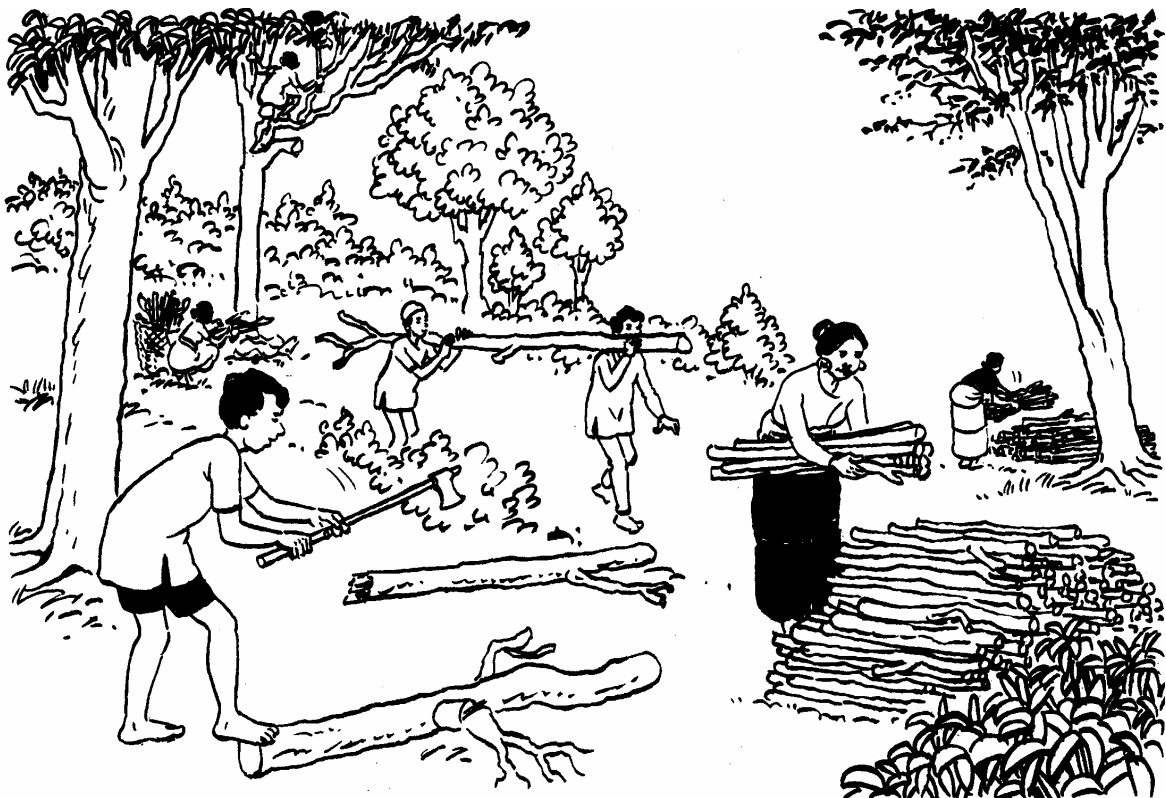FOREST USER GROUPS FOREST MANAGEMENT PROJECT

PARTICIPATORY ACTION AND LEARNING

A Field Worker's Guidebook For Supporting Community Forest Management

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Foreword

Our Community Forestry Programme in Nepal is widely considered to be successful in terms of achieving its dual objectives of environmental conservation and local community development. Despite this, we cannot afford to be complacent, and we need to continue to move forward to ensure that issues which are raised continue to be tackled in a way which will continuously improve the practice and impact of community forestry. This Guidebook will help to improve the quality of support which forest user groups get from Department of Forests staff and NGOs. It sets out in a series of simple steps a means for improving the management of community forests, and giving more benefits to the poorest and most forest dependent community members. Participatory Action Learning is therefore a critically important tool.

On behalf of the Department of Forests, I would like to congratulate the members of the FFMP Team for their efforts in putting together this important and useful document.

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Foreword

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) has had a close association with the action research in Myagdi and Parbat Districts of Nepal associated with the development of this Guidebook. DFID not only funded the Forest User Groups Forest Management Project (FFMP), but also funded the Nepal UK Community Forestry Project (NUKCFP) and later the Nepal: Livelihoods and Forestry Programme, which collaborated with FFMP. This collaboration has provided an opportunity to learn more about the process of forest user group (FUG) formation in the country and some of the problems and challenges that are faced in setting up such groups.

Despite the scale of success of community forestry across the hills of Nepal a number of significant challenges remain. These include the protectionist and passive forest management approach of the majority of FUGs and consequent forsaken benefits; poor equity within many FUGs with domination by elites and men; the exclusion of some of the poorest traditional forest users.   Other lessons learnt include the need to link local community forestry interventions to national policy developments, the potential to work with a wider range of stakeholders and the need for disaggregated monitoring.

The Guidebook introduces Participatory Action and Learning (PAL) as a way of addressing a number of these issues by providing an approach for both FUG members and forestry field staff to learn together from the process. They jointly identify forest management issues, initiate actions to address those issues, monitor the results of the actions and the process used, and then reflect upon the results to determine future actions. The approach to community forest management planning, if applied through the process being suggested in this Guidebook, can make a positive contribution to sustainable livelihoods, particularly through enhancing the natural capital of FUG members; social capital - particularly of poorest households; human capital through better forest management skills and to a certain extent financial capital through increased levels of FUG funds.

I believe that PAL will prove to be a valuable tool for shifting FUGs from 'passive' to 'active' management of their forest resources, which can only be beneficial for all concerned.
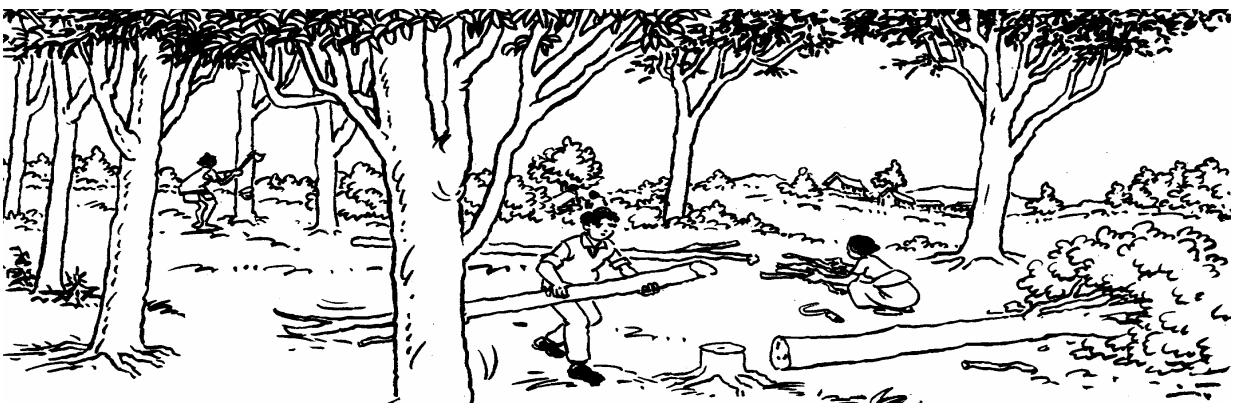
Peter Neil,
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Nepal: Livelihoods and Forestry Programme

Acknowledgements

Glossary

AERDD	Agriculture Extension and Rural Development Department
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
DFID	Department for International Development
DFO	District Forest Office(r)
FG	Forest Guard
FUGC	Forest User Group Committee
FFMP	FUG Forest Management Project
FUG	Forest User Group
HMGN	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
LFP	Livelihoods and Forestry Programme
PAL	Participatory Action and Learning
PAR	Participatory Action Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUKCFP	Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project
RFO	Range Forest Officer

Bari	Rainfed agriculture land (out-slopped terrace)
Bhari	A headload (about 30 kg)
Chaur	Marginal agriculture land
Katuwal	A locally paid village level messenger
Kharbari	Out-slopped marginal land used for growing thatch grass
Khet	Arrigated levelled agricultural land
Muri	measurement unit for grain production (approx. 60 Kgs)
Ropani	Land measurement unit in the hills region (1/20 of a ha)
Shyaula	Leafy branches and twigs
Sim	Water-logged agriculture land
Tole	A hamlet or small settlement (part of a village)

Contents

General Introduction
About This Guidebook…

'Participatory Action and Learning (PAL) for Community Forest Management Planning' is one of two guidebooks developed to support Forest User Groups (FUGs), in managing their community forests. It is based on the work of Forest User Groups Forest Management Project (FFMP)[1] in collaboration with NUKCFP (now LFP the Livelihoods and Forestry Programme, and also on wider developments, which are taking place in community forestry in Nepal.

This guidebook describes the PAL approach to planning community forest management in a village. It describes the rationale for PAL, the process involved in it and the various factors that form the PAL strategy. It also describes in detail how to plan and implement individual steps and what tools and techniques are needed. The other guidebook, *'Innovative Forestry: A Synthesis of Small-Scale Forest Management Practices,'*

Box 1: Assumptions for the Guidebook

The Guidebook is prepared assuming that:

- Field staff, especially Forest Rangers and Forest Guards, form FUGs and hand over forests to them using the correct procedure, as outlined in the operational guidelines and that they have information on all FUGs and community forests in their area, and possess technical knowledge and skills needed for the management of community forest resources.

- The FUG members have the understanding of government policy on community forestry, its objectives and the procedure to implement it in villages.

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describes a range of forestry practices, from which FUGs and field staff can choose the best options and adapt them to their own site-specific circumstances.

Who is this guidebook for?

θ   Government Forest Department field staff (especially Forest Rangers, Forest Assistants and Forest Guards)

θ   Staff of field projects

θ   Staff of non-governmental/community based organisations (NGOs/CBOs)

θ   Local animators and FUG members

What is in the guidebook?

θ   The need for PAL in community forest management planning

θ   The PAL process – major stages and critical steps

θ   The PAL strategy

θ   A description of how to plan and carry out each of the 'critical' steps

θ   Examples of activities, methods, techniques and tools

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[1]   *The FFMP is managed by the Department of International and Rural Development, University of Reading, UK in collaboration with the Livelihoods and Forestry Programme, Kathmandu, and funded by the UK government's Department for International Development through its Forest Research Programme (DFID R6918). The project has been operational during the period 1997 – 2001.*

In what ways is planning for community forest management different from forming a FUG?

Preparation of an 'operational plan' is usually done as part of the FUG formation process. In practice, it is assumed that the process of 'forming a FUG' is the same as 'forest management planning' and that the resulting 'operational plan' is adequate for management of a community forest. In practice, operational plans as they are prepared at present are not sufficient to be used as forest management plans - they lack both good information and clearly defined management objectives and activities.

Of course, the FUG formation process is very important. It leads to the FUG constitution, which guarantees the rights of the users to their forest. The 'operational plan' defines rules and regulations for forest protection and use, and without it users cannot legally use their forest. However, the purpose and the process of community forest management planning are different from those of forming a FUG. This has resulted in a situation where most FUGs have operational plans which are insufficient for effectively and actively managing their community forest (see Box 2).

The process of forming a FUG usually takes time. This initial stage may not be right for detailed forest management planning. Villagers need time to think through and understand the policy objectives and their own and Forest Department's new roles and responsibilities in forest management. In the beginning, they may view community forestry initiatives similar to many other government programmes that have had little positive impact on their livelihoods. There are many examples of conflicts arising as a result of handing over community forests in haste.

Box 2: Difference between FUG formation and community forest management planning

FUG formation involves: identifying a forest and its users; organising the users into a group; registering the group with the District Forest Office; preparing the FUG constitution and 'operational plan'; and getting these approved by the DFO.

The FUG Constitution: legalises the user's rights to use a given forest; includes a list of member households; a list of FUG committee officials; and describes the roles and responsibilities of FUG members, FUG committee and DFO in forest management.

The Operational Plan: describes rules and regulations (and sanctions) for the protection and use of the community forest. Under current arrangement, members of a FUG cannot legally use a community forest until they have an approved operational plan.

Community forest management planning: involves planning for 'active' forest management by the forest users. It includes identifying forest management problems and ways to address them. The solutions may include changing forest structure and species composition over time; enhancing the growth rate of preferred tree species; harvesting methods that maximise the supply of various products; ensuring adequate regeneration of the forests; and distributing forest products equitably to FUG households.

How is the information in the guidebook organised?

The guidebook is divided into four parts:

Part one explains the rationale for participatory action and learning in community forest management planning in villages, and the various stages and steps involved in the process.

Part two describes the PAL strategy, which is based on the factors that influence community forest management.

