests have significant potential for enhancing income of poor and excluded people through valuable non-timber forest products and medicinal and aromatic plants.

# LFP's Animation and Social Mobilisation

The *Livelihoods and Forestry Programme* (LFP) publishes a series of “Good Practice” papers to share experiences with government partners and other projects and programmes in Nepal’s forestry sector that support Forestry Users Groups (FUGs)<sup>1</sup>. Papers focus on LFP’s goal of promoting innovative forestry practices for better livelihoods, especially for the poorest and most excluded people. These “Good Practice” papers aim to stimulate discussion amongst government and NGO implementing partners, donors, programme staff, and other stakeholders.

This fourth “Good Practice” paper on LFP’s Animation and Social Mobilisation (A/SM) presents a qualitative overview documenting the experiences and observations of local people, FUG members, A/SM staff, LFP partners, and other stakeholders. It describes LFP’s animation and social mobilisation approach, which aims to improve the functioning of FUGs and include poor and excluded (P&E) people more effectively in decision-making processes, resource distribution, and livelihoods improvement activities.

By presenting the views of community members, partners, and other stakeholders in selected LFP districts, this paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions in Nepal’s forestry sector about concepts and mechanisms for increasing the voice and influence of the most P&E people.

Detailed information on A/SM is available from LFP’s Programme Coordination Office in Kathmandu.

## Introduction: *Mobilising groups to manage forest resources for poverty reduction*

Community Forestry (CF) has proven to be an effective means of managing and conserving Nepal’s forests, upon which the majority of rural people depend. It has even further potential to improve the livelihoods of the poorest and most excluded people through more equitable use and distribution of Forest User Group (FUG) resources. The Tenth Five-Year Plan of the Government of Nepal (GoN) emphasises the importance of forestry for people’s livelihoods and recommends targeting activities to poor and excluded<sup>2</sup> (P&E) people to strengthen their access to opportunities for livelihoods improvement.

<sup>1</sup> FUGs may be Community FUGs (CFUGs), especially found in the hills, or Leasehold FUGs, which are more common in the *Terai*.

<sup>2</sup> Poor and excluded (P&E) people may be disadvantaged socio-economically on the basis of their gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, marital status, language, or political affiliation.

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Many forestry stakeholders recognise that it is important to support the preparation of individuals and communities for more equitable operation of their FUGs. Different terms are used to describe this process, such as social mobilisation, facilitation, or animation. Social mobilisation can facilitate improved targeting of P&E people, encourage their involvement in FUG decision-making, and ensure better access to benefits from development activities and opportunities.

LFP first implemented Animation activities in its seven Hill districts. In 2004, Social Mobilisation was started in LFP's three *Terai* districts and in 2006, it was started in the five Mid-west districts as the LFP partnership programme.

### **Summary: LFP's Animation and Social Mobilisation**

LFP implements Animation and Social Mobilisation (A/SM) activities as part of its mainstream programme with government and NGO partners. It aims to mobilise and empower community members to more effectively participate in community activities, strengthen the functioning of FUGs, and improve the livelihoods of P&E people whose needs and aspirations are often marginalised in the decisions of FUG Executive Committees (ECs). In essence, it aims to ensure more meaningful participation of P&E people in FUG decision-making processes.

A/SM objectives are to address social inclusion issues and create an enabling environment for effective action at the community level. A/SM implements LFP's Pro-Poor and Social Inclusion (PPSI) Strategy<sup>3</sup> from the 'grassroots' level and aims to create an environment to develop ownership of and partnership in social and technical forestry development activities.

Key objectives are to integrate social processes of motivation and awareness building, participatory decision-making, empowerment, accountability, and transparency. Social mobilisation activities also bring tangible benefits, such as better community forest management, more equitable forest resource distribution, small-scale community infrastructure, and FUG fund mobilisation for targeted income-generating activities (IGAs) for P&E people.

Specific objectives of LFP's A/SM are to:

- Increase awareness amongst forest users and P&E, about their rights, roles, and responsibilities in relation to Community Forestry and FUGs.
- Promote social and livelihoods empowerment of P&E.
- Create an environment to initiate and implement FUG activities focused on P&E and forest management.

<sup>3</sup> See Best Practice Paper No. 5 on the Pro-Poor and Social Inclusion Strategy.

- Encourage more inclusive ‘bottom-up’ planning processes.
- Increase participation of poor people, women, and other marginalised groups in decision-making and benefit-sharing processes.
- Enable forest users to prepare proposals and access services from various service providers.
- Develop networks amongst FUGs, both within and between districts.
- Increase FUG involvement in local government planning processes.
- Strengthen FUG capacity to implement transparent and accountable internal management systems.
- Encourage review and revision of key policy documents to institutionalise pro-poor and socially inclusive reforms.

In each district, local NGOs implement LFP’s A/SM in coordination with various stakeholders, including local government, District Forest Coordination Committees (DFCCs) where they exist, to broaden ownership and effectiveness. LFP partners recruit A/SM staff locally to work with communities and FUGs. LFP has developed various capacity building manuals for animators and social mobilisers, with training delivered by Samuhik Abhiyan, a national NGO.

LFP monitors the impact of its A/SM activities through the Livelihoods and Social Inclusion (LSI) indicators defining three ‘Domains of Change’ according to DFID’s monitoring framework: rules of the game; voice, influence, and agency; and access to resources and services.

In case studies developed for this paper, interviewees mentioned a wide range of positive changes from A/SM activities including:

- Improved representation of P&E people in FUG Committees for more inclusive decision-making and better mechanisms for participation of all users in FUG planning processes.
- Enhanced confidence and skills of P&E people to articulate their needs and interests, influence FUG decisions, and demand better services.
- Improved FUG structures for P&E people to exercise voice, influence, and agency.
- Elites influenced to change how they set priorities and make decisions
- Coordinated discussion on the concerns of community members, reducing the need for multiple meetings.

Challenges to FUG social mobilisation include:

- Amount of time and effort by animation staff required initially, such as daily visits to community members.
- Encouraging all community members to accept ‘pro-poor and excluded’ concepts without creating divisions.
- Opportunity costs i.e. forming committees and groups with meetings that P&E members are expected to attend.

Several factors affect both FUG functioning and the outcomes of A/SM initiatives including:

- Group and FUG Committee Leadership
- Availability of community forest resources.
- Community social composition.
- Availability and feasibility of income-generating activities (IGAs), opportunities, and direct benefits.
- Responsiveness of service providers.
- Programme implementation and transparency, including dedication of A/SM staff.

Although LFP designed its A/SM as ‘software’ to better address social inclusion issues, it has realised that it must also concurrently integrate ‘hardware’ offering tangible benefits to meet the immediate needs of communities. However, A/SM is necessary to deliver ‘hardware’ activities more effectively. The materials and skilled labour expenses for hardware, such as improved cook stoves and latrines, are often not affordable for P&E people so LFP provides additional matching funds for these activities.

LFP promotes the sustainability of A/SM activities by recruiting local volunteers to work as animators, initiators, or ‘internal activists’. It also promotes FUG networks in each VDC with a basket fund in order to provide animator/social mobilisers’ salaries and forge linkages with mainstream service providers. LFP encourages FUGs to pay for the service of LRP/local facilitators with financial contributions from the local communities.

Despite the challenges in A/SM, it has proven to be essential for empowering the P&E and helping FUGs become more functional and equitable. Various studies<sup>4</sup> show that LFP’s activities are more effective in areas where A/SM is implemented. This paper documents ‘voices from the field’ to describe these experiences.



<sup>4</sup> LFP: CFUG categorization in the LFP seven hill districts

## **The Issue:** ***Mobilising communities to improve FUG functioning and inclusiveness***

Community forestry development is a significant achievement in Nepal. Currently, more than 14,000 FUGs manage over 1.2 million hectares of forest. However, various studies suggest that many FUGs still lack the capacity to manage forestry activities effectively and inclusively<sup>5</sup>. LFP's activities cover about 4,000 FUGs in fifteen districts.

Strengthening the management of FUGs and encouraging members to be more equitable and inclusive means working intensively with individuals and groups to raise awareness and promote changes in behaviour and attitudes. In Nepali society, where most information is shared through interpersonal discussion, a proven means for achieving this objective is animation or social mobilisation (A/SM), whereby skilled social mobilisers work with community members.

### **Exclusion of P&E in FUGs**

Since P&E people typically lack access to land, they often depend more on community forest resources for their livelihoods and may actually become worse off following the establishment of a FUG<sup>6</sup> if it limits their access to forest resources and related services. P&E people are rarely included in the decision-making of FUG Executive Committees (ECs). Transparency and accountability are often concerns within FUG administration, income generation, and fund mobilisation. Many FUGs use their funds to construct temples, roads, and offices, which are of less direct benefit or priority for P&E community members.

Many P&E households are not FUG members due to prohibitively expensive membership fees, insufficient access to information, lack of time to attend meetings, or flawed processes during FUG formation. Moreover, they often are excluded from meaningful participation and benefit sharing because elite groups continue to dominate village affairs and FUG group dynamics. P&E community members usually have little or no voice or influence in decisions regarding community and FUG affairs.

### **Using forestry for poverty reduction**

Previously, FUG Constitutions and Operational Plans (OPs) focused more on the protection of forests handed over by the government to community users. However, in line with

<sup>5</sup> LFP Animation Programme Review, September 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The following papers have questioned whether Community Forestry is benefiting the poor:

- Timsina, Netra, "Empowerment or Marginalization: a debate in community forestry in Nepal", *Journal of Forest and Livelihoods*, Volume 2 (1), 2002, pp 27-33
- Neupane, Hari, "Contested impact of community forestry on equity: some evidences from Nepal", *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*, Volume 2 (2), Feb. 2003, pp 55-61
- Malla, Yam, Neupane, Hari, and Branney, Peter, "Why aren't poor people benefiting more from Community Forestry?", *Journal of Forest and Livelihoods*, Volume 3 (1), July 2003, pp 78 - 90
- Pokharel, B, and Nurse, M., "Forests and People's Livelihoods: Benefiting the poor from Community Forestry", *Journal of Forest and Livelihoods*, Volume 4 (1), July 2004, pp 19-29

the Government's Tenth Plan, there has been a shift to using forestry as a means to achieve poverty reduction objectives. To achieve this, FUG Constitutions and Operational Plans often require revision to become more gender-sensitive, poor focused, and socially inclusive.

In addition, there is greater recognition of the need to build the awareness and participation of P&E individuals and households and raise the level of understanding of general forest users regarding the rules, roles, responsibilities of different stakeholders and service providers.

LFP and the GoN's challenge is to develop a means of encouraging more equitable and inclusive social processes to strengthen the internal management of FUGs. To date, Animation or Social Mobilisation has been the main approach in LFP programme districts to address the above challenges.

### **Animation and Social Mobilisation: Facilitating better governance and equity in FUGs**

Animation or social mobilisation of FUGs serves as a mechanism to more effectively deliver LFP's interventions and implement its Pro-Poor and Social Inclusion (PPSI) Strategy. It aims to reduce opportunity gaps and discrimination between men and women, affluent and poor, and elites and socially excluded people by empowering P&E people to demand their rights. For more equitable benefit sharing, animators /social mobilisers work with groups and individuals from different socio-economic groups by influencing elites who control local resources and empowering the 'grassroots' P&E.

The 'good practice' in this paper is the animation or social mobilisation of community groups through LFP and its partners in all fifteen programme districts.

### **LFP's Approaches to Animation / Social Mobilisation**

LFP's Animation and Social Mobilisation (A/SM) Programmes employ trained local people as animators /social mobilisers to promote more inclusive participation, improved FUG management, and better targeting of resources and services to P&E groups. LFP works in partnership with local NGOs to carry out A/SM in over 80% of the CFUGs in its seven hill districts, almost as many in the *Terai*, and about 60% in five Mid-west districts. LFP offers animation training and technical support to other organisations and networks, such as FECOFUN, to carry out social mobilisation (SM) with other FUGs.

