



Royal Government of Bhutan
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

National Strategy for Community Forestry

Social Forestry and Extension Division
Department of Forests and Park Services

September 2019



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Abbreviations

CF	Community Forest/Forestry
CFMG	Community Forest Management Group
CFO	Chief Forestry Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DoFPS	Department of Forests and Park Services
DT	Dzongkhag Tshogdu
FNCA	Forest and Nature Conservation Act
GT	Gewog Tshogde
Ha	Hectare
Hh	House hold
LG	Local Government
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHCA	Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs
NWFP	Non-Wood Forest Products
NSCF	National Strategy for Community Forestry
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PFMP	Participatory Forest Management Project
REDD+	Reduction of Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation.
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
SFED	Social Forestry and Extension Division

FOREWORD

The concept of peoples' participation in sustainable forest management in Bhutan started when Social forestry made its first appearance in Bhutan in 1979 with a Royal Decree from His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. Peoples' participation in forest management became more evident when community forestry program featured prominently in the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan, 1995. Community Forestry (CF) Program in Bhutan started with the first Community Forest approved by the Department of Forests and Park Services in 1997. Hence, it advanced gradually even without strategies and frameworks. As the CF program made considerable progress, the need of strategy was realized, hence the National Strategy for Community Forestry (NSCF) 2010 was developed.

The NSCF 2010 has ten broad strategies. Enhance the regulatory framework for CF to ensure that it is enabling rather than enforcing; manage CF by applying principles of Sustainable Forest Management to achieve both conservation and development outcomes; manage CF to generate income as well as a wide range of other goods and services; manage CF to contribute to a reduction in rural poverty; meet rural timber requirements from CFs to the greatest extent possible; CF management based on principles of good governance; improve awareness of the general public and staff about all aspects of CF; build capacity to plan for and manage CF; base technical and socio-economic approaches to CF on good science; and monitor and evaluate the biophysical and socio-economic outcomes of CF. These strategies were implemented over 8 years.

The NSCF 2010 was evaluated and found to have achieved its purpose to a great degree. The Forest and Nature Conservation Rules and Regulations, 2017 have some major changes from the FNCR 2006 which accordingly needs to be incorporated in the revised Strategy. The CFMG follows the management plan for implementing, abiding annual harvesting limit for harvesting, plantation, fund management, focus on pro-poor, good governance practices, trained good number of forestry staff and CFMG members on different aspects of CF management. However, there are few issues and gaps, which are addressed as strategies in the National Strategy for Community Forestry 2019.

This National Strategy for Community Forestry 2019 has embraced critical potentials like enterprises development, value addition, creating employment opportunities, establishing network and networking to strengthen governance, sustainable resource management, income generation and expertise sharing. CF Management by applying principles of Sustainable Forest Management with emphasis on adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts.

This strategy is a useful document for advancement of CF program for sustainable forest management, improving governance, contribute to poverty reduction and above all contribute to maintaining 60% of forest cover for all times to come.



(Lobzang Dorji)
DIRECTOR

Executive Summary

The first community forest strategy was planned and published in accordance with draft Forest Policy of Bhutan 1999, Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan 1995, Forest and Nature Conservation Rules 2006, 10th Five Year Plan development goals, and based on experiences implementing the program by different projects over the years.

Community Forestry is a key component of Bhutan's forest policy and is developing very dynamically, contributing to sustainable management of forests and in maintaining 60 percent of country's area under forest cover for all times to come as enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan. Until 2010, the CF program was guided by 5-year development plans, in addition to project support from various Donors including EU, SDC, HELVETAS, GTZ. In order to move the CF program forward, the first National Strategy for Community Forestry was developed in 2010 with guiding principles, vision, development goal, ten strategies and almost 60 proposed actions.

This Strategy document (2019) has been formulated based on evaluation of the National Strategy for Community Forestry, 2010. It is also based on experiences gained during the implementation of the first strategy for more than 8 years. The strategic plan is mainly to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, align with the goal of National Forest Policy of 2011, and achieve with positive impacts. It is also to focus on strategies that contribute to intended outcomes/results, and adapt in response to the changing environment.

The second National Strategy for Community Forestry of 2019 has seven targets and strategies with 2 -3 proposed actions per target. The Seven Strategies are:

Strategy 1: Manage Community Forests to address poverty reduction by establishing enterprises, value addition and creating employment opportunities.

Strategy 2: Adopt good science to guide the technical and socio-economic outcomes for Community Forestry.

Strategy 3: Continue awareness raising, education and capacity building at all levels.

Strategy 4: Establish and increase networking to strengthen governance, resource management, equity, access to markets, income generation and sharing of expertise.

Strategy 5: Manage community forests by applying principles of Sustainable Forest Management with emphasis on adaptation and mitigation to climate change impacts.

Strategy 6: Monitor and evaluate regularly the biophysical and socio-economic outcomes of Community Forestry.