Part three describes how the 'critical steps' are planned and implemented. Each step includes descriptions of what action to take, why, when and how. It identifies what resources will be needed and what the expected outputs are as well as who will be responsible for the action, and how long will it take to carry it out.

Part four provides examples of various activities, techniques and tools that can be used while going through different steps of the PAL process.

Part One - Rationale And Process For Participatory Action And Learning

The need for community forest management planning

The Government of Nepal has adopted community forestry as a major policy strategy to manage the country's forest resources, especially in the hills region. According to a recent report of the Community and Private Forestry Division, in the hills region alone, there are now 8,700 FUGs, involving some 914,000 households (5.2 million people) and 615,000 ha of forests. This accounts for about 34 percent of the total forests and 52 percent of the total population in the hills region. Some recent studies have indicated that although the physical condition of forests in some villages has improved, the actual flow of forest products to the user households has been limited.

So far, community forestry activities in villages have concentrated mostly on forming forest user groups and handing over forests to them. Once a forest is handed over to a FUG, field staff tend to leave the users to manage the forest on their own. Although the need for post-formation support is often discussed, in practice most FUGs receive little in the way of forest management support. The 'operational plan', which is seen as the main basis for community forest management, provides little information on how to manage the forest most effectively.

The result is that FUGs manage their community forests in a rather 'passive' manner with emphasis on protection and with only limited utilisation of the resource.

Regeneration is fundamental to long-term sustainable forest management. For this, some systematic cutting, and the application of appropriate silvicultural techniques is desirable. For example, many species are light demanders and will not regenerate unless the seedlings get enough light. Without action to provide light, many such seedlings die. Combined with seedling losses from grazing and/or fire, can result in a steady depletion of the growing stock with little chance of regeneration.

The present practice of forest management by protection only may lead to further degradation of the forest. On the other hand, a more systematic harvesting of

forests would provide products to forest users at the same time as encouraging regeneration and growth of the resource.

Better forest management is needed to ensure that:

θ Improvements in forest condition lead to corresponding increases in forest product supplies and off-take levels in a sustainable way.

θ Enough forest products of the right type are available to satisfy the needs of FUG members, especially the needs of the poorest and most forest dependant household within FUGs.

'Active' management of forests not only helps to improve forest condition and its' potential productive capacity, but also the supply of forest products to user households. The PAL approach to community forest management planning, if applied through the process being suggested in this guidebook, can make a positive contribution to sustainable livelihoods, particularly through enhancing the natural capital of FUG members; social capital - particularly of poorest households; human capital through better forest management skills and to a certain extent economic capital through increased levels of FUG funds.

For more 'active' management of community forests, both the forest users and field staff need to work and learn together. Forest users need to take part in the forest management because they have a better understanding of the forestry problems (and solutions) facing them. Forestry field staff need to take part because it is their job to support FUGs in the management of community forest resources, and they have greater access to outside knowledge, information and other resources.

What is PAL?

Participatory action and learning (PAL) is about working together with established FUGs to help them to 'actively' manage their community forests. PAL is based on the concept of the learning cycle for participatory action research (PAR) used by the FFMP (see Figure 1).

In this, both FUG members and forestry field staff learn together from the process. They jointly identify forest management issues, initiate actions to address those issues, monitor the results of the actions and the process used, and then reflect upon the results to determine future actions.

Figure 1: The learning cycle used by FFMP

Information collection

Information analysis and planning

Plan implementation

Monitoring
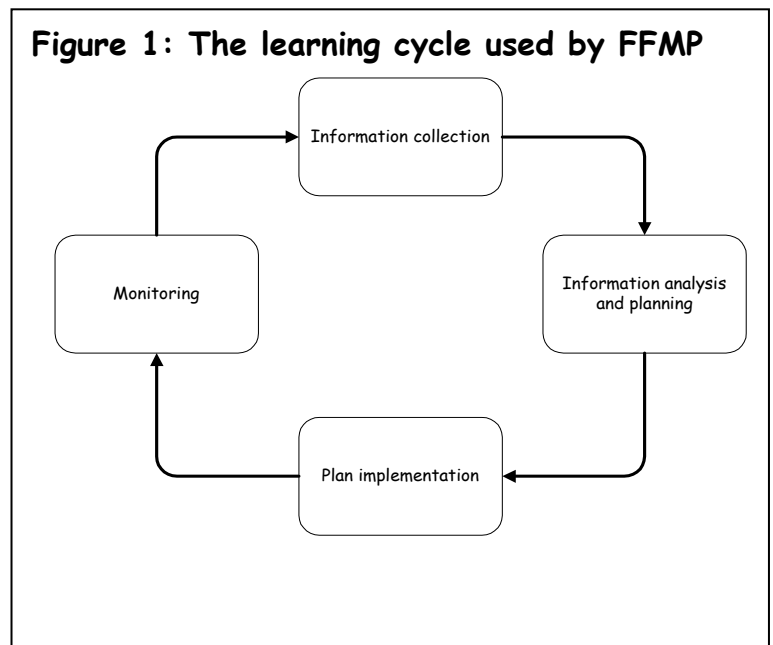
The process

What does this 'learning cycle' mean for actual community forest management planning in a village? Figure 1 does not really show the actual actions on the ground which are needed. Each of these main stages consists of a series of activities, or steps in a village and/or forest. These are explained in detail the following sections.

Major stages

The four components of the learning cycle (i.e. information collection, information analysis and planning, implementation, and monitoring) represent the four main stages of the PAL process. These are fundamental to the quality and effectiveness of the PAL process. In addition, field staff need to prepare before starting the PAL process (pre-PAL stage) and at the end to ensure that eventually support is withdrawn in a participatory and non-disruptive manner (post-PAL stage). The overall programme of support to a FUG in its community forest management planning can therefore be carried out in six stages as follows:

θ   Pre PAL Stage - Selection of a FUG for support
θ   PAL Stage 1 - Information collection
θ   PAL Stage 2 - Information analysis & action plan preparation
θ   PAL Stage 3 - Action plan implementation
θ   PAL Stage 4 - Monitoring and reflection
θ   Post PAL Stage - Planning to withdraw support

The pre-PAL stage involves selection of FUGs, using basic information from existing sources (e.g. Operational Plans, Range Post staff; databases). The next four stages build up PAL process in sequence involving a series of activities: i.e. collect information; analyse the collected information; prepare an action plan; implement the action plan; and to monitor and reflect upon the outcome and the overall process. In the post PAL stage, field staff take a 'hands off' approach and plan to withdraw active support, and identify together with the FUG members special conditions for further support.

> **Box 3: Difference between 'Operational Plan' and 'Action Plan'**
>
> *The 'Operational Plan'* describes the general condition of the community forest and the rules and regulations (and sanctions) for its protection and use. It serves as a basis for agreement between the DFO and FUG for use of the forest. The plan is normally reviewed and up-dated every five years, although it may sometimes be revised earlier (or later) than this.
>
> *The 'Action Plan'* includes a series of activities relating to the management and use of a community forest. It identifies the activities to be carried out; the people responsible; the resources that may be needed; and describes how and when to carry out the activities. The 'Action Plan' may indicate for each activity a tentative time frame, ranging from a day to several weeks, or even months. A FUG may include an activity in its 'Action Plan' to review and revise their 'operational plan' itself.

'Critical' steps

The participatory action research (PAR) method adopted by the FFMP originally involved some forty steps. These were required to carry out research in a systematic and organised. Many of these steps are unnecessary for planning for community forest management in a village. For example, some steps, such as those used to select FUGs for the focus of research, were important for an outsider, they are less important for the concerned FUG.

Of the forty steps used by the FFMP, eleven steps are seen as the most 'critical' to the PAL process. Figure 2 shows how these eleven steps are distributed in the four stages of the PAL. Table 1 describes the objectives and outputs of each of these steps, and the role of the concerned facilitators and FUG members.

Figure 2: Participatory action & learning process in community forest management

Table 1: Different 'steps' of community forestry management planning and the main 'outputs'

Stage	Step	Objective / Output	By Who
Pre-PAL Stage	Select FUG	• A selected FUG for support	F/Staff
Stage 1 Information Collection	FUGC Meeting	• To explain the purpose & process of planning CF management, and to develop a plan of work • An agreed/written work programme	F/Staff FUGC
	Tole Meetings	• To explain the purpose & process of planning CF management, and to inform the plan of work more widely to *tole* residents. • List of *tole* representatives (men and women) to take part in mapping etc.	F/Staff *Tole* residents
	Meeting with *Tole* Reps.	• Social /resource maps; wealth ranks, and ranks/scores of different forest products needs and forest management issues • Date and time of forest inventory • List of households for a detailed interview, and date, time and place of interview.	F/Staff *Tole* reps.
	Baseline Information	• A set of completed forest assessment forms • A set of completed household interview forms	F/Staff, *Tole* reps.
Stage 2 Information Analysis & Planning	FUGC Meeting	• To inform the outcome of the discussion with *tole* reps. and the baseline work. • Agreed date, time and place for the second round of *tole* meetings & the first general assembly.	F/Staff FUGC, *Tole* reps.
	Tole Meeting	• To inform the users the outcome of the discussion with *tole* Reps. And the baseline work. • *Tole* members are committed to attend the FUG assembly & contribute to action plan	F/Staff, *Tole* reps, *Tole* residents
	FUG Assembly	• An agreed action plan with a range of activities. • Individuals/groups assigned to plan & execute different activities	F/Staff FUGC, FUG
Stage 3 Implementation	Implement Action Plan	• Plan of operation for each activity (action) prepared and executed. • Reports on the results and the process used prepared for presentation to the FUGC, *Tole* residents & FUG assembly.	Concerned people
Stage 4	FUGC Meeting	• To present the results of the various activities carried out & the process used. • An agreed programme of the final round of *tole* meetings and general assembly.	Concerned people, FUGC, F/Staff

Stage	Step	Objective / Output	By Who
Monitoring	*Tole* Meeting	• To discuss more widely the results of the various works carried out & the process used. • *Tole* residents are committed to contribute to the discussion in the general assembly.	Concerned people, *Tole* residents. F/Staff
	FUG Assembly	• A list of activities with positive impacts. • A list of activities that need further actions.	FUGC, FUG F/Staff
Post-PAL Stage	Withdraw Support	• Plan to withdraw support & move to another FUG for support	F/Staff, FUGC, FUG

Part Two - The PAL 'Strategy' For Community Forest Management Planning

Strategic objectives of community forest management

The primary objective is to manage and utilise community forest resources in a sustainable manner. For this, a strategy must be developed to tackle three fundamental issues.

θ   To ensure that benefits come from community forest management - especially for poorer households

θ   To ensure that forest condition and productivity are improved

θ   The link staff and committee credibility with better forest management rather than simply protection

Guaranteed benefits (incentives) for forest users, especially for poorer household members, is the key to their active involvement in the management of a community forest resource. At present, FUG members tend to get only limited direct benefits from their community forests. Very little is actually harvested - even if there is potential to harvest more products. As a result, forest users may take little interest in community forestry activities.

Forest condition and productivity will be improved when the resource is managed properly, with thinning, harvesting and other management works being carried out regularly. Without proper management, the growth and productivity of community forests will be affected with potentially negative impacts on forest condition.

Over-emphasis on 'protection' and limited utilisation of forest resources means that the 'credibility' of the field staff and the FUGC officials actually lies in 'forest protection', rather than 'forest utilisation'. Field staff and committee officials see actions such as tree felling as a threat to their positions and their 'credibility'. The challenge is to turn this situation around.

The three strategic objectives of forest management planning are:

θ   To demonstrate that 'active' forest management can actually improve forest condition and growth leading to increased forest product off-take levels, or conversely, that 'passive' management through protection only can affect the condition and growth of the forest negatively.

θ To ensure that FUG members, especially the poorest and most forest dependant households, have increased access, or increased security of access, to forest products and other benefits of community forestry activities in the village.

θ To see that the 'credibility' of field staff and FUGC officials lies in 'sustainable utilisation', not in just 'protection', of the forest.

Factors influencing community forest management

The objectives of community forest management are influenced by six critical factors. These are shown in Figure 3. As these six factors are closely interrelated the PAL strategy must consider all them holistically, rather than in isolation.