The A/SM operates through two approaches:

1. A partnership with a local NGO or federation (such as FECOFUN) that implements the A/SM in approximately half of the working area/FUGs. The NGO receives salary support for various personnel for A/SM implementation, including animators /social mobilisers, resource persons, supervisors, and managers.

2. A partner receives performance-based wages for animators /social mobilisers as they deliver certain activities or achieve targeted revisions to the FUG Constitution or Operational Plans (OP), recruit volunteer animators, or improve inclusion of P&E people on FUG ECs.

**Testing the approach to Animation:** LFP implemented the pilot phase of its Animation Programme in clustered Village Development Committees (VDCs) of two range posts in each of the seven Hill districts. The District Forest Coordination Committee (DFCC) selected the pilot VDCs on the basis of poverty indicators, low literacy rates, excluded ethnic groups, and little or no prior development assistance. VDCs were clustered to facilitate support and mentoring for animation staff.

After two years, a review of LFP's pilot Animation Programme demonstrated good results so LFP scaled it up to more scattered VDCs in adjoining areas. Shortly afterwards, a Social and Geographical Audit (SAGA) showed that LFP was still not reaching remote VDCs. Therefore, the current third phase is expanding the Animation Programme to work in more geographically remote and excluded VDCs.

**Duration of support:** LFP provides support for animation to a selected FUG generally for four-five years. Animators then move to work full or part-time with FUGs in other areas. After four-five years, LFP expects that a FUG will require less support from a salaried animator because a volunteer animator (initiator) can facilitate most activities, and the FUG can access ongoing support from a VDC-level FUG network. Social mobilisation of community groups in the *Terai* is expected to be more short-term, with the goal of enabling the groups to demand services from line agencies, other projects, and service providers.



## Implementing LFP's A/SM through Local NGOs

LFP's decision to implement its A/SM in partnership with district NGOs was influenced by LFP's direct staffing constraints, limited government capacity, and more importantly, the potential to generate more sustainability. LFP management explored the use of local NGOs to mobilise the additional staff numbers required, through one or two contracts in each district. In comparison with line agencies, local NGOs tend to have greater capacity and expertise in social mobilisation, more local knowledge and outreach to link FUGs with a wider range of service providers.

Over time, the implementation of LFP's A/SM in partnership with NGOs has demonstrated several advantages including:

- building the capacity of district-based organisations to reduce poverty by working with a range of stakeholders, agencies, and programmes.
- promoting more holistic development as NGOs can work in several sectors and refer FUGs multi-sectoral requests to the relevant line agencies and DDCs/VDCs.

**Transparent selection:** LFP with the DFCC select district or local NGOs to manage the A/SM in a given district based on a transparent and competitive bidding process that reviews proposals prepared by potential NGO partners. The decision is based on LFP criteria that consider NGO applicants' commitment to inclusive development, sustainability, social mobilisation experience, organisational infrastructure, project management capacity, political neutrality, and ability to link FUGs to other livelihoods-related projects and service providers.

At the start of the Animation Programme in LFP's Hills districts, LFP staff provided initial training and mentoring to partner NGOs to ensure the required level of managerial capacity. When LFP started its Social Mobilisation Programme in the *Terai* and Mid-West, it built on previous experience in terms of NGO expertise required.

**New approaches:** During 2006, LFP implemented a similar Partnership Initiative in its Mid-western districts. The approach is highly conflict-sensitive, ensuring greater coverage and building local NGO capacity. LFP has three to four partners in each programme district to implement the Partnership Initiative in the remote areas of the Mid-west, building on their local knowledge and community relationships.

**Effectiveness during conflict:** During the conflict situation, implementation of LFP's A/SM through district NGOs has proven to be an effective strategy. Local people hired as animators /social mobilisers often live in remote conflict-affected areas. LFP works with a range of district partners and has developed ways to respond to various challenges, such as NGO partners having vested interests or party linkages. There is competition for contracts to manage LFP's interventions, with clear criteria to promote transparency in relation to staff advertisements and local recruitment processes.

## Recruiting and Supporting Local Animators/Social Mobilisers

LFP requires that NGO partners recruit local VDC residents as animators or social mobilisers. Advantages to working through local animators include:

- Greater ability to deliver the activities during conflict.
- Provision of regular and continuous local support.
- Greater understanding of the local context and community dynamics.
- Better perception of the needs and aspirations of local people.
- Improved facilitation of community meetings since local animators are usually of the same ethnicity and linguistic group.
- Increased cost-effectiveness, as no travel expenses.
- Improved co-ordination with local networks such as VDCs, Village Forest Coordination Committees (VFCCs), and line agencies.
- Opportunity to build local capacity and generate local employment opportunities.
- Improved sustainability of programme impacts, as the capacity and expertise of local animators remains in the community.

However, several disadvantages/challenges have also been observed including:

- The local animator's family relationships may create biases with regard to selection for household visits and use of tools such as well-being ranking.
- For young animators, it is often difficult to build community trust until they gain experience and acceptance.
- If elite or FUG members are relatives of the local animator /social mobiliser, it may be more difficult to influence attitudes and challenge existing power relationships.
- Senior elite individuals may not listen to a younger, especially female relative, a *Dalit*, or a poor person. The animator /social mobiliser may be reluctant to disagree with a senior relative.
- FUG members may not accept the advice/influence of a person whose family history, ideology, and family interactions are known and not accepted.

Although these factors can present challenges, LFP has found that the advantages prevail over the disadvantages of working through local animators.

A contradiction may happen as the area for A/SM expands. LFP naturally wants to continue working with animators /social mobilisers in whom it has invested significant resources for capacity building. However, as LFP phases out of FUGs where it has provided A/SM for about four years, animators might relocate to work in other programme areas where they are not members of the local community.

## Recruitment process for local animators /social mobilisers

To minimise political interference and bias in the recruitment of local animators /social mobilisers, LFP and its partners have developed a locally adapted, participatory, merit-based, and transparent procedure that involves FUGs and their stakeholders. First, a discussion with FUGs, key stakeholders, and the Animation /SM Programme Manager (A/SM PM) finalises the selection criteria and agrees on management of the process.

Animator /social mobiliser positions are advertised locally through the VDC, range post notice boards, and local press to make standardised application forms available for interested candidates to complete and return to the A/SM PM with their accompanying CV. The district A/SM PM works with representatives of the FUGs and VDC networks to screen and shortlist local candidates based on the following education and experience criteria.

Selection criteria for animators:

Personal Qualities	Skill / Competencies	Education	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative</li> <li>• Pro P&amp;E</li> <li>• Motivated</li> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Willing to learn</li> <li>• Morality</li> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Respectfulness</li> <li>• Maturity</li> <li>• Positive attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to express him/herself</li> <li>• District-specific criteria</li> <li>• Able to discuss with stakeholders</li> <li>• Experience in social service or community development in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.L.C or minimum class 10 with good practical experience</li> <li>• Other relevant training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local of VDC</li> <li>• Willing to live and work in remote areas</li> <li>• Of socially excluded, marginalised, or disadvantaged background</li> <li>• Undertaken social or community work</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Commitment &amp; sensitivity to P&amp;E</li> </ul>

Once candidates are short-listed, a selection board is established of LFP staff, the A/SM PM, (FUG representatives where possible) and usually representatives from the DDC or DFO. The board generally selects no more than twice the number of animators to be recruited to attend an assessment workshop where one animator from each VDC is selected.

At the workshop, candidates participate in skills tests, group discussions, case study analysis, presentations, and interviews to assess their facilitation, leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal qualities and skills. According to A/SM PM staff interviewed, even unsuccessful candidates have been satisfied with the transparency of this process.

Voices from the field...

### ***“we are building the ability of locals”***

**Pradip Shah is the chairperson of the NGO, Indreni Rural Development Centre, managing the social mobilisation in Rupandehi:**

“ The advantage of hiring local people (as social mobilisers) is that we are building the capacity of locals, so they are more capable after the project phases out. They know the local community so it is easier for them to start work. A disadvantage is that they might be distracted by their own family or household work.

We have criteria for selecting social mobilisers and post these criteria in each VDC where we work and take applications. There is a team from NESDO (the NGO), LFP, DFO, and DSCO to select applicants on the basis of experience and skills. When we are selecting social mobilisers, we do not select relatives of EC members, so that they are not placed in a difficult situation. So far, we have had good co-operation.”

**Saradha Ghimire is a board member of the NGO:**

“ As members (of the NGO), we sometimes go monitor the work of social mobilisers. We choose them by putting an advertisement in the paper. The person should be a member of the local FUG.”

## **Providing support to local animators /social mobilisers**

In the hill districts, support for newly hired animators begins with basic staff orientation and a field visit to develop common understanding. Animators receive about fifteen days field orientation from experienced animators. Once they have a thorough understanding of field practice, they attend basic training provided by Samuhik Abhiyan, a national NGO. Core training topics include basic social mobilisation, facilitation, accounting, PRA, and PPSI. The training process in the *Terai* differs in that the formal training is shorter, but the staff attend more seminars and short on-the-job training sessions. In the Mid-west, LFP has recruited two trained consultants who conduct training and coaching to the partner staff members.

Once the animator is actively working in their VDC, the district A/SM PM, A/SM Supervisor, Area Training Coordinator, and A/SM Resource Person provide on-the-job training, back-stopping support, and monitoring.

**On-going support to field staff:** The district APM conducts monthly reviews with the animators, often in consultation with the DFO and other stakeholders. Progress, lessons, and case studies are discussed. This monthly review is important for sharing experience with partners. A/SM PMs often make presentations to the DFCC and other stakeholders and send a report to the DFO.

Experience shows that animators/social mobilisers require more training in technical forestry skills. In the *Terai*, the SM intends to link the community groups with other service providers of technical skills. However, the conflict has restricted the access of the service providers so the social mobilisers have to acquire more technical skills. The LFP Mid Term Review (MTR, Nov 2006) has also recommended strengthening a mix of both the technical and social skills of the animators/ social mobilisers.

Voices from the field...

### ***“I do on-site-coaching with the animator”***

**Indra Acharya - Resource Person with the Bhim Pokhara Youth Club (BYC) in Baglung district:**

“ I observe the work of the animators to see what kind of support they need. Then I arrange training to support them at the range post. I ‘backstop’ the animator to analyse the gaps in their work and the community situation, especially where they have difficulty as local community members.

We need to be clear about whether the gaps are a result of the animator’s lack of capacity or if they are just not doing the work. I do on-site-coaching with the animator so that they are better able to encourage the P&E to express their needs and make requests.

We need to generate more ownership by the CFUGs for the activities to be sustainable. For instance, the CFUGs should meet whether or not the animator is coming to the meeting.”

**Yam Bahadur Medhasi - AP Supervisor in Parbat district:**

“ When supervising the animators, we have to train and monitor them but most important is back-stopping. They come to a review session once a month and we talk about their problems. If necessary, we go to the field with them to facilitate their work and resolve problems.”

We have not had difficulties because the animators are local people. We explain the activities thoroughly to the community so that it is transparent and they realise that the activities are theirs.”

**Deepak Shrestha - AP Training Coordinator for Samuhik Abhiyan in Dhankuta:**

“ I work with SOLVE in Dhankuta and with FECOFUN in Terhathum to train the animators. I also give training based on the needs of the CBOs, such as proposal writing or record keeping. I also go to the field with animators to give backstopping support for instance, if they have difficulty writing their field diary into a progress report or if they have difficulty facilitating a meeting. I have seen many changes in the animators. They learn to write quality reports and manage networks of CFUGs. They've also developed their leadership skills and to influence political leaders to bring resources and services to the CFUGs.”