Strategy 7: Manage Community Forests on principles of good governance (inclusiveness, transparency, accountability)

1. Introduction

The Community Forestry (CF) program is relatively new compared to other forestry programs such as plantation, forest management unit and protected area management. The CF program seeks to strengthen link between people and forests. Since the CF development started in 1990s, it has made significant progress and has always been endeavouring to ensure that the community forestry development goes the desired way in contributing to socio-economic and environmental development goals and to strengthen local democratization. Community Forestry is a key component of Bhutan's forest policy and is developing very dynamically contributing to sustainable management of forests and in maintaining 60 percent of country's area under forest cover for all times to come as enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan. Until 2010, the CF program was guided by 5-year development plans. In order to move the CF program forward, the first National Strategy for Community Forestry was developed in 2010 with guiding principles, vision, development goal, ten strategies and almost 60 proposed actions.

The first strategy was designed and published in accordance with draft forest policy of Bhutan 1999, Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan 1995, Forest and Nature Conservation Rules 2006, 10th Five Year plan developmental goal and based on experiences implementing the program by different projects over the years such as Participatory Forest Management Project (PFMP) of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), EU, HELVETAS, GTZ, etc. Other aspects also considered, while developing the first strategy were governance and equity.

The first strategy document addressed several key issues related to CF formulation and operationalization. Regulatory framework for CF has become enabling, management plans are developed and applied following principles of sustainable forest management to achieve both conservation and developmental outcomes,

generated significant income, met the rural timber requirement to some degree, built capacities of community forest management groups (CFMGs).

There are almost 800 CFs in the country as of September 2019, covering more than 3.5 percent of total forest area. Now the most important intervention would be to improve the quality and strengthen these CFs for sustainable management of resources. There are still ongoing challenges and gaps that need to be addressed in the context of establishing rural community based forest enterprises, employment generation in rural area, enhancing governance further, lack of technological inputs, resource disparity within and between CFs, limited investment knowledge and opportunities, weak monitoring and evaluation and capacity gaps among others.

2. Current Situation

Though there were traditional rights and management system of forests by communities prior to nationalization of forest in 1969, it took decades to hand over the rights back to the communities. It happened only after the enactment of Forest and Nature Conservation Act (FNCA) of Bhutan 1995.

Current situation of community forestry development is divided into legal framework, policy, instruments such as guidelines and manual, progress of CF formulation, socio-economic benefits of CF, governance of CFMGs, sustainability of resources, etc.

2.1 Legal framework for Community Forestry

Bhutan's forest policies strongly favour the conservation and sustainable management of forest resources in addition to providing socio-economic benefits to people. The legal framework includes legislation, policies, rules and procedural systems (implementation manuals and guidelines) that provide the formal framework within which Community Forest operates. The following paragraphs describe the key changes that have taken place in recent times, and the contemporary situation.

The Forest Act of 1969 was repealed and replaced by the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan, 1995. This currently provides the primary authority for forestry activities in the country. The 1995 Act has section on CF and recognises the traditional and cultural rights of local people to access and use forest resources and this reversed the trend of earlier 1969 Act. The 1995 Act also has provision for private forestry to be practiced on privately registered land and for Community Forests to be established on state forestlands, with the communities being granted management and user rights under conditions set out in approved management plans.

The Community Forestry Chapter states that:

- *“The Ministry may make rules for the establishment of community forests on Government Reserved Forest.*
- *The rules for community forests may provide for the transfer of ownership of the forest produce in the community forest to appropriate groups of communities adjoining the forest.*
- *The group to which community forests have been transferred shall manage them for sustainable use in accordance with the rules for community forests and the approved management plan.*
- *Permits, royalties and other charges, as well as assistance to Community Forestry, shall be governed by the rules for community forests.”*

These changes in forest policy need to be seen in the context of the wider decentralisation agenda of the country. The Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdu Chatrim (2002) and the Geog Yargay Tshogchung Chatrim (2002) spell out a wide range of powers, authorities, resources, responsibilities and functions delegated from central agencies to Dzongkhag Tshogdu to formulate, approve and implement Dzongkhag and Gewog plans. For example, under the DT Chatrim, the DT is the highest forum for local policy and decision making on matters of public interest in a *Dzongkhag* (Article 8). Under the GT Chatrim, Gewogs are given the power for “*conservation and protection of water sources, lakes, springs, streams, and rivers*” (Article 9,7);

and “custody and care of communal lands, community forests, including communal sokshing and nyekhor tsamdo, medicinal herbs and accordingly prevention of illegal house construction and all other types of encroachments in such community lands as well as on Government land and forests” (Article 9,8). The GT is also mandated to “prepare Gewog development plans for which technical backstopping must be provided by the Dzongkhag sector staff (Article 9,1).