Figure 3: Factors influencing community forest management objectives
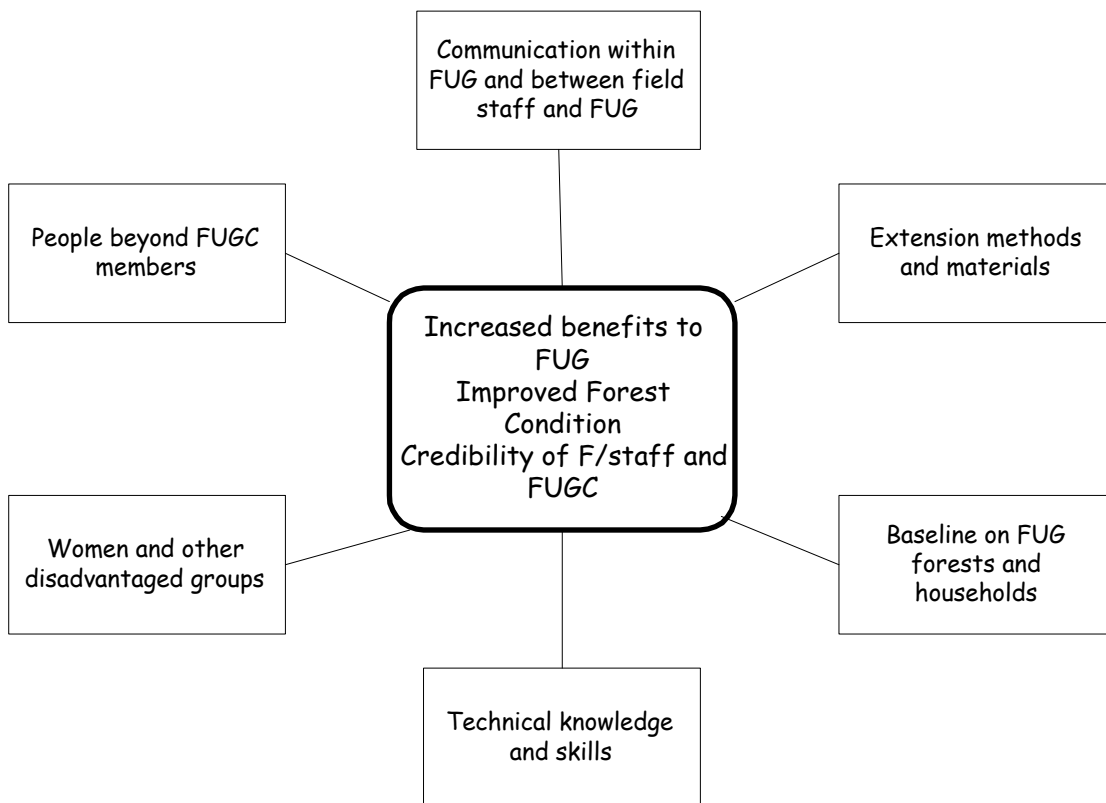
Communications

The usual means of communication in villages in Nepal is through face-to-face individual, or group, meetings in convenient places. FUGs consist of many households, ranging from 30 to several hundreds. It is difficult to involve them all in decision-making processes unless there is a systematic and organised mechanism for doing this.

There is no systematic or organised system of communication between forestry field staff and FUGs. At present, when field staff visit a village, they generally approach the FUG committee members, especially chairpersons, and only discuss things with them before

returning to their post. They assume that the committee officials or the chairperson represent the interests of all the FUG households and the matter discussed will eventually spread to them.

Reaching all FUG members

At present, at the FUG level, the FUG committee officials, especially chairpersons, make most decisions on community forestry activities. FUG general assemblies are quite infrequent - often only once a year, mainly to organise 'green' firewood harvesting activities. In practice little information is actually passed on from the committee to the rest of the FUGs. One reason for this is that it demands a lot of time on the part of the concerned committee officials, or the chairperson, to organise and communicate messages to all members of the FUG.

Women and disadvantaged groups

Although the need to involve more women and other disadvantaged members is often emphasised, it is not clear how FUGs can actually go about doing it in a male dominated village society, which is structured into hierarchical caste system. The local, powerful male members hold the key positions in the FUG Committee and generally control the decision-making process.

Extension

Another issue relates to training and extension programmes for the villagers. Field staff spend a lot of time implementing extension programmes, including workshops, study tours and distribution of posters and leaflets. They also organise training on community forest management. But these training programmes have so far had only limited impact on the management of community forests because the information passed, through these extension programmes, is not relevant to forestry problems facing villagers. Moreover, information may be provided in bits and pieces and given to wrong people and in wrong time and places. Another reason is that training on forest management is often provided to one or two persons from a FUG at a time. They then face difficulty in sharing the knowledge and skills gained in the training with other members of the FUG and applying them in the field, as this would demand additional labour and time of the concerned individuals.

Baseline information

In the absence of good baseline information, operational plans are not effectively based on implementing activities which have an objective of tackling specific problems. Even where information is collected (for example during FUG formation) it isn't normally used as an input into the forest management plan, and much of it may be irrelevant anyway.

Technical knowledge

Finally, both the Forest Department field staff and FUG members seem to lack the technical knowledge and skills needed to manage community forest resources. Training programmes on forest management cover various very basic elements but this is barely sufficient to stimulate active management of community forest resources by the concerned FUGs.

The PAL Strategy

Based on the issues and factors described above, six major strategies are proposed here:

- θ   Develop a simple and effective communication system
- θ   Reach households beyond FUGC officials
- θ   Listen to and act on the views of women and other disadvantaged members
- θ   Collect baseline information for planning, monitoring and impact assessment
- θ   Use relevant extension methods and materials
- θ   Provide technical knowledge and skills for forest management

Strategy 1: Develop a simple and effective communication system

For the majority of the FUG members to be effectively involved in forest management planning process, there needs to be a system for organised communication among the FUG members, and between the FUG and field staff. The system should be simple and should not add an extra burden (of time, effort and cost) onto people. If possible, such a system should be built on the existing village communication mechanisms.

Figure 4: A systematic communication within a FUG and between a field staff and the FUG
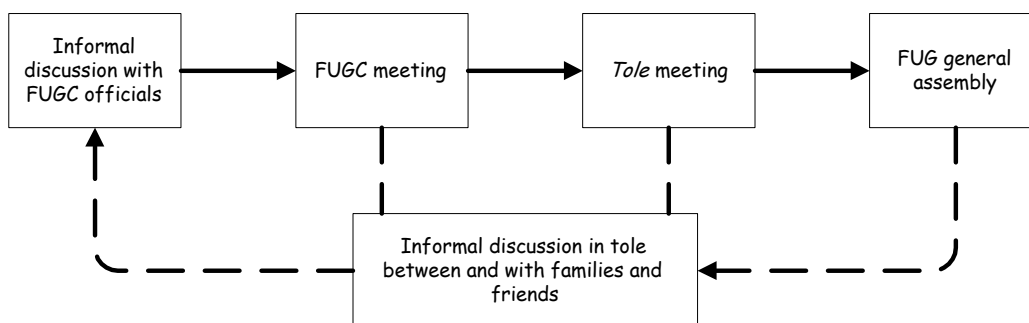
Village households are generally clustered in small settlements or hamlets, called *toles*. The village leaders have traditionally used a *katuwal*, a locally paid messenger, to pass the message from one *tole* to another. The message then spreads among the *tole* members. Depending upon the subject, *tole* members then gather to talk informally about the matter. If the matter is of wider concern beyond the *tole*, key members of each *tole* may meet together, discuss the issue, and make decisions. If the issue concerns all *tole* members, then they would organise a formal meeting to discuss the issue and make decisions. Communication and decisions on most issues are made is done this way. The strength of this system of communication is that it is simple and can reach most households without necessarily placing the burden of communication on one person.

The PAL process builds on this traditional method to develop a systematic mechanism for communication amongst FUG members and between FUG members and a forestry field staff at different levels (Figure 4).

Strategy 2: Reach households beyond FUG committee officials

Tole meetings have been developed as part of the PAL process in order to reach all FUG members - not just the committee. 90% of member households can be reached in this way.

Tole meetings:

θ   Allow field staff and users to meet face to face and get first-hand information from each other, rather than through committee members and printed materials (posters leaflets etc.).

θ   Enable field staff and users to break the barrier of committee officials standing between them and many member households

θ   Bring locations of meetings closer to the individual households, where most people, especially women, can take part in the discussion.

θ   Enable field staff reach occupational castes more easily and to carry out focused discussions with them separately (as the *tole* usually comprises of households from the same/similar castes and ethnic groups).

θ   Create conditions for people to come forward voluntarily to pass messages around so the workload is spread

θ   Bring information and knowledge from solely within the FUG committee to the wider members

Strategy 3:   Listen to and act on the views of women and other disadvantaged members

It is women who collect many of the forest products for their households and it is usually poorer households, especially members of occupational castes, who depend most on forest resources for their livelihoods. Yet, it has been very difficult to involve these very people in forestry activities. Local leaders and FUG committee officials are not normally pro-active in seeking to involve women and members of occupational castes.

One reason for this is that committee officials and other local leaders don't really understand why it is so important to involve them in programmes. Therefore the need for involving women and members of occupational castes must be first discussed in detail and agreed with committee officials before expecting them to act. Such a discussion is much more convincing if it is based on good data collected from the FUG households (baseline data)

In one of the participating FUGs in the FFMP, once committee officials were themselves convinced that such an action would actually enhance their own credibility started to support programmes for *tole* meetings with separate men's and women's groups and with members of the occupational castes. They also went from *tole* to *tole* and encouraged women and

members of the occupational castes to come to the meetings. This had the following benefits for these members:

θ Greater participation in discussions and presentation of their views more openly.
θ Efforts were made to meet with them separately in their own *tole* and to listen to their problems.
θ Their ability to speak more confidently and take part more actively in subsequent *tole* meetings and general assemblies was enhanced

The key to increased involvement of women and other disadvantaged members in community forestry activities lies in:

θ Balancing the interests of both the richer and powerful committee officials and the more disadvantaged groups,
θ Careful planning and involving the committee officials in the process of developing plans to involve the disadvantaged members
θ Presenting the programmes and techniques for involving women and the disadvantaged members as the idea of the committee officials
θ Basing the argument for greater inclusion of disadvantaged groups on good baseline data showing how they are otherwise affected.

It is not a matter of simply getting women and the other disadvantaged members to a meeting, but of getting their voices heard and legitimised (by the facilitator) through recording on the worksheets and survey forms, and then presenting these at FUG general assemblies.

Strategy 4: Collect baseline information for planning, monitoring and impact assessment

Planning strategies and action at village level needs to be based on the best-available information. Normally good information is limited making it difficult to assess and make appropriate strategies for further action. Baseline information on key aspects of the FUG forest and member households is also necessary to monitor changes taking place in a village as a result of community forest management.

For example, in the FFMP sites, some households, representing different wealth categories, were selected for a focused semi-structured interview. The information collected from these interviews included the amount of forest products collected from community forests before and after the forests were handed over to the groups. Similarly, sample plots were established in different parts of the FUG forests, and the level of stocking and regeneration were determined. Sample plots were also established to test different harvesting intensities.

The information was then converted into simple diagrams and presented to committee officials in the committee meetings, and to men and women groups in *tole* meetings. The exercise showed that:

θ   Baseline information can be effectively used to help users understand their forestry situation, generate discussion and plan for further actions.

θ   Both men and women, including those who are unable to read Nepali, can interpret quantitative information and relate it to their forest and socio-economic situations easily provided the information is presented in simple formats using pictures and diagrams.

The information thus obtained was used to analyse and reflect on the present forestry situation. For example, the amount of forest products received by poorer households in all four participating FUGs was less than before forming the FUGs, whereas wealthier households were getting more. Similarly, during discussions on the past and present condition of forests the general impression was that the condition of the forest had improved. But a close observation of the forest revealed that, due to over protection, trees in some forests had grown too dense and started to affect each other's growth and that too much shade from tree crowns was preventing regeneration of new seedlings.

Better information can be used by FUGs for more effective planning future actions to tackle particular issues. For example, realising the disproportional representation of different wealth categories in their FUG committee, one FUG chairman and other members decided to change the composition of the committee in the general assembly. The members of this FUG also decided to use the household categories based on wealth ranks in order to provide low interest loans for people from the poorest group.

Strategy 5: Use relevant extension methods and materials

Conventional extension methods and materials such as broadcasting through radio and distribution of leaflets and posters, have not been effective for actively engaging villagers in community forestry activities.

Face to face meetings, especially *tole* meetings of men and women, and with members of occupational castes, have been very useful for identifying real issues and solutions to forest management. Rather than using ready-made extension materials, where field staff and local people developed their own materials together by drawing maps on the ground or on pieces of paper using local materials, real objects, signs and symbols they were more effectively

understood. The users developed lists of forest management issues that concerned them and about their forest product needs. These were then ranked in order of priority, and plans were prepared for action. Locally created extension materials:

θ   Reflect villagers own real life situations,
θ   Avoid the need for villagers to deal with materials brought from outside which could be alienating those who cannot read.
θ   Create a sense of ownership over the extension materials.