***“We learned a lot from the community”*****Rajiv Tripathi - Animator in Rupandehi district in the Terai:**

“ Officially, we had training, but we learned a lot from the community, who would tell us which step was next. We need more technical knowledge on forestry and ways to help the P&E, such as land allocation. We also need more training on income-generating activities and more ideas and information on the different kinds of changes that we can promote and the support that we can get from different line agencies to address the specific needs of the group.”



## Process and Activities for A/SM of Community Groups

The process of A/SM involves four main phases:

### Phase One: Building awareness and confidence

- Support P&E people to understand their rights and voice their needs
- Sensitise elites and convince key FUG leaders and elites who are open to change
- Facilitate FUGs to hold assemblies and meetings
- Facilitate community assessments through well-being ranking
- Create opportunities for open discussion of problems and needs for plan preparation.

### Phase Two: Organising groups and preparing or revising plans

- Facilitate the formation of *tole* (hamlet) / interest groups to plan focussed on P&E
- Facilitate the FUG to allocate resources to the P&E
- Support amendment of Operational Plans and Constitutions to make them P&E sensitive
- Support preparation of action plans based on Operational Plans (OPs), and Constitutions so that interventions are more systematic and P&E-focused
- Facilitate planning based on the needs of *tole* /interest groups
- Provide training in record-keeping, accounting, leadership, and forest management.

### Phase Three: Providing tangible benefits and assets

- Support and facilitate the FUG to implement the plans, OPs, and Constitutions
- Seek funding opportunities for community infrastructure as an entry point to encourage the participation of the whole community (i.e. quick tangible activities help to gain more creditability in the conflict situation)
- Support creating increased assets and opportunities for P&E.

### Phase Four: Building sustainability and linkages

- Recruit and train volunteer animators
- Create linkages to services for community development and livelihoods opportunities
- Create linkages to technical forestry service providers, such as LRPs and Range Posts
- Establish a VFCC (i.e., FUG networks) and facilitate its meetings and institutional strengthening processes
- Make the animation programme the responsibility of VDC networks using local resource generation.

### Phase One: Building awareness and confidence

Simultaneously, the animator / social mobiliser builds the awareness and confidence of P&E people and sensitises the elites for attitudinal change about the importance of building

more inclusion in communities. One approach is initially including poor people who are not from specific excluded groups in order to avoid creating community divisions and risk losing the support of better-off, influential people.

**Visits to each household:** As animators /social mobilisers start work with a FUG, they visit each household to build awareness and encourage formation of smaller groups, which can discuss and present their priorities to the FUG EC and assembly (see Good Practice paper #3). They also strive to ensure that households previously excluded, as FUG members, are included. Household visits are important for awareness-raising and acquiring information about a community.

They facilitate FUGs to hold an assembly and select the EC. They also work to motivate more community members to attend the assembly and to select P&E people as EC members.

**Well-being ranking:** An important activity for building awareness and gathering information is well-being ranking (see Tools section), which provides valuable data on household socio-economic well-being in a participatory way. Ranking reveals variation in household/individual land ownership and income sources between FUG members. By analysing their own community, many people come to a greater realisation of the situation of other households and often become convinced to offer more support to P&E.

## Phase Two: Organising groups and preparing or revising plans

Animators /social mobilisers then encourage and facilitate the formation of groups based on people's interests, well-being ranking, or exclusion issues. Groups and meetings usually require the animator's facilitation for several months. Since each animator usually works with five to ten FUGs in the hills (fewer larger FUGs in the *Terai*), *tole* /interest group formation initially increases their workload, but with positive outcomes.

**Household needs and issues:** Groups usually start by discussing household/individual's issues, concerns, and needs. The groups then plan how to address these concerns and decide upon requests for support from their FUG EC and other service providers. Requests typically include a broad range of community development activities including community infrastructure (such as drinking water and village sanitation), micro-credit, and revolving funds to set up emergency funds or loans to enable P&E to carry out income-generating activities (IGAs).

**Revision of FUG documents:** The animators /social mobilisers also facilitate the revision of OPs and Constitutions that are the basis for making annual plans more systematic and P&E-focused. They also provide or arrange for training in record-keeping, accounting, leadership, and forest management for FUG members.

### Phase Three: Providing tangible benefits and assets

**Implementing plans:** The animator / social mobiliser supports the FUGs to implement their FUG and P&E plans. A FUG EC can use the well-being ranking as the basis to implement its plans and prioritise its services, support, and allocation of resources. It can select members most in need of support for empowerment and IGAs for asset building. Animators /social mobilisers facilitate the establishment of revolving funds to provide loans to the most P&E people. They also encourage FUGs to establish land allocations and promote more equitable distribution of forest resources.

Through A/SM, LFP offers opportunities for community infrastructure as an entry point to encourage the participation of the whole community - providing quick tangible activities helps to generate more creditability, particularly in the conflict situation. It also offers training opportunities and linkages to programmes focussed on other community needs, such as schools and health.

### Phase Four: Building sustainability and linkages

**Volunteer initiators:** Animators and social mobilisers promote sustainability of the outcomes of the activities (see sustainability section) by recruiting and training volunteer animators or initiators from among FUG members. Volunteer initiators attend meetings with the animators /social mobilisers and visit households to prepare the FUG members for meetings.

**Links to service providers:** The animators /social mobilisers also work to create linkages to other community development services and to technical forestry service providers, such as LRPs. Each animator /social mobiliser promotes the establishment of a VFCC/FUG networks and facilitates its meetings. They also assist the groups to explore means of managing public or common resources, such as public land.

Voices from the field...

***“We have to convince key leaders in the community”***

**Durga Subedi - animator in Dhankuta:**

“First, we have to convince key community leaders of the need to support the P&E in order to bring about development. Then we work with the poor.

One of the biggest benefits of Animation is when women and P&E come to be in decision-making positions on the EC. Then, they make decisions based on what their community really needs.”

***“We need to work from both sides...”*****Sita (Limbu) Kandangwa - animator in Terhathum:**

“ We need to work from both sides. We make the P&E aware of their rights, so that they can demand support from the CFUG. Once they are aware that the programme is for them, they can work alongside elites and well-off people for the community. In some CFUGs, there are now women, *Dalits*, and poor on the CFUG ECs so automatically they are informed about the availability of activities like IGA, revolving funds, etc. In Terhathum, the DFCC is working with local health posts to subsidise medicines for the poor. ”

***“We learn so much from the P&E”*****Yogendra Raj Sharma - animator in Baglung district:**

“ We have had training, but working in the field, we learn so much from the P&E especially about their needs. I have learned that it helps first to have the women and P&E people in smaller separate groups to discuss their problems because even if they attend a meeting, they will not speak out to the EC. By making plans as a group, they gain confidence to approach the EC with their needs. ”

***“Household visits are essential ... we give and take information”*****Prasad Chettri - member of a NGO partner in Rupandehi district:**

“ Within our programme is SM, management of communal property, and livelihood improvement. To manage communal property, we must involve all the stakeholders. For SM, household visits are essential and we get household information.

For social work, we must understand that development is a local process. It must come from within. Where people cannot internalise information, the development process is almost impossible.

We give and take information – it must be a two-way process in each step. Giving and taking information through SM is a powerful tool to help people raise awareness.

The communities need their own formal and informal organisations that can be registered; the hardest thing is to develop the organisations. ”

**Shiva Angla - coordinator of animation activities carried out by FECOFUN in Dhankuta:**

“ Before, FECOFUN had initiators, who were educated people with time to offer community service, to work with their own *tole* (hamlet) and CFUG. FECOFUN provided training in different phases. They facilitated literacy classes and explained the difficult parts of the constitution and Operational plan to *tole* members. They would also explain what the EC decided and they often translated the constitution and operational plan into other languages – Rai, Gurung, Tamang, Limbu, etc. ”

**“Builds their trust and understanding of the programme”****Januka Adhikari is a SM coordinator in Rupandehi district:**

“ SM raises people’s consciousness and enables them to work cooperatively. It also builds their trust and understanding of the programme. It is very important to ensure that women and *Dalits* understand that the programme is for them.

We see places where the men say ‘women do not need to come; they do not need to understand.’ Then, after we convince them that both women and men need to understand, they will tell the women to come to the meetings. The same with *Dalits*, they feel that the programme is not for them, so we have to mobilise them to have the confidence to come and participate in meetings.”

**Tools Used to Target the Poor-and-Excluded**

LFP uses appropriate tools to focus on women and socially excluded people and to capture the in-depth social and cultural issues through its Pro-Poor and Social Inclusion Strategy (see Good Practice Paper #5). Other tools include gender analysis and existing PRA methods. It trains A/SM staff to use these tools to communicate with, target, and benefit P&E people.

**Well-being ranking**

Participatory well-being ranking forms the basis for selecting IGA participants and revolving fund loan recipients. It is the basis for ensuring equitable forest product distribution and representation on committees. The well-being ranking generates understanding among the community members about why certain individuals or households were selected.

A carefully conducted well-being ranking considers people within and outside of the FUGs and promotes the inclusion of previously excluded households. However, the poverty

differences between FUGs are important because those identified as poorest in one FUG may be equivalent to the most affluent in another group.

**Participatory process:** The animators /social mobilisers facilitate the well-being ranking. When conducting a well-being ranking, the group defines the ranking criteria with poor people discussing and analysing their own poverty. Key informants usually do the actual ranking because well-off people may diminish their wealth, or poor people may be too proud to say how poor they actually are. As with any tool, well-being ranking is only as useful as the skill of the facilitator and the knowledge of the key informants. It must be triangulated and updated periodically.

The results can be a careful analysis of the situation of the poor that categorises the households in the community according to criteria they themselves defined. Individuals may realise that they are not in the lowest rank because they have fields that produce food for three months, whereas people in the lowest rank do not have any fields and must work each day to earn their food.

There has been a tendency to conduct a well-being ranking, but then not use the results in targeting activities. Sometimes, the activities delivered pre-determined packages of activities without considering the real needs of the beneficiaries.

### **Tole level planning**

Conducting the well-being ranking in small groups and *toles* (hamlets) increases its accuracy and sensitivity. Through A/SM, LFP supports bottom up planning from the *tole* level to FUG committees and then FUG networks formed at the VDC level. In some districts, working at the *tole* level has proved effective for the very poor to express their needs, concerns, and views in committee meetings. For more information, refer to Good Practice Paper #3.

### **Land allocation in community forests or public land**

LFP promotes the allocation of land in community forests to poor landless families within a FUG or of public land to community groups on the *Terai*. It strives to ensure the long-term users' rights through special provisions or policies. A number of districts are promoting this activity.

The animators /social mobilisers assist the participating households to make productive use of the land within the confines of the regulations governing community forestry (cultivating agricultural crops or converting community forest land to permanent agriculture is not permissible). To minimise appropriation of the land when it becomes productive, agreements are needed to protect both the households that have been allocated land and the FUG.

**Facilitating linkages:** LFP encourages the animators /social mobilisers to facilitate linkages that promote better livestock management by using the allocated land for fodder production. Short-term returns on investment are necessary since poorer families cannot take the risk of investing labour in a venture that may not yield returns for several years. For longer-term investments, the poorest farmers usually require some sort of support to help them bear the risk. For more details, see Good Practice Paper #1.

### **Fund allocation/management**

Through A/SM, LFP encourages the FUGs to allocate a proportion of their fund as a revolving fund to be used by the poorest members of their community for emergencies or productive investments. Fund allocation is often contingent upon a local champion or influential person who encourages the committees and LFP contributes matching funds.

The well-being ranking serves as a priority roster for providing loans to the poor households. Those poor households that did not obtain a loan in the first round will have an opportunity in the next round.

