



---

# **Review of Community Forestry and Analysis of its Strengths and Weaknesses for Future Directions**

---

**Participatory Forest Management Project, phase III (PFMP III)**



**Rinzin Dorji, PPD MoAF**

**Kaspar Schmidt, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation**

**30/06/2014**

**Thimphu and Berne**

**Submitted to Mr Chenchu Norbu, Director General, Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB)**

---

## **Executive summary**

---

Community forestry (CF) has evolved very dynamically in Bhutan over the past years to a programme involving about one third of all rural households in the country. CF is a partnership between the state as the formal owner of forest land represented by DoFPS and its services and local communities for the conservation and sustainable management of forests. Despite being a young programme, CF already started showing its multiple benefits in terms of increased forest protection or contributing to improving rural livelihoods. However, in 2013 a range of issues related to CF were brought up to DoFPS. Subsequently the department decided to temporarily suspend the approval of new CF management plans and to conduct a review of CF to develop recommendation for the further implementation of the CF programme.

This review was conducted in April and May 2014. The review team discussed CF implementation, its strengths and weaknesses and possible ways forward with representatives of all key stakeholder groups including CFMGs, DoFPS HQ and field services and local government leaders. Further input from DoFPS staff was received through a questionnaire. The team also visited five CFMGs in the field. Moreover, it studied various media and DoFPS investigation reports and other relevant documents.

Analysing the feedback, the review team identified a range of strengths and weaknesses of CF and its current implementation in Bhutan and a number of tension fields. By far the highest number of weaknesses concern aspects of implementation followed by constraints and issues concerning the allocation of forest resources to CFMGs, group governance and the regulatory framework.

CF in Bhutan contributes substantially to the conservation of the country's forests, to bringing more forest area under formal management and to improving rural livelihoods. However, there is scope for improvement, particular in terms of implementation of the programme. The review team came to the conclusion that the existing weaknesses can be addressed and that there was no reason to fundamentally question the concept of CF.

---

## **Key recommendations**

---

Prevent possible problems by improving CF implementation and strengthen existing checks and balances so that CFMGs can solve possible problems, if need be with the support of DoFPS and other stakeholders. The recommended measures aim at broadening the ownership for the CF programme, fostering trust between the stakeholders and promoting their engagement for the continuous improvement of CF.

The recommended priorities are:

- Further improve the regulatory framework by aligning the FNCR to the National Forest Policy and the National CF Strategy, by making a few additions to the CF Manual and by providing more guidance in key areas;
- Address the implementation gaps by following the processes and procedures as set out in the FNCR and the CF Manual;
- Finalise the CF field monitoring system and conduct joint annual monitoring of CFs by territorial divisions/parks and DzFSs;
- Continue the work on group governance as foreseen as an important priority for the support provided by PFMP phase III.

It is expected that this strategy will further shift the focus of the CF programme and support provided to it on the quality of CF and thus of existing and new CFs.

Lift the temporary suspension of the approval of new CFs that has been in place since September 2013. The review team is confident that the identified constraints and weaknesses can be

overcome by the stakeholders. The various analyses of and reflection on CF that took place over the past months have yielded clear priorities for further work to improve the quality of CF.

---

## **Acknowledgements**

---

The review team is grateful to Mr Chencho Norbu, the Hon'ble Director General of DoFPS, for his guidance of this review and his insightful inputs to the review. It would equally like to thank all the stakeholders met in the field and in Thimphu and consulted by phone and via the questionnaire for sharing their views on CF implementation and their experience with CF and thus contributing to this review. The fruitful exchange with foresters from territorial divisions, parks and DzFSs and at head quarter allowed identifying the issues that need attention to further develop CF. Discussions with elected local leaders provided insightful perspectives on CF in the wider context of local governance. Interactions with members of CFMGs illustrated the potential of community-based forest management and constraints it currently faces.

Thanks also go to Mr Gyeltshen Dukpa, CFO SFED, Kinley Dorji, Head of the Social Forestry Section SFED, and their team for the preparations of this review, arranging meetings and the fieldtrips. Kaspar Schmidt would like to thank Mr Tshewang Dorji, Forestry Officer SFED, for accompanying him on the visit to Paro and Haa Dzongkhags. In the field, the review team appreciated the good selection of CFMGs and other stakeholders met that the colleagues of the respective DzFS made and their general support during the field visits.

The team would also like to express it thanks to the colleagues of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan, in particular Mr Chhimi Dorji, Sr Programme Officer, Mr Hansruedi Pfeiffer, Country Director, and Mr Nado Dukpa, Liaison cum Logistics Officer, for their support during the preparations and the conduction of the review, their various inputs to the review and sharing their insightful observations and reflections on CF.

Picture on the cover page: Tshokothangka village and CF in Nahi Gewog, Wangdue Phodrang; The CF starts on the ridge above the village.

---

## Table of contents

---

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Key recommendations</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Rationale for, objective and methodology of the review of community forestry</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 Development of community forestry in Bhutan.....	6
1.2 Temporary suspension of approval of new CF management plans by DoFPS .....	6
1.3 Objective and tasks of the review of community forestry .....	7
1.4 Methodology.....	8
<b>2. Review of CF and its strengths and weaknesses</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Assessment of the regulatory framework for CF .....	9
2.2 Objectives of CF as seen by different stakeholders .....	10
2.3 Analysis of complaints reported to DoFPS and of media reports .....	11
2.4 Strengths of CF and its current implementation .....	13
2.5 Weaknesses of CF and its current implementation.....	14
2.6 Tension fields.....	18
<b>3. Conclusions and recommendations</b> .....	<b>19</b>
3.1 General considerations for the further development of CF .....	20
3.2 Recommendations to address the identified weaknesses .....	21
3.2.1 Further improvement of the regulatory framework for CF .....	21
3.2.2 Allocation of forest resources.....	24
3.2.3 Improve collaboration between forest services.....	24
3.2.4 Improve other key aspects of CF implementation .....	26
3.2.5 Group governance and linkages to local governance .....	27
3.3 Recommendation concerning the suspension of approval of new CFs .....	28
<b>References</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>31</b>
1. Terms of reference .....	32
2. Programme .....	34
3. Persons met.....	36
4. Questionnaire .....	40

---

## List of tables

---

Table 1: Overview on the number of people from different stakeholder groups consulted in meetings and through the questionnaire (indicated). .....	8
Table 2: Complaints brought to the attention of DoFPS and main findings of investigation .....	11
Table 2: Media reports highlighting specific issues concerning CF.....	12

---

## Glossary

---

Chiwog	Group of villages
Dzongkhag	District
Dzongrab	Deputy Dzongkhag Administrator
Gewog	Block (sub unit of district)
Gewog Tshogde	Block Committee
Gup	Head of Gewog
Mangmi	Deputy Head of Gewog
Sokshing	Traditional leaf litter collection rights
Tsamdro	Traditional grazing rights
Tshogpa	Chiwog Head

---

## Abbreviations and acronyms

---

CF	Community Forest/ry
CFMG	Community Forest Management Group
CFO	Chief Forestry Officer
cft	Cubic feet
DFO	Divisional Forestry Officer
DoFPS	Department of Forest and Park Services
DzFO	Dzongkhag Forest Officer
DzFS	Dzongkhag Forestry Sector
FYP	Five Year Plan
GT	Gewog Tshogde
HQ	Head Quarter
MoAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NWFP	Non Wood Forest Product
PM	Park Manager
PO	Programme Office (of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan)
PPD	Planning and Policy Division, MoAF
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RNR	Renewable Natural Resources
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SRF	State Reserved Forest
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference

---

# **1. Rationale for, objective and methodology of the review of community forestry**

---

## **1.1 Development of community forestry in Bhutan**

Community forest (CF) in Bhutan is government-owned forest land for which communities, organised as Community Forest Management Groups (CFMGs), are being granted management and use rights and responsibilities under conditions set out in a management plan approved by the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS). The management plan is valid for a period of ten years (renewable after revision). The members of the CFMG elect an executive committee, typically including a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and a few additional members, from their midst.

Community Forestry (CF) in Bhutan was first cautiously explored in the mid 1990s (Carter et al, 2009, p. 40) with the creation of the legal basis for CF in the Forest and Nature Conservation Act (FNCA) 1995 and the establishment of the country's very first Community Forests (CFs) managed by CFMGs in Eastern Bhutan. The main reasons for the slow start of the CF programme were i) the initial scepticism of communities whether the Department of Forest would actually handover forests for their management only about two decades after the nationalization of forests in 1969, and ii) severe reservations amongst government staff about the ability of communities to manage forests sustainably (Temphel and Beukeboom 2006).

After a phase of steady, but slow growth over a period of about ten years the establishment of CFs accelerated in 2007. This dynamic phase brought the total number of approved CFs in the country to 556 covering 62,115 ha of forest land and involving 23,808 rural households in forest management as per early September 2013 (CF database maintained by SFED), i.e. up to the introduction of the temporary suspension of approval of new CF management plans introduced by the DoFPS (see Section 1.2 below). Area wise, these 556 CFs cover 2.3% of the total area covered by natural forest land in the country (based on total natural forest land areas as given in RGoB 2013). Today, about one third of all rural households in Bhutan are member of a CFMG. In some Dzongkhags, more than half of all rural households are member of a CFMG. This illustrates that community forestry has become a significant movement in the country and a widely practised and accepted approach to forest management. The process of establishing CFs is now demand driven and is being fuelled by applications for new CFs submitted by rural communities (Gronow and Peljor 2010).

## **1.2 Temporary suspension of approval of new CF management plans by DoFPS**

In the course of the year 2013, a range of complaints pertaining to CF has reached the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), either directly submitted by parties concerned, shared by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) or via the media. These included allegations of misuse of power and collusion in illegal activities by members of CFMG executive committees, misuse of CF funds, lack of awareness of CFMG members, boundary conflicts, or development works affecting CFs (see Section 2.3 below for more details on some of the complaints). The monitoring of CF implementation in Paro and Haa Dzongkhag under Paro Forest Division conducted in September 2013 equally revealed a number of weaknesses (see References).