Strategy 6: Provide appropriate technical knowledge and skills for forest management

Better technical knowledge is likely to come through practical hands-on experience. For example, one FUG had imposed complete protection since taking over the community forest. When the objectives of community forestry were carefully discussed and the ways forest products could be harvested and distributed amongst FUG households was explained, the group decided to harvest 'green' firewood from a block for the first time since the group was formed four years previously. After receiving firewood from the forest, some poorer women members of the FUG said **"*We did not take interest in community forestry as the forest was completely protected. We are now beginning to think that the forest is ours. Before we did not understand what community forestry is about"*.**

It is important that members of a FUG are aware of the options for forest management and of ways of making better use of the productive potential of their forest. The "*Guidelines for small-scale forest management*" provides a range of options for discussion by FUG members. Action research plots have been particularly effective in initiating forest management activities, and as a training and skill development resource for FUG members. The important thing with these is that they should be based on proper discussion of the available options so that FUG members really understand why the plots are being established. A range of treatments will give a better demonstration effect. After establishing such plots, one FUG committee official said **"*Before, we used to say we must protect trees, we now say we must cut trees"*** (in order to improve the condition of the forest).

Action research plots have been shown to:

θ   Increase the supply of forest products to FUG households (by stimulating more active management)
θ   Develop the confidence of forest users in managing their forest
θ   Enhance the credibility of the FUG committee officials and field staff in the eyes of FUG members.

Part Three - Planning And Using The 'Critical' Steps

FUG committee members need to be aware of the 'steps' from the start of the community forest management planning process, so that they know what to expect, why, when, and where, and who will do what. For the PAL process to be effective the eleven critical steps are followed in sequence as laid out in Figure 2. For example:

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θ   FUGC meetings before the *tole* level meetings and discussion with key informants will help gain support of the powerful committee officials.

θ   Focused *tole* level and small group meetings will help gain better understanding of forestry issues and solutions, and help better facilitate the discussion at the general assembly.

θ   *Tole* meetings before the users assembly will allow the people time to think and discuss problems with their families and friends; to come to the general assembly better prepared and present their views more effectively.

Plan the individual 'steps'

For effectively planning and carrying out the eleven steps, outlined in Figure 2 and Table 1 the description of each step contains nine sub-sections as follows:

Activity: specifies what action to take.
Objective: explains what the action will achieve
Expected end results: identifies what to expect at the end of the step
Responsible persons: indicates the people responsible for implementing the step
Methods: describes how the activity should be carried out and in what sequence.
Points to consider: includes various positive and negative aspects that should be considered when carrying out the activity.
Skills required: describes specific skills, which facilitators need to effectively plan and implement the activities in step. This section will also assist in training needs analysis for facilitators and support workers.
Materials needed: suggests specific materials needed to plan and execute the step.
Time frame: indicates the rough time in terms of the number of hours or days which will be required to do each step.

Examples of tools and techniques, which could be usefully adapted, while planning and implementing different activities, are given in **Part Four**

Pre-PAL stage
Select a forest user group for support

Activity	Select a FUG for support
Objectives	• To decide which FUG to support first. • To collect basic information on the selected FUG from the existing sources (operational plans, Range Post staff, etc.)
Expected end results	A selected FUG
Responsible person/s	The concerned Field Staff / Local animator
Methods	• Review the concerned FUG's forest operational plan, • Discuss with the staff of the concerned Range Post, • Develop a field visit programme, • Inform the Range Post, the concerned FUG chairman and other relevant office about the field visit programme.
Points to consider	Lack of information
Skills required	Ability to extract and analyse relevant information from the existing sources.
Materials needed	Operational plan, District forestry strategy, field reports, note book, pen, paper
Time frame	1 - 2 days

Information collection
Step 1: Meet with FUGC

Activity	Organise a meeting with the FUGC members

Objectives	- To inform the committee about the purpose of the visit - To brief the FUGC about the forest management planning approach (the PAL process) to be taken and the rationale for such an approach. - To agree and develop a work programme: activities, dates, time and places.
Expected end results	A written agreed work programme FUGC takes the responsibility to inform the Tole residents the dates, time, and place of meeting.
Responsible persons	Field Staff and FUGC members
Methods	- Visit the concerned FUG and contact the FUGC chairman and other committee members. - Introduce yourself if you have come to the village for the first time and briefly tell him/her about the objective of the visit. - Ask him to arrange a formal meeting of the FUGC and fix a date, time and place for a meeting with the FUGC. - In the FUGC meeting, explain the purpose of this. - Explain the PAL process for working with them and the rest of the FUG members and the rationale for taking such an approach (explain all the steps involved in the process). - Ask the members if they have understood the process and if there are any questions or points they would like to be raised and clarified. - Now ask them to develop a work programme for forest management planning and fix date, time and place of each work programme or activity. - Arrange with the committee to inform Tole residents the dates, time and place of the meetings.
Points to consider	- Need to emphasise on 'why' forest management planning and ways in which it is different from a FUG formation process. - It is important for the FUGC officials to understand the process and the rationale behind the 'critical steps' - No need to go into the details of individual activities at this stage
Skills required	Preparing agenda, communication skills (meeting facilitation).
Materials needed	Agenda, minute record book and a copy of the OP
Time frame	1 day to visit the village and 1 - 3 hours for the meeting in the following day.

Information collection
Step 2: Tole meetings

Activity	Organise a series of Tole meetings, each done with men and women groups separately.

Objectives	• To communicate more widely the purpose of the visit and work programme agreed in the FUGC meeting. • To select Tole members to take part in forest inventory and other baseline information collection.
Expected end results	List of key people, men and women, from each Tole to take part in baseline information (forest inventory, socio-economic information on households, social/resource mapping).
Responsible person/s	Field staff and Tole residents
Methods	• Get to the venue of the meeting on the set day, date and time. • Introduce yourself and briefly explain the purpose of your visit and reasons for Tole meetings. • Explain the work programme agreed in the FUGC meeting. • Ask the people to identify and nominate two to four people, both men and women, from their Tole, who have a detailed knowledge about the FUG households and about the community forest for different exercise (for participatory social, village and forest maps, wealth ranking, etc.). • Repeat the process in other Tole meetings.
Points to consider	• Timing of the day is critical to the success of such meetings. As most such meetings are effective in a particular time of the day (e.g. morning), the number of such meetings that can be arranged in a day could be limited. Besides a Tole meeting should last 2-3 hours at the most, after which women start to drift away. • Tole meetings help to spread messages to a greater number of people, especially women and members of the occupational caste, and helps to bring out the knowledge and information from the domain of FUGC members to a public domain.
Skills required	Communication skills (facilitating meetings).
Materials needed	A copy of the OP, agreed time-table from the FUGC meeting, pens, paper, note book
Time frame	2- 5 days (depending upon the number of *toles*).

Information collection
Step 3: Discussion with *tole* representatives

Activity	Organise a series of *tole* meetings with *tole* representatives for focused discussions

Objectives	• To obtain detailed information on the FUG households and forest resource, needs for different forest products and sources, issues on forest management.
	• To select households for a detailed, focused discussion.
Expected end results	• Village, social and forest maps; number of households under different social and wealth categories, matrix charts with ranks and scores for different forest products, and the various forest management issues.
	• List of selected households to take part in household interviews, and date, place and time of each interview.
	• List of Tole representatives (men and women) to take part in forest inventory and the date and time for the activity.
Responsible persons	Field Staff and Tole representatives
Methods	• Explain the objective of the meeting with the Tole representatives, specifying the tasks to be done and the process to be used
	• Initiate and facilitate - one exercise at a time (social and resource mapping, wealth rankings, selecting households for a detailed discussion) and allow enough break time between the exercises.
	• Prepare a copy of the maps and charts for yourself and leave the original with the Tole representatives.
	• Explain briefly how this information will be used later in the FUGC meeting and FUG general assembly.
	• Fix a date, time and place to meet for a forest inventory.
	• Ask the Tole members to nominate households for a detailed interview, and confirm date, place and time for a detailed interview.
	• Ask the Tole representatives to inform the selected households the date, time and place of the interview and to confirm.
Points to consider	• Lack of training and facilitation skills by the field staff;
	• It is critical that objectives and the process for doing different exercises (especially wealth ranking) are explained properly. The Tole representatives must be willing to do the exercise. Do not force them if they do not want to do it.
	• Do not rush through to finish all the exercises in a day. People may have other important things to do. If time permits, it is more useful to spend some time to use the maps and diagrams thus prepared to discuss and generate more detail and useful information.
Skills required	Knowledge and skills to use a range of RRA/PRA tools and techniques
Materials needed	A copy of the OP, RRA/PRA Guidebook; note book, flip charts, pens, ropes
Time frame	2 days

Information collection
Step 4: Baseline on FUG forests and households

Activity	Conduct a forest resource assessment and detailed discussion with the selected household members

Objectives	To collect information on community forest and the selected FUG households as a baseline.
Expected end results	• A set of completed household survey forms. • A set of completed forest inventory forms
Responsible persons	Field Staff, Tole representatives, selected household members.
Methods	• Prepare a format for the household survey and forest inventory. • For the household interviews, visit the selected households on the fixed date and time. • Ask both husband and wife to participate in the discussion as far as possible. • Explain the purpose of the exercise, and why it is important, and how the information may be used for the planning of their community forest management. • Take time and do not jump to the check-list of questions and try to rush through the list. Start by asking general questions about their family and children. • Once the household members are more relaxed and ready for the exercise, start the discussion. • Accept if they offer tea, or something, to eat, or give reason why you cannot eat, for health reasons. They will understand. • In the end, as a token of appreciation, thank them for their time. • For the forest inventory, walk to the forest together with the Tole representatives on the set date and time. • Take some time to explain the activities to be carried out and why they need to be done. • Demonstrate some specific tools and equipment that may be used for the inventory (DBH tapes, compasses, measurement tapes, ropes, etc.), why they need to be used and how they are used. • Explain other methods of measuring areas and trees (e.g. ocular estimates, 'thumb' rules etc.). • Ask the participants to do some measurements and estimates on their own and discuss among themselves. • Explain the formats to record the information and show them how to fill-in the collected information. • Now divide the participants into two groups: one group will do the measurement and the other will record. (see the appropriate box and format for each of these)
Points to consider	• Each household interview should last at the most no more than two hours. • Many villagers, especially women and members of the occupational caste, cannot read and write. It is important to use a variety of, materials, diagrams, pictures and local methods, which they can understand.

Skills required	• For the household interview, one needs to be extremely sensitive and tactful in phrasing appropriate questions and using the right words and the skills of 'probing'.
	• For the forest resource assessment exercise, skills for participatory resource assessment (e.g. forest walks, thumb rules, direct observations) and the skills to use tools to measure forest and trees (e.g. DBH tapes, compass).
	• Also the participatory forest inventory, especially with the people who cannot read and write, usually takes much longer than one might expect. Should allow at least twice the amount of normal time.
Material needed	Household survey forms, forest resource inventory forms, measurement tapes, DBH tapes, compass, ropes, diary, forest assessment Guidebooks, a copy of the OP.
Time frame	1 – 4 days

Information analysis & planning
Step 5: Meet with FUGC

| Activity | Organise a Meeting with FUGC |

Objectives	• To share and analyse the information collected though Tole representatives and the baseline information (household interviews and forest inventory).
	• To discuss issues arising from the discussion with Tole representatives and baseline and their possible solutions.
	• To arrange a date, time and place for the second round of Tole meetings to share and analyse the information and discuss the potential solutions more widely.
	• To fix a date and time for the second FUG assembly to prepare an action plan
Responsible persons	Forest Ranger/Forest Guard and FUGC members
Expected end results	• FUGC officials are better informed of their community forestry situations.
	• Agreed dates, time and place of Tole meetings and FUG general assembly.
	• FUGC members take the responsibility to inform Tole residents the dates, time and places of Tole meetings and general assembly.
Methods	• Summarise the information from the completed forms of household survey and forest inventory, and write down all the important information on different flip charts (e.g. forest products used by different households under different wealth categories, forest product stocking in different blocks, regeneration counting etc.).
	• Take these and the information collected through the Tole representatives to the meeting.
	• Present one flip chart at a time in sequence, allow time for discussion and note down the major points in a separate flip chart.
	• Once all the charts have been presented and discussed, summarise the major (important) findings.
	• Discuss the issues arising from the information and their potential solutions
	• Ask the committee members to fix the date, place and time for the Tole meetings and FUG general assembly.
	• Also ask them to take the responsibility to inform the date, place and time of the meetings to the respective Tole residents.
Points to consider	• Time to analyse the information, especially the household and forest inventory forms may take longer. It is better to allow a day or two for the compilation and summarising the information.
	• Also presentation of the information may need to be done through visual diagrams (such as picture of leaves, trees, people, animals, loads of firewood etc.) given the nature of the rural communities in Nepal.
Skills required	• Ability to analyse and summarise the baseline information.
	• Communication skills (preparation and presentation of the materials, ability to facilitate information analysis by the FUGC members, and skills to phrase appropriate questions and to focus on both positive and negative aspects).
Materials needed	Flip charts with information collected through key informants/tole meetings, and through baseline exercises, blank flip-charts, colour pens and paper.
Time frame	2 - 4 hours.