### **Small infrastructure activities**

LFP supports FUG infrastructure projects, especially on poor *toles*. If possible, the FUGs contribute to the project. Time-saving and appropriate hygienic technologies, such as improved cook stoves and toilets; help reduce the workload of women. The schemes requested by the most disadvantaged groups might be drinking water, rainwater harvesting, school building repairs, small-scale irrigation, landslide prevention, latrines, or footpath construction/repair. LFP has learnt several lessons about infrastructure that are being incorporated into a scaling up and programme expansion into the mid-Western districts.

### **Income Generating Activities (IGAs)**

The animators /social mobilisers facilitate access to loans and low risk IGAs for the P&E, and promote savings-and-credit activities for the poorest families, which are flexible enough for their intermittent cash flows.

**Careful design of IGAs:** LFP is working to address the many concerns regarding the real benefit of IGA activities and micro-credit systems for the poorest people, especially if they are landless. Animators /social mobilisers need to encourage IGAs other than goat-raising, which requires land for grass to feed the goats. If the beneficiaries must purchase grass, they may have a loss in raising the goat. A land allocation by the FUG gives the P&E beneficiaries access to grass to feed the goats. Other activities such as trading and shops

have a faster turnover. Training to upgrade the traditional skills of *Dalits* might improve their livelihoods more effectively.

Livestock related activities (goat, pig, and chicken rearing) are popular with women because these activities are a skill the women already have. However, IGAs that target women can have negative indirect consequences for girl child labourers, who are withdrawal from school. Such consequences need to be considered when planning IGAs.

### Training in proposal writing, reporting, monitoring, and public auditing

LFP supports A/SM to offer community members training in proposal writing, reporting, monitoring, and public auditing to enable them to carry on the activities themselves.

Voices from the field...

***“I made them aware of their rights in the CFUG and we did a well-being ranking”***

**Ratan Gautam is a social mobiliser with Indreni Rural Development Centre in Tikulighar VDC in Rupandehi district. He facilitates Bahaune Shatte CFUG that covers four VDCs and has 5,000 member households:**

“ I started working with the CFUG by my introducing myself, since with 5,000 households, I did not know everyone. Then I made them aware of their rights in the CFUG and we did a well-being ranking to select the poorest people to earn daily wages working to trim (men) and plant seedlings (female) in the community forest.

The CFUG has started a fishpond. When the fish are harvested, the CFUG will get 10% of the total income, and then of the remaining 90%, 25% will go to the poor group to buy more fish for sustainability of the project and 75% will be divided among the individual households. Three representatives of the P&E group, one man and two women, went to the EC and said that the group needed IGA and arranged the details for the pond.

Before, the P&E only thought that the community forest was for firewood. Now they realise that they can go to the EC to ask for IGA.”

### **“Each tole group sends a representative”**

**Dhanda Pari Kanal works as a social mobiliser in Parauha, VDC of Rupandehi district:**

“ In Bolbom FUG, we did five trainings so now the EC allocates budget for the poor. They set aside Rs 80,000 for the poor and hire the poorest people to work in the community forest.

Before, the EC would meet, but the FUG members never knew the decisions. Now, each *tole* group sends a representative to inform each *tole* of the decisions of the meeting. The EC members realise that one social mobiliser cannot develop everyone’s awareness, so they want to put a notice board on each *tole*, where they put notices with all the FUG decisions so that everyone knows.

Another change is that the EC has a representative from three villages 5 km to the south that use the forest but are not represented on the EC. First, the villages sent a man, now they send one of the poorest people.

They did an allocation of the public land in the village (that was under the control of the VDC) to the ten poorest households. They have had a realisation and asked for the training on each *tole*. They planted seedlings for timber, herbs, and bamboo.

Since it will be a long time before there is any production, the households have vegetable plots between the trees. They now realise, with the training, that they can grow vegetables on wasteland. Though it is only one month since they started the vegetable plots, they have started to sell seedlings.

Recently, we sent the three poorest to training by the development office. One made photocopies of the constitution and operational plan so that each *tole* group has a copy to read to the members. Now, they are discussing having a requirement for representatives of *Dalits* and the poorest on the EC.

They have also been promoting transparency by posting the details of the budgets of training and doing public audits. Participants in trainings give a report (evaluation to three questions) back to the EC. ”

## Beneficial Changes from Animation / Social Mobilisation

LFP monitors the results of A/SM activities through the Livelihoods and Social Inclusion (LSI) indicators that provide a framework to disaggregate targeting and define three domains of change: rules of the game; voice, influence, and agency; and access to resources and services. During the documentation for this “Good Practices” paper, interviewees mentioned changes from the A/SM of groups that included a basic increase in the activity of the FUGs and a range of specific benefits for the P&E in the three domains of change including: (a) rules of the game; (b) voice, influence, and agency; and (c) increased access to assets and services.

Voices from the field...

### **“We could not speak for ourselves”**

The SM in the *Terai* has been promoting public land management in communities that do not have access to a community forest. In Narsahi VDC of Nawalparasi district, a community of 159 households conducted a well-being ranking that placed 50 households in the poorest category. The social mobilisers have promoted the use of the public land by these households for vegetable farming. They established the Gandaki Vegetable Group.

#### **Hakikun Ansari is a member of the vegetable growing group:**

“ Some people have 2-3 katta of land, some have nothing. There is not a community forest near here, but the Narayani River brings us firewood. There is a bit of farm work available here, but not much. Shanti (the social mobiliser) came here, I am not sure why, and started talking to us.

So, we started a group and wrote a constitution. The objective of our group is to start a plantation so when the trees are big we will have many benefits. We will be able to cut the branches for firewood to cook our food and have trees to break the wind. Before this was just shrub land, now we have planted vegetables and have benefits. We also have a pump set (to irrigate the fields). ”



### **“In the group, we started to talk and lost our shyness”**

**Chandari Bhediher – group chairperson:**

“Before, we women were very shy and could not speak for ourselves - we hid in our saris. We were afraid if an outsider came. Before, we never would sit and talk like this. We were like frogs in a ditch.

Now whoever comes, we can talk to them. In the group, we started to talk and lost our shyness. Now we are happy. Now, we women can speak and work. Now our minds are open so we can get knowledge. Now we want to go out to see development.

We did all this hard work to bring development to our village so the government will give us support - our suffering will be gone and we will have better lives. Shanti listens to our complaints and tells them to the district office. Please take us to other places to see development.”



### **Rules of the game**

A/SM can generate changes in the rules of the game as evident in the improved governance of FUGs. Several indicators include:

- Elites changed how they make priorities and decisions
- Changes in FUGs, such that the P&E have voice, influence, and agency
- Representation of the P&E in the FUG committee and decision-making
- Revision of FUG Constitutions and Operational Plans to be socially inclusive
- Mechanism for all users to participate in a bottom-up FUG planning process
- Improvements in decision-making, transparency, and public audits
- Inclusion of P&E in training. If empowered, they participate more.
- Regularisation of meetings and assemblies and transparent record-keeping
- Reduction of the numbers of meetings needed to discuss the issues related to their *tole*, rather than having separate meetings for the issues of each sector
- Meetings scheduled when P&E can attend without compromising household or labour commitments

**Functioning of FUGs:** An essential change is better functioning of FUGs because the regularisation of meetings and assemblies and recording of minutes and decisions usually

leads to the inclusion of P&E representatives on the EC. Greater representation strengthens the FUGs institutionally and helps the P&E to have voice, influence, and agency. Transparency is promoted through public auditing, improved record keeping, facilitation of meetings and general assemblies, and use of a well-being ranking to allocate benefits.

The FUG can become an institution for community development with increased membership representative of the community composition. Through well-being ranking and *tole* planning, community members become more aware of the needs of the P&E. By using the FUG, the number of community development meetings can be reduced instead of having separate meetings for each sector.

**जलकिनी स्वामिपती आयोजना**  
२०६१ / २०६२

सा.व. जलकिनी  
टोल: खडहर

क्र.सं.	सामग्रीची विवरण	इकाई	परिमाण	रजिस्टर वरून	समुदाय	अनुमानित लागत	वस्तुनिष्ठ लागत	निश्चित
१	सिमेंट	बॅग	८८	११०००/-		११०००/-	११०००/-	
२	पोलिथिन पाईप	मिटर	८८	३०८००/-		३०८००/-	४१६००/१२	
३	अन्य निरीक्षण सामग्री	१ मूकट		१०३८०३		१०३८०३	१२३६/२६	
४	स्थानीय सामग्री (पिटी, बालुका, वृक्षा, वृक्षाची प्रकल्प)	"			१२६००	१२६००	१२६००	
५	वाटी सामग्री तुपाची संच	"						
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८	फिटिड सामग्री र पाईप	मिटर		६४६०.१२	४४६६०	६४६०.१२	४४६६०	
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Voices from the field...

***“Now, all members of the EC are involved in decisions”***

The Chutreni CFUG in Baglung district has greatly improved the effectiveness and inclusiveness of its functioning since the start of Animation activities.

**Renuka Devi Sharma - volunteer animator of Chutreni CFUG:**

“ Tika (the animator) went to the meetings, then went house to house and helped people to express their problems; she also helped the secretaries if they had difficulties keeping minutes. Now all the members of the EC or the groups are involved in decisions.

Before, the accounts were in a mess and no one knew what money went where. The account keeping system is better now because we keep the accounts under separate headings. We would like training in account keeping.

Now there are *Dalits* on the EC, which is good. The new chairperson will go to each house to get everyone come to a meeting – since most members are *Dalit*. We have a revolving fund for *Dalits* and the poor. The P&E and single women do not have to pay for firewood and grass. ”

**Yam Narayan Acharya - treasurer of the EC:**

“ Now, P&E have a chance for loans from the revolving fund, and we have hopes that in two years, we will also have a turn. Before, often only the past chairperson and treasurer made decisions about expenditures and there were not any bills, now the EC makes decisions, and the bills and accounts are kept. ”



***“CFUGs have realised the purpose of Operational Plans and Constitutions”***

**Yam Bahadur Medhasi - AP Supervisor in Parbat district:**

“ The CFUGs have realised the purpose of Operational Plans and Constitutions. Through animation, they realise that unlike before when the DFO staff just wrote a constitution, the CFUG members could delete the useless parts and add sections, especially those to benefit the P&E.

Before, they only gave loans to P&E from the revolving fund of LFP, but now they have realised that they can give loans from their own funds and many groups have set aside funds for this purpose. Now, there are also forest based IGAs. The women are developing leadership and discussing their issues separately before taking them to the CFUG. ”

### **“Now they keep minutes that are transparent”**

**Matrika Prasad Timilsina - AP Supervisor in Parbat district:**

“ We’ve seen changes in that sometimes groups would not keep minutes so the discussion was lost. Now they keep minutes that are transparent and will conduct public audits, and will carry out activities for the P&E – such as drinking water facilities for *Dalits*, who would have to carry water from long distances. Now there is also bottom-up planning from the *toles* to the main CFUG EC. ”

### **Voice, influence, and agency**

Through awareness raising and skill development, A/SM promotes changes whereby P&E become more empowered and have voice, influence, and agency in the functioning of their FUG. Indicators include:

- Increased awareness of the rights of the P&E
- Enhanced confidence and skills of P&E to articulate their needs and interests, influence decisions, and demand services
- Sense of unity and cooperation to address *tole* level issues

Through *tole* groups, the P&E develop confidence to articulate their needs and interests, influence decisions, and demand services because they can communicate better in small groups. They learn to organise themselves to work as a group to improve their situation, feel included in the FUG, participate in the FUG planning process, and feel ownership of the community forestry activities.

**Promoting ‘bottom-up’ planning:** Increased participation by P&E in FUGs promotes bottom-up planning processes. When the P&E gain influence, they have representatives on FUG ECs, who can better participate in decision-making and influence the elites to change how they make priorities and decisions. They become more integrated into the larger community with a greater sense of unity.