Considering these reports on various issues related to the implementation of the CF programme, the DoFPS decided during its 14<sup>th</sup> departmental monthly meeting held on September 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Head Quarter (HQ) in Thimphu 'to

- suspend the approval of new CFs till December 2013, and

- instead focus work on monitoring and evaluation of those approved CFs for the time being,
- to determine how beneficial and practicable the CF programme has been in meeting its intended objectives.’ (letter signed by DG DoFPS ref SFD/SFS/2-2 (A)/2013/131 dated September 9<sup>th</sup> 2013).

The media reported on the decision to temporarily suspend the approval of new CFs (c.f. article in Kuensel 07/01/2014). The decision was also discussed in the National Assembly. The suspension of the approval of new CFs was still in force at the time of this review (May 2014). As an effect of this temporary suspension, more than 50 new CF management plans which are ready for approval by the DoFPS have accumulated at Social Forestry and Extension Division (SFED) up to the end of May.

In October 2013, DoFPS instructed the Dzongkhag Forestry Sectors (DzFSs) to make sure that CF hammers are kept with the concerned Gewog Forestry Extension Officer (GFEO) and not held by the Community Forest Management Group (CFMG) (office order issued by DG DoFPS ref SFD/SFS/2-2 (A)/2013/189 dated October 31<sup>st</sup> 2013). This office order was prompted by reports on illegal activities within CFs sometimes also involving CFMG members and the observation that CF hammers were, in most cases, with the GFEO and in some cases with the CFMG. This difference in practice was due to a change in the rules from FNCR 2003 which authorised the CFMGs to keep the hammer to FNCR 2006 mandating that the DFO/PM marks trees in CFs based on requests by CFMGs.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Forestry Conference held in December 2013 in Samtse adopted the following three resolutions pertaining to CF, noting success and weaknesses of CF and recognising the need to strengthen the CF programme:

‘20. To avoid various issues relating to community forests, mechanisms will be instituted in place to;

- Improve coordination between territorial divisions, Dzongkhag and parks
- Have clear boundary demarcation for all CFs
- Increase awareness levels on community forest rules and guidelines
- Enhance internal auditing system and M & E

21. SFED shall review the existing area ceiling of 2.5 ha and provide policy recommendations.

22. SFED shall carry out analysis of Community forestry in the country to review strengths and weaknesses to recommend future scope of community forestry in the country.’ (DoFPS 2013)

Following-up on resolution no 22, SFED suggested getting an external view on the issues related to CF implementation. Thus, DoFPS asked a team comprising Mr Rinzin Dorji, Sr Planning Officer of the Policy and Planning Division (PPD), and Dr Kaspar Schmidt, Team Leader Environment and Climate Change of Advisory Services of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, to jointly conduct this review.

### **1.3 Objective and tasks of the review of community forestry**

In the terms of reference (ToR) for this review (attached in Appendix 1), the following objective and tasks were set:

#### **Objective**

‘To find out and document the issues around the CFs raised in the media and the stakeholders of CFs and provide expert solutions/advice to the issues that would negatively impact the project (= Participatory Forest Management Project PFMP, addition by the authors) and the CF movement (quality analysis with potentially feasible recommendations and strategies).’

## Tasks

'The Consultant will work closely with the DoFPS under the advice of the Director General. He will be supported by a national counterpart (who will be appointed by the department) and shall be responsible for the following

- Review of documents related to Community Forestry (policies, rules, guidelines, manuals)
- Field visits to verify the issues – meet with CFMGs, Local leaders (Gups)
- Consultation with relevant stakeholders – Territorial/Park staff, DzFS,
- A debriefing to the Department and HSI-PO before leaving Bhutan.'

## 1.4 Methodology

The review team first had introductory meetings with DG DoFPS and SFED. For the document review, it consulted relevant policies, legislation (example: FNCA 1995, Land Act 2007), rules, technical guidelines and manuals, media reports and complaints sent to the DoFPS related to CF and investigation reports (see References).

Before going to the field, the review team established a check-list of topics and aspects to be covered and discussed in a series of semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders (see list of persons met in Appendix 3). These interviews conducted with stakeholders in the field and in Thimphu also included a collection and discussion of strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) of CF and the current implementation of the CF programme and the reasons for these. Where possible, also opportunities (O) and threats (T) for CF were identified and discussed (SWOT analysis).

In the field (see the programme and itinerary in Appendix 2), the team met with members of five CFMGs which were chosen by the respective DzFS based on the criteria defined by the review team (selection of a) CFs with some problems/issues and b) well-performing CFMGs). In every CF, the review team also met members of the CFMGs who are not part of its executive committee and, in most cases, held a separate discussion with these members in absence of executive committee members. The team explicitly asked the DzFSs to invite women to the meetings and asked the female CFMGs members to give their views in the discussions.

As it was not possible to visit Central and Eastern Bhutan, the review team asked all Chief Forestry Officers (CFOs) of territorial divisions, protected areas and functional divisions of DoFPS and all Dzongkhag Forestry Officers (DzFOs) to contribute to the review by replying to a questionnaire (included in Appendix 4) with a set of questions on the objectives of CF and the SWOT of CF and its current implementation.

Table 1: Overview on the number of people from different stakeholder groups consulted in meetings and through the questionnaire (indicated).

National and local leaders	1 National Assembly member (MP) 1 Dzongrab 3 Gups 1 Mangmi
DoFPS	DG 9 DFOs/CFOs and territorial staff (all m) 1 DFO and 2 rangers of territorial divisions (questionnaire) 2 park managers (PMs/CFOs) (questionnaire) 33 DzFOs, ADzFOs and GFEOs (29 m, 4 f) 7 DzFOs, 5 GFEOs (questionnaire) 2 CFOs of functional divisions

	SFED staff (7 m, 2 f)
	Participatory forest management specialist SAARC Forestry Centre
CFMG members	37 CFMG members (executive committee and non-committee members; 27 male (m), 10 female (f)) from 5 CFs visited in the field
	6 executive committee members from CFMGs from Paro Dzongkhag (5 m, 1 f)

Mr Chhimi Dorji, Sr Programme Officer HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan, provided additional information from a SWOT on CF that he conducted with 35 GFEOs in total from Western and Southern and from Central Bhutan during two M4P training courses held in April 2014 in Tsirang and Mongar respectively.

The reviewers subsequently analysed the collected information, asked for additional information from a few informants by phone and triangulated a few points with SFED. During the analysis, similar points were clustered and subsumed under a common category.

The review team presented its findings and recommendations to DoFPS on Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup> and elaborated its review report.

---

## 2. Review of CF and its strengths and weaknesses

---

### 2.1 Assessment of the regulatory framework for CF

The term ‘regulatory framework’ is used here to include policies, legislation, rules and (technical) implementation manuals and guidelines that are relevant for CF.

CF has become a key component of **Bhutan’s National Forest Policy** 2011. The policy objective for community forestry (DoFPS 2011) is to “*empower rural communities to manage forests sustainably for socio-economic benefits, poverty reduction and to contribute to overall sustainable forest management at national level*”. Equally relevant is policy objective vii: ‘*enable an economically viable and efficient forest based industry aimed at adding value to forest products and build capacity of private sector and rural communities to utilise, process and market forest products;*’ The **National Strategy for Community Forestry** (SFD 2010) spells out what to do to advance community forestry and to ensure that community forestry eventually achieves the expected biophysical, socio-economic and governance outcomes. The National Forest Policy and the National Strategy for CF provide a solid and well-harmonised policy framework for CF in Bhutan.

The **Forest and Nature Conservation Act** (FNCA) 1995 provides the legal basis for CF in its chapter IV, section 17. Based on this act, the **Forest and Nature Conservation Rules** (FNCR) 2006 provide concrete rules for the establishment and management of CFs. The FNCR provide a solid, albeit somewhat rigid framework for CF. Some provisions are no longer consistent with current practice, e.g. clause 33.1 mandating DFO/PM to mark trees in CFs upon request by the CFMG versus the office order issued by DoFPS in October 2013 to keep CF hammers with the GFEOs and to mark trees in CFs by the GFEOs in collaboration with the CFMG. Others merit a revision in the light of the National Forest Policy and the National CF Strategy to make the rules more enabling, e.g. the area ceiling of 2.5 ha per member household (clause 27.2d). Both FNCA and FNCR are currently being revised. This provides an excellent opportunity to align the rules with the National Forest Policy and the National CF Strategy and feed learning from the significant experience gained with CF in practice over the past years into the revision of these key documents.

The **Land Act of Bhutan** 2007 also has major implications for forest management including community forestry. The **Local Government Act** 2009 appoints the Gewog Tshogde (GT) as custodian of community land and forests. This act and the **Local Government Rules and Regulations** 2012 clarify the roles and responsibilities of local governments for local development and the interface with CF. The rules indicate a responsibility of GT for the monitoring of CFs (clause 408).

At the technical level of CF implementation, the **CF Manual for Bhutan** in four parts published 2004 provides guidance on initiation and planning of CF, silviculture in CFs and record keeping and institutional strengthening for CFMGs. This manual was thoroughly revised and updated in 2012 resulting in a **CF Manual** and a **Manual on Silviculture and other Forestry Operations**. This revision was done in close collaboration with DoFPS staff, taking concerns of field staff, for example regarding the calculation of the Annual Harvesting Limit (AHL) into account and building on their experience with the use of the CF Manual. The revised manuals also include more guidance on group governance and other key areas. These revised manuals have however not yet been printed and are thus only available as softcopies or print-outs. The manuals refer to the FNCR in numerous places. In attendance of the finalisation of the revision of the FNCR, SFED has decided to wait with the publication of the manuals.

In addition to the CF Manuals, SFED has issued an **Interim Framework for Management and Marketing of Non-Wood Forest Products** (2011) and a range of guidelines for the resource assessment and management of NWFPs. In 2012, DoFPS published an **Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF** that spells out the steps and conditions for the marketing of timber from CF and the roles and responsibilities of CFMGs, DzFSSs, territorial divisions or park staff in this process both in Dzongkha and English. In 2012, SFED also issued a training manual to strengthen record and book keeping in CFMGs and NWFP groups.

Hence, there is a range of manuals and technical guidelines available covering important areas to support CF implementation.

An assessment of the level of awareness of field staff and CFMG members of the above-mentioned key documents representing the regulatory framework for CF is made in Section 2.5 below.