The Land Act of Bhutan 2007 is an important legislation that has major implications for many aspects of forest management including Community Forestry. Those sections of the Act that have relevance and practical implications include:

- Chapter 6 (99) confirms that trees, either naturally grown or planted, in registered land shall belong to the landowner.
- Chapter 8 (184) provides for the leasing of Government Reserved Forest land.
- Chapter 10 (235) requires that all *Tsamdro* (grazing) rights shall be deleted from the *Thram* (land title document) and revert to Government land if in *Thromde* (municipal area) or to Government Reserved Forest (if in rural areas); and further (236) the reverted *Tsamdro* in rural areas shall be converted to leasehold, while that in *Thromde* shall remain as government land. Article 240 provides for the leasing of reverted *Tsamdro* to individuals or communities owning livestock, with preference being given to previous right holders (241). Article 247 requires that grazing and pasture development on *Tsamdro* be permitted based on a management plan, with the Department of Forests and Park Services, the Department of Livestock and the lessee responsible for its preparation.
- Chapter 11 (255) requires that all *Sokshing* rights (the rights to use forest land for collection of leaf litter) shall be deleted from the *Thram*, and that *Sokshing* shall be maintained as Government land in *Thromde* or as Government Reserved Forest in rural areas. Article 256 provides for the

reverted *Sokshing* in rural areas to be converted to leasehold land at individual or community level, with preference given to previous rights holders (but only to those who have agricultural land - 257). However, land categorised as *sokshing* where there are no trees shall not be leased. The management of *Sokshing* shall be carried out in accordance with a management plan, with the Department of Forests and Park Services, Department of Agriculture and the lessee responsible for its preparation.

The Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995 has given operational focus through the Forest and Nature Conservation Rules. These were first formulated in 2000 and revised in 2003, 2006 and 2017 (DoF 2003 and DoF 2006, DoFPS 2017). However, it may be important to note that several of these Legal documents are under review and may change.

Key changes to the Rules between 2006 and 2017 are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Key changes in the FNCR 2006 and FNCRR 2017.

Topic	FNCR 2006	FNCR 2017
Preparation of CF management plans	DzFO shall prepare management plans in consultation and collaboration with the CFMGs (Article 28-3)	CFO shall assist CFMG in preparation of CFM plan through consultation and collaboration (Section 78-2)
Area ceiling for CF	Not more than 2.5 hectares per household (Article 27-2)	Mixed conifer/Blue pine forest – 3 ha/hh Chirpine forest - 4ha/hh Mixed broadleaved and other forest types - 5 ha/hh
Procedure for selection of CF area	Plantations raised by the Department shall not be included in the CF (Article 27-1)	Any area of government plantation in small patch less than three years of establishment or plantation measuring less than five ha located within proposed CF shall be included (Article 75-4C)
Responsibilities of CFMG	Under overall supervision of Dzongda with technical support of DzFO and the CFO/PM, CFMG shall be responsible for control and management (Article 31-1)	Under the supervision of CFO, CFMG shall be responsible for sustainable management of CF (Article – 86) The CFMG shall allow the developmental activity within or through CF on conditions the CFMG are Compensated for the damage (Section – 87)
Formation of CFMG	At least required 10 HH (Article 31-2)	At least 5 HH (Section 78 (1))

Sale of Forest Produce	The Department shall impose sales tax as per the prevailing rules and regulations from time to time (Article 4 –b (2))	Royalty shall be levied at prevailing commercial rates in case of sale of timber, sand, boulder and other NWFPP for commercial purpose (Article – 101)
Formation of CF Networks and Associations	No mention	<p>The CFMG shall be allowed to form CF network and association to strengthen good governance, sustainable utilization of resources, equity, and common market access. (Article 108)</p> <p>The CFMG shall submit such proposal as per the guidelines to the department and the department shall review the proposal and whether reject/recommend to the Ministry for approval. (Article 109)</p>
Sale of surplus forest produce from CF	The rate have to be in line with NRPC	The prices for the sale of surplus forest produce shall be as per the rates decided by the CFMG
Rights over CF resources	Rights of forest resources excluding sand and boulders	Upon issuance of the CF Certificate, all forest produce specified in the CFMP shall be the property of the CFMG (Section 84) and Section 101
Marking of trees in CF	Marking Hammer kept with the CFO	Marking of the trees in CF shall be carried out by concerned Forest Officer as per CFMP (Section 90)
CFMP prescription	No mention	<p>The management plan prescription shall address the requirement of timber or other forest produce for construction/renovation of Monastery/Lhakhang/Chorten in their locality after realizing the cost.</p>

Article 5 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2008) states that: “*Every Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom’s natural resources and environment*”. The Royal Government is entrusted in the Constitution to conserve and improve the environment and safeguards the country’s biodiversity. It is further directed to secure sustainable forest management, while promoting social and economic development. The Constitution further mandates the Government to ensure that a minimum of 60 percent of Bhutan’s total land area is maintained under forest cover for all time.

Table 2. Effectiveness of Bhutan’s Community Forestry regulatory framework.