Having *tole* groups makes it easier for the FUG member households to communicate with their EC and for the EC to communicate with the households. It also reduces the workload of the EC because the *tole* group representatives communicate with their member households and share the work of planning, decision-making, and monitoring.

Voices from the field...

### ***First confidence, then empowerment***

The Manakamana Group in Rupandehi district has fourteen women members and started three months ago.

#### **Dil Maya Raut - treasurer of the main committee:**

“ Before, we would stay in our houses, not be able to say our names, we were so shy. Now, we have confidence to come and speak. We have also learned and understood a few things.”

### ***“The confidence to work for our own benefit...”***

In Sukrauli VDC of Nawalparasi district, the Janjagati Group of P&E women gained the confidence within six months to go to court to reclaim local public land from elites encroaching upon it.

#### **Rama Shankar Panday - social mobiliser for the group:**

“ The elites had encroached on the land, but the poor knew it was public land. When the SM started, they discussed how to make income by starting a plantation on the land. They formed a group and the women went to the CDO, then to the district court. They won the case and they planted vegetables and NTFPs and dug the fishpond. All 30 women went to the court.”

#### **Sagara Khatun - chairperson of the group:**

“ It was not until we started the group that we had the confidence to go to the CDO and court. We had the confidence to work for our own benefit.

Before only the men would come to community meetings or meet outsiders. We women had to stay in the house. Before, we women never met. Now we talk about our problems, have knowledge, and planted the land. We want the forest so that we have firewood to cook our food.

Since we formed the group, we have cultivated the barren land and planted crops but some vegetables died because there was not enough water. We have started a vegetable garden and a fishpond. We have problems with enough water for the vegetables and not enough money to buy stock for the pond. Our biggest problem is not enough water.”



### ***“We told the CFUG assembly that we wanted...”***

The women’s group of Ghoralikharka VDC in Dhankuta district is a union of the women from three CFUGs.

**Ambika Thapa and Puspa Kumari Poudel are two of three rotating group chairpersons:**

“ Before we had the CFUGs, but only since the Animation started, did we start this women’s group. Before, we would hide in our houses. Now, we do our own housework and also “walk” about to do our development work. Now we have loans without collateral – before we had to give our gold to the rich people.

We told the CFUG assembly that we wanted the revolving fund so we can give loans to the P&E. Our Jalkini CFUG gave us Rs 20,000 that we give as loans to the P&E. Now, they have had some benefits so next we will give it to the next rank. One woman was able to attend a 35-day veterinary training, but needs medicine and equipment to keep working.”

We had training for savings-and-credit and learned to write our names. We have 300 women in our group. We have had skill training to make pickles and candy, grow vegetables, and construct smoke-less cook stoves. We would like a day care for children under five, but need advice from the VDC network. We are happy to have loans from the revolving fund of the CFUGs to raise pigs and goats.”

### ***“Now they will ... ask for what they need”***

**Ganga Sharma - animator in Parbat district:**

“ There have been many changes through the Animation Programme. The women’s consciousness has been raised so they keep their environment clean, send their children to school, and grow vegetables to eat greens. The women have groups, from which they take loans for IGA, especially raising goats. The revolving fund from LFP is for P&E.

The problem is that there are so many P&E — to whom to give the loans. They are selected by the well-being rank, but there are people below the lowest rank. The monitoring committee ensures that the expenses are appropriate and that the person will be able to pay the loan.

They are motivated because they are all P&E on the committee. They are also empowered to demand services from the line agencies and NGOs. They also send representatives to mass meetings and range-post meetings. Before, the women could not even introduce themselves, now they will go to the assembly and ask for what they need.”



## Increasing access to assets and services

Indicators of the third domain of change, increasing access of the P&E to assets and services, include:

- Linkages of FUGs to other service providers and programmes in the districts to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the A/SM outcomes
- Equitable distribution of FUG resources – funds and forest products
- Enhanced access of local people, especially P&E, to assets - human, financial, social, natural, and physical
- Promotion of 'active' forest management for increased productivity
- Availability of IGAs to improve the livelihoods of P&E

Many FUGs had equal distribution of forest products, but it was often not equitable given the circumstances of P&E who depended on the forest for their livelihoods. FUGs sometimes used funds for infrastructure that only really benefit the elites, such as temples into which *Dalits* are not allowed entry. The changes may be access for P&E to loans that increase their assets or access to land allocations in public land in the *Terai* or in community forests.

**Training to improve product marketing:** To sustain the benefits from the assets, it is essential to link the FUGs and P&E to other service providers. Several individuals interviewed requested more training and support to help them improve the marketing of their products and manage problems, such insects or mould in vegetable gardens or diseases in livestock.

Voices from the field...

### ***“Now, the way is open”***

In Dhankuta district, FUG member lives in a tiny hut squeezed inside a road switchback.

**Sanja Tamang describes her experience having received a loan through the FUG:**

“Sundar (the animator) comes to our meetings and talks to us about loans and whether or not we have profit. Before we had nothing, now the way is open. We got the loan because we have no land and are very poor. We have a loan of Rs 5,000 for buffaloes. I have a loan of Rs 1,000 for the pig and it had nine piglets that can each be sold for Rs 1,000.”



***“Without social mobilisation..., we would not have used these resources”***

In Rupandehi district, the SM started only six months prior to this interview. In Ekala VDC, the Tiger Top Karbala Pokhari Samudaik Samuha has already made progress with vegetable gardens for the landless people and the community fishpond. LFP’s social mobilisation is linked with the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP), which provided Rs 75,000 to renovate the pond and increase the benefits available to P&E people.

**Sudama Pasi is treasurer of the group and Chedi Kurmi is chairperson:**

“ At the start the social mobiliser went to every house to talk to everyone, and then convinced us to come to a meeting to start the group. We decided to do a plantation to improve the environment and so that eventually we would have timber and fire wood. We also allocated land to the landless people so that they can grow vegetables for income for their livelihoods. We also started a fishpond to have income to develop our community. We only started 6 months ago.

Without the SM and starting the group, we would not have used these resources in our community. If we did not have these resources, we would probably have started as a savings-and-credit group and asked for other support. We use the pond water for vegetables.

People have started to earn some money; one man has earned Rs 800 and another man Rs 3,000 from vegetables. The fifteen poorest households have had vegetables to eat and earned a total of Rs 20,600 in 6 months.

We need a way to pump water to the plantation in the hot season and not have to carry it. We also need a nursery. We also need more two-way communication with LFP.”





**Suryamati Mishra - group member:**

“The change is that now people not only voice their problems. We realise that after we understand the problems, we can have benefits and can make decisions to reach solutions.”

**“99% change in people’s understanding of their rights”**

About 80% of the members of the Shanti FUG in Rupandehi district have no land and even the largest house has only enough land to grow three months of food. With facilitation from the social mobiliser, the FUG has conducted a well-being ranking and started supporting income-generating activities.



**Kaladar Gyawali - FUG chairperson:**

“When we started the FUG, it was destroyed, so we conserved 73 ha in 3 blocks where we planted seedlings. The SM started one year ago, since then we have done a well-being ranking, explained many things, and started activities for poor women in the poorest ranks with Rs 1 lakh from our FUG income. We are also supporting biogas from toilets. We hope that LFP will support us for the biogas.”

The advantage of SM is that those who knew nothing have had their awareness raised. We could start a variety of activities. People also understand that they are able to do work other than labouring elsewhere. This is the biggest change.

Of the 450 households in the FUG, 135 are in the second lowest rank, and 97 in the lowest rank. These people do not have employment. We have given 45 households loans of Rs 2,000 to buy goats.

Rather than just giving Rs 2,000 loan for buying goats, it would help the poor to get employment if LFP offered skill training in house-wiring, tailoring, or another skills from which they can earn income.”

**Chandra Bahadur BK - chairperson of the committee of P&E people:**

“The idea (for goat-raising) started with SM and we had training from the FUG about our rights, which opened our eyes. We did a well-being ranking to choose the people for goat-raising. The FUG set aside a fund and we went to each village to explain. There is 99% change in people’s understanding of their rights in the FUG since SM.”



Each poor household got a loan of Rs 2,000. We meet as a group to do savings-and-credit for a fund from which we can give loans for medicine if the goats get sick. If LFP stopped now we have the funds from savings-and-credit and revolving fund.

It would help if we could have matching funds to the money in our savings-and-credit fund so that we could do more. If we could have five goats, there would be more advantages. If the one goat dies, then we have a problem. ””

**Uttam Bhattarai - local youth club chairperson:**

“ Our youth club helped the FUG plant *amriso* grass in the forest for grass and brooms. Now, people have the attitude that they should save the forest because it belongs to them. The main problem is that people do not have enough to eat so they do not have time to work in the public pond or community forest. We could have better income if we could protect the community forest and pond from livestock coming in to graze. ””

## Factors Affecting the Outcomes of FUG Animation

Providing A/SM does not always ensure positive changes in a FUG because several factors regarding the management of the A/SM Programme, its animators / social mobilisers, and the FUG or community may affect the outcomes.

### Factors about the A/SM Programmes

**Availability of direct benefits:** Factors about the A/SM Programmes include the availability of IGAs and direct benefits, such as community infrastructure, and linkages with other service providers. Providing tangible benefits, such as community infrastructure, can be an entry point to establish a relationship with a community and gain their trust. Community infrastructure potentially benefits everyone in the village, so those people who do not receive livelihood support still benefit. LFP allocates funds for short-term infrastructure activities.

Another factor is the availability of income-generating activities, loans, or grants that motivate P&E to participate in meetings and activities. The poorest people need to work each day to earn food to eat and do not have time to attend meetings that do not directly bring income or better livelihoods.

**Technical knowledge:** For activities to succeed, animators /social mobilisers need enough technical knowledge to assist the groups with technical problems or linkages to technical service providers or other programmes and agencies. Income-generating activities might require infrastructure, such as pumps or canals for irrigation.

Voices from the field...

### **Mobilised, but needing technical support and infrastructure**

In many areas of the *Terai*, P&E communities came to be a long distance from the forests as more people migrated to the plains and settled on what was once forestland to the north of these communities. LFP works with these communities to promote the utilisation of public land for the benefit of P&E people.

In Makrahar VDC of Rupandehi district, several *to/e* committees have started the first vegetable farming on public land. However, during the interviews for this paper, the participants voiced the need for more technical support and support for infrastructures to either stop the erosion of rivers or provide irrigation water. They also raised the question of the workload of the social mobiliser.



### ***“We would like support for river control and irrigation”***

The Jut Pani Samaya Conservation Committee is cultivating land near a bend in a river.

**The secretary, Yadav Aryal, describes their progress and challenges:**



“Before the SM started, we had no groups organized and used the empty public land to graze livestock. We saw another group using empty land and had the idea that we should use this land for our future community development. Santa gave us advice along the way.

We did a well-being ranking based on education, assets, health to make categories from which we formed three groups to manage the land. We had the idea but she facilitated us to do it. We only started six months ago and hope that in the future we will have the forest, income, and benefits.

The main problem is that the river is cutting curves into the north of our village. We prepared a constitution to register as a FUG, but are not yet registered. The range post has helped us to make the map and the constitution. We would like support for river control and irrigation. We made the small irrigation ourselves. We need the social mobiliser to continue helping us plan for the next year.”

**Suparna Sahi - group member:**

“ The animator has so much area to cover that we see her only three days a week. If she had less area to cover, we could have more support. If she could come more often we could proceed more quickly and learn about how to apply medicines to prevent insects and so on. ”

**Dev Raj Purbia Tharu - group chairperson:**

“ The community selected me to be the chairperson so that I could mobilise the community (mostly *Tharus*) to tend the plants, build the irrigation so that we have resources for the future. We have to work ourselves for our own development. ”

***“We need more training ... to know how to solve this problem”***

The Manakamana Group has fourteen women and started three months ago.