## 2.2 Objectives of CF as seen by different stakeholders

When asked for the objectives of CF, most of the interviewed stakeholders mentioned at least the first two if not all three of the following main objectives of CF or objectives that can be subsumed under these three objectives respectively:

- Contribute to the protection and conservation of forests – a few informants made an explicit reference to the constitutional requirement of keeping at least 60% of the country's land area under forest cover for all time;
- Contribute to the sustainable management of Bhutan's forests;
- Generate socio-economic and social benefits, hereby contributing to poverty reduction.

Thus, there is a large congruence in the way informants see the objectives of CF. The objective of forest protection and conservation was mentioned most often, followed by sustainable forest management. DzFS staff and CFMG members mentioned the socio-economic objective aiming at poverty reduction slightly more frequently than foresters from other services and local government leaders.

In contrast to some reports from the field, the review team found the interviewed CFMG members, including people who are not member of the executive committee of their CFMG, to be well aware of the main objectives of CF.

## 2.3 Analysis of complaints reported to DoFPS and of media reports

The review team analysed three specific complaints brought to the attention of DoFPS, one through the Anti-Corruption Commission, and subsequently investigated by teams from DoFPS. The complaints and the main findings of the investigation are summarised in Table 2 below. One of these allegations was also reported on in the media.

On the reports from CFs in Zhemgang and Sarpang, the investigation teams found that the main allegations of misuse of CF funds by the chairperson for unjust enrichment and the alleged collusion between the chairperson, the secretary and a contractor in the sale of timber could not be proven. In case of Menchu CF in Punakha, the investigation substantiated some of the reported flaws. Most of these appear to be due to low awareness of CFMG members about the content of their CF management plan (which is only available in English) and rules pertaining to CF, lack of annual planning and monitoring, and limited silvicultural and poor record and book skills. The investigation team equally observed some of these weaknesses in Dangkhar CF in Zhemgang.

Table 2: Complaints brought to the attention of DoFPS and main findings of investigation

Place	Content of the complaint / allegation	Reference(s)	Main findings of investigation
Menchu CF, Punakha	Harvest and sale of standing trees not following the CF management plan and the Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF; lapses in record keeping	Investigation report by the Forest Protection and Surveillance Unit dated 21/10/2013;  Clarification letter to CFO SFED by the concerned GFEO ref no RNR(FO) TEOP-04/2013-2014/59 dated 06/11/2013;  Report by two members of the Protection Unit, one from SFED and DzFO Punakha dated 25/11/2013	Investigations conducted in October and November 2013: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF not followed;</li> <li>- CF management plan only in English, not accessible to CFMG members;</li> <li>- Lack of annual work plan in the CF;</li> <li>- Hammers with CFMGs, CFMG members unaware that marking has to be done in collaboration with GFEO;</li> <li>- Harvest mostly below AHL as per the CF management plan; over-harvest of Cham in 2012, but possibly compensated by harvest of Drashing size trees below AHL;</li> <li>- Several lapses in record keeping;</li> <li>- Lack of monitoring report.</li> </ul>
Dangkhar CF, Zhemgang	Alleged misuse of CF funds by the chairperson, un-proper timber extraction and sale of timber, leasing of CF area.	Investigation report  Kuensel article 14/11/2013	Investigation conducted 29 to 30/1/2014: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No misuse of CF funds by the chairperson;</li> <li>- Sale of timber in accordance with CF management plan;</li> <li>- Records not properly maintained due to low literacy and late training and supply of books and forms;</li> <li>- Range staff reports some fellings not observing silvicultural principles;</li> <li>- Unauthorised lease of CF area to outsiders by CF chairperson.</li> </ul>

Place	Content of the complaint / allegation	Reference(s)	Main findings of investigation
Lhayul CF, Sarpang	CFMG chairperson and secretary allegedly colluded with a contractor in the sale of timber for what appears to be a very low price / cft.	Sharing of complaint by Anti-Corruption Commission (vide letter no ACC/CFS-04/277 to DG DoFPS dated 13/03/2014); Investigation report.	Investigation conducted 3 to 5/4/2014: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No evidence found to prove the alleged collusion between chairperson, secretary and contractor;</li> <li>- Decision on how to use timber taken in general assembly of the CFMG;</li> <li>- Sale of timber in accordance with relevant rules and guidelines;</li> <li>- Determination of sales price based on analysis of NRDCL rates and logging costs;</li> <li>- Records properly maintained.</li> </ul>

The review team equally screened a collection held by SFED of eight media reports on CF published between June 2013 and March 2014. Of these eight newspaper articles and other media reports, three reported on positive effects of CF on forest protection and various benefits to local communities, one article was on a phytosanitary problem in a CF and four on problematic issues related to CF. The content of these media reports is summarised in Table 3 below.

The two media reports from Trashigang highlight the critical issue of overlaying claims to access and use forests based on traditional rights held by different communities. Such claims risk leading to conflicts between the communities concerned, particularly in areas with limited forest resources such as Trashigang Dzongkhag. This emphasises the importance of a proper stakeholder consultation involving neighbouring communities and other holders of traditional rights when identifying an area for a CF.

Table 3: Media reports highlighting specific issues concerning CF

Place	Content	Reference
Trashigang	Competing claims over state-reserved forests planned to be converted into a CF between neighbouring communities (Bidung and Bartsham Gewogs, Radhi and Tongling Chiwogs in Radhi Gewog)	BBS 10/06/2013
Rinchengang, Wangdue Phodrang	Rinchengang CF infested with an insect that has defoliated pine trees on about 20 acres	Kuensel 13/07/2013
Trashigang	Conflicts over access to pastureland and free grazing of cattle between herders of the highlands (Merak, Sakteng Gewogs) leasing <i>tsamdros</i> rights from people in lower Gewogs and communities in lower Gewogs holding/establishing CFs for prevention of land degradation and sustainable management of resources.	Kuensel 17/09/2013
Umling Gewog, Sarpang	Seven out of eight villages in Umling Gewog have a CF; benefits of CF for local people: much easier access to construction timber, running local loan schemes, enhanced environmental conservation, flood prevention, protection of drinking water.	BBS 28/09/2013
Trashigang	Significant decrease in the number and extent of forest fires after the establishment of CFs; with CF, people are said to have become more protective of forest resources, people have a sense of ownership and	Kuensel 04/12/2013

	engage more actively in containing and fighting forest fires.	
Dangkhar CF, Zhemgang	See entry for 'Dangkhar CF, Zhemgang' in Table 2 above;	Kuensel article 14/11/2013
Country-wide	Suspension of approval of new CFs since October 2013 according to DoFPS 'to streamline procedures and flaws pertaining to community forest management'. People in villages see the suspension in the light of allegations of misuse of forest products.  Specific issues mentioned in the article: Lack of proper consultation before CFs are established; CFs in Forest Management Units (FMUs); DoFPS intends 'to go slow' to ensure quality of CFs and inclusive participation; domination of CFMGs by influential, well-to-do members; need for regular monitoring and supervision.	Kuensel article 07/01/2014
Samtse	Communities in Samtse show keen interest in CF; So far 57 CFs approved covering 2,500 ha; people are interested in safeguarding natural resources through CF and generating economic benefits for their communities; challenges include the mobilisation of labour during monsoon and equitable distribution of benefits from CF.	BBS 17/03/2014

## 2.4 Strengths of CF and its current implementation

The strengths of the CF programme and its current implementation in Bhutan that the informants mentioned in interviews and questionnaires are summarised and grouped into four different categories as shown below. The strengths mentioned most frequently are listed on top of these lists.

### 1. Strengths of the CF programme

- 1.1 Strong enabling policy and regulatory environment for CF (forestry, decentralisation etc.)
- 1.2 Feeling of ownership and responsibility for forests with CFMGs
- 1.3 CF as a partnership between local people, local governments and DoFPS for sustainable forest management, conservation and protection of forests, and improved rural livelihoods
- 1.4 High level of interest of communities in CF
- 1.5 Strong support from governments at all levels, territorial and park staff and senior management of DoFPS
- 1.6 Growing implementation capacities with DzFSs and CFMGs

### 2. Ecological impact

- 2.1 Protection of forests (against fires, illegal activities<sup>1</sup>, soil erosion) and water catchments and sources
- 2.2 Sustainable management and improvement of forests
- 2.3 Contribution to increasing forest area under forest management
- 2.4 Reduced pressure on state reserved forests (SRF)

<sup>1</sup> See also the report on members of Kyentshen CFMG in Haa Dzongkhag who detained two truckloads of illegal timber from their CF in August 2013 (posted on DoFPS Website 2013 CFMG in Haa: Keen interest to protect their Community Forest. submitted by: Sherab Jamtsho (Forest Ranger), Dzongkhag Forestry Sector.)

## 2.5 Increased environmental awareness with people

### 3. Economic impact

- 3.1 Easy access to forest products for local people (particularly compared to the lengthy application process for rural timber)
- 3.2 Securing access to areas to which communities have customary rights
- 3.3 Improved rural livelihoods through generation of income, employment and availability of CF funds for local development
- 3.4 Self-sufficiency of CFMG members in forest products
- 3.5 Provision of ecosystem services (drinking and irrigation water, water for hydro-power generation)
- 3.6 CF reduces expenses for RGoB to ensure protection and sustainable management of forests
- 3.7 Securing forest resources for future generations (inter-generational equity)

### 4. Governance and social impact

- 4.1 Community empowerment and local decision making
- 4.2 Self governance of CFMGs which become local institutions
- 4.3 Good group governance including equitable benefit sharing and gender equality
- 4.4 Increased social cohesion and collaboration within CFMGs

## 2.5 Weaknesses of CF and its current implementation

Based on the weaknesses mentioned in discussions, interviews and the questionnaires, the review team identified main weaknesses of and critical issues for CF that are shown below grouped into six different categories.

By far the highest number of weaknesses brought up concern aspects of implementing CF in the field. Next, but significantly less often mentioned than implementation issues follow constraints and issues subsumed under the three categories of 'allocation of forest resources', 'group governance' and 'regulatory framework (including policy)'. Then follow weaknesses related subsumed in categories termed 'concept and objectives of CF' and 'capacities'. Within every category, the weaknesses and issues are shown in decreasing order of mention, i.e. the most frequently mentioned points figure on top of the list.