Criteria	Bhutan’s conformity with criteria
Regulatory frameworks should be enabling rather than enforcing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many aspects are enabling: the rights of communities to manage local forests and use the benefits are guaranteed in the FNCA and FNCRR 2017 • Number of household to form a CFMG is reduced to five from 10. • Rights over surface collection of sand and boulders are given to the CFMGs • Fixing of rates of forest produce can be decided by the respective CFMG rather than following the national rates • Some aspects are less enabling: compliance requirements for planning and management are relatively complex and inhibit the ability of communities to take effective control.
Communities should be given effective authority (empowerment) as well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFMGs have the authority to manage CFs, distribute benefits and generate income which can be used for both forest management as well as community development.

<p>as responsibility to enable them to manage community forests effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the FNCRR, 2017 the authority to develop management plans was shifted from CFMGs to CFOs, thus disempowering CFMGs as effective forest planners and managers. • Marking of trees in CF shall be carried out by concerned Forestry Officer as per the CFMP (Section 90 of FNCRR 2017)
<p>Rights of access and usage need to be sufficiently “hard” to encourage communities to invest resources into community forest management. “Soft” rights are insufficient incentive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Forests and “<i>groups of inhabitants of communities adjoining the forest</i>” (CFMGs) have recognition in both the FNCA and the FNCRR with communities being granted management and user rights under conditions set out in approved management plans. • While CFMGs are guaranteed with rights to manage Community Forests under the FNCA and the FNCRR, these rights can be suspended if CFMG wants to and or Department can do if the CFMG is unable to manage and if CFMGs are involved in contravention of the provisions of Act, Rules, by-laws of the management plan.

It has become an accepted practice that CF Management Plans will be for a period of 10 years as specified in FNCRR 2017.

The FNCRR 2017 is a critical part of the regulatory framework for Community Forestry and it is evident from their frequent revision (2000, 2003, 2006 and 2017) that there is a strong institutional desire to learn from implementation experiences and to adapt the Rules to make them more realistic and enabling. For example, providing rights over sand and boulders in the CF (FNCRR, 2017).

3. Purpose of Revised CF Strategy

This Strategy document is developed based on evaluation of the implementation of first National Strategy for Community Forestry developed in 2010. Information from experiences gained during the implementation of the first strategy (NSCF 2010) for more than 8 years has been pivotal in giving strategic direction for CF improvement and strengthening it. The strategic plan is mainly to set priorities, focus interventions and resources, strengthen operations, align with the goal of National Forest Policy of 2011, and achieve the desired objectives. It is also to focus on strategies that contribute to intended outcomes/results, and adapt in response to a changing environment. According to the evaluation of the NSCF 2010, following gaps and challenges were reported by both the CFMGs, field officials and other stakeholders during the field visits as well as during the stakeholder workshop.

- The need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of CF.
- Poor record keeping leading to misuse of CF fund in some cases.
- Lack of capacity on enterprise development.
- Lack of capacity on skills and value addition producing quality products leading to poor market.
- Lack of networking of CFMGs within the gewog, dzongkhags and regions.
- Limited CF area due to ceiling, so there is leakage of resources from SRF.
- Lack of equipment and technology to produce quality products.
- Resource disparity within and between CFs, even regionally.
- Lack of sufficient buffer between FMU and CF
- No external auditing of CF funds
- No clear guidelines in the utilization of CF fund
- There is no clear framework for site selection.

Therefore, based on the gaps and challenges and the outcomes from the evaluation of the NSCF 2010 and the strategy prioritization during the stakeholder workshop, seven strategies have been identified.

4. Guiding Principles

This strategy is for a period of 5 years i.e., from 2018/19 to 2022/2023 and it is to align with the RGoB five-year plan periods. Several key principles were identified to guide the formulation of strategies for the future focus and development of Community Forestry.

- Balanced conservation of forest resources and its ecosystem services including adaptation and mitigation aspects of climate change impacts and sustainable utilisation of natural resources;
- Deregulation and devolution through empowerment of local communities to manage their local forests;
- Improve governance of Community Forests leading to improved forest conditions and equitable distribution of benefits;
- Generate income for local communities through enterprise establishment and development
- Contribution of forest products and services for poverty reduction
- Underpin all aspects of forest planning and management with the application of good science i.e. by applying the best available scientific knowledge to all aspects of Community Forestry (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) but in a way that is readily understood and applied by field staff and communities;
- Make explicit attempts to bridge the research-management divide.

4.1 Vision and Goal

4.1.1 Vision:

Empower rural communities to manage forest sustainably for socio-economic and environmental benefits, poverty reduction and to address adaptation and mitigation aspects of climate change.