Information analysis & planning
Step 6: Tole meetings

Activity	Organise a meeting in each Tole
Objectives	• To share and analyse the information collected through Tole representatives, household interviews and forest inventory. • To discuss issues and their possible solutions
Expected end results	• Tole residents are better informed of their community forestry situations and the various problems and issues facing community forest management. • Tole members are committed to take part in the general assembly and to contribute to the action planning.
Responsible persons	Field Staff and Tole residents

Methods	- Get to the concerned Tole at the set date, time and place of the meeting. - Present the information from the Tole representatives and the baseline – one by one. - Discuss the problems and issues and their potential solutions possibly separately with men and women. - Encourage the two groups to share views with each other and form a common view. - Record the main issues arising from the discussion for consideration in the FUG general assembly and action planning. - Inform the date, time and place for the general assembly as agreed by the FUGC. - Ask them to present their common view to the FUG general assembly. - Repeat the process in other Tole meetings.
Points to consider	At least two persons may be needed to facilitate separate groups of men and women. Tole meetings are generally arranged early morning or late evening, and this can be limiting to two Tole meetings a day.
Skills required	- Presentation of the information, in forms which are understandable by both men and women, especially by non-literate members. - Ability to facilitate the process of information analysis and reflection by Tole residents, - Skills to phrase appropriate questions and to focus on both positive and negative aspects. - Sensitivity and skills to involve women members in the sharing and reflection of information.
Materials needed	Social and resource maps, households wealth categories, baseline information, diagrams, flip charts, pens and paper
Time frame	1 – 5 days, depending on the number of *toles*

Information analysis & planning
Step 7: FUG general assembly (to prepare action plan)

Activity	Organise FUG general assembly for a wide discussion of the issues and their solutions and to prepare an action plan.
Objectives	- To present all the findings (social, resource maps, household interviews, and forest inventory and the subsequent discussions in the FUGC and Tole meetings). - To discuss and prioritise the problems. - To prepare an action plan.
Expected end results	- A set of agreed forestry issues facing the FUG - An agreed action plan

Responsible persons	Field Staff and FUG members
Methods	• Summarise the findings from *Tole* meetings, household interviews and forest inventory before the assembly • Prepare a flip-chart in a simple format with a row for each issue, and columns for importance, action required to be taken, when, by whom and how. • With the FUGC, prepare an agenda for the assembly: who will do what, when and how • On the agreed date and time go to the place of assembly • Explain the purpose of the general assembly and the agenda to be covered. • Briefly explain the work done so far and how it was done. • Present the main findings to the assembly, starting with the positive aspects. • Present the issues that came out of meetings with FUGC and *Tole* representatives and from the baseline. • Ask if any issues and points, which were raised at the *Tole* and FUGC meetings have been left out from the list. • Explain the group task to be done in the general assembly. • Divide participants by their *toles* and within each *Tole* into separate sub-groups of men and women. If possible divide each sub-group further into social groups, especially of occupational castes. • Give each sub-group a prepared sheet from the flip chart with a set of issues identified. Their task is to complete the blank columns. • Ask each group to select two persons, one to moderate the group discussion and the other to record the decision in the format provided. • Ask each group to present the outcome of their discussion to the whole assembly • Facilitate the general discussion, and record final decisions on a chart (prioritised issues, action required). • Read out all the agreed decisions in front of the group. • After the assembly put these decisions in an action plan format. Make copies for the DF and RP offices and leave the original with the FUGC
Points to consider	It may need more than a person to actually facilitate the discussion, and may take more than a day to discuss all of the issues properly and find their solutions.
Skills required	Skills to prepare materials in advance, skills to organise and facilitate large group meetings, ability to put together, summarise and present the outcomes of the meeting, and the skills and ability to manage time.
Materials needed	Social and resource maps, household categories, summaries of the baseline findings, outcome of the discussion of the FUGC and Tole meetings, formats for discussion and recording of the smaller and large group meetings, blank sheets of flip charts, colour pens, paper
Time frame	1 – 2 days

Implementation
Step 8: Implement action plan (plan & execute individual activities)

Activity	Develop a plan of work for each activity identified in the action plan and execute it.
Objectives	To enforce the decision made by the FUG general assembly (agreement).
Expected end results	• Plan of operation for each activity (action). • Reports on the results and the process used.
Responsible persons	The concerned individuals (FUGC members, nominated FUG members, Forest Ranger/Forest Guard).
Methods	• The concerned individual, or group, develops a plan of work for activities assigned them. For each activity, the following procedure is used: • Review the nature of the activity carefully, the issues it is aiming to address and the various options and alternatives available. • Consider the resource that will be required to do the job: materials, labour,

	skills, time and money.
	• Prepare a tentative plan of work and review the plan with the FUGC members and other members of the FUG and if appropriate with the field staff (Forest Ranger/Forest Guard).
	• Finalise the plan and give a copy of the plan to the FUGC for approval. The final plan of work should describe what exact work will be undertaken, who will do it, when, where and how? It should also specify what resources will be required and how much will it cost?
	• Once the plan of work for the concerned activity is approved, execute the plan.
	• (Examples of some of the plans of work developed to implement the decisions agreed in the action plans by the FUGs supported by the FFMP are provided in Appendix ?).
Points to consider	Time frame set for the tasks may be unrealistic. Some tasks may be delayed due to various unforeseen reasons, such as the lack of previous experience of doing similar jobs. Some tasks may demand technical skills, which may take a while for the local people to acquire. Others may involve considerable financial cost, which may be beyond the reach of the FUG members.
Skills required	• Skills to identify appropriate persons for the tasks and to put together resources (human, financial, materials). • A commitment to the assigned task and the plan of work.
Materials needed	Fund, equipment and tools and labour
Time frame	Varied from few days to 6 months. Most activities are usually planned and executed within 2 months.

Monitoring
Step 9: Meet with FUGC

Activity	Organise a meeting with the forest users committee members (FUGC)
Objectives	• To present results of the various activities undertaken and the process used by the concerned FUG members over time. • To analyse, share and reflect upon the outcome of each activity and the process..
Expected end results	• FUGC members are well aware of the work done, and further work to be done. • A programme of agreed date, time and place for the third and final round of Tole meetings. • FUGC takes the responsibility to inform Tole residents.
Responsible persons	Forest Ranger/Forest Guard, individuals/groups of people responsible to plan and implement activities agreed in the action plan and FUGC members
Methods	• Visit the concerned FUG and contact the FUGC chairman and other

	committee members.
	• Discuss briefly about the need to monitor the activities undertaken as a part of the forest management planning
	• Ask them to arrange a formal meeting of the FUGC and fix a date, time and place for a meeting with the FUGC.
	• Arrange to inform and ask the individuals who were responsible to plan and execute different activities of the action plan to come to the meeting and present the work done and process used by them.
	• In the FUGC meeting, explain the purpose of this.
	• Ask the individuals or groups of individuals to present the work done, process used, and the outcome of the activities, one by one.
	• Discuss, analyse and reflect upon the outcome (positive and limitations) of each activity and ways to build on the positive aspects and to overcome the limitations.
	• Ask the committee to arrange Tole meetings to share more widely the outcome of the various activities, and fix date, place and time for the meetings, and a general FUG assembly.
	• Ask the FUGC members to inform the concerned Tole members the respective meeting dates, time and place.
Points to consider	The individuals and groups may need help to prepare for the presentation of their work to the FUGC.
Skills required	Preparing agenda, communication and presentation skills.
Materials needed	Materials (results) of each activities, pens and papers
Time frame	1 day to visit the village and another 1-2 day for the meeting.

Monitoring
Step 10: Tole meetings

Activity	Organise a series of Tole meetings, each done with men and women groups separately.
Objectives	• To present results of the various activities undertaken and the process used more widely to the FUG members at Tole level meetings.
	• To analyse, share and reflect upon the outcome of each activity and the process.
Expected end results	• The majority of the FUG household members are well aware of the work achieved, and further work needed to be carried out.
	• Tole residents are committed to take part in the FUG general assembly and contribute to the monitoring, reflection and discussion for a further action plan
Responsible person/s	Forest Ranger/Forest Guard, persons and groups responsible for activities, FUGC officials and FUG members
Methods	• Get to the venue of the meeting on the set day, date and time.

	- Visit the concerned FUG and contact the FUGC chairman and other committee members. - Discuss briefly about the need to monitor the activities undertaken as a part of the forest management planning - Ask them to arrange a formal meeting of the FUGC and fix a date, time and place for a meeting with the FUGC. - Arrange to inform and ask the individuals who were responsible to plan and execute different activities of the action plan to come to the meeting and present the work done and process used by them. - In the FUGC meeting, explain the purpose of the meeting. - Ask the individuals or groups of individuals to present the work done, process used, and the outcome of the activities, one by one. - Discuss, analyse and reflect upon the outcome (positive and limitations) of each activity and ways to build on the positive aspects and to overcome the limitations. - Inform the date, time and place for the general assembly, and ask the Tole members to take part in the discussion - Repeat the process in other Tole meetings.
Points to consider	Timing of the day is critical to the success of such meetings (see Steps 2 and 6).
Skills required	Communication skills (facilitating meetings).
Materials needed	Materials (results) of each activities, pens and papers
Time frame	2- 5 days (depending upon the number of *toles*).

Monitoring
Step 11: FUG general assembly

Activity	Organise FUG general assembly for the presentation, discussion and reflection on the action plan implementation.
Objectives	- To present results of the various activities undertaken and the process used to the FUG members in the assembly. - To analyse, share and reflect upon the outcome of each activity and the process. - To plan to build on what has been achieved, and to plan new actions
Expected end results	- FUG members are well informed of the forest management situations - A list of activities that have had positive impacts. - A list of activities that need further actions.
Responsible persons	Forest Ranger/Forest Guard, persons and groups responsible for activities, FUGC officials and FUG members
Methods	Prepare agenda and programme for the general assembly with the FUGC

	members
	• Ask the FUG chairperson to chair the session, and the member secretary to act as programme moderator.
	• Help each person or group to prepare their work in flip charts for presentation to the large group.
	• Go to the place of assembly at the set date and time.
	• In the assembly, the secretary ask the chairperson to share the session, explains the purpose of the general assembly and agenda to be covered.
	• Each person/group presents the findings of their work to the large group.
	• Facilitate discussion after each presentation.
	• Make notes of the points made in the meeting, and list activities that need no further actions, and those that need to be revised and any new actions that need to be planned and implemented.
	• Read out all the agreed decisions in front of the group.
	• Put these decisions in an action plan format, make a copies for the DF and RP offices and leave the original with the FUGC
Points to consider	It may need more than a person to facilitate the discussion, and may take more than a day to discuss all of the issues properly and find their solutions.
Skills required	Skills to prepare materials in advance, skills to organise and facilitate large group meetings, ability to put together, summarise and present the outcomes of the meeting, and the skills and ability to manage time
Materials needed	Agenda, minute book, FUG register, materials (results) of each activities, pens and papers
Time frame	1 – 2 days

Post-PAL stage
Plan to withdraw support

Activity	Discuss the circumstances and conditions for withdrawal of support to manage the community forest.
Objectives	To plan the redundancy of the Field Staff and other outside supporter in a participatory way, as least disruptive manner as possible.
Expected end results	An agreed/negotiated plan of withdrawal of support.
Responsible persons	Field Staff, FUGC and FUG members
Methods	• Organise a FUGC meeting.
	• Review the progress and achievements in forest management planning.
	• Discuss the role of the facilitator/supporter (Field Staff or other), whether such a support is required by the FUG any longer, or the ways the supporters' role can now be assumed by some other stakeholders.
	• Explore options for withdrawal: a complete withdrawal forever, to a minimum, but constant support, or a withdrawal until some special conditions or

	problems arise that require additional support.
	• Decide and work out a plan of action with what, when and how will it happen and why.
	• Arrange Tole meetings to inform the decisions more widely.
	• In each Tole meeting, explain the purpose of the meeting and the plan of action for withdrawal of support as suggested by the FUGC members.
	• Ask if the participants had other ideas on how the withdrawal of the support might be done.
	• Consider all the ideas and build into the plan of action.
	• Organise a FUG general assembly for:
	• Finalising the plan of withdrawal
	• New allocations of roles and responsibilities in the absence of the supporter
	• Arrangements for phasing out support, and
	• The conditions under which future support will be sought and provided.
	• Write all the decisions down in a flip chart, make a copy for yourself and leave the original for the FUG to keep.
Points to consider	• A complete withdrawal of support for the Field Staff may be an option for a field project. For the Forest Dept., a withdrawal to a minimum support and until some special conditions for support arise, will be the most appropriate option.
	• For the field project, it is possible to return for other purposes (e.g. to undertake a post withdrawal evaluation to find out how the villagers are managing their community forests).
	• Finally, the supporters, both the Forest Dept. and field projects may want to engage villagers in other forestry activities (research, training and extension work).
	• One may also take the help of intermediary organisations with expertise in negotiations and conflict management.
Skills required	Ability to analyse the positive aspects and limitations of the conflicting views of interests, and skills to make negotiations and to mange conflicts.
Materials needed	Colour pens, paper and flip charts.
Time frame	1 – 4 days

Part Four: Examples of Outputs and Tools

This part of the guidebook gives examples of tools and outputs for each step in the PAL process. Most of these are real examples taken from the villages where PAL has actually been used. Remember that these are only examples - each village is different, and the real situation in the villages you may be working with may give somewhat different results.

