

Exploring Possible Recommendations

Policy Level

- The Forest Act of 1993 should be implemented immediately. The Act, published in the Gazette in 1993, had not come into force even by February 1995. This resulted in great inconvenience and confusion in all forestry activities and decisions. At present, the Forest Act of 1961 has to be used for any legal actions.
- Forestry bylaws should be updated immediately; they should cover all the rules and regulations for community forests and user groups.
- The authority to approve operational plans should be given to one agency.
- The traditional approach of DOF/HMG to decisions on disputes should be revised to make decision-making less time-consuming.

Departmental Level

- When a party to a dispute issues a statement that the conflict took place through the instructions of a government official, the party should have written proof.
- Conflicts should be resolved within a reasonable time frame.
- The women's community forest group should be allowed to use the income in their account (from the sale of timber and fuelwood) for the welfare of the community.

District Forest Office Level

- The DFO has special judicial authority. In order to function as a quasi-judicial body, necessary training on judicial proceedings should be provided to District Forest Office officials. The lack of judicial knowledge may be the reason for the DFO, in his comment on September 27th, 1993, referring to the Forest Act of 1993 which had not then come into force.
- User groups should be given the sole authority to prepare or revise an OP. The DFO should only be responsible for providing necessary technical advice.
- The OP should have a clause for dispute settlement.
- The date from which an OP is effective should be clearly mentioned.

- Every possible attempt should be made at the district level to settle a dispute; communication between the two parties should be frequent.
- Training programmes on OP preparation, forestry rules and regulations, and awareness building should be conducted for all community forestry user groups.

Community Level

- User groups should work according to the OP. Any changes should be communicated in writing and appended to the OP.
- Written instructions should be provided for undertaking any activity under the DFO's direction.
- Women should also receive training in community forestry. The women of the Jalbire community forest group have also asked for a study tour of community forests where the users' committees/groups are functioning well.