**Damber Maya Thapa - *tole* group treasurer:**

“ We can speak and ask for what we need. We have started to do savings-and-credit but have not yet taken loans. We each have a part of the vegetable garden. We have learned from the animator, but we still want support to know how to plant the seeds, grow, and harvest the plants. The problem is that we need water on the land, after we have done so much work to plant it. ”

**Sorati Tharu - group member:**

“ We worked hard to plant the seeds and they have germinated. We have problems with insects and need to know how to solve this problem. A technician told us to put urea on the plants, but it burnt them. We need more training and to know specifically when and how to do what. ”

**Ram Prasad Tharu – group member:**

“ The problem is support for irrigation because many seeds dried up and we did not know what to do about problems. I hope we can grow our own vegetables. Most of us have very little land and not enough for a vegetable garden. If we could dig a canal from the river we would have enough water. ”



## Factors about a FUG

Various factors about a FUG or community group may affect the A/SM outcomes:

- Resources available in the community forest and community
- Leadership of the group and FUG committee
- Dependence on a cash economy
- Degree of poverty and exclusion can affect working with *Dalits* and women who have no land, no confidence, no voice or influence

**FUG leadership:** The response of FUG members to A/SM may depend on the leadership of the group. Better-off community leaders can be either a positive or a negative influence in generating inclusive changes. Another factor is whether leadership develops among the P&E. The leadership among P&E usually does not develop until they are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

**Forest resources:** Another factor is the availability of forest resources. Where a FUG has degraded forest with few resources, the members are less likely to spend time on FUG activities. In towns or along roads and trails where people depend on wages or business for livelihoods, A/SM is much less likely to mobilise the FUG members to conduct effective activities.

**Degree of poverty:** The degree of poverty and exclusion of P&E people can affect their participation, especially when working with *Dalits* and women who have no land, confidence, and voice or influence.

## Factors about the animator / social mobiliser

A/SM involves person-to-person communication so the selection of animators /social mobilisers is critical, especially when working with both P&E people and the elite leaders of a community. The animator should be friendly to everyone and have the skills and commitment to convince people to improve the functioning and equity of their FUG. LFP's Animation Strategy stipulates that animators /social mobilisers should be local people with knowledge of their community.

**Commitment of field staff:** The animator / social mobiliser should visit every household in the community — not just the elites or those in their same social situation. However, an elite animator /social mobiliser might visit only elite households or a *Dalit* animator / social mobiliser might be intimidated or prevented from visiting them these households. The animator might face caste, gender, or 'reverse' discrimination that requires courage and perseverance to overcome. Several animators /social mobilisers said that they face such challenges in their work. It may be easier for women or *Dalits* to work as animators /social mobilisers with P&E.

The animator /social mobiliser must be empowered to question or even challenge power relationships that maintain the status and resources of the elite. An example seen during field research was a woman animator from an elite family could not challenge the traditional power relationships in the community and the FUG to bring about significant changes.

**Local pressure:** Another factor effecting the local animators /social mobilisers or staff people is that they will be under more pressure than if they were outsiders for donations, favourable decisions, contracts, or concessions. They might also become the liaison with the EC rather than empowering the P&E to attend meetings and voice their concerns.

### Factors regarding working in the conflict situation

**Negotiation for local working space:** The animators /social mobilisers must usually negotiate the continuation of their work by explaining how it offers opportunities for the P&E. For instance, in the *Terai*, the insurgents initially insisted that they were against public land management because they would redistribute land. However, once they understood that the activity would benefit the P&E, they allowed it to go ahead. To negotiate in this situation, the A/SM staff must maintain neutrality, impartiality, and transparency for an acceptable image in the community and with both sides of the conflict. LFP provides risk management training for AP Managers and animators /social mobilisers to work in the conflict situation.

LFP has found that local animators /social mobilisers are better for working in the conflict situation even though they might be under greater pressure for donations, favours, and showing partiality to either side.

**Immediate direct benefits:** Conflict-affected communities are often not interested in forestry so the availability of ‘Quick Impact Projects’ requested by the community can serve as an entry point to start talking to the community members about FUG issues. It is essential for future development and peace building that community members see that development can take place despite the conflict.

#### Voices from the field...

##### **Yogendra Raj Sharma - animator in Baglung district:**

“ To work in this conflict situation, we explain that the Animation Programme is for the poor, weak, and P&E, so they (the insurgents) usually accept this. Sometimes, we have to be discreet in our work. ”

## Challenges Hindering Animation /Social Mobilisation

### Challenges due to the social and economic situation

Three main social issues may hinder the outcomes of A/SM.

**Convincing the elite:** The first is convincing elite members to share access to resources and decision-making that their families have controlled for generations. Change challenges the existing power structure so they may resist acknowledging that a more equitable community will be stronger and more developed. Often, the elites may be related to government officials, who would decide on a court case.

**Limited capacity of P&E:** The second issue is the limited capacity of P&E and finding ways to keep them engaged if the programme does not provide any immediate tangible benefits that improve their lives. The sense of identity of homogeneous ethnic communities might make them slower to accept and take risks to change. Often changes happen much faster in mixed and *Dalit* communities. Local animators /social mobilisers need to speak local languages because some groups, such as the Rais or Limbus of eastern Nepal, only understand half of spoken Nepali.

P&E have to work each day to earn food so they do not have time to attend meetings and training. FUGs should hold meetings when women and P&E are not busy with household or labour commitments. Thus, the animator /social mobiliser should live in the local area to be able to attend evening or early morning meetings. Another challenge is that the ultra poor may need special conditions to manage the risk of larger loans or grants (Rs 5,000).

**Working with different groups:** The third challenge is working with non-poor excluded people, such as affluent metalworkers, or poor people of an elite caste, such as people who might have lost their land or only inherited the land where their house sits. Support to the latter group can help in influencing the well-off elites of the importance of more equity and reducing poverty.

### Challenges operating the A/SM Programmes

**Capacity of local staff:** LFP has faced challenges finding local people with the education, commitment, and social and language skills to work in A/SM and building their capacity to provide social facilitation and technical knowledge. The number of visits and time required to mobilise P&E and FUG members demands commitment and determination on behalf of the A/SM staff.

**Careful facilitation to ease possible tensions:** The distribution of livelihoods benefits to a few P&E households may cause tensions that demand careful facilitation through in-depth discussions and a well-being ranking. FUG members need orientations to understand and accept the concept and make activities for P&E a reality. As more P&E make products through Income Generation activities, they may begin to compete with each other in the market. Consequently, the prices and benefits for a common product could decrease.

**Slow process:** Several people interviewed for this paper commented that the process of making decisions on the groups' proposals through the DFCC was often slow and discouraging for the groups. Fortunately, the political situation that hampered the work of the DFCCs is improving as of June 2006.

### **Challenges due to the lack of coordination by development agencies**

Different development agencies may have contradictory strategies, which presents challenges where several programmes work in the same community. Each agency may want the local people to form their programme's 'own' group. However, the poorest people usually do not have the time to attend a number of meetings in a month.

**Ensuring consistency:** Coordination among the various development agencies would avoid duplication and ensure consistency in guidelines and procedures. It could be advantageous if all the development agencies worked through FUGs, which are the only registered local bodies with resources.

**Resistance to new development approaches:** Challenges are encountered where 'old style' programmes, which simply provide resources, have been implemented for many years. The community members may resist having to mobilise their own local resources to contribute to community development projects. Working with the government agencies presents challenges due to their lack of organisational development, especially at the district level. Government staff not been able to visit or stay in villages due to the conflict situation and may resent not being able to control the A/SM Programmes.

Voices from the field...

***“We have three levels of problems ...with capacity”***

**Kamal Rokaya - SM coordinator in Nawalparasi district:**

“ Our first threat is that there is every kind of political person in the villages. They want to use us for their own purposes. Both sides want to use the groups for their own interests. We say we are not doing politics for anyone - we empower the community to know what politics are and what development is. We convince them that our work is to raise the poor. Our focus is social mobilization for local resource management.

Now, we have three levels of problems - the community capacity, the staff capacity, and the organization level of government agencies. At the community level, groups are formed but not capable - their organisational capacity is not built yet.

One of the problems is that the capacity of our staff has not yet been built, we need to give them more training on organisational development and on participatory planning. All of our animators are local people so, they already know, the local community. They also lead by example and one of our animators just gave a plot of land he inherited to a group of poor to use. Since, our NGO is local, there is positive trust. ”

***“If people were recipients, there can be challenges since ... now (we) expect them to be participants”***

**Januka Adhikari - SM coordinator in Rupandehi district:**

“ There are old and new styles of development programmes and if old style programmes operated in a community before and people were recipients, there can be challenges since the SM programme now expects them to be participants who mobilise their local resources.

It is important that SM shows people how to use their local resources to develop the confidence of both individuals and the community. Often people will want benefits that day and it is hard to convince them that it is worth waiting for greater benefits for 2-3 months or years.

There are also cultural problems when the women in the *Terai* will not speak if a male relative is in the group. As well, it might take 2-3 months of explaining to get a high caste group to sit with *Dalits*. ”

***“You have to go meet the people many times to achieve small things.”***



**Shanti Joshi - social mobiliser for four groups in Rupandehi district:**

“I’ve realised that development has to start from ourselves. The biggest problem is that the people are uneducated and it is difficult to link them to skills. The other problems are small ones that I can solve. You have to go meet the people many times to achieve small things. Sometimes it is hard to meet people because they are away working and can only meet in mornings and evenings.”

**Rama Sanker Pandey - social mobiliser in Sukrauli VDC of Nawalparasi district:**

“Before, the women would not come, just the men. We had to call the women several times to come for discussions. The rich people also tried to stop the activities of the group. They would tell the husbands not to let the women go to the meeting. We had a big meeting to explain that the rights of women and men are the same and that women should go ahead for development. If the women are educated, her children tend to be better educated. Before, the women were too shy to say what they needed and government officers would not select women to participate in training.

Now, there are political problems and (they) tried to stop our meeting today. I explained that one person alone cannot bring development so we help them form groups to work together.

It is also important to give adequate technical support like irrigation, pumps, and agricultural technical support. If we write a proposal and the DFCC has it for six months, it becomes difficult to work with the group or if they cannot get seedlings in the off seasons or the group did not hear back from LFP about a grant for fingerlings, so they took a loan from their savings-and-credit fund to buy fingerlings.”

**Rajiv Tripathi - social mobiliser with the NGO, NESDO, in Rupandehi district:**

“A problem is that in some VDCs, the elites have already ‘captured’ the use of the public land. Taking the case to the CDO and court depends on the relationships with the elites. In some places, the elites are related to the officials and the P&E are afraid to raise the case.

Sometimes, the decision-making is slow, which causes problems. It would help if the DFCC made decisions faster and if there was more bottom-to-top communication. It would be better if there was more coordination between all the different programmes.

Sometimes, at meetings it would help if a representative of NESDO or LFP could help explain so the group would understand better. It would also help if there was seed money for the savings-and-credit funds of very poor people so they can start IGA and loan activities sooner.

PDDP (a UN programme) has given daily allowances to participants to attend meetings, so some people deliberately belong to several groups. PDDP decides on projects quickly, so it is difficult when LFP is slow. ”

### ***“The challenge of uplifting Dalits is huge”***

**Shiva Bishwokarma - animator with the Bhim Pokhara Youth Club in Baglung district:**



“Through Animation, there were representatives from the *Dalit* houses on the EC but it takes time for them to be confident to ask for their rights and for the revolving fund for loans.”

To convince the elites, I usually talk to a person on the EC, who really understands the constitution and operational plan - which now usually have provisions for the P&E.

We also explain that besides the facilities for the P&E, Animation can offer infrastructure, like irrigation and drinking water, for the whole community. This usually helps them to accept making the changes.