Step 1:
FUG Committee Meeting
Examples of outputs and tools

Output 1: Decision to hold a FUG Committee meeting in an informal meeting with the FUG Chairman

Meeting place	Chairman's house, Dhan Bahadur Thapa
Date	13/01/1997
Time	7 a.m.
Persons responsible to inform other FUGC members	The Chairman and those members present at the discussion

Output 2: An agreed plan of activities in the FUGC meeting

Activity	Date
Tole meetings	14 – 16/01/97
Information collection with *Tole* representatives	17 – 19/01/97
Sharing & reflection of the information collected with FUGC members, identifying issues exploring solutions	21/01/97
Sharing & reflection of the information collected with *Tole* members (men & women), identifying issues & exploring solutions	22 – 24/01/97
Action plan preparation in FUG assembly	25/01/1997

Output 3: An agreed plan of Tole meetings

Tole	Place, date & time	Person responsible to inform Tole members
Bhairab Tole	Ram Prasad's house 14/01/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Budhi Man
Pakha Pani	Dil Kumari's house, 14/01/97, 6 p.m.	Member, Radha Devi
Majh Bari	Raj Kumar's house, 15/01/97, 7 a.m.	Secretary, Kusmakhar
Thapa Tole	Dhan Bahadur's house, 15/01/97, 6:30 p.m.	Chairman, Dhan Bahadur
Pallo Pakha	Hira Lal's house, 16/01/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Hira Lal
Acharya Tole	Devi Prasad's house, 16/01/97, 7 p.m.	Treasurer, Ram Acharya

<div>
Tools

θ   Informal discussion

θ   A list of the agenda

θ   Formal discussion

θ   A flip chart with a diagram of PAL process

θ   FUG register
</div>

Step 2:
Tole Meetings
Examples of outputs and tools

| Output: A list of Tole representatives	
Tole	Representatives
Bhairab Tole	Krishma Prasad Upreti, Hom Maya Singdel, Radha Upreti
Pakha Pani	Radha Devi Acharya, Hari Prasad Acharya
Majh Bari	Rupa Magar, Savitra Devi Acharya, Padam Bahadur Thapa
Thapa Tole	Dhan Bahadur Thapa, Ram Maya Neupane
Pallo Pakha	Hira Lal, Nir Maya Biswakarma,
Acharya Tole	Nirmala Acharya, Bal Krishna Acharya

Tools

θ   Plan of activities (output 1 of Step 1)
θ   Plan of Tole meetings (Step 1's output 2)
θ   Diagram of PAL process

Step 3:
Discussion with Tole Representatives
Example of output and tools

Output 1: A participatory map

खोटेगैह्रो खातल्ले सामुदायिक वनको सहभागितामूलक नक्शा
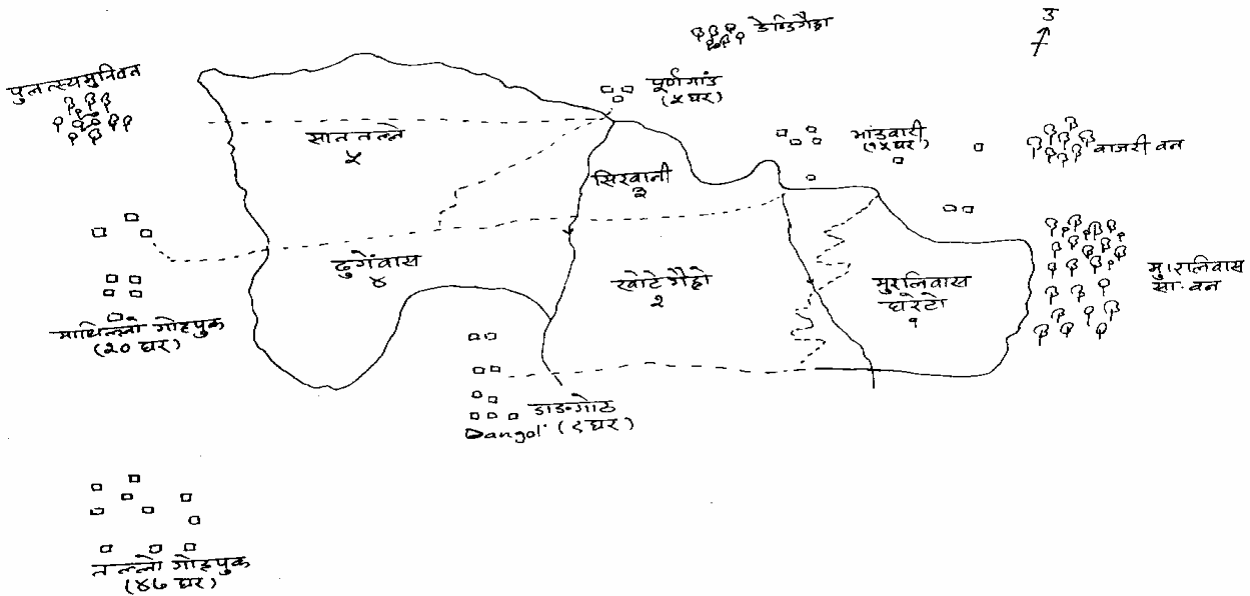
TOOLS

θ   Participatory mapping
θ   List of semi-structured questions

Output 2: Characterisation of households by wealth category

Category	Characteristics	
Group I	*Barha mahina khana pugne* (sufficient to eat for twelve months) Sufficient food for 12 months and sell some grain (up to 50 *muri*); 15-30 *ropanis* of land (all good quality of *khet*, *bari* and *kharbari*); hire labour to work on the farm and give some share-cropped by tenants; large livestock holding and 1-2 animals to tenants; at least one family member with a government job, business or other secured off-farm job; children attend schools and colleges in towns or Kathmandu; lend money to other people; lot of trees on private lands, get some forest products from community forests, but no need to go to a govt. (non FUG) forest	74
Group II	*Nau mahina khana pugne* (sufficient to eat for nine months) Sufficient food for 9 months; 10 -15 *ropani* of land both *khet* and *bari*; labour exchange with other h/holds; do not lend or borrow money; 3-4 livestock; one-third of the households in the category has an access to off-farm income; send children to schools and colleges in nearby villages or towns; several trees on private land; rely on community and govt. (non-FUG) forests for forest products.	117
Group III	*Chha mahina khana pugne* (sufficient to eat for six months) Shortage of food for 3 to 6 months; family size is usually bigger than the first two categories; 5-10 *ropani* of land usually poor quality land (called *sim* or *chaur*); share-crop other people's land; 1-3 livestock mostly of other people; mostly engaged in wage labour in the nearby villages; few households have access to off-farm jobs (usually temporary); send children to schools in the village; few private trees; depend highly on community and govt. (non-FUG) forests for forest products.	102
Group IV	*Barha mahina nimek garera matra khana pugne* (daily wage 12 months) Sufficient food for 3-6 months; mostly lower caste people and also some high caste people; less than 5 *ropanis* of land (poor quality *bari*); few livestock - all belong to rich people; household members must work as daily wage labour all the year; very few private trees; must go to community and govt. (non-FUG) forests for forest products.	102
Total		395

TOOLS

θ   List of semi-structured questions
θ   Wealth ranking

Output 3: Species and sources of different forest products used and solutions to the problems (male group)

तल्लो गोरेटुङ ¿ टोल:

पुँजी अंक - १६/१९

२५/११/०५४

वन पैदावर	प्रजाती	प्राप्ती				समस्या-समाधान
		सा.वन नगरपालिका	रा.वन	स्थानीय वन वनारण्यसे	भाग	
१. दाउरा	्युप, चिलाउने, मेल, उत्तीस	००	●●●●●●●	●●	●●●●●●●	→ हरेक घरमा बुहारोपण गर्ने, वन कटुवी गरी गरेट विगाल्ने
२. चाप	्या, दावान उत्तीसे मेल गुर	x	१०११०	००	●●●●●	→ सरल राख्ने, बारे बुझे गंदा बाट रोप्ने, नर्सरी बनाउने ८ आफ्नो बारामा गरी लगाउने
३. ला, ङ लाकुरी	चिलाउने सेवा दावान	०	०●●	००	००००००	→ युवा कुसुन्द, बाग्गा डडाने रोप्ने गेट हारे गर्ने
४. घर	धान चिलाउने मेल, उत्तीस	०	०●●●	०	०●●●●●	→ सरल राख्ने, प्रावधानता अनुसार समिति तिनमंक्त गरने, वन कमेटी बनामा दिने भैन्ने
५. गोल	धान कुत मे भर्नो तिल्को	●	x	●●	●●●●●	→ भराउगा, बुडा बलबाल कार्तुर गेट गोल सुर नय छिन्तोर गीत लगाउने
६. घांस	धान कुस	०●●●●	x	०●	०●●●	→ बिरुवालाई सुरक्षा ८ रोगाउने, गृहिवस्तला पाल्बित गराउने
७. स्याउला	कुस, चिलाउने मेल, थाम, नगाना	००	०●●	०	●●●●	→ कांद्गुर गदो मात्र मिल्दछे, बाग्गा डिडाग नयै गेट टराम मि्ठेको खादाना अतर गराउने ।
८. पिउ	चिलाउने बार सेवा	●●●●● / ०●●●●	x	●●●●● / ●●●●●	०●●●● / ●●●●●	→ आवश्यकता हेरी उपलब्ध गराउने
९. कठुको फल	कुस	●●●●● / ●●●●●	x	●●●● / ●●●●	●●●● / ●●●●●●	→ हरेक वा एक्लो घरको फल नदिने ८ मेरे पछ पछे ठांडमा मात्र फल दिन्ते

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Output 4: Species and sources of different forest products used and solutions to the problems (female group)

Output 5: Forest product ranking

Forest Products	Forest Product Preferences			
	Bhirpani	Jamale Chisapani	Jyamire Satbise	Khotegairo Sattale
Firewood	1	1	2	2
Leaf-litter (dry leaves)	2	5	3	-
Grass	3	4	1	1
Timber	4	2	6	4
Non timber forest products	5	8	-	9
Agricultural implements	-	3	5	3
Syaula (green leaves & branches)	7	6	-	5
Syaula /fodder (tree leaves)	-	-	4	5
Leaf (pat)	8	7	-	8
Charcoal	-	-	7	6
Grazing	-	-	-	7
Stone (/slate)	6	9	-	-
Clays (red and white)	9	9	8	-

1= Highest   9= Lowest   - = not available or no rule in OP

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Output 6: Forest product ranking by men, women and occupational caste			
Forest Product Type	Forest Product Preferences		
	Men	Women	Other poor group
Firewood	1	1	1
Timber	2	4	5
Grass	3	2	2
Wood for agr. implements	4	5	4
Leaf-litter	5	3	3
Charcoal	NM	NM	NM

1= Highest   5= Lowest   NM = Not Mentioned

TOOLS

θ   Semi-structured (open) questions
θ   Matrix rankings and scoring

Step 4: Baseline Information
Example of outputs and tools

Output 1: Existing stocking (inventory) and value of forest products in a Community forest (Khotegairo Sattale FUG – 586 Ropani)