**'CF implementation' >>> 'allocation of forest resources' ~ 'group governance' ~ 'regulatory framework (including policy)' > 'concept and objectives of CF' ~ 'capacities'**

Aspects and weaknesses related to CF implementation were a particular concern for staff of all forest services (territorial, parks, DzFSs), people working in functional divisions at DoFPS HQ and for CFMG members. Weaknesses falling under 'allocation of forest resources' were most frequently mentioned by local government leaders and territorial staff. DzFS and territorial staff were the main groups concerned with weaknesses in the area of group governance and organisation. Concerns regarding the regulatory framework were mostly shared by staff of DzFSs, territorial and functional divisions.

### 1. CF implementation

- 1.1 Poor monitoring of CF implementation (self monitoring by CFMGs, annual monitoring by DzFS and territorial divisions/parks);

- 1.2 Poor record and book keeping due to low literacy rate and lack of capacities with CFMG executive committees;
- 1.3 Most CF management plans including by-laws not accessible to CFMG members, as available only in English, thus CFMG members not fully aware of the content of the plan and by-laws and of their responsibilities and rights;
- 1.4 Weak coordination and collaboration between different forest services and functional divisions;
- 1.5 Unclear boundaries between CFs and between CFs and SRF, lack of proper boundary demarcation leading to confusion when trees are marked etc.;
- 1.6 Weak implementation of CF management plans (e.g. planned plantations not being established, lack of annual work plan and annual progress report);
- 1.7 Lack of proper consultation with all relevant stakeholders for during site selection and area delimitation for a new CF;
- 1.8 Implementation gap: rules, manuals, guidelines etc. framed at HQ, but limited awareness of these documents and weak implementation, follow-up, support, guidance and supervision in the field;
- 1.9 Lack of awareness of forest policies, rules and guidelines concerning CF amongst CFMGs.

On: 1.4 Collaboration and relationship between forest services and functional divisions

With regard to the weak coordination and collaboration between different forest services (territorial divisions, parks, DzFSs), there were contradictory statements from territorial divisions/parks on the one hand and DzFS representatives on the other hand. Territorial division and park staff complained of being approached too late by their DzFS counterparts in the process of establishing a CF, for example only once a CF management plan has already been drafted. They equally complained about not being informed about commercial harvests in a CF. DzFS staff on the other hand emphasised that they routinely invite their counterparts from territorial divisions/parks to key steps in the CF establishment process, such as CF site and area identification or boundary survey, but that there was nevertheless low attendance. A DzFO estimated that in only about one third of the cases in which he had invited the territorial division to attend somebody from the division actually took part in the CF planning step. However, while in the field, the review team also saw good examples of collaboration and exchange between territorial and DzFS staff, for example between a GFEO and a Beat Officer in Charge.

There are also issues of hierarchies and sometimes a lack of mutual trust affecting the relationship between the services. DzFS staff felt that territorial staff would not recognise the value of their work and thus felt not trusted. Territorial and park staff on the other hand described CF as a programme getting considerable support from donor-funded projects and largely 'owned' by the forestry extension service in which they were only little involved.

At DoFPS HQ level, there is also scope for improved collaboration between relevant divisions such as SFED and FRMD, for example in the elaboration of the regular Forest Resources Potential Assessment (FRPA, definition of areas of potential use for timber production, for local use including CFs etc), the planned downsizing of FMUs or the identification of areas for new FMUs.

On: 1.8 Limited awareness of field staff of important regulatory documents, in particular implementation manuals and guidelines<sup>2</sup>

Relevant acts and rules were largely available with forestry staff in the field. However, about one fifth of the offices including both territorial divisions and DzFSs that the review team visited did not have copies of the National Forest Policy. Also the National CF Strategy was only available with some colleagues. All divisional and Dzongkhag offices had copies of the CF Manual 2004, albeit often only in a limited number of copies. The revised CF Manual 2012 – so far only available as softcopy or print-out – is only partly available with field staff. The Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF was found to be available, at least in one copy, in every territorial and Dzongkhag office visited, but quite a number of staff was not familiar with it. From a sample of 35 GFEOs, only a little more than half were aware of this guideline.

On: 1.3 Most CF management plans including by-laws not accessible to CFMG members, as available only in English, thus CFMG members not fully aware of the content of the plan and by-laws and of their responsibilities and rights

On: 1.9 Lack of awareness of forest policies, rules and guidelines concerning CF amongst CFMGs

The non-availability of the CF management plans and the group by-laws in local language was mentioned as a serious weakness of the current system by many different informants. This clearly constrains CF implementation and ownership of the plan with CFMG members. Some CFMG executive committee members had a fairly good understanding of the rules concerning CF from the FNCR explaining that the GFEO had explained them relevant rules during the CF establishment process. A majority of CF executive committee members, also from groups with well-stocked forests with potential for timber production, was not aware of the Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF. This was observed despite the fact that this guideline is written both in Dzongkha and English.

## **2. Allocation of forest resources**

- 2.1 CFMGs protect their CF (e.g. do not use their AHL) while trying to get forest resources from SRF;
- 2.2 Disparities in resource allocation amongst CFs;
- 2.3 Lack of resources in the CF and/or size of the CF not adequate to fully satisfy the demand in timber of CFMG members; hence, CFMG member still partly depend on SRF for timber;
- 2.4 Criteria for CF site selection not applied in some cases, leading to CFs far away from the communities and member households,
- 2.5 In areas with limited forest resources: decreasing / limited area to provide timber for non-CFMG members and other organisations (e.g. schools, dratsang);
- 2.6 Loss of CF area due to developmental activities (e.g. roads, power lines, public buildings);
- 2.7 CFMGs only want good forests.

These issues reflect how sensible the allocation of (limited) forest resources to CFMGs and other right holders is. It has immediate economic consequences for all parties concerned.

---

<sup>2</sup> Considered documents: National Forest Policy 2011, National Strategy for Community Forestry 2010, FNCA 1995, FNCR 2006, Land Act 2007, CF Manual for Bhutan 2004, CF Manual and Manual on Silviculture and other Forestry Operations 2012 (not yet printed), Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF 2012, Interim Framework for Management and Marketing of Non-Wood Forest Products 2011.

The perception of CFMGs becoming overly protective and the issue of unequal distribution of resources amongst CFs in the country ('disparities in resources') were mostly concerns of staff of territorial and functional divisions. Also the observation that in some areas there is now only limited forest area available to satisfy the needs of various stakeholders in timber was mainly brought up by territorial staff. DzFS staff was mostly concerned about CFMGs not being able to meet their needs from their CF and thus still depending partly on SRF.

### 3. Group governance

- 3.1 Flaws in the formulation and weak implementation and enforcement of CF by laws; many CFMG members not aware of their by laws;
- 3.2 Lack of transparent information of CFMG members by executive committee, e.g. on decisions taken by the committee, status and use CF funds;
- 3.3 'Elite capturing': CFMG dominated by one family or sub-group of the community;
- 3.4 Influential CFMG members get most of the benefits from the CF;
- 3.5 Low cooperation amongst CFMG members;
- 3.6 Dominance of chairperson taking all decisions himself.

These weaknesses and flaws indicated that there is scope for further improvement of group governance and organisation. This is confirmed by a study undertaken by a GFEO from Wangdue Phodrang Dzongkhag on CF by laws for his BSc in forestry (Namgay 2014). However, it is important to recall that only a relatively small number of all the weaknesses brought up in the interviews and questionnaires concern group governance. This indicates that the above-mentioned issues rather concern a limited number of CFMGs and are not widespread phenomena that affect a majority of groups.

With regard to information sharing, the review team observed good information sharing and transparent decision making in the groups visited in the field.

### 4. Regulatory framework (including policy)

- 4.1 Changes in policies affecting CF (e.g. suspension of approval of new CFs, withdrawal of CF hammers from CFMGs) leading to a feeling of uncertainty with CFMG members regarding the continuation of their CF beyond the current plan period;
- 4.2 Establishment of CFs in forest management units (FMUs) leading to areas which are covered by two management plans (FMU and CF management plan) and distorting the calculation of the annual allowable cut (ACC) in FMUs;
- 4.3 Conflicts over *sokshing* and *tsamdrol* rights in CFs or in SRF which could be converted into a CF. *Sokshing* and *tsamdrol* rights have been cancelled de-jure with the Land Act 2007, but are de-facto still recognized.
- 4.4 Measures proposed and agreed on in the National CF Strategy not yet fully translated into the rules (FNCR) thus creating legal uncertainties;
- 4.5 Ceiling of a maximum of 2.5 ha of CF area per member household which leads to artificial boundaries of CFs;
- 4.6 Lack of guidance on compensation for the loss of CF area or resources due to developmental activities (e.g. roads, power lines);
- 4.7 Lack of guidance for the use of CF funds and the establishment and management of loan schemes within CFMGs;
- 4.8 No clarity on surface collection of sand and boulders from CF<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> "Boulders, stone, sand, gravel, rocks, peat and soil" are defined as non-wood forest produce in clause 2.(31) of FNCR 2006. Clause 34.(2) gives the CFMG the right to harvest forest produce from the CF.

## **5. Concept and objectives of CF**

- 5.1 CF goal and objectives not clearly understood by executive committee and members;
- 5.2 Some CFMGs appear mainly interested in getting timber, making money from their forest and raising CF funds.

The first point which was brought up by representatives of all forest services and particularly often by DoFPS staff working at HQ contrasts with the observation of the review team that the interviewed CFMG members in the field, executive and non-executive members alike, were well aware of the main objectives of CF. In any case, awareness of the basic idea of CF, its goal and objectives is certainly key for the success of the CF programme.

Linked to the second point is the fear expressed by a number of foresters that CFMG members might become too interested in pursuing commercial activities which risks leading to overharvest of timber and other forest products.

## **6. Capacities**

- 6.1 Limited skills of CFMG members, in particular in forest management, record and book keeping and marketing;
- 6.2 Low literacy in CFMGs;
- 6.3 Lack of capacities with CFMGs to prepare the CF management plan and fully implement it;
- 6.4 Limited management capacities of executive committee members.

The second point, low literacy in CFMGs, is believed to be one of the main causes explaining limited capacities of CFMG members to manage the groups, implement their forest management plan and keep the books and records.

These limitations in the skills and capacities of CFMG members were mostly concerns brought forward by forestry extension staff. While there is undoubtedly scope for further developing the necessary skills and capacities of CFMGs to sustainably manage their CFs, the mention of 'growing implementation capacities with DzFSs and CFMGs' under strengths shows that capacities are already improving.