The biggest challenge we face is that 80% of *Dalits* are poor, though we might give them goats; they have no land to grow grass, so the challenge of uplifting them is huge. There was a single woman who had a loan for a goat that died. The CFUG expected her to pay the loan so she came to me and we arranged with the CFUG to give her another loan for four years instead of two without interest so she could buy another goat. Now goat is pregnant. ”

### ***“After the work was extended, the social mobilisers were not necessarily local people”***

**Yog Maya Chaulagain - social mobiliser in Dhankuta with HIMAWANTI:**

“We had training and interaction with LFP after we started home work. We choose the social mobilisers from among our experienced members, so especially after the work was extended into another VDC, the social mobilisers were not necessarily local people. ”

**Indra Rai - animator in Dhankuta with FECOFUN:**

“ At the start, we sometimes weren't sure how to work with a group, but with training and experience, we have more confidence. A problem with new groups is that sometimes the CFUG leaders will tell us: 'Don't say that *keta-keti* (children's) talk.' It can be hard to work with them and raise their awareness, but we keep working with the CFUG members so they eventually convince the leaders. ”

**Comparative Effectiveness of Animation / Social Mobilisation:**

A recent study by LFP to categorise FUGs<sup>7</sup> found that when comparing areas with A/SM to those without, 60.9% of FUGs were active in 'Animation areas' as compared to 26.7% of the FUGs without A/SM.

With respect to institution and governance, 75.5% of the FUGs were active in the animation areas as compared to 50% in areas without animation; in forest management, 57.5% were active as compared to 34.9%; and in livelihoods, 39.8% were active as compared to 12.6%.

In general, FUGs in the A/SM areas have more:

- participation by poor households in FUG assemblies,
- assemblies as stated in their Constitutions,
- women and poor active on the ECs,
- effective 'bottom-up' planning processes,
- provisions that were implemented to benefit women and P&E people,
- effective record-keeping and self-monitoring,
- equitable distribution systems for forest products,
- effective use of well-being assessments to carry out pro-poor and income-generating activities,
- investment of FUG income in pro-poor activities,
- implementation of community development activities, and
- linkages with local and district level agencies to promote livelihoods activities in the community forest.

<sup>7</sup> LFP categorisation of CFUGs in the LFP seven hill districts

### Voices from the field...

The Charpala CFUG in Rupandehi district has the second largest community forest in Nepal covering 1,558 ha. It has 10,000 member households in seven VDCs and one ward of Butwal municipality. From the earnings from selling timber, the CFUG has constructed an office and employed staff. Although it pays for the salaries of seven social mobilisers, their main work is awareness raising. The EC consists of a representative from each VDC, *tole* committee, and five elected positions.

#### **Surya Rana - Office Secretary:**

“Users pay Rs 100 per quintal for firewood but get a 25% discount for ceremonies and get wood free of cost for funerals. There is no separate rate for the poor. People get wood cheaper for houses. *Tole* committees sell firewood, timber, rocks, and grass from which the CFUG earns Rs 18-19 lakh per year. We have also supported *gobar* gas (biogas) plants and the EC has made the decision to give loans to the poor for raising goats but we have not started yet.”

#### **“Everything – no!”**

The Pahire CFUG in Pakhribas # 8 of Dhankuta district had only just been included in the Animation Area. The CFUG was established in 1992 but did not hold an assembly until the animator started with their group in 2006. During this time, the guard of the community forest had encroached upon it. Even members of the old EC had not had any voice or influence in its decisions as the former chairperson made all the decisions. When asked about the functioning of the CFUG and whether it had provisions for the poor, the response was “everything – no!”

#### **Kumar Khatwal and Narayan Basnet - members of the CFUG:**

“We would like to sell some timber from the forest to start a revolving fund for IGA. Since we held the assembly one month ago, we have a new EC, a representative on the VDC network, and a new constitution and Operational Plan that allows for *tole* committees, land allocations, revolving funds for P&E people, and timber for houses. We would like to know what work we can do to help women through the CFUG.”

## Perceptions of A/SM by LFP stakeholders

Most individual DFO staff members interviewed for this paper described positive changes from A/SM. Some said that A/SM reduced their workload by generating more communication and collaboration between sectors, levels, and stakeholders. Others said more coordination is needed between the DFO, the animation staff, and the VDC.

Overall, DFO staff members are making positive changes by including provisions for the P&E in the Constitutions and Operational Plans of the FUGs.

Voices from the field...

### ***“We need to coordinate with the VDCs”***

**Mr Ganesh Ray - DFO in Parbat until March 2006:**

“ Animation for CFUGs is essential for individuals, groups, and forestry related NGOs. It promotes good governance, gender sensitisation for the participation of women, and inclusion and equality. We need to give *Dalits* fuel wood for less and we need to ensure that we hold meetings when women can attend.

We need SM for collaboration between all sectors – DFOs, CFUGs, and NGOs all need to collaborate. We cannot see it as an NGO program and not the DFO’s; we also need to coordinate with VDCs. By giving money from CFUGs to schools and community development, the VDC should use money for social activities so the people are mobilised for community forestry. We made the mistake of doing the Animation through NGOs, but did not coordinate with VDC. ”

### ***“Local leaders asking for Social Mobilisation”***

**Ram Krishna Karki – Assistant Forest Officer, District Forest Office, Rupandehi:**

“ An advantage of SM is that we know the needs of the villagers, the resources, who are the poor. So, we know the potential area and programme. It is easier for the villagers to say their needs and they realise things faster. Where SM is not available, local leaders are asking for it.

The disadvantage is that the NGO and Animators do not coordinate well with the DFO. LFP does a little bit. LFP staff say it is a DFO program, but the money comes from LFP. It pays the NGO, which pays its staff. Then the NGO writes reports to LFP and the DFO. It is two parallel paths. We should get rid of the direct relationship between LFP and the NGOs. If it is the DFO's programme, LFP should give the DFO the responsibility. As well, we need to give the animators short training on forestry, nurseries, seed collection, and transportation. ”

### ***“Animation has assisted our programme”***

**Saroj Khanal - Ranger in Dhankuta district:**

“ Animation has made the CFUGs meet regularly each month, do more regular assemblies, and activities for the poor. There is a lack of coordination with the DFO, which is the only problem. Mostly, Animation has assisted our programme.

The benefits of local animators are that the mother tongue is the same and they know everyone in the village. They are also more motivated because they are working for the development of their own community and can be a bridge to the community. A disadvantage is that sometimes what they say does not carry as much weight. Another is that unmarried ladies might move when they get married. ”

### ***“Our workload has been reduced because there is more communication”***

**Ram Bahadur Bishwokarma - Ranger of Baglung Range Post in Baglung district:**

“ With animation, we have started to do well-being ranking and address the results in the Operational Plans and Constitutions. We add that the EC must include P&E, who should be subsidised in the distribution of forest products. Most groups distribute the forest products equally but still do not understand the idea of having different rates for each rank.

We also add that 20 to 25% of the fund should be used for P&E and provisions for land allocation, which many groups have done. The revolving fund should also be for loans for the P&E.

With animation, our workload has been reduced because there is more communication. Where the animator goes to all the meetings and works hard, all the minutes are well kept. There are animation areas where the groups do not function well; there are areas without animation where the groups function well. It depends on the education of the groups, if they follow the rules and have leadership. If the group does not have resources, then it is harder to motivate them. ”

## Building Sustainable Outcomes and Linkages

Currently, A/SM depends on donor support for salaries of staff and managers. Various mechanisms have shown potential for making the activities and outcomes of A/SM more sustainable by developing:

- Volunteer animators/initiators for each FUG
- A network of FUGs in each VDC (VFCC) to manage A/SM by raising common issues, coordinating funds for animators /social mobilisers and income generating activities, monitoring, and advocating for programmes and service providers.
- Linkages between the FUG, the DFCC, and the other service providers and programmes to link FUG plans with community plans.
- Systems for feedback from the field to the policy level
- Local funds from contributions by FUGs, VDCs, VFCCs, and other institutions
- Local Resource Persons (LRPs) to revise Constitutions and Operational Plans.

### Voices from the field...

#### **Prasad Chettri - member of LFP NGO partner in Rupandehi:**

“ The challenge with sustainability is that each (development agency) programme runs groups for its 3-4 year duration, and then when the support ends, the group stops functioning. We have also found problems in the registration of groups for each activity - forest, fish, and agriculture. Some line agencies do not like sub-groups for different sectors in their groups.

One solution is to do all group registration and periodic planning at the VDC level where there can be integration of the activities through sustainable groups.

For this, the community planning process must be institutionalised. First, one needs information and a needs assessment to reflect upon. It took almost one year for the animators to realise that needs are not equivalent to desires or wants. If it took our staff a year to understand this, how long will it take the communities? We need to prepare communities for need-driven development. ”

## Developing volunteer FUG initiators

LFP encourages the development of volunteer FUG initiators (animators), who support their FUGs when the A/SM staff members are occupied elsewhere. Although the staff are locals of the VDC, they may be from a different community and might not have time to attend every FUG meeting since they are expected to provide services to six to eleven FUGs in the VDCs.

These volunteers accompany the A/SM staff to visit households and groups; facilitate meetings, well being rankings, or *tole* group formation; and discuss amendments to Constitutions or Operational Plans. They act as a bridge between the staff and the focus groups to provide timely and regular service and advice.

**Skills stay in community:** Strategically, their services are available for the long term since they are locals of each community and can provide services to their FUGs in the current difficult security situation and after the completion of LFP. The volunteers are not a financial burden to the FUG.

The FUGs select the volunteers with facilitation by the animator /social mobiliser. The volunteers should be committed to local community and responsible to the FUG. In some districts, one woman and one man are selected as volunteer initiators.

Voices from the field...

### ***“We do this to bring development to the village”***

In Ghoralikharka VDC of Dhankuta, three local women have become volunteer initiators (internal activists).

**Puspa Kumari Koirala, Ambika Thapa, and Man Maya Tamang were selected for their commitment to their communities and active involvement in their respective CFUGs.**

“ Each CFUG committee selected us because we are active members and then the network selected us for training as internal activists. Our work is to go to the meetings to help the groups decide what to request. Then, we attend the network meetings to present the group requests and report the decisions to the group. We do this to bring development to the village and to raise the consciousness of the women and P&E people.

We have been learning from the example of the animator and hope that we learn enough to continue doing this work. We have only had a short training and could learn more from an intensive training on how to operate many activities, like revolving funds. We also hope that if there was a small interest on the loans we could have a small amount to cover our expenses.”



### “Someone in the village can continue the animation work”

#### Mithulal BK - animator in Parbat:

“ We each work with a volunteer who goes with us to all the meetings. They are a local person, who the CFUG sometimes compensates. When LFP finishes and we have to leave, someone in the village can continue the animation work. Since we all work in our home VDCs, we will be there as resource persons for the CFUGs.

In my village about one-third of the people are *Dalit*. It is not difficult to work as a *Dalit* in meetings and the animation work. The problem is when we have to travel and find a place to stay and eat. It is not a problem in *Janajati* and *Dalits* mixed communities, but it is in communities of high caste people. People's consciousness has been changed, but there are still some aspects yet to change. ”



#### Renuka Devi Sharma - volunteer animator of Chutreni CFUG in Baglung district:

“ Tika (the animator) has already resigned (to find another job). I am helping with meetings, so that we can still run our CFUG well and learn the needs of the members. ”



## Facilitating networks of FUGs

LFP encourages the establishment of VDC networks of FUG representatives (VFCCs). VFCCs provide an institutional framework for more ownership and sustainability, including the continuation of A/SM activities and interlinking of projects. They can prioritise creation of infrastructure, provide training, select staff members, and support animators /social mobilisers.

