

This case study is one of several produced by the **CLARA** network to coincide with the publication of the IPCC Special Report on Land. We're showcasing **CLARA** member climate solutions which demonstrate the **rights-based, low-emission development pathways** needed for reducing emissions while **promoting livelihoods** and **ecosystem integrity**.

This case study is based on one of over 60 participatory assessments carried out with communities in 22 countries through the Community Conservation Resilience Initiative (CCRI).

Communities playing a critical role in conserving forests and biodiversity in Nepal

Success of the community forestry user groups shows the importance of the legal recognition of collective tenure rights over community forests

Organisations and individuals involved

Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) and its members (Community Forest User Groups)

Dil Raj Khanal
dilcommon@gmail.com

Global Forest Coalition

Souparna Lahiri, Climate Campaigner and Advisor
souparna.lahiri@gmail.com

Location

Bharandabhara Corridor in Nepal, between the Chitwan National Park and Valmiki National Park in India.



THE BHARANDABHARA CORRIDOR south west of Kathmandu links Valmiki National Park in India and Chitwan National Park in Nepal, both UNESCO Natural World Heritage sites. The area is rich in wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and provides significant benefits in terms of income generation and livelihoods. It is also a source of water for domestic and agricultural uses downstream, as well as being one of the main sources of water for the Ramsar-listed Bishajari wetland.

17 legally-recognised community forestry user groups are managing more than 10,000ha of community forest in the corridor, which is widely contributing to the restoration of ecosystem services, and the conservation of forests and wildlife habitats. The Bharandabhara Forest is home to the Tharu Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent local communities, and the conservation of it now means that there is sufficient water for drinking and irrigation, and income can be generated locally through ecotourism and the collection of non-timber forest products. Communities manage the

forests with their rich traditional knowledge and customary sustainable practices.

A challenge for communities is that there is massive pressure from the government and private sector for infrastructure development (highways, transmission lines, industrial areas, hotels for tourists, jungle safaris, etc.). However, the community forestry groups and their association are strongly opposing the conversion of community forests to other land uses, and the deforestation that would come with it.

Rights of tenure over community forest land and resources are recognised by the Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulation 1995. Some of the IPLCs' customary practices relating to forest resources have been integrated into the formally-approved Forest Management Plans of the community forests, but in practice Indigenous Peoples are struggling to have their informal practices and other customary rights related to forest use—such as collecting non-timber forest products and grazing—recognised in the forestry legislation and management plans.

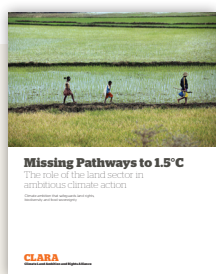
Testimony

Bharat Dhungana, Chairperson of Chitwan District FECOFUN

"In the past there was a lack of a network of forest communities. Now, we have our own network of community forestry groups for the conservation of this critical corridor, through 17 community forests and we have achieved tangible outcomes in the last few years. The network has given equal emphasis to forest management and social development. The community forestry groups are jointly implementing more than ten different activities for socio-economic development and environmental conservation."

'Missing Pathways' to climate action

Last year, CLARA published the report 'Missing Pathways', identifying areas of global mitigation ambition rooted in land rights, restoration, agroecology, and food system change.



The climate actions that are needed to support the efforts of this community are...

for more of Nepal's forests to be designated as community forest, expanding this highly successful community-led conservation model. Further still, the forest tenure rights of local communities, as recognised in forest legislation, must be respected, and government agencies and other stakeholders should also be required to provide support and technical assistance to Community Forest User Groups. Nepal is a clear example of how securing collective land and forest rights, where the protection and restoration of natural sinks is achieved through the stewardship of communities, is an equitable and cost-effective climate mitigation strategy, as argued in the Missing Pathways report.

Transformational change in land management starts with respecting rights.



Contact CLARA

Media: Don Lehr (CLARA) / dblehr@cs.com / +1 917 304 4058

Network Coordination:

Peter Riggs (Pivot Point) peteriggspivotpoint@gmail.com / +1 360 426 0959

Twitter: @CLARA_Alliance