4.1.2 Goal:

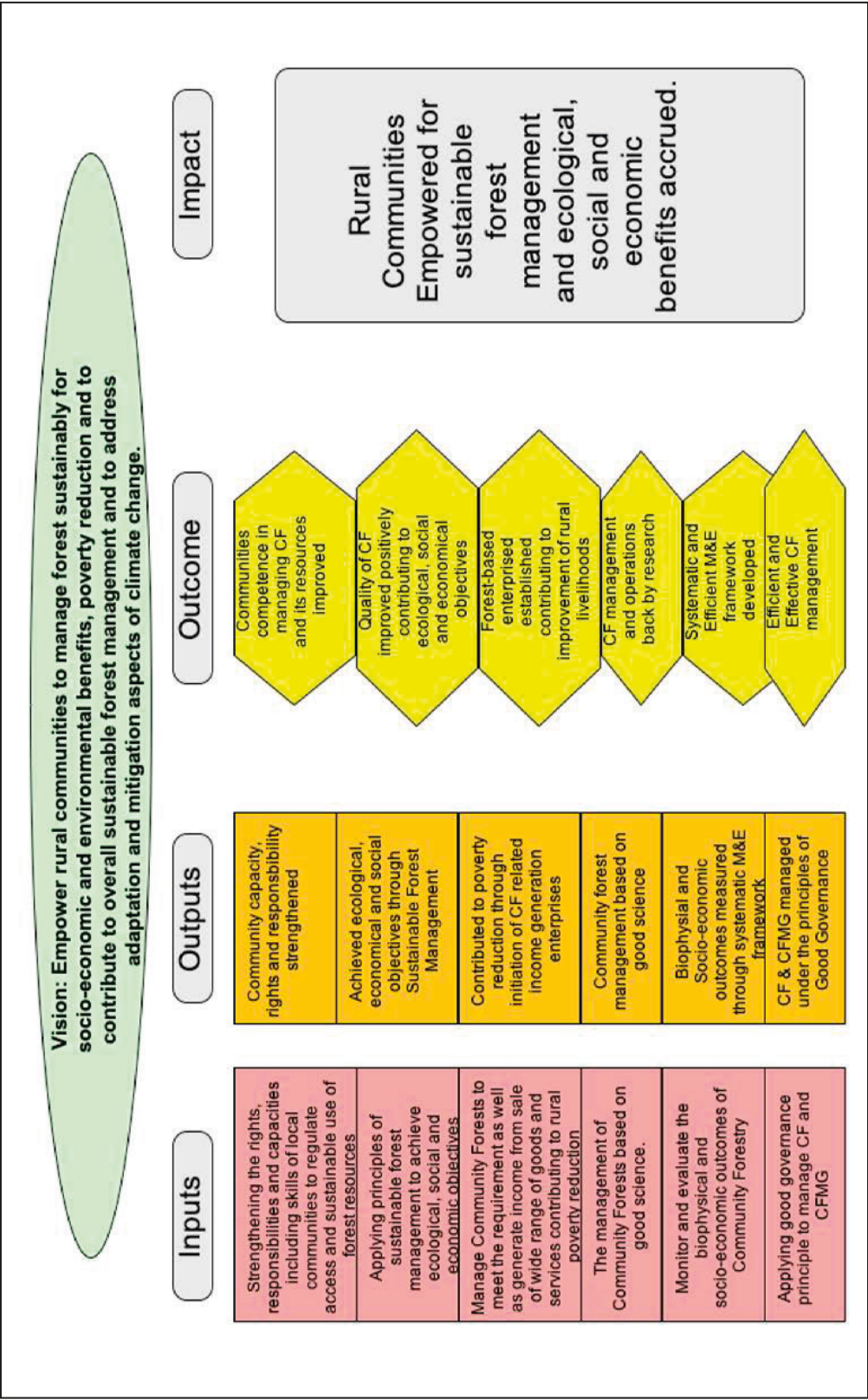
Ensuring sustainable forest management, economic growth and creating employment opportunities by empowering rural communities.

Specifically, the following inputs will be contributing to achieving the above vision and goal.

- Strengthening the rights, responsibilities and capacities including skills of local communities to regulate access and sustainable management of forest resources.
- Applying principles of sustainable forest management to achieve ecological, adaptation and mitigation of Climate change, social and economic objectives.
- Manage Community Forests to meet the requirement as well as generate income from sale of wide range of goods and services contributing to rural poverty reduction.
- Manage Community Forests based on good science.
- Monitor and evaluate the biophysical and socio-economic outcomes of Community Forestry.
- Applying good governance principles to manage CF and Community Forest Management Groups functioning.
- Facilitate establishment of Community Forests in the Protected Areas and biological corridors without compromising the objectives of such areas.

The broad Theory of Change will be used as a conceptual guide to provide intellectual clarity and focus in designing the work program and to allow to trace results and impacts. The overall vision of the CF strategy under the purview of climate change is to empower rural communities to sustainably manage forest and its resources in achieving all the three benefits – ecological, social and economic. The following conceptual framework provides the inputs, outputs, outcome and the expected impact in the long run.