## **2.6 Tension fields**

The strengths and weaknesses presented above are not without contradictions, as the example of the divergent assessment of the existing capacities with CFMGs to manage their group and their forests shows. Obviously, some informants were more positive than others in their assessment. There were also a few very critical voices saying that 'people are not yet ready for CF, we thus have to progress slowly' or 'CF members in our park were not ready to take CF and act positively'.

Many forestry officials, particularly from territorial divisions and parks, fear that CFMGs might become too 'greedy' and too interested in making quick money from the sale of timber thus neglecting their responsibilities for the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. Some CFMGs on the other hand feel insecure about the future of their CFs and fear that DoFPS might revoke their CFs. A number of GFEOs has observed this happening in the CFMGs they support. Recent changes in rules such as the withdrawal of the CF hammer from the groups or the suspension of the approval of new CF management plans have further fuelled such insecurities and fears. The withdrawal of the CF hammers from the groups and the suspension were

---

Clause 36.(7), on the other hand, asks for a specific license or permit for the taking of these resources from the CF.

introduced after reports on alleged illegal activities in CFs had reached DoFPS (see Section 1.2 above for more details). A GFEO also reported a feeling amongst some CFMG members, particularly of resource poor groups, that they essentially do work for the government for free while not getting any benefits, thus a perception that efforts and benefits are not balanced. Such negative feelings and fears on both sides risk eroding the very foundation on which CF is built, namely mutual trust in one's partners, security of access to resources and thus the feeling of 'ownership' over one's CF.

With regard to the risk of overharvesting, there are many reports (c.f. for example harvest data in the Paro Forest Division CF monitoring report October 2013; in the monitoring report of the Dzongkhag Forestry Sector Bumthang February 2014, annex II; case studies from Lhuentse, Mongar and Bumthang in Beck 2011, p 63) indicating that

- effective timber harvest in most CFMGs is usually considerably below AHL, and
- effective use of timber by community members for their own use tends to be considerably lower than the demand estimated during the CF planning process based on the entitlements for rural timber.

There are occasionally cases in which a group harvests more trees from a particular diameter class than the AHL would allow in one year. Such cases are however often explained by special circumstances such as the construction of a road. Usually, such over-extractions are compensated by low extractions the years before and/or extractions below AHL in other diameter classes. Thus, CFMGs tend to use their forest resources very efficiently. On its visit to Tshokorthangkha CF in Wangdue Phodrang, the review team was told that so far the CFMG had been able to meet the entire demand for timber and fuelwood by its members from its own CF. This despite the provisions made in the CF management plan for the supply of timber from SRF, as the sustainable supply from the CF was assessed to be lower than the estimated demand for timber.

---

### **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

---

From the insights gained during the field visit and from the various stakeholder interviews and discussions it appears that many CFMGs operate well, manage their resources sustainably and achieve their objectives. CF as it is currently being practised in Bhutan has, as most stakeholders agree, much strength and is contributing substantially to the conservation of forests, to bringing more forest area under formal management and to improved rural livelihoods.

At the same time, everybody agrees that there is a range of weaknesses that need to be addressed. Also, there have been cases of groups not following technical guidelines, often because they were not aware of these, and acting without proper consultation with the concerned forestry services.

Allegations of misuse of group funds and resources sound alarming, particularly when reported on by the press. It is however important to recall that in two out of three cases described in Section 2.3 the investigation teams concluded that no CF funds had been misused and that there had been no collusion between CFMG office holders and a contractor. This is not to say that there is no misuse in CF. Realistically, misuse of funds, resources and power in CFMGs has happened, is bound to happen and will continue to happen, given the size of the CF programme that now already involves one third of all rural households in Bhutan. Also, singular cases of misuse should be put into perspective of the mutual benefits both DoFPS as well as many CFMG have started to reap.

Checks and balances to prevent and mitigate misuse in CF are in place. Thus the question is how to strengthen these checks and balances and group governance in general and how to

support CFMGs affected by cases of misuse so that these can be addressed and the justice system can, if need be, follow its proper course.

Based on its analysis, the review team is confident that the weaknesses identified can be addressed and CF in Bhutan thus further improved. This all the more as most of the weaknesses relate to issues of implementation. Hence, in the opinion of the review team there is no reason to fundamentally question the concept of CF.

Thus, the review team proposes a two-pronged strategy to use the strengths of the CF programme and address the weaknesses identified comprising

- **Prevention** of possible problems by improving CF implementation and closing the implementation gaps;
- Strengthening **existing checks and balances** to empower the CFMGs to solve problems where they arise, if need be with the support of forestry services and possibly other stakeholders.

In the following, a range of measures are recommended. These aim at building further and broader **ownership** for the CF programme, foster **trust** between the stakeholders and promote their **engagement** to further implement and continuously improve the CF programme.

### 3.1 General considerations for the further development of CF

CF is a process of **joint social learning** by all stakeholder involved. This learning process has progressed significantly both on the sides of the government and of communities since the inception of CF in Bhutan in the mid 1990s. The positive effects of CF of increased forest protection and conservation testify that communities can be trusted to act in their own best interest by sustainably managing their CFs. The learning process continues and requires the positive engagement of forest services, the communities and other stakeholders.

The following considerations appear to be particularly important for the further development of CF:

- Continue to make the regulatory framework and environment **more enabling** rather than enforcing.
- Ensure a **mutual beneficial balance** of **responsibilities and rights** hold by the CFMGs and of **inputs** they provide and **benefits** they receive from CF.  
It is critical to get the balance of responsibilities and rights hold by the CFMGs and of inputs provided and benefits received by the groups right to develop a mutually beneficial partnership. The aspect of benefit refers to the economic viability of CFs and economic incentives for sustainable forest management provided by CF.
- Provide **security of access** to forest resources and **space for decision making** by CFMGs;  
A number of studies (e.g. Agrawal and Ostrom 2001, Carter and Gronow 2005) from different contexts show the importance of security of access to forest resources and the feeling of 'ownership' held by CFMG members for 'their' forest for their readiness to invest into the resources in the longer term.
- Continue to **enable, support** and **empower** communities as partners in forest management of DoFPS.  
Hereby, 'enable' refers to the capacities of communities, 'support' to extension and other services provided by forest services and 'empower' to the transfer of rights to CFMGs.

- CF as **common programme** of the DoFPS including all its services, CFMGs and other partners.  
It appears important that CF evolves to a programme which is 'owned' by all partners including all services of DoFPS based on a commonly shared vision on what the future of Bhutan's forest and its management will be and how community-based forest management fits into this vision.

## 3.2 Recommendations to address the identified weaknesses

The review team recommends the following priorities to address the observed weaknesses and further work on CF:

- Further improve the regulatory framework by aligning the FNCR to the National Forest Policy and the National CF Strategy, by making a few additions to the CF Manual and by providing more guidance in key areas;
- Address the implementation gaps by following the processes and procedures as set out in the FNCR and the CF Manual;
- Finalise the CF field monitoring system and conduct joint annual monitoring of CFs by territorial divisions/parks and DzFSs;
- Continue the work on group governance as foreseen as an important priority for the support provided by PFMP phase III.

It is expected that this strategy will increase the quality of existing and new CFs. This emphasis on quality of the CF process already guided the planning for the CF programme for the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP and phase III of the PFMP. Thus, the recommendations made here and the priorities for PFMP phase III which started in late 2013 are quite coherent. The shift of focus and resources on ensuring quality of CF is expected to lead to a stronger engagement of staff from all forestry services in supporting and accompanying CFMGs. This could lead to a slowdown in the establishment of new CFs. However, the dynamics of CF establishment are also influenced by the demand for new CFs as expressed by local communities.

With every measure a priority (priority 1 being the highest, priority 3 the lowest) for its implementation is proposed to facilitate the operationalisation of the recommendations. These priorities were set based on the need to address key challenges and on the forthcoming opportunities to do so.

### 3.2.1 Further improvement of the regulatory framework for CF

- The review team recommends the following changes in the FNCR under revision to align the FNCR with the National Forest Policy and the National CF Strategy (priority 1):
  - **CF area determination**  
Replace the area ceiling in the revised FNCR (currently 2.5 ha per member household as per FNCR 2006, 5 ha in the draft FNCR dated 23/05/2014 (clause 25.2c) by the following criteria to determine the area of a new CF (National CF Strategy, p 47):
    - Customary rights and practices
    - Availability of forest land;
    - Willingness and ability of the CFMG to manage the forest;
    - Potential productivity of the forest;
    - Proximity and claims of adjacent villagers;
    - Level of dependence on the forest.

Specify in the FNCR that the limits of a CF should be defined using traditional and natural boundaries, where ever possible. This will prevent unclear boundaries and boundary conflicts.

Justification: The National Forest Policy includes the following policy measures for CF (emphasis in bold by authors):

‘iii Manage CF to **meet the requirement of timber**, firewood of the local people and other goods and services.’

‘v Manage CF to generate a wide range of other goods and services contributing to rural **poverty reduction through sale of forest products and services.**’

Having the same absolute figure as area ceiling for all forests of the country is artificial and does not take the huge diversity and variation within the country in terms of forest ecosystems, forest composition and stock, growing conditions, forest growth and productivity into account. Also, it leads to a situation in which often the size of the CF is calculated in a first step based on this area ceiling and the concrete area is only then identified on the ground. This leads to artificial boundaries which again risk causing confusion and problems. Moreover, in a number of groups the area ceiling of 2.5 ha was found to be insufficient to yield timber in excess of what CFMG members need for their own use, and thus constrains income generation opportunities for the concerned CFMGs (Wangchuk and Beck 2008).

- CF in FMUs

CFs in FMUs should be considered from non-production area (e.g. local use zone) in case that no other area in vicinity of a community applying for a CF is available. Otherwise, an overlap of FMUs and CFs should be avoided to prevent the inclusion of the same area under two different forest management plans (FMU and CF management plans). CFs should not be established in production zones of existing FMUs.

The planned downsizing of FMUs and the preparation of new FMU management plans offer opportunities to review the situation where there is a close-by community that has expressed an interest in having a CF and, possibly, to establish CFs in (former) FMUs.

The review team equally recommends that the relevant offices, both at central (FRMD, SFED) and field (territorial divisions, DzFSSs) level, regularly exchange information on plans for new and modifications affecting existing FMUs. FRMD and SFED should conduct relevant exercises such as the periodically conducted Forest Resources Potential Assessment (FRPA) in collaboration.

