Situated at the north border of Chitwan National Park, the forest was heavily degraded in the seventies and eighties following the nationalization of forest and eradication of malaria in the southern terai of Nepal. In 1990, acknowledging the importance of conservation and usefulness of natural resources in livelihood of people, the locals gathered together to protect and conserve the forest and its biodiversity leading to the beginning of community conservation of this forest. On June 26, 1995, with collective voice from community, this forest was officially handed over to the community user group as Baghmara Buffer Zone Community Forestry under Forest Act 1993. The forest covers an area of 215 ha of which 163 ha was naturally regenerated through community efforts.

This forest user group consists of 956 households as members and constitutes more than half of the population of Tharus (one of the indigenous groups). Besides this, other indigenous/ethnic groups such as Magar, Gurung, Tamang, Newar, Mushahar, Dalits and Brahmin and Chhetri also inhabit the area.

GOVERNANCE

The CFUG is governed by a CFUG council consisting of 45 members representing all the geophysical subsections encompassing the locality of the group. An executive committee consisting of 13 members (at least four women) selected from the council manages the day to day activities and makes decisions regarding sustainable forest management, conservation and poverty alleviation. Day to day activities are further supported by 22 hired staffs.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The main source of income for the group is through eco-tourism managed by the community as well as 22 staffs hired by the group. Annual income amounts to approximately NPR 7,000,000 which the user group invests in sustainable management of forest, biodiversity conservation, community development and poverty alleviation.

The vegetation consists of partly planted (52 ha) and the rest regenerated type with dominant species Padke (Albizia spp.), Simal (Bombax ceiba), Vellor (Trewia nudiflora), Kutmiro (Litsea catechu), Sisso (Dalbergia sisso) and Khair (Acacia catechu).

There are around 21 species of mammals, 195 species of birds, 26 species of butterflies, 15 species of fish and many species of reptiles found in this forest. E.g. One-horned rhinoceros,
small Indian civet, jackal, tiger, leopard, five striped squirrel, Indian fox, brown fish owl, colorful parakeets, scarlet minivet, crocodiles, pythons, snakes, golden monitor lizard, yellow-throat marlin, etc.

**INVESTMENT FOR COMMUNITY AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

The CFUG fund is invested in various community development activities like repair and construction of roads and school building, renovation of cultural heritage sites, distribution of improved cooking stoves, establishment of biogas plants, income-generating activities for women, poor and marginalized, inclusion of conservation and management curricula in school, etc.

As an effort for poverty alleviation and employment generation, a fish pond was built by the group for 35 households (mainly Mushahars) within the group characterized as poor households. In addition, improved cooking stoves were also distributed to them. Scholarships to students have also been provided. An exposure/study visit is also arranged for them in order to enhance their knowledge, skills and status.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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