Figure 1: Conceptual Theory of Change for CF Management and Operation



5. Strategies and Actions

Community forest management still revolves around few key challenges and gaps, namely:

- a) Continuously empower communities in group governance, planning, management of forest and its resources, micro-credit and saving options and other self-support initiatives.
- b) With more than 800 CFs, while planning it is important to consider access to forest resources amongst neighbouring communities, coordinating CF actions with FMUs, Parks, Local Forest Management plans and Non-Wood Forest Product management groups.
- c) Enhance linkages and synergies within and amongst other key stakeholders involved in natural resource management.
- d) Need to sustainably utilize and manage forest resources to ensure ecological process, adaptation and mitigation process, social and economic gains besides focusing on increasing the forest stock for future generation.

Out of 10 strategies from NSCF 2010, six are still relevant to the current context to address CF formulation, development and operationalization. Only one new strategy has been proposed and adopted, i.e., Strategy 4 on networking. Therefore, seven strategies were adopted and endorsed during the national level stakeholder workshop, local level stakeholder consultation and field assessment. These strategies are expected to deliver greater impact by limiting to just seven strategic interventions.

Target 1: Establish forest-based enterprise and support value addition to contribute to poverty reduction and employment generation.

Rationale

Sufficient emphasis has been placed on developing and operationalizing CF institutions (Community Forest Management Group {CFMG}) and not much on providing technical forest management aspects. Consequently, most CFMGs have adopted a passive forest management strategy, which emphasizes forest protection, rather than actively managing forests for multiple purposes applying silvicultural practices and operationalization of management plan. Greater emphasis should be placed on active forest management in future to increase the overall benefits from community forests and ensure sustainable management. There is a clear need to shift from protection to active management of forest resources and increase production and access to improving livelihoods of rural people. Nonetheless, for this strategy, there is a need for strong technical assistance from relevant agencies.

Strategy 1: Manage Community Forests to address poverty reduction by establishing enterprises, value addition and creating employment opportunities.

Action 1.1: Resource assessment to take stock of the potential to initiate forest-based enterprise.

Action 1.2: Review existing forest-based enterprises and support up-scaling.

Action 1.3: Identify and support establishment of potential forest-based enterprises.

Action 1.4: Take stock of opportunities to support employment creation through forest-based enterprises.

Target 2: Technical and socio-economic outcomes from CF management are based on good science.

Rationale

The primary purpose of the CF is to ensure sustainable management of forest and its resources to achieve the triple benefit - ecological, social and economic. Therefore, outcome of CF management should be based on good science. A simple example would be the development of CF management plan – where currently, the DoFPS supports CFMGs in formulating plan. The development of management plan involves several steps and stages, the degree of active community engagement and involvement is important, and it is equally important for CFMGs to be able to integrate their need as well as the ecological parameters. Similarly, how well the good science aspects/parameters have been infused into management plan is also critical.

Strategy 2: Adopt good science to guide the technical and socio-economic outcomes for Community Forestry

Action 2.1: Assess the existing gaps in the CF in relation to how CF management and operationalization is backed by good science.

Action 2.2: Strengthen research and documentation of experiences to generate technical information to scientifically manage and improve CF management

Action 2.3: Promote evidence-based decision making to improve the quality of CFs.

Target 3: Educate, create awareness and build capacity at all levels to ensure sustainable forest management through enhanced quality of CFs.

Rationale

Substantial efforts have been made to build capacity at all levels to implement CF programs effectively. These efforts have paid off and most forestry officials in the field have a good understanding of their roles to support implementation of community forestry. However, as the CF program progresses and many of the CFMG are experiencing issues related to forest resource management, social and economic parameters. In addition, there are still demands from communities to establish CF, and these CFs need continuous capacity building and facilitation to develop management plan and implement. Furthermore, the CF is becoming more complex and have to interweave with global scenarios like climate change, eco-tourism, payment for ecosystem services, etc.

The process of educating, creating awareness and capacity building should be a continuous process to support effective and efficient management of CFs to promote sustainable forest management. This has been a concerted effort from the DoFPS till now, where education, awareness and capacity building in relation to CF have been initiated widely. However, there are more than 800 CFs and each one is at a different developmental stage and there is still the need to continue with institutional development and capacity building.

Strategy 3: Continue awareness raising, education and capacity building at all levels.

Action 3.1: Impact assessment of awareness on the CF

Action 3.2: Identify agencies involved in education, awareness and capacity building related to CF

Action 3.3: Take stock of existing capacity gaps related to CF governance, management, marketing and operation.

Target 4: Networking within CFMG established and strengthened to institute good governance, sustainable resource management and utilization, equity and common market access.

Rationale

Although, there are more than 800 CFs in Bhutan, it is envisaged that the number of CF will still grow over the years. The guidelines for CF and NWFP group networks formation is in place and facilitates formation of networks at the Chiwog, Gewog and Dzongkhag, regional and national levels. There is no systematic framework or guideline that ensures effective and efficient networking between CFs and other stakeholders like the CSOs and private enterprise. However, there is evidence that CFMGs have conducted knowledge exchange program within Bhutan and in the region and have found this to be very beneficial. There are examples from Nepal and Guatemala of how beneficial the formation of CF network has proved in several aspects (*N.S Paudel, et.al., 2010*). With favorable forest policy and legislations supporting formation of Network and Association, initiation of network formation is critical with support from the Department.