**Mobilising local resources:** VFCCs mobilise local resources through contributions from each FUG to create a basket fund, which is available for FUGs with few resources for animator salaries, training, or innovative activities. The FUGs need to recognise that the animators /social mobilisers' salaries are a worthwhile cost for improved forest management.

**Links to service providers:** By prioritising the proposals of the FUGs and *tole* groups, VFCCs can call on service providers more effectively and create linkages to other programmes. VFCCs can also create guidelines for pro-poor interventions, such as land allocation and income generating activities. The VFCCs invite the FUG chairpersons to the bi-monthly A/SM meetings and give the reports for their groups, which creates more ownership of the activities.

Voices from the field...

***“A network of five CFUGs in this village to improve our facilities”***

**In Ghoralikharka VDC of Dhankuta district, Ramji Basnet is chairperson of the VFCC:**

“ Since Animation activities started, we established a network of the five CFUGs in this village to improve the facilities of the CFUGs, improve the livelihoods of the P&E, and improve our organisational development. SOLVE gave us an orientation and support to form the VDC network, when we all met to shortlist the animator.

The main objective of the VFCC is for all the CFUGs to work in the same way. Before we put our CFUG funds in the bank; now we started a basket fund for the CFUG work and revolving funds for loans to improve the livelihoods of the poor. We are also revising the Operational Plans so that 33% of the EC members were women. We also looked at how we could use the fund to develop our villages. We have also done trainings on IGA for the members.

With the help of SOLVE (the NGO), we started the network and revolving fund. Each CFUG gave Rs 1,000 and SOLVE matched it with Rs 5,000 to create the basket fund. The VDC also contributed. SOLVE will find support for the projects that cannot be done by the CFUGs. One problem is that the fund is too little to do much and until we register, we cannot apply for funds from donors.

In this situation, there are no elected representatives, so we work as a network of CFUGs to create the space for community development and make sustainable development for the future of the children. We also will resolve conflicts between CFUGs and individuals, since there are no representatives. There are networks in other VDCs and sometimes we meet or join for trainings.”



In Baglung district, the NGO working as the APM is now supporting the handover of management of the Animation Programme to VFCCs.

**Narayan Poudel - Secretary of the VFCC for Tityang VDC:**

“ We hope that by establishing and registering the VFCC, we can continue the work of the international organizations in forestry. The VFCC can be a point to start working in the VDC, even if the programme is in another sector. That way we can pay the salary of one animator for each VDC. With support of the VDC, the work of the VFCC will be legalised.

If the animator helps to develop volunteer initiators in each ward, then the Animation Programme will continue and be more cost effective. That way we will develop the human resources to continue facilitating the CFUGs.”

**Prem KC - Chairperson of the Tityang VFCC and CFUG member:**

“ There is so much left to do. We need more coordination. We also need to use our own resources for funds to improve the situation of the poorest people. You (LFP) have also shown us the road because we cannot just beg. We also need to contribute or the work is not sustainable. Your monitoring is very important so that we know how to improve. We need leadership that will bring about positive changes.”



## Linkages with other service providers and programmes

The NGOs managing A/SM often implement projects for other agencies and donors besides LFP. They are encouraged to link the communities and FUGs with the services provided by the other projects or programmes. In this way, the FUGs can avail of services in other sectors, such as health, micro-credit, literacy, and infrastructure development.

Generating these linkages has helped sustain the changes brought about through A/SM. FUGs can serve as the main community group through which development activities are implemented, as they are the only legally registered body at the community level in Nepal.

Voices from the field...

### ***“We can network and work with multiple partners”***

**Bishwo Prakash Prasai - Animation Programme Manager in Parbat:**

“Being a partner of LFP and not a contractor, we can network with other programmes to work with the CFUGs, such as the Safer Motherhood Programme. For instance, with funds from World Education we work with out-of-school children, especially those older than 13, on IGA connected to the CFUGs. One organisation cannot work on everything, so we can network and work with multiple partners.”

**Mr Rajendra Pradhan - Executive Director of SOLVE, which manages the Animation Programme in Dhankuta:**

“SOLVE is trying to make the work of LFP sustainable by linking it with the other 18 programmes we implement, such as a micro-finance programme. Other organisations will give support in agriculture, infrastructure, and small enterprise development. LFP created the environment but is pulling out just as we are starting to do work that brings tangible benefits.

We are also bringing local journalists to write articles for wider local dissemination of the Animation Programme’s work. We have also made a manual for teachers to use in schools to talk about CFUGs, which will help in building awareness and sustainability.”

## Learning from LFP's Animation / Social Mobilisation

Reflections upon LFP's A/SM approach offers a range of valuable lessons for GoN and programmes working in the forestry sector and community development. The A/SM approach requires coordination at every level. Two-way communication through the A/SM of a FUG or other group is so important that if it fails, then all other interventions are also likely to fail.

**Local NGOs and animators /social mobilisers:** Implementation through district or local NGOs allows A/SM Programmes to cover more areas and FUGs. Recruiting local people to work as animators /social mobilisers increases access to remote and conflict-affected areas with fewer interventions and service providers. Although local animators /social mobilisers may be more susceptible to local pressure, they are more effective at building trust and confidence with communities.

**Representation and Inclusion:** A/SM staff learned the importance of ensuring that FUG activities are representative and inclusive. Several FUGs have admitted new members from previously excluded community groups. To avoid exacerbating community divisions and losing the support of better-off people, LFP's pro-poor targeting focuses not just on specific groups but on people who are P&E in terms of asset ownership, income, resources, well-being, and decision-making processes. There are people who are both income poor and socially excluded.

**Community Awareness:** The awareness of community members increases through using participatory tools, such as household visits and well-being ranking. Several informants said that they became more aware of the concerns of the P&E, and the fact that they themselves could make decisions and plans to improve the situation in their own community.

**Modified Approach for Specific Situations:** LFP modifies its A/SM approach for the different geographical regions of Nepal. For instance, FUGs in the Hills function mostly for subsistence, so communities have less intense and competitive power dynamics.

In contrast, in the *Terai*, some forests have a much greater commercial value, so FUG leaders may have much stronger motivation for holding onto power. Many of the most excluded communities are in the south of the *Terai* because as migrants moved into the areas just to the north, they cut the forests, which are now only further north. The most promising option for these communities to develop natural resources is the management of public land, leasehold forestry, agro-forestry, alternative energy sources, and for soil conservation measures.

**Capacity building and skill development:** More forest technicians are required to complement the work of social mobilisers. LFP has incorporated this approach into its

new implementation strategy in the Mid-western districts. In the Hills, LFP has developed Local Resource Persons (LRPs). In the *Terai*, it links groups with DFOs, NGOs, and private service providers.

**Livelihood Improvements:** Diversification of IGAs is a critical issue. Improved coordination amongst the different organisations and line agencies promoting the development of forest resources, livestock, and agriculture is essential for the success of skills training and livelihoods improvement activities.

**Developing Linkages:** Effective linkages are necessary with different stakeholders including VDCs, DFCCs, local service providers, and clubs, especially for the sustainability of programme results. Animators /social mobilisers need the skills to further strengthen these linkages, particularly with district line agencies, and provide more technical information.

**Leadership and Local Ownership:** FUG members are developing the skills and ownership to manage their activities. A/SM has shown the potential to develop alternative community leaders in small interest or *tole* groups, FUGs, and networks. Traditional community leaders have encouraged leadership from amongst other groups of people.

**Legal Provisions:** Legal provisions for VFCCs are needed in national and district guidelines to sustain the outcomes of A/SM. The establishment of VFCCs has been possible where DFOs are supportive, however legal provisions for VFCCs to operate as a coordinating institutional body are required.

**Increasing Coverage:** Although the intensity of A/SM activities required may limit the direct coverage of FUGs, it is possible to increase coverage indirectly by having more progressive FUGs promote innovations for the P&E in neighbouring FUGs. Working through local NGOs and government is also an effective means of expanding coverage of A/SM work.

**Institutional strengthening and functioning of FUGs:** The stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed for this paper indicated that they appreciated LFP's A/SM Programmes and the changes generated. FUG members said they had learned how to keep records, conduct meetings, and represent their interests.

**Planning for sustainability:** The sustainability of programme results cannot be ensured without planning from the outset. LFP uses a variety of measures, such as volunteer initiators (internal activists), VFCCs, and partner linkages, to develop the necessary skills and ownership for future sustainability.

Voices from the field...

**“This group was given priority because it has little influence”**

The Jalkinikoltar CFUG in Ghoralikharka VDC of Dhankuta district has a couple of remote *toles* where people have had almost no influence until the Animation started.

**Sohan Shrestha - Animation Programme manager in Dhankuta:**

“ The animator facilitated the CFUG assembly and there were soon changes. The meetings became regular each month. The CFUG did a well-being ranking in *toles* and the animator went to each house for social preparation and facilitated *tole* meetings.

Each *tole* submitted plans to the EC, which prioritised plans and submitted them as annexes to the VDC. The CFUG decided to give drinking water to this group, because it was remote and voiceless. There was no drinking water, so sometimes the people had to drink irrigation water.

LFP gave materials for purchase and wages for skilled labour. The *tole* group provided sand, rocks, and unskilled labour. The CFUG gave Rs 15,000 for the drinking water system. There are two tap stands for the 12 -14 households. This group was given priority because it has little influence.”

**Dhan Bahadur Thapa - Chairperson of the *tole* committee:**

“ Sundar (the animator) helped us with drinking water. We had been asking for drinking water for almost 20 years.

We had monthly meetings and assemblies before he worked for us, but now, more people come to the assemblies. Before, only the women on the EC would attend, now 25-30 people come. About a quarter of the women speak out in assemblies. I have heard that the EC will give people support if they need treatment. They also give loans from the revolving fund to the P&E. We would like to ask for loans for the weak and poor.”



## Conclusions and Future Directions

Evidence gathered for this Good Practice paper highlights that LFP's A/SM has proven to be a valuable approach to create improved social and governance environments in FUGs. A/SM has facilitated LFP-assisted FUGs to make internal changes that support more effective design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction, natural resource management, and small-scale community infrastructure interventions by:

- Enhancing the confidence and skills of P&E people to articulate their needs and interests, influence decisions, and demand better services
- Promoting more effective, inclusive functioning, transparency, and accountability of FUGs
- Promoting more inclusive planning and implementation of activities
- Promoting more equitable distribution of resources and benefits to P&E people
- Building the leadership and institutional capacity of FUGs, sub-groups, and VDC-level networks
- Influencing elites and other influential stakeholders to change how they make decisions and provide community leadership.

**A/SM for more effective programmes:** Field experience shows that LFP's A/SM contributes to the implementation of improved pro-poor and socially inclusive forestry approaches. Animation and social mobilisation are an important aspect of LFP and GoN's institutional strategy to work more effectively with P&E groups.

**Forestry for community development:** Ensuring the sustainability of these outcomes in LFP's seven Hill districts requires that VFCCs are strengthened to promote community development and provide entry points for local government and other programmes to work through VDCs/DDCs.

**Future initiatives:** LFP has started a similar 'Partnership' Initiative in its five Mid-western districts, where it operates through more local NGO partners (3 – 4 NGOs per district) and integrates institutional/social skills with technical forestry skills. There is significant potential for this Mid-west Partnership Initiative to pilot more effective and inclusive community and leasehold forestry, reduce discrimination, and contribute to peace building in these long-term conflict-affected districts.

#### Voices from the field...

In Deupur VDC of Parbat district, Khoranga CFUG has brought about several positive changes, including greater social inclusion, as an outcome of Animation.

**Baburam Timilsina, a member of the CFUG Land Allocation Group reports:**

“ There are great changes since the animation of the CFUG. Previously the CFUG only included two *toles*, now a third *tole* has been included. Before, it was just the elite in the CFUG, now it is ordinary people. We have had opportunities to understand many things. Also, we never used to be able to obtain loans. ”



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