Product	Block	Quantity	Rs / Unit	Total Rs / Block
Firewood (Bhari)	I	7,084		
	II	5,486		
	III	7,457		
	IV	9,143		
	V	4,457		
	Sub-total	33,627	50.00	**16,81,350.00**
Timber (Daar) (c.ft.)	I	1,264		
	II	2,373		
	III	1,582		
	IV	3,164		
	V	396		
	Sub-total	8,779	300.00	**26,33,700.00**
Shyaula (Bhari)	I	6,800		
	II	5,069		
	III	6,673		
	IV	9.635		
	V	3,931		
	Sub-total	32,108	10.00	**3,21,080.00**
Wood for agr. implements (Poles)	I	2,080		
	II	600		
	III	1,575		
	IV	2,800		
	V	1,500		
	Sub-total	8,555	100.00	**8,55,500.00**
Grass (Bhari)	All 5 blocks	1,000	40.00	40,000.00
Total				55,31,630.00

TOOLS

θ   Forest walk
θ   Forest resource assessment (inventory) forms
θ   FUG Operational Plan
θ   Biomass table

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Output 2: Average amount of firewood received from different sources by average household in different wealth categories (in 4 FUGs)

	Wealth Group			
	I	II	III	IV
Average amount consumed per year	68	54	63	57
Amount obtained from community forest Distributed by FUGC Additional amount collected	10 20	10 12	10 15	10 15
Amount collected from government forests	8	8	13	16
Amount purchased	5	3	9	4
Amount obtained from private sources	25	21	16	12

Output 3: Amount of leaf-litter received from different sources by average household in different wealth categories (in 4 FUGs)

	Wealth Group			
	I	II	III	IV
Average amount used per year	23	20	13	10
Amount received from community forests	10	10	7	5
Amount collected from government forests	13	10	6	5

TOOLS

θ   Semi-structured survey questions (for selected household interviews)
θ   FUG register (forest product harvesting distribution records)

Step 5:
FUG Committee Meeting
Example of output and tools

Output 1: List of community forest management issues and their importance determined through tole representative

Issues / Problems	Ranks
Limited supplies of forest products from CF	1
Misuse of FUG fund by a few rich members	2
Poor representation of women and other disadvantaged members in FUGC	3
Lack of forest management knowledge and skills	4
Small forest area and large FUG size	5

Output 2: An agreed plan of tole meetings

Tole	Place, date & time	Person responsible to inform Tole members
Bhairab Tole	Ram Prasad's house 14/01/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Budhi Man
Pakha Pani	Dil Kumari's house, 14/01/97, 6 p.m.	Member, Radha Devi
Majh Bari	Raj Kumar's house, 15/01/97, 7 a.m.	Secretary, Kusmakhar
Thapa Tole	Dhan Bahadur's house, 15/01/97, 6:30 p.m.	Chairman, Dhan Bahadur
Pallo Pakha	Hira Lal's house, 16/01/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Hira Lal
Acharya Tole	Devi Prasad's house, 16/01/97, 7 p.m.	Treasurer, Ram Acharya

TOOLS

- θ   FUG Operational Plan
- θ   All outputs (information) arising from step 4
- θ   Ranking and scoring (matrix & pairwise)

Step 6:
Tole Meetings
Example of output and tools

Output 1: Revised list of community forest management issues and their importance determined at the tole meetings

Issues / Problems	Ranks
Limited supplies of forest products from CF	1
Misappropriation of FUG fund by a few rich members	2
Lack of understanding about the purpose of community forest and knowledge of the existence of Operational Plan	3
Lack of forest management knowledge and skills	4
Poor representation of women and disadvantaged members in FUGC	5
Operational plan not useful and complex to understand	6

TOOLS

θ   All the outputs (information) arising from step 4
θ   Ranking and scoring of issues / problems
θ   Semi-structured discussion (with men, women and occupational castes)
θ   FUG Operational Plan

Step 7:
FUG Assembly – Action Plan Preparation
Example of output and tools

Output 1: Action plan

Issue	Action required	When	How	By who
Poor representation of women and disadvantaged members in FUGC	Reformulate the FUG Committee	01/02/98	Through Tole meetings & FUG general assembly	Current FUG Chairman (D. B. Thapa) and Secretary (Kusmakhar)
Misappropriation of the FUG fund	Recover the amount	Within 2 months (by 01/04/98)	By setting up a task force in FUG general assembly	The task force (Ram Paudel, Nani Dahal & Purna Thapa)
Operational plan not helpful for forest user group operation	Revise the operational plan	Before the end of the fiscal year (15/07/98)	Through discussions in FUGC & Tole meetings, and FUG general assembly	Tole representatives, FUGC & field staff
Lack of technical skills for community forest management	Organise a study tour Organise a training programme for forest harvesting Set up a series of trial plots	03/98 03/98 03/98	By setting up a team for each of these activities in Tole and FUGC meetings and approving it in a FUG general assembly.	Dhan B. Thapa & Khem Paudel Chitra K.C. and Keshav Adhikari Raja Ram and Savitri Devi
FUG fund not accessible to poorer members of the FUG	Allocate 10,000 (25% of the total) to provide poorer members with low interest.	04/98	Through FUGC (use wealth ranks as the basis for household selection)	FUGC

TOOLS

θ Issues identified in FUGC meeting
θ Issues identified in Tole Meetings
θ A format for action plan preparation
θ FUG Operational Plan

Step 8:
Action Plan Implementation
Example of output and tools

Output 1: A new FUG Committee

Tole	Name	Position
Bhairab Tole	Ram Maya Paudel	Vice Chairperson
	Bishnu Acharya	Member
Pakha Pani	Som Prasad Paudel	Member
Majh Bari	Kusmakhar Sharma	Secretary
	Nav Raj Baral	Member
Thapa Tole	Dhan Bahadur Thapa	Chairman
	Krishna Kumari Pun	Member
Pallo Pakha	Hira Lal Bika	Member
	Jamuna Devi Bika	Member
Acharya Tole	Devi Prasad Acharya	Treasurer
	Hari Prasad Acharya	Member

Output 2: Process used to recover the FUG's misused money

The concerned team members (Ram Paudel, Nani Dahal & Purna Thapa) meet and prepare a plan as follows:

Meet with the previous and current FUG treasurers (Ram Acharya and Devi Acharya respectively) and look at the details of individuals who have used FUG fund and yet to return (names, amount used and date borrowed).

Prepare the list of people who have used money from the FUG fund.

Meet with the concerned individuals, confirm the details and together with them set a new date (verbally or in writing) for repayment.

The following people had burrowed money from the FUG fund. Together with them a new date was agreed for returning the money.

Name	Rs	Total (+ interest)	New date for repayment
Dhan B. Thapa	5,000	5,800	15/03/98
Ram Acharya	2,500	2,900	15/03/98
Kushmakhar	2,500	2,900	15/03/98
Manju Thapa	500	550	15/03/98
Total	10,500	13,150	

TOOLS

θ   Discussion in FUG general assembly
θ   FUG register
θ   FUG account statement

Output 3: Planning and conducting a study tour

The nominated members: Dhan Bahadur Thapa. and Khem Paudel meet with Kul Bahadur Chhetri to discuss potential sites / places for a study tour, and seek information on the various things to see, people to meet with and time that may be involved . They work out the programme and cost as follows:

No. of people: 20 (1 man & 1 woman from each of the six Toles, and seven FUGC members), and a DFO staff

No. of days: 10 days (lincluding travelling time 03/03/98 and return on 12/03/98)

Places to visit: Kaski (FUGs and research sites), Bhaktapur (Nagarkot), Sindhupalchok (forest product processing industries), Ilam, Saptari (Mahuli).

Cost (Rs):		
	Food	30,000
	Accommodation	30,000
	Transport	20,000
Other		8,000
	Total	88,000

Dhan Bahadur Thapa and Khem Paudel then discuss the plan with the FUGC members and after a necessary revision, the FUG chairman sends the proposal with a covering letter to the District Forest Officer for support.

The District Forest Officer reviews the plan and then sends it to the Nepal UK Community Forestry Project (NUKCFP) and a recommendation letter for support.

On assurance of fund from the NUKCFP, the DFO confirms the tour with the FUGC and assign Kul Bahadur Chhetri (or another staff member) to help organise the tour.

Through the DFO, Kul Bahadur Chhetri helps the FUG to make necessary arrangements for the tour, including the selection of participants, informing the hosts and arranging transport, food, accommodation and record keeping.

The villagers leave for the tour and return from the tour on the set dates and time.

Kul Bahadur Chhetri helps the participants to write a report on the study tour and submit to the DFO with a copy each to the FUGC and NUKCFP.

TOOLS

θ   Information / reports on the various research sites
θ   Letter from the FUGC and DFO
θ   A field staff from the concerned Range Post
θ   A report on the study tour

Output 4: Forest harvesting trial plots

Chitra K.C. and Keshav Adhikari meet with the field staff (Kul Bahadur Chhetri) and seek information on setting up trial plots to test different harvesting regimes. Kul Bahadur advises them procedures to seek such support. Chitra K.C. and Keshav Adhikari write a letter through the FUG Chairman to the District Forest Officer for support in setting up trial plots in their community forest. The District Forest Officer then refers the letter to the NUKCFP and asks for support. The NUKCFP makes a necessary arrangement (consultants with appropriate knowledge and skills and fund) to provide the required support.

The concerned consultants contact Chitra K.C. and Keshav Adhikari, review the situation, walk through the forest and village and develop the following plan.

People to be involved	2 members from each Tole (1 man & 1 woman)
	3 FUGC members
Day, date & time	Wednesday, 25/02/98, 10 a.m.
Venue	Bhirpani community forest, Block 3, near Chuche Dhunga

Chitra K.C. and Keshav Paudel discuss the above with the FUGC and to the Tole residents and ask the Tole residents to select/nominate two members (1 man 1 woman) from their Toles. On 25/02/98 people assemble at the venue on the set date and time. After intensive discussion with the participants about the need for trial plots and the main purpose of such plots, the group decids to agree for the following:

Objective:	To find the most appropriate harvesting intensity (distance)
Total plots & the size:	5 (each plot of 20 m x 20m)
Plot 1	Control
Plot 2	Harvesting at 1m x 1m spacing
Plot 3	Harvesting at 2m x 2m spacing
Plot 4	Harvesting at 3m x 3m spacing
Plot 5	Harvesting at 4m x 4m spacing
Harvesting frequency:	Once a year (as normally practised by the FUG)
Measurement:	Total biomass yield (kg), height & tree circumference, regeneration of young seedlings

The consultants then explain the FUG criteria for selecting a site for trial plots, help them to set up the plots, measure and record information, and monitor and maintain the plots and information.

TOOLS

θ Format for forest & tree measurement
θ Measurement tapes and ropes
θ Measuring rods
θ Operational plan

Output 5: Demand for firewood and supply from community forests

The consultants and the concerned FUG members (Chitra KC and Keshav Adhikari) and the field staff

(Kul Bahadur Chhetri) used the information arising from the trial plots to work out the amount of forest products (firewood) the FUG can obtain from different plots. They then compared the amount the FUG are receiving from the current harvesting practices and the amounts they could obtain annually from a ha from an organised, systematic harvesting (using a specific treatment and rotation period), and the extent to which the different harvesting regimes could meet the FUG demands for firewood. The following is the result.

FUGs/Harvesting Regimes	Firewood harvested		
	Rotation (year)	Current/Projected Yield (MT/ha/yr)	Firewood needs met from CF
Bhirpani Current harvesting system Harvest 8 ha/yr with 1x1 m space Harvest 5 ha/yr with 4x4 m space	- 5 8	**0.79** 17.4 41.7	**11%** 49% 73%
Jamale Chisapani Current harvesting system Harvest 8.5 ha/yr with 1x1 m space Harvest 5.3 ha/yr with 4x4 m space	- 5 8	**2.59** 15.4 44.6	32% 39% 70%
Khotegairo Sattale Current harvesting system Harvest 5.9 ha/yr with high forest regime Harvest 3.7 ha/yr with regular regime	- 5 8	0.86 55.5 73.7	1% 107% 89%

TOOLS

θ   Information on the amount of forest products harvested from the trial plots

θ   Biomass tables

θ   FUG Operational Plan

Output 6: Provide Rs 10,000 from the FUG to the poorest household members

The FUGC reviews the household categories arising from the wealth ranking exercise

with the Tole representatives, and consider the poorest category for providing loans without any interest for the first six months and thereafter at 12 percent. The concerned households will have to repay the loan with interest within 2 years. A household needs at least 2,000 rupees to undertake an income generating activity (e.g. to start goat or poultry or a basket making enterprise). As there are 14 poorest households, they decide to provide Rs 2,000 each to 5 households in the first year, another 5 households in the second year and the final 4 households in the third year.

The FUG Committee asks households of the poorest category to submit through Tole representatives their names and the proposed income generating activities for which they would like to use the money. The committee decided to provide loan to the following members in the first year.