Strategy 4: Establish and increase networking to strengthen governance, resource management, equity, access to markets, income generation and sharing of expertise.

Action 4.1: Conduct Stakeholder analysis and mapping to identify key stakeholder that could benefit by formation of CF network.

Action 4.2: Initiate formation of CF networks and associations at Chiwog, Gewog, Dzongkhag, Regional and or National levels.

Activity 4.2: Provide constant technical support from the Department.

Target 5: Continuously manage community forest within the principles of Sustainable Forest Management.

Rationale

The underlying premise for handing over forests for community management is to ensure sustainable management of forest and its resources. To ensure the sustainability, the CF management plan will have to adopt and administer principles of sustainable forest management. Although, there is strong support from the DoFPS in ensuring the CFMGs adopt sustainable management principles, there is still the need to build institutional and individual capacity on different aspects of sustainable management of forest resources and at the same time building social and economic capital.

Strategy 5: Manage community forests by applying principles of Sustainable Forest Management with emphasis on adaptation and mitigation to climate change impacts.

Action 5.1: Continue implementing the principles of sustainable forest management in managing the CFs.

Action 5.2: Review the methods used in resource assessment in all the CFs and make appropriate interventions.

Action 5.3: Develop guidelines and framework compensation of CF area and resources lost for developmental activities. Demarcation of CF boundary and maintaining buffer with other forest management regimes.

Action 5.4: As far as possible translate the whole CF management plan or key parts (By-laws) into national language for better understanding and effective implementation.

Action 5.5: Reforestation/afforestation activities including appropriate silvicultural operations.

Target 6: Biophysical and socio-economic outcomes from CF are consistently and efficiently monitored.

Rationale

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of activities and actions are very important to gauge and ascertain the outcomes and impacts. Thus, to have a well formulated M&E framework for CF is important as that will inform, ensure learning and promote adaptive management.

The community forestry program is facing problems of appropriate/regular monitoring and evaluation systems in terms of its impact on poverty reduction and environment conservation. The linkages between results and impacts, and poor documentation or synthesis of CF lessons learned; and weak non-participatory approaches are some key areas for consideration.

Strategy 6: Regularly monitor and evaluate the biophysical and socio-economic outcomes of Community Forestry.

Action 6.1: Conduct assessment of the level of understanding of the CFMGs and forestry officials to initiate the M&E approach described in the CF Manual 2018, methods mentioned in M&E guidelines 2016 and provisions on M&E in FNCRR 2017

Action 6.2: Based on the outcome of the above assessment, develop participatory M&E framework, identifying, activities, outputs, outcome and expected impacts as described in CF Manual 2018.

Action 6.3: Build basic database to document knowledge and lessons from CF implementation.

Action 6.4: Simplification of record keeping books and procedures.

Target 7: Ensure all CFs operate with the principle of good governance.

Rationale

Although, the number of CFs in Bhutan has increased exponentially and the benefits have been accrued by the communities, there are many challenges pertaining to benefit sharing, equity, decision making, transparency, inclusiveness, carrying out CF activities and gender sensitivity within CFMG and among CFMGs.

The goal of governance initiatives in community forestry is to develop capacities that are needed to realize development that gives priority to the poorer households, single women headed households, marginalized groups, sustains the environment and create opportunities for income generation and local employment opportunities. In community forestry, stakeholders should have access to information in order to understand and monitor them. More attention is needed on the transparency in CF fund utilization and CF management, decision-making process, information flow and CF product distribution and utilization.

Strategy 7: Manage Community Forests based on principles of good governance (inclusiveness, transparency, accountability)

Action 7.1: Assessment of CFs and relevant partners to identify gaps in the context of adoption of principles of good governance.

Action 7.2: Develop clear guidelines, framework and by-laws to guide decision-making, benefit distribution, gender inclusiveness and pro-poor initiatives.

Action 7.3: Engage local government and stakeholders particularly the Civil Society organizations.

5. Implementation Plan

Although, the primary role of implementing community forestry program is with respective forest offices in the field and by the SFED, DoFPS in collaboration with CFMG, there are other RGoB organizations, CSOs, Donors and Developmental Partners that are directly or indirectly involved in some way or the other in community based natural resource management. Consequently, identifying key institutions, organization, and collaborating on initiatives that are complementary or supplementary would be very instrumental on the success of achieving CF vision and goals. This will also ensure to avoid duplication of planning and implementing CF related activities.

Some of the important stakeholders and partners (not an exhaustive list) that SFED, DoFPS should develop institutional partnership to support implementation of the Strategies are below:

- i. National Environment Commission Secretariat.
- ii. Watershed Management Division, DoFPS,
- iii. Forest Resource Management Division, DoFPS,
- iv. Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives, MoAF
- v. WWF- Bhutan
- vi. Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation
- vii. Royal Society for Protection of Nature
- viii. Tarayana Foundation
- ix. Department of Local Government, MoHCA
- x. Local Governments.
- xi. Tourism Council of Bhutan

The National Strategy for Community Forest 2019 should be widely disseminated to all stakeholders and to all relevant actors at all levels. The implementation of the strategy should ensure the effective coordination with NWFP, Plantation, PES-Schemes, REDD+ programs and others.