- Surface collection of sand, stone, gravel and boulders by CFMG members

It is recommended to allow CFMG members to do surface collection of sand, stone, gravel and boulders from the CF as long as it does not have any deleterious environmental effects. CFMGs should be given the right to manage the entirety of forest products.

According to FNCR 2006 (clause 36.7 iv) the collection of sand, stone, gravel, boulders and other mineral resources from the CF requires a license or permit. It is unclear whether the mention of surface collection of these resources in the CF management plan and the subsequent approval of the plan by DoFPS can be seen as permission to lift these products or whether a separate permission is

needed. For the sake of clarity and prevention of potential conflicts, the legal requirements for the surface collection of sand, stone, gravel and boulders by CFMG members should be made very clear in FNCR.

- CF hammer and joint marking of trees (FNCR clause 33.1)  
Align FNCR with the current practice as described in office order ref SFD/SFS/2-2 (A)/2013/189 dated 31 October 2013: CF hammers to be kept with the GFEO who shall be responsible to mark trees from CFs in collaboration with representatives of the CFMG in accordance with the CF management plans and based on silvicultural principles.
- Once the FNCR have been revised and approved: compile a leaflet with key points concerning CF for forestry staff, CFMGs, local government leaders and possibly other stakeholders. Use additional channels, such as radio broadcasts or TV panel discussions, to spread the news on the changes. (priority 2)
- At the technical level, the review team recommends providing more guidance on:
  - Use of CF funds (priority 1)  
The FNCR 2006 spells out that CF funds may firstly be used by the CFMG for fulfilling its responsibilities and for CF development activities (clause 33.5) and secondly for community development (clause 33.6).  
It should be specified that for community development, priority will be given to productive activities over other use such as simple consumption or distribution of shares amongst CFMG member households (--> revision of FNCR).
  - Setting-up and running loan schemes in CFMGs (priority 2)  
As more and more CFMGs generate revenues, more groups develop their own loan schemes. While many of these seem to operate to the satisfaction of the CFMG members, there are also reports on members defaulting on their loans. In Paro, CFMG executive committee members have shown an interest in developing a joint approach to operating such loan schemes.  
Given the amounts of group funds involved and the potential harm that a badly set-up or operated local system can cause to CFMG members and in particular poorer households, there is a need to provide more guidance in this area to CFMGs and forestry staff. This could start with an exchange of experience amongst groups and an input from an expert on best practices in rural finance and running savings and credit groups. The review team proposes that such support could be provided by the PFMP.
  - Compensation for loss of area or resources due to developmental activities (priority 3)  
In many CFs throughout the country, farm roads are being built through the CF, power lines erected or other developmental activities are undertaken leading to a loss of production area and felling of trees. If such activities are well planned with the involvement of CFMG members and do not interfere with other CF activities such as the establishment of plantations such developmental activities are usually welcomed by the CFMGs as they are undertaken for the benefit of their and neighbouring communities.  
Following policy measure x on CF of the National Forest Policy, it is recommended that a mechanism to compensate the loss of CF area or resources due

to developmental activities from designated community forests be established (--> revision of FNCR).

### 3.2.2 Allocation of forest resources

- Allot sufficient forest resources to CFMGs, where ever possible (priority 2 - continuous)  
Keeping the policy measures iii ('meet the requirements') and v ('contribute to rural poverty reduction through sale of forest products and services') of the National Forest Policy 2011 quoted above in mind, it is primordial for the long-term success of CF to allocate sufficient forest resources to CFMGs. A partial dependency of CFMG members on SRF unnecessarily complicates the system and the everyday work for all parties concerned and should therefore avoided, where ever possible.
- Develop an approach to jointly conduct a resources mapping by forestry services, local governments, local people and possibly other stakeholders as basis for resources allocation (priority 2)

As reported by two DFOs, the continuing allocation of forest land as CF in areas with limited forest resources has lead to situations in which only relatively little SRF is left to supply (rural) timber to non-CFMG members, government institutions, schools etc. This increases the pressure on the remaining SRF. At the same time, the forest area available for the establishment of new CFs also becomes smaller and smaller. Such signs of resources scarcity call for better planning and management of natural resource management at the landscape level.

The proposed joint resources mapping allows everybody getting an overview on natural resources available, their management, claims on resources from different communities and other stakeholders, planned developmental activities. It serves as a basis for decision making on appropriate management regimes for the forests in a geographical entity and the allocation of resources to communities under CF etc.

Such resources mapping exercises can be done at multiple levels (Gewog, Dzongkhag, national) and would typically be done with the help of GIS and/or satellite imagery. At the Dzongkhag or division level, the resources map should be combined with information about how much timber from other areas flow into the Dzongkhag or division and how much flows out of the unit. The review team proposes that SFED and its partners check whether the elaboration of such a resource map could be supported from PFMP phase III.

- Disparities in resources allocated to CFs (priority 3)  
Disparities in resources amongst CFMGs is mainly due to factors such as variation of forests and growing conditions in the country, local human pressure on resources.  
There is no 'quick-fix' to balance these disparities out. PFMP phase 3 has funds available to create livelihood opportunities for resource poor groups (output 1.2). The review team proposes that SFED again invites field staff and CFMGs to make proposals for the creation of such CF-based livelihood opportunity.  
In the mid-term, a national CF fund, possibly administered by a national CFMG umbrella organisation, could be instituted to which groups that generate significant revenues contribute whereas groups with little potential to generate income would receive funds on the condition that they plough it back into CF development.

### 3.2.3 Improve collaboration between forest services

The measures given below are proposed to improve the collaboration between forest services on CF and thus also broader ownership for the CF programme within DoFPS and its field services. The review team believes that these measures can contribute to improving the collabora-

tion and trust between the different services. At the same time, it acknowledges that addressing more fundamental underlying issues, such as differences in hierarchies and power between the forest services, probably requires more far-reaching changes at the institutional level (see also last bullet point).

- Improve the collaboration between the services and in particular (priority 1 - continuous):
  - The participation of territorial division or park staff in key moment of CF establishment such as: field verification after reception of application for a CF, resource assessment, discussion of draft CF management plan with the CFMG, boundary demarcation;
  - The critical revision of draft CF management plans by DFO/PM.
- Conduct joint annual monitoring of CFs by the concerned DzFS and territorial division or park respectively (lead: territorial division or park) (priority 1)  
FNCR 2006 (clause 39.2a) gives the DFO/PM and the DzFO the responsibility 'for conducting regular monitoring and evaluation of each Community Forest'. There are various places throughout Bhutan where joint monitoring of CFs has taken place (e.g. Bumthang, Trashigang Division). This experience including practical aspects such as forms used represents a promising starting point for the development of a simple, yet robust approach to the joint annual monitoring.

The joint annual monitoring of CFs requires a short guidance and forms. In developing these, also based on existing forms in various DzFS, divisions and the CF Manual, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- As simple as possible;
  - Clarify the purpose of monitoring at each level (steering, accountability, learning; monitoring why and for whom?);
  - Information needs by CFMGs for the management of their groups and CFs?
  - Information needs by DoFPS for what purpose (compliance, etc.)?
  - Allow room for qualitative information which is often key for ensuring learning through monitoring and subsequent adaptations of activities etc. based on the learning.
- Workshops to further develop the joint vision of DoFPS and its field services on CF and its future role for the sustainable management of the country's forests to broaden the ownership for CF and further anchor CF in DoFPS. This corresponds to one of the activities under output 4.1 of PFMP phase III. (priority 3)
  - SFED to continue involving staff from territorial divisions and parks working on CF in its activities (priority 2 - continuous)  
To broaden the ownership for CF within DoFPS it is important that SFED continues and possibly intensifies its efforts to involve colleagues from territorial divisions and parks who work on CF in its activities concerning CF.
  - Consider establishing the function of 'social forestry officer' in territorial divisions and parks as a first point of contact for the colleagues from the DzFS and CFMG members, as Paro Division has done. The social forestry officer should have own working experience in forestry extension and CF. (priority 3)
  - In the mid-term: Consider the need to improve collaboration and coordination between forest services on CF in the institutional review of the structures of the forestry sector (priority 2)

The split between the de-concentrated forestry extension services and the territorial divisions and parks which are directly under DoFPS and linked issues of hierarchies and power affecting the relation between the services make collaboration often difficult. An institutional review of the structures of the forestry sector (see also Hobley 2012) could propose new solutions that redress some of these obstacles.

### 3.2.4 Improve other key aspects of CF implementation

The analysis in Section Weaknesses of CF and its current implementation<sup>2.5</sup> oben identified quite a large number of weaknesses related to poor implementation of existing procedures, rules etc. To improve the implementation of CF the review team proposes the following measures:

- Make CF management plans and by-laws available in Dzongkha (priority 2)

The CF management plans and by-laws are key elements of CF and have to become documents which are fully owned and used by the CFMGs. SFED should explore various options, possibly with support from the PFMP, including:

- Translate entire CF management plans and by-laws to Dzongkha; or
- Translate essential parts of the CF management plan and the CF by-laws fully to Dzongkha; and
- Display essential information of the CF management plan and by-laws on posters in the community. Hereby, illustrations can be used to convey content to non-literate community members.

Low literacy rates amongst CFMG members come out as an important constraint in the analysis. However, most of the younger community members have gone to school and an increasing number of people in rural area attend non-formal education classes. This is expected to lead to higher functional literacy in rural communities over the years to come.

- Ensure the conduction of proper stakeholders consultations during CF establishment facilitated by DzFS staff (see CF Manual, priority 1 - continuous)

Continue to build further awareness with forestry field staff on the criteria for CF site selection and on the need to conduct proper consultations with all relevant stakeholders.

With regard to *sokshing* and *tsamdrol* rights (nationalised with Land Act 2007, but de-facto still respected), it appears important for MoAF to develop a clear understanding of the purpose of the nationalisation of these rights. As per the Land Act 2007, reverted *tsamdrol* and *sokshing* (clauses 240 and 256) may be converted to individual or community leaseholds (guidelines for the lease of SRF land are currently being elaborated). If the purpose of the nationalisation of these rights is the redistribution of areas for *tsamdrol* and *sokshing* to households and communities owing livestock or depending on leaf litter respectively, this purpose should not be defied by the establishment of CF in such areas. Observing this (assumed) purpose, the establishment of CF should thus not lead to a reduction of forest area available for leaf litter collection or grazing. Where the previous right holders agree to lease out reverted *tsamdrol* or *sokshing* on a community basis, such a lease can be combined with a CF.