Name	Activity	Rs
Sashi Maya Bika	Goat rearing	2,000
Purne Kami	Goat rearing	2,000
Hari Kala Sarkini	Goat rearing	2,000
Kailee sarkini	Poultry farming	2,000
Bal Bahadur Thapa	Bamboo basket weaving	2,000

TOOLS
θ   Forest sample plots measurement
θ   FUG records of wealth categories
θ   FUG account sheets
θ   FUG agreement papers

Step 9:
FUG Committee Meeting – Monitoring (reflection) on the Plan Implementation

Example of output and tools

Output 1: Monitoring (reflection) on the study tour

The FUG chairman consults the FUGC members and the study-tour participants and then sets a date and time for the reflection on the study tour. In the meeting, he asks the tour participants to describe the study tour; i.e. people that went to the tour, time involved, places visited, activities observed and the aspects, which were most interesting and relevant to their situation and could be adopted without much trouble and costs.

He then tries to draw out what aspects could be useful and relevant to their situation. For example, some aspects of the study tour, which the tour participants of the Bhirpani FUG thought to be relevant to their situation are as follows:
*   Planting broom grass underneath the forest, and to earn income by selling brooms and grass.
*   Using a portion of the group funds to loan out to the poor members at low interest rate.
*   Regular, systematic cutting (pruning, thinning & felling) trees in order to improve the growth and general condition of the forest.
*   Using a part of the FUG fund to build village schools and providing scholarships to the children of the poor households.

The discussion then focused on how these specific activities were planned and implemented and what general impact have they had on the FUG and their forest.

The FUGC agreed to organise the similar sharing and reflection at the Tole level. They also agreed to suggest to the Tole residents to consider the following possibilities:
*   Whether the FUG should also plant broom grass! If yes, where, when & how they should go about doing it?
*   Whether the FUG should also try to use a part of the group fund? If yes, how much and how should they go about doing it?

The committee developed a programme for Tole level meetings (similar to that shown in Output 3 of Step 1). It was agreed that the study tour participants of the concerned Tole (rather than all the tour participants) to visit the Tole and to share and reflect upon the experience.

TOOLS

θ Tour programme
θ Diary
θ FUG register

Output 2: Reflection on the trial plots (harvesting regimes)

The concerned FUG members (*Chitra KC and Keshav Adhikari*), Tole representatives and the field

staff (Kul Bahadur Chhetri) observe the trial plots (growth of trees and the regeneration of new seedlings as well as the estimates of forest products yields from different harvesting regimes (Output 4, Step 8). The following is the overall assessment.

Plot type	Amt. harvested	Tree growth	Regeneration
Control 1m x 1m Plot 2m x 2m Plot 3m x 3m Plot 4m x 4m Plot	Nil Loweer Higher than 1m Higher than 2m Highest	Lowest Higher than control Not much difference in the other three plots	Nil Not many Higher than 1m No difference in 2m & 3m Highest

Chitra KC and Keshav Adhikari presented the observations at the FUGC meeting. The committee members thought that it was too early to make a definite judgment. Meanwhile, while they await results, they thought they could still use the initial observations to make a decision and move towards more active forest management. The FUG members in Bhirpani and Karkineta thought that it would be reasonably safe for them to adopt the modest harvesting regimes (i.e. 2m x 2m). However, before making a definite decision, the initial results should be shared and reflected at the Tole level meetings with the rest of the FUG members, and then to decide at the FUG general assembly.

TOOLS

θ   Records from the trial plots
θ   Output 4, Step 8
θ   FUG Operational Plan

Output 3: Report on the recovery of the FUG's misused money

Ram Paudel, Nani Dahal & Purna Thapa responsible for the recovery of the misused money presented the following report at the FUGC meeting.

The following people had burrowed money from the FUG fund. Together with them a new date was agreed for returning the money.

Name	Rs	Interest	New date for repayment
Dhan B. Thapa	5,000	800	Returned all money on the set date
Ram Acharya	2,500	400	Returned only the interest
Kushmakhar	2,500	400	Returned all money on the set date
Manju Thapa	500	50	Returned all money on the set date
Total	10,500	1,650	

Rs 8,850 has been deposited to the FUG account in the bank.

The team also reported that Ram Acharya had asked for a further time period for the repayment of the amount (Rs 2,500). The FUG Chairman said that it would be possible to extend the repayment date for another six months, but would have to be agreed in the FUG general assembly.
The FUGC also decided to share this information at the Tole level meetingss.

TOOLS
θ   Agreement
θ   Task force report

θ   Bank statement with the deposit slip

Output 4: Monitoring (reflection) on the use of loan by the poor

In a FUGC meeting (after 12 months), the concerned Tole representatives are requested to report on the impact of the loan provided to the poor members of the group. The following were the report.

- Shashi Maya Bika has bought a female goat. The goat has already delivered two baby goats, which she sold at 1,000 rupees each. She has returned 50% of the capital loan as well as the interest, well before the set date. The goat is pregnant again. It looks like she will be able to return the loan in time, without any problem.
- Purne Kami's goat has been killed by a leopard. He was able to recover 1,000 rupees by selling meat, but he may be unable to pay back the loan without a further support.
- Hari Kala Sarkini's goat has yet to give birth to a baby goat. She is considering to sell the goat and buy another one.
- Kailee Sarkini has been able to sell both eggs and live chicken and earn money. She has been able to pay the interest and a part of the capital loan. She may be able to return the loan in time.
- Bal Bahadur Thapa has earned some 4,000 rupees from the loan, and he has already returned the loan money with interest.

The committee agreed to organise similar sharing and reflection at the Tole level meetings, and to propose:

- To waive the interest charge for Purne Kami and to provide him with additional 1,000 rupees to purchase another goat, and to charge the interest from the new date.
- To use the money returned from Bal Bahadur Kailee Sarkini and Shashi Maya and add 4,000 rupees from the group fund to loan out to five more households on similar conditions.
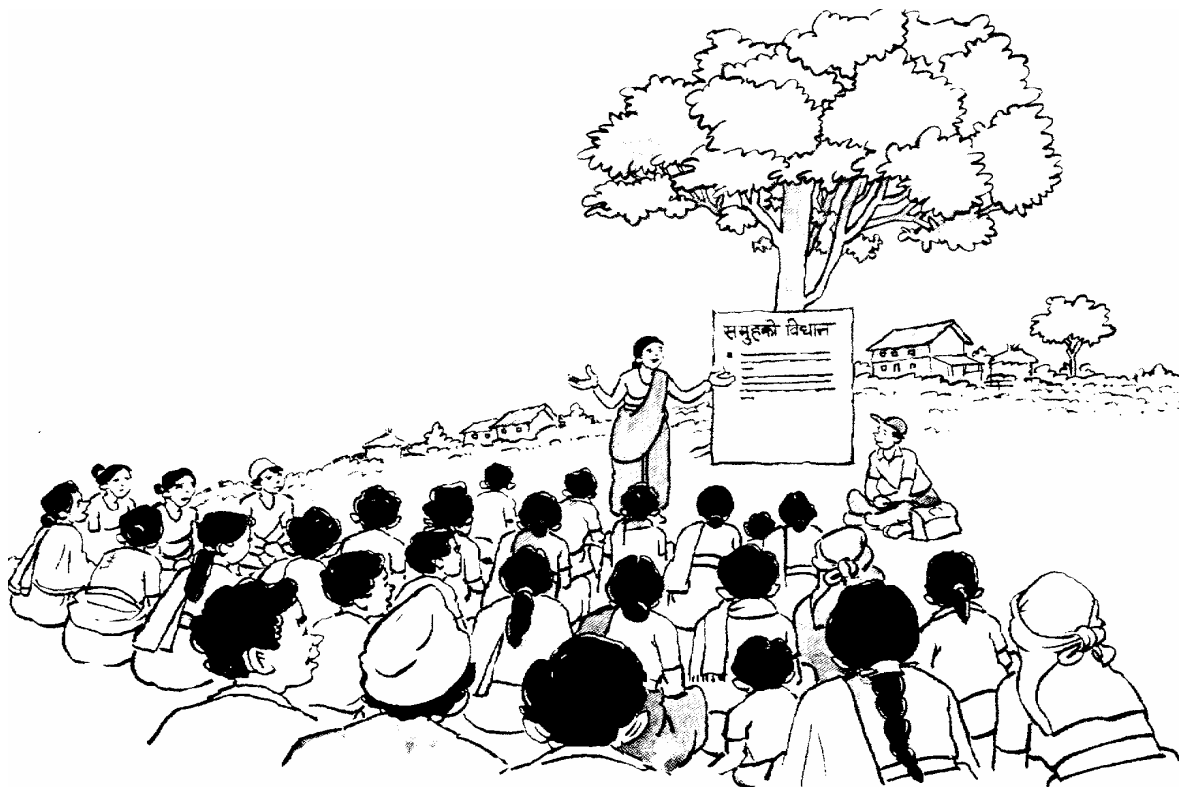

TOOLS
θ   Loan record book
θ   Tole representative's report
θ   FUG Register

Output 5: An agreed plan of Tole meetings

Tole	Place, date & time	Person responsible to inform Tole members

Bhairab Tole	Ram Prasad's house 20/11/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Budhi Man
Pakha Pani	Dil Kumari's house, 20/11/97, 6 p.m.	Member, Radha Devi
Majh Bari	Raj Kumar's house, 21/11/97, 7 a.m.	Secretary, Kusmakhar
Thapa Tole	Dhan Bahadur's house, 21/11/97, 6:30 p.m.	Chairman, Dhan Bahadur
Pallo Pakha	Hira Lal's house, 22/11/97, 7 a.m.	Member, Hira Lal
Acharya Tole	Devi Prasad's house, 22/11/97, 7 p.m.	Treasurer, Ram Acharya

Output 6: An agreed date, time and place for FUG General Assembly
• Date: 24/11/97 • Time: 10 a.m. • Place: Chautara, nearby the Primary School

Step 10:
Tole Level Meetings – Monitoring (reflection) on the Plan Implementation

Example of output and tools

Output 1: Summary of issues/questions identified in Tole meetings for discussion in the FUG general assembly

In each Tole level meeting, repeat the monitoring (reflection) process used in FUGC meeting. First, each task groups explains the task assigned and then explains who did what, when and the process used. They then present the outcome (result).

The Tole residents then discuss and reflect upon the positive aspectes as well as the new matter of concerns or issues arising from the results/outcome. They then discuss among themselves about potential solutions to address the new issues/questions ask questions. In summary, the following issues/questions were identified for a detailed discussion and decision for further action in the FUG general assembly:

1. What is the most appropriate treatment plots for the harvesting of forest, and how to apply it in the regular forest management?

2. What course of action would be best to recover the misappropriated FUG fund from Ram Acharya?

3. How could the group help Purne Kami?

4. Should more money be set aside for the poorer households?

Although the residents of each Tole have suggested solutions to the above issues, it was agreed that each Tole representatives should present them in the FUG assembly for consideration

TOOLS

θ   Plan for Tole meetings
θ   Information on FUG Assembly
θ   Reports on different activities

Step 11:
FUG Assembly: Monitoring (reflection) on the Plan Implementation

Example of output and tools

Output 1: Action plan

On 24/11/97, FUG members gather at the Chautara at around 11 a.m. The FUG secretary records attendence of all the members present. The Chairman then reads out the agenda for discussion in this particular assembly meeting. He then asks each task group to present their report to the assembly for general discussion and reflection. The chairman then presents the list of main issues or questions, identified from the Tole level meetings, for a detailed discussion and resolution or for a decision for further action. The decisions made and an agreed plan for a further action are as follows:

What to do	Action required	When	How	By who
Use 2m x 2m spacing in harvesting	Inform the FUG members	During the harvesting time	Through Tole meetings and FUG assembly	FUGC members & Tole reps.
Recover of the misappropriated FUG fund from Ram Acharya	Extend the time for repayment for another 6 months, but double the interest rate	Immediately	At the FUG Assembly	The task force (Ram Paudel, Nani Dahal & Purna Thapa)
Waive the interest charge for Purne Kami and provide additional loan of 1,000 rupees	Inform Purne Kami, revise and sign the agreement	Immediately	At the FUG Assembly	FUGC & Purne Kami
Provide 2,000 rupees each to five more poor h/holds at low interest rate	Set aside Rs. 10,000 to provide five more poor h/holds at low interest.	Immediately	Use wealth ranks as the basis for household selection)	FUGC & Tole reps.

TOOLS

θ   Agenda for discussion

θ   Summary sheet of major issues/questions

θ   A format for action plan preparation

θ   FUG Operational Plan