In Nepal, based on the management regime, there are two types of forests: National Forests (NF) and Private Forests (PF). The Forest Act 1993 and Regulations 1995 are the legal instruments to translate the policy vision into practice. PF represents the forests or trees planted, nurtured or conserved in any private land that belongs to an individual. Obtaining private tree registration certificate and associated transportation permits from DFO is very complex and involves a lot of risks and uncertainties for marketing of their products from private lands. Policy making process in Nepal is yet to be based on field evidences. The institutions that are responsible do not take scientific evidences for policy formulation, in general. To a significant degree, an explanation to this irony is the lack of required local capacity to contest or to formulate policy alternatives based on research and evidence. With this realization, a five year (2013-2018) joint project “Enhancing Livelihoods and Food Security (EnLiFT) through Agroforestry and Community Forestry in Nepal” implemented by the Government of Nepal and Government of Australia and operated in six sites of two districts (Kavre and Lamjung) envisaged the need for policy lab approach to influence policy in promoting private forests, agro forestry and community forestry in Nepal. For this a framework was initially designed by Dr. Hemant Ojha, University of New South Wales, Australia.

Introduction

Some of the policy related questions were identified such as:
- How have the policies, laws and regulations (Forest Act 1993, Forest Regulation 1995, Environment Protection Regulation 1997, and Private Forest Development Directives 2011) promoted/inhibited registration, management, harvesting including timber marketing of private forest?
- How can implementing agencies such as District Forest Officer and Policy encourage private forestry development and marketing in the prevailing regulatory framework?

And to find the appropriate answer more than seven policy lab meetings were held from 2014 to 2017 within and outside Kathmandu (Figure 1). During the process top level bureaucrats involving senior policy makers in the field of forestry, agriculture and live-stock development were briefed on the existing policies and hurdles appeared in translating them in the field with evidences.

Objectives:
- To systematically engage policy actors in the research process,
- To generate thick descriptions of the ways in which key policy actors understand and interpret policy problems, including the contested views and interpretations of problems and solutions,
- To identify potential policy solutions to the problems.

Objectives:

Approach:

Some of the related questions were identified such as:
- To systematically engage policy actors in the research process,
- To generate thick descriptions of the ways in which key policy actors understand and interpret policy problems, including the contested views and interpretations of problems and solutions,
- To identify potential policy solutions to the problems.

Highlights of Policy Lab outcomes

The followings were some of the issues that policy lab came to the conclusion.
- The policy provision is the major hurdles for major policy issues (for instance- private forest registration, timber harvesting and marketing).
- The situation demands the revision of the current policy provisions.
- Lack of technical help (silviculture of species) at grass root level in developing private forests.
- The concept of EnLiFT policy lab is quite interesting and the process has been the “eye opener” in reforming relevant policies.

Key Recommendations

Some of the suggestions put forward by the Policy Lab process to the Government of Nepal were:
- To revise the list of species for effective marketing of products and simplify the private tree registration process, formulate appropriate royalty system for forest based and farm based products.
- Exotic tree species such as Eucalyptus, Populus, Ceiba pentandra, Ipil-ipil which do not grow naturally in Nepalese forests should be traded freely in the market without any regulatory requirement.

Initiation taken up by the Government

Although it is not the effect of Policy lab recommendation only but Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation has recently amended Forest Act 2049 (BS).

Acknowledgments

The author’s would like to acknowledge with thanks to Dr. Tony Bartlett, Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR), Canberra, for providing travel grants for the lead author in attending the conference. The author also would like to acknowledge ACIAR for funding EnLiFT Policy Lab through EnLiFT Project.