In any case, it is very important to properly consult with previous *tsamdrol* and *sokshing* right holders and all community members including people who might be interested in leasing reverted *tsamdrol* or *sokshing*.

- Ensure that CFMGs draw a simple annual plan and compile a simple annual report with the support of the GFEOs, if needed (priority 2)
- Mark CF boundaries where unclear (priority 1)

Where ever possible, CF limits should follow natural or traditional boundaries which greatly increases the likelihood that boundaries are clear, known and thus being respected. This will help reducing instances of conflicts or confusion over unclear boundaries. The boundary determination goes hand in hand with the CF area selection by the CFMG, DzFO and DFO/PM as per clause 28.(2) of FNCR 2006.

Boundaries, in particular those not following natural or traditional boundaries, should be clearly marked in the field. Consider involving the Dzongkhag land record officer in the demarcation of the CF area.

- Improve record and book keeping and financial management in CFMGs (priority 1 - continuous)

It continues to be important to train new office holders on record and book keeping and financial management. However, even more important seems that the GFEO supports the CFMGs and in particular their office holders regularly on everyday administrative tasks including record and book keeping.

Low literacy in rural areas continues to constitute a constraint for proper record and book keeping. However, the increasing percentage of rural people having attended school or non-formal education classes increases the likelihood of finding CFMG office holders with the necessary literacy skills.

- Increase awareness of forestry field staff and CFMGs on regulatory documents (priority 2)

Improve the dissemination of documents such as the Interim Timber Marketing Guideline for CF. However, the mere dissemination of a document is usually not enough. Therefore, new documents or documents that are not yet well known have to be introduced to the target audience using appropriate fora (e.g. national workshops, annual Dzongkhag CFMG workshop etc.).

SFED should make important documents available for download in the Internet (e.g. from the DoFPS website).

Documents that are of relevance and interest to CFMGs (e.g. forthcoming revised FNCR) should be made available to them in Dzongkha. Again, the documents have to be properly introduced to the CFMG members, e.g. during an annual CFMG workshop in the Dzongkhags, the planning for a new CF, by the GFEO in charge.

### **3.2.5 Group governance and linkages to local governance**

Good group governance is undoubtedly key for the long-term success of CF and achieving the expected outcomes of CF. Strengthening the governance of CFMGs is one of the four outcomes of PFMP phase III. Thus, the PFMP can make a significant contribution to improving group governance.

- SFED should, ideally with the support of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation through the PFMP, revisit the guidance on group governance including gender provided by FNCR and the CF Manual (priority 1):
  - FNCR to prescribe only most important minimal standards (e.g. CFMG to have at least one general meeting annually, introduction of a gender soft quota for office holders and executive committee as a whole?);
  - CF Manual including best practices recommendations, particularly for formulation of CF by-laws.
- Conduct the trainings on governance, gender and social equity for DzFS staff and CFMG office holders planned under PFMP phase III (priority 1).
- GFEOs to support office holders and other executive committee members in group management and governance (short meeting minutes, etc.). (priority 2 - continuous)
- The local government leaders interviewed during the review are very interested in CF. It is thus important to continue fostering collaboration with local governments, e.g. by inclusion of CF in local development plans, support for CF application provided by local

leaders, participation in resource mapping and decisions on allocation of forest resources under CF or other management regimes, strengthening downward accountability of forest services to local governments and local communities. (priority 2 - continuous)

### **3.3 Recommendation concerning the suspension of approval of new CFs**

The review team recommends to DoFPS **lifting the temporary suspension of the approval of new CFs** that has been in force since September 2013 for the following reasons:

- While it is acknowledged that there are some issues and scope for improvement of various aspects of CF implementation, there were no fundamental issues found that cannot be addressed and overcome.
- After a period of analysis and reflection that yielded clear priorities for further work to address weaknesses of CF implementation and further improve the quality of CF, it is important to keep the CF programme going and not lose further momentum.
- Checks and balances are in place that allow the CFMGs and DoFPS to solve possible conflicts and problems based on the existing regulatory framework.

The review team is confident that with the recommended measures the identified issues can be addressed, joint learning for the step-wise improvement of CF continues and the existing weaknesses of CF can be effectively corrected.

---

## References

---

- Agrawal, A. and Ostrom, E. 2001 Collective Action, Property Rights, and Decentralization in Resource Use in India and Nepal. *Politics & Society* 29: 485-514.
- BBS 10/06/2013 Community forest sparks row in Trashigang. Pema Namgay, Kanglung. <http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=28121>
- BBS 17/05/2014 Community Forestry gains momentum in Samtse. <http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=38095>
- BBS 18/05/2013 500<sup>th</sup> community forest handed over. <http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=27427>
- BBS 28/09/2013 Community forests benefit Sarpang Dzongkhag. <http://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=32023>
- Beck, M. 2011 Economic Analysis of Timber Production from Community Forests and Forest Management Units. Three Case Studies from Central and Eastern Bhutan. Master Thesis "Environmental Sciences" submitted that the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich).
- Bumthang Forestry Sector 20 February 2014 Community Forest Management Status. Monitoring Report (As of December 2013). Annex II, Monitoring Result of Timber Harvest from Community Forests.
- Carter, J. and Gronow, J. 2005 Recent Experience in Collaborative Forest Management. A Review Paper. CIFOR Occasional Paper No. 43. Center for International Forestry Research CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.
- Carter, J., Schmidt, K., Robinson, P., Stadtmüller, T. & Nizami, A. (Eds.), 2009. Forests landscapes and governance: multiple actors, multiple roles. Bern and Zurich, Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Intercooperation and Helvetas.
- DoFPS 2011 National Forest Policy of Bhutan. Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan.
- DoFPS 2013 Resolutions and Recommendations of the Third Forestry Conference, Samtse, 19-21 December 2013. Department of Forests and Park Services DoFPS, MoAF, RGoB.
- DoFPS Website 2013 CFMG in Haa: Keen interest to protect their Community Forest. submitted by: Sherab Jamtsho (Forest Ranger), Dzongkhag Forestry Sector.
- Gronow, J. and Peljor, N., 2010 External Mid Term Review of the Participatory Forest Management Project Phase II. For Helvetas/SDC and the Department of Forests and Park Services, MoAF, RGoB.
- Hobley, M. 2012 Community-based forestry and governance – opportunities for potential Phase 3 PFMP. Governance Issue Paper. PFMP.
- Kuensel 04/12/2013 A community approach to curb forest fire. By Tempa Wangdi, Trashigang. <http://www.kuenselonline.com/ktwosection/a-community-approach-to-curb-forest-fire>
- Kuensel 07/01/2014 Community forest formation suspended. By Tashi Dema. <http://www.kuenselonline.com/community-forest-formation-suspended>
- Kuensel 13/07/2013 Rinchengang community forests infested with pine defoliators. By Dawa Gyelmo, Wangdue. <http://www.kuenselonline.com/rinchengang-community-forests-infested-with-pine-defoliators>
- Kuensel 14/11/2013 Chairperson accused of misuse of community forest. By Tashi Dema. <http://www.kuenselonline.com/chairperson-accused-of-misuse-of-community-forest>
- Kuensel 17/09/2013 Forest fights pastureland. By Tempa Wangdi, Trashigang. <http://www.kuenselonline.com/forest-fights-pastureland>
- Namgay, Kinzang 2014 Effective by-law making in CF: the difference it can make in indemnifying equity among CFMG members. BSc thesis at the Dophine Institute affiliated to Gharwal Central University, India (draft).

- Paro Forest Division, October 2013, Community forest monitoring report: Paro Forest Division. Forwarded to the DG DoFPS by CFO Paro with letter no PFD/SF-02/2013/799 dated 2/10/2013.
- RGoB 2013 Forestry Facts and Figures, 2013. Department of Forests and Park Services DoFPS, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests MoAF, RGoB.
- SFD 2010 National Strategy for Community Forestry: The Way Ahead. Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB).
- Tempel, K.J. and Beukeboom, H., 2006 Community Forestry: Supporting Bhutan's National and MDG Goals while Protecting Forests. In: Oberndorf, R., Durst, P., Mahanty, S., Burslem, K. and Suzuki, R. (Eds.) 2006. A Cut for the Poor. Proceedings of the International Conference on Managing Forests for Poverty Reduction: Capturing Opportunities in Forest Harvesting and Wood Processing for the Benefit of the Poor. Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 3-6<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Bangkok, RECOFTC Report No. 19. p. 114-125.
- Wangchuk, T, and Beck, M. 2008 Community Forest in Bhutan need to fulfill the minimum timber requirement and provide income: Recommended area for Community Forestry. A Series of Case Studies on Community –Based Forest Natural Resources Management in Bhutan.

---

## Appendices

---

1. Terms of reference
2. Programme
3. Persons met
4. Questionnaire

## 1. Terms of reference

### **“Review of Community Forestry and provide analysis of strengths and weaknesses for future directions”**

Thimphu, April 3, 2014

#### **Background**

The PFMP III is based on the successful establishment of more than 500 Community Forests (CF) – majority of them in the phase II - due to enabling policies, capacities of community forest management groups (CFMGs) and the DoFPS's commitment to furthering community based forest management. Today it is widely accepted that rural communities having clear and secure access and management rights and responsibilities over forests can play an important role in sustainable forest management in Bhutan. CF also has a high potential of providing livelihood opportunities to rural communities when managed sustainably and according to good governance principles. With the necessary capacities and collaboration amongst groups, CFMGs are expected to produce and market high quality forest products, thus generating income and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Representing one out of three rural households, CF is seen as the largest social movement in Bhutan with a considerable potential to enhance rural communities' voice and representation in local democratic governance. By strengthening the intra-group governance of CFMGs and promoting the inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups, CF is expected to contribute to equitable socio-economic development and empowered rural communities to advocate their interests in local and regional fora and to partake in policy dialogue on forest management.

However, with the increasing number of CFs, there are correspondingly increasing number of issues relating to CF such as boundary conflicts; misuse of CF funds; misuse of power and collusion in illegal activities by executive and committee members, etc. for which the Department is in receipt of complaints from various ends including Anti Corruption Commission, besides often being reported in the media.