However, a separate Implementation Action plan will need to be developed with clear indicators to measure the achievement of the strategic plan.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The primary responsibility to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Strategy Plan rests with the Social Forestry and Extension Division, DoFPS. The progress of the implementation of the strategy will be monitored on an annual basis in close collaboration with forestry field offices, CFMGs, Local Government and other stakeholders. This could be done in the form of workshops organized regionally or Dzongkhag-wise.

Table 3: Broad Guideline for Monitoring and Evaluation of CF Strategy

Strategies	Actions	Frequency	Data source	Responsibility for data collection
<i>1. Manage Community Forests to contribute in poverty reduction by establishing wood-based enterprises, value addition and creating employment</i>	<p>Action 1.1: Resource assessment to take stock of the potential to initiate forest-based enterprises.</p> <p>Action 1.2: Review existing forest-based enterprises and support up-scaling.</p> <p>Action 1.3: Identify and support establishment of potential forest-based enterprises.</p> <p>Action 1.4: Take stock of opportunities to support employment creation through forest-based enterprises.</p>	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/Forestry Offices/LG/ AWBI, CFMGs
<i>2. Adopt good science to guide the technical and socio-economic outcomes for Community</i>	<p>Action 2.1: Assess the existing gaps in the CF in relation to gaps in how CF management and operationalization is backed by good science.</p> <p>Action 2.2: Strengthen research and documentation of experiences to generate technical information to scientifically manage</p>	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/UWICER/Forestry Field Offices/LG/ NRDCL, CFMGs

<i>Forestry</i>	and improve CF	Action 2.3: Promote evidence-based decision making to improve the quality of CFs.			
3. Continue awareness raising, education and capacity building at all levels.		<p>Action 3.1: Assessment of awareness on the CF</p> <p>Action 3.2: Identify agencies involved in education, awareness and capacity building related to CF</p> <p>Action 3.3: Take stock of existing capacity related CF governance, management, marketing and operation related to CF.</p>	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/Forestry Offices/LG/ CFMGs Field
4. Establish and increase networking to strengthen governance, resource management, equity, access to markets, income generation and sharing of expertise.		<p>Action 4.1: Conduct Stakeholder analysis and mapping to identify key stakeholder that could benefit by formation of CF network.</p> <p>Action 4.2: Initiate formation of CF network and association at Gewog, Dzongkhag, Regional and National levels.</p> <p>Activity 4.2: Provide constant technical support from the Department.</p>	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/Forestry Offices/LG/ Dzongkhag CFMGs Field
5. Manage community forests by applying		Action 5.1: Continue implementing the principles of sustainable forest management in	Annually	Field work	SFED/FRMD/Forestry Field Offices/LG/

<i>principles of Sustainable Forest Management</i>	<p>managing the CFs.</p> <p>Action 5.2: Review the resource assessment methods in all the CFs and make appropriate interventions.</p> <p>Action 5.3: Institute proper guideline and framework for on compensation for CF area and resources lost due to developmental activities CF boundary demarcation and maintaining buffer with other forest management regimes.</p> <p>Action 5.4: As far as possible translate the whole CF management plan or key parts (By-laws) into national language for better understanding and effective implementation</p> <p>Action 5.5: Reforestation/afforestation activities including silvicultural operations</p>		Reports assessments	Dzongkhag, National Land Commission, Department of Roads, Bhutan Telecom, Tashi Cell, Department of Agriculture, Department of Livestock, NEC, etc. CFMGs
6. Regularly and the evaluate the biophysical and socio-economic outcomes of Community Forestry	<p>Action 6.1: Conduct assessment of the level of understanding of the CFMGs and forestry officials to initiate the M&E approach described in the CF manual 2018, Methods mentioned in M&E Guidelines 2016, provisions on M&E in FNCRR 2017.</p> <p>Action 6.2: Based on the outcome of the above assessment, develop participatory M&E framework, identifying, activities, outputs,</p>	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/Forestry Offices/LG/ CFMGs Field

	outcome and expected impacts. Action 6.3: Build basic database to document knowledge and lessons from CF implementation. Action 6.4: Simplification of record keeping books and procedures.			
7. <i>Manage Community Forests on principles of good governance (inclusiveness, transparency, accountability)</i>	Action 7.1: Assessment of CFs and relevant partners to identify gaps in the context of adoption of principles of good governance. Action 7.2: Develop clear guidelines, framework and by-laws to guide decision making, benefit distribution, gender inclusiveness and pro-poor initiatives. Action 7.3: Engage local government and stakeholders particularly the Civil Society organization.	Annually	Field work Reports assessments	SFED/Forestry Offices/LG/ CFMGs Field

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