As such, the DoFPS during the third annual conference held in December 2013 has asked SFED to carry out a study on the issues raised in the media and among the many stakeholders of CFs. As follow up to the resolution of the Third Annual Forestry Conference for an expert and external viewpoint, an external consultant is suggested to study the issues as raised in the media and other fora.

#### **Objective**

To find out and document the issues around the CFs raised in the media and the stakeholders of CFs and provide expert solutions/advice to the issues that would negatively impact the project and the CF movement (quality analysis with potentially feasible recommendations and strategies).

## **Tasks**

The Consultant will work closely with the DoFPS under the advice of the Director General. He will be supported by a national counterpart (who will be appointed by the department) and shall be responsible for the following:

- Review of documents related to Community Forestry (policies, rules, guidelines, manuals)
- Field visits to verify the issues – meet with CFMGs, Local leaders (Gups)
- Consultation with relevant stakeholders – Territorial/Park staff, DzFS,
- A debriefing to the Department and HSI-PO before leaving Bhutan.

## **Issues that will need attention**

- CF boundaries
- Traditional rights (accesses, user rights)
- Confusion arising out of Land acts (new and old)
- Coordination among implementing agencies (Local government, territorial Divisions, Parks, Dzongkhags)
- Capacities of stakeholders
- Awareness of CFs and CF processes and procedures
- Governance of CFMGs
- CF misuse and conflicts (as reported in the media)
- Aspects of monitoring, evaluation and reporting on CF

## **Expected outputs**

Thoroughly analyzed report outlining the

- Impediments to achieving the objectives of the CF Programme
- Recommendations and strategies to remove these impediments
- Recommendations on the support to the CF Programme provided by PFMP III.

## **Duration**

Consultancy of total 30 days including about 5 days report writing in Switzerland.

The report should be submitted latest within 30 days of leaving Bhutan

## 2. Programme

Day	Date	Programme	Overnight stay in	Remarks
Mon	7 April	12h45 departure Kaspar Schmidt from Zurich, Switzerland 23h55 arrival in Delhi	Delhi	
Tue	8 April	14h10 dep from Delhi 17h00 arr in Paro, transfer to Thimphu	Thimphu	
Wed	9 April	Morning: briefing meetings at PO HSI Bhutan: Hansruedi Pfeiffer, Chhimi Dorji, Tashi Pem Afternoon: briefing meeting at SFED, gather relevant documents	Thimphu	
Thu	10 April	10h00 meeting Mr Chencho Norbu, Director General DoFPS Planning of the review, gather relevant documents (Rinzin Dorji, Kaspar)	Thimphu	
Fri	11 April	Prepare the methodology, lead questions 14h00 meeting Chhimi Dorji with Kaspar, PO HSI Bhutan 15h30 meeting Kinley Tshering, CFO FRMD, Rinzin Dorji, Kaspar	Thimphu	
Sat	12 April	Preparation of field visits	Thimphu	
Sun	13 April	<i>News of Kaspar's 4 months old daughter having contracted meningitis reaches Kaspar --&gt; interruption of the mission; DG DoFPS and partners of DoFPS and MoAF informed accordingly.</i>	Thimphu	
Mon	14 April	11h20 dep Kaspar Schmidt from Paro 13h10 arr in Delhi		
Tue	15 April	01h15 dep from Delhi 06h20 arr in Zurich, Switzerland	Flight	

Day	Date	Programme, tasks	Overnight stay in	Remarks
Mon	5 May	12h45 dep Kaspar Schmidt from Zurich, Switzerland 23h55 arr in Delhi	Delhi	
Tue	6 May	14h20 dep from Delhi 17h00 arr in Paro, transfer to Thimphu	Thimphu	
Wed	7 May	Field visit Paro: 08h30 dep from Thimphu 10h00 meeting with Mr Kaka Tshering, CFO/DFO Paro and his staff; 13h00 lunch with DzFS staff and office holders of CFMGs at the annual CF workshop in Paro 14h15 discussion with CFMG members 16h00 discussion with GFEOs 17h45 drive to Haa 19h30 arr in Haa Dinner with DzFS staff	Haa: Hotel Lhayul	Tshewang Dorji, SFED, accompanying Kaspar
Thu	8 May	Field visit Haa: 09h30 discussion with DzFS staff 11h00 meeting members of Dorib Yarkel Puensum CF in Dorikha, Samar Geog	Thimphu	Tshewang Dorji, SFED, accompanying Kaspar

		13h00 lunch with CFMG members 14h00 visit timber depot of the CFMG below and besides the local monastery 15h00 arr Geog centre Samar Geog, Gup is out 15h30 meeting Mr Tenzin Jamba, Gup Euse Geog 16h45 drive to Thimphu		
Fri	9 May	Analysis	Thimphu	Zhabdrung Kuchoe – public holiday
Sat	10 May	<i>(other work)</i>	Thimphu	
Sun	11 May	<i>Rest</i>	Thimphu	
Mon	12 May	Meetings in Thimphu: 14h00 meeting with Mr Phento Tshering, CFO/DFO Thimphu Preparations of field visits	Thimphu	Rinzin Dorji with the Hon'ble Lyonpo
Tue	13 May	Field visit Meeting Sonam Togbay, DzFO Punakha Meeting members of Dadogoenpa CF, Shengana Gewog, Punakha	Wangdue: Dragon's Nest	Rinzin Dorji with the Hon'ble Lyonpo
Wed	14 May	Field visit Meeting DzFS staff in Wangdue Meeting Mr Baph Pema, Wangdue Dzongrab Meeting members of Tshokothangka CF, Nahi Gewog, and Rucheykha CF, Rubesa Gewog Drive to Tsirang	Tsirang: Hotel Dejong	
Thu	15 May	Field visit Meeting Sithar Dorji, DFO Tsirang Meeting DzFS staff in Tsirang	Tsirang: Hotel Dejong	
Fri	16 May	Field visit Meeting members of Kikorthang CF and Mr Tshewang Norbu, Gup, and Mr Rinzin, Mangmi Kikorthang Gewog Meeting Mr Bal Bahadur Tamang, Gup Rangthaling Gewog Drive back to Thimphu	Thimphu	
Sat	17 May	<i>Rest</i>	Thimphu	
Sun	18 May	Analysis, report writing	Thimphu	
Mon	19 May	Meetings in Thimphu 10h30 meeting KJ Temphele, SAARC Forestry Centre 14h00 meeting Chhimi Dorji and Hansruedi Pfeiffer	Thimphu	
Tue	20 May	Consolidating thoughts at HSI PO; 14h30 meeting with SFED staff 16h30 meeting with Mr Ritu Raj Chhetri, MP National Assembly, Chairperson Environment & Social Development Committee	Thimphu	
Wed	21 May	Analysis, preparation of debriefing	Thimphu	
Thu	22 May	Preparation of debriefing 11h00 meeting with SFED 15h00 debriefing at DoFPS conference hall	Thimphu	
Fri	23 May	14h00 debriefing at HSI PO Collection of additional information at SFED	Thimphu	
Sat	24 May	08h00 dep Kaspar Schmidt from Paro 10h45 arr in Delhi		
Sun	25 May	01h15 dep from Delhi 06h20 arr in Zurich, Switzerland	Flight	

### 3. Persons met

#### **Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), HQ Thimphu**

Mr Chencho Norbu	Director General DoFPS
Mr Kinley Tshering	CFO FRMD
Mr Gyeltshen Dukpa	CFO SFED
Mr BB Chhetri	Specialist
Mr Kinley Dorji	Dy CFO, Head Social Forestry Section, Dy CFO SFED
Ms Kesang Droelkar Tshering	Dy CFO SFED
Mr Tashi Wangchuk	Forestry Officer, SFED
Mr TB Rai	Forestry Officer, SFED
Ms Sonam Peldon	Dy CFO, Head NWFP Section, Dy CFO SFED
Mr Tshewang Dorji	Forestry Officer, SFED
Mr KN Ghimeray	Sr Forestry Officer, Head Plantation Section SFED

#### **National Assembly of Bhutan**

Mr Ritu Raj Chhetri	Member of Parliament, Chairperson Environment & Social Development Committee, Vice Chairperson Legislative Committee
---------------------	--

#### **Territorial Division Paro**

Mr Kaka Tshering	CFO/DFO Paro Division
Social Forestry Officer, Planning Officers, Beat in Charge (4 m)	

#### **Dzongkhag Forestry Sector (DzFS) Paro**

Mr Akey Dorji	DzFO Paro
Mr Phub Thinley	GFEO Shaba
Mr Dorji	GFEO Doteng
Mr Jigme Pelden	GFEO Lango
Ms Phuntsho Wangmo	GFEO Dopshari
Mr Tenzin Zangpo	GFEO Lungnyi
Mr Tshewang Needup	GFEO Wangchang

#### **CFMG executive committee members from Paro Dzongkhag**

Mr Gyem Thinley	Chairperson Chubjakha CF
Mr Norbu Tshering	Chairperson Dungding Gongphel CF
Mr Sonam Phuntsho	Chairperson Druk Tsenden CF
Mr Sangay Wangdi	Chairperson Druk Thunpa Punzhi CF
Mr Lethro	Chairperson Druk Kuenphen CF
Ms Yangchen Drolker	Secretary Druk Pejong CF

#### **Local government leader Haa**

Mr Tenzin Jamba	Gup Eusu Gewog
-----------------	----------------

**Members of Dorib Yarkel Puensum CFMG, Samar Gewog, Haa**

Mr Sangay Dorji	CFMG member, former chairperson
Mr Golo	CFMG member
Mr Ugyen Dorji	Resoop/marketing officer
Mr Tshering Tandin	CFMG member, village Tshogpa
Mr Tobgyel	Resoop
Ms Tshencho Wangmo	CFMG member, former executive committee member
Mr Kinga	CFMG member
Mr Tshering Namgay	CFMG member
Mr Tshencho	Secretary

**Dzongkhag Forestry Sector (DzFS) Haa**

Mr Gem Tshering	DzFO Haa
Mr Tempa Gyeltshen	GFEO Eusu and Samar
Mr Sherub	GFEO Katsho
Mr Prem Kumar Rai	GFEO Bjee

**Territorial Division Thimphu**

Mr Phento Tshering	CFO/DFO Thimphu Division
--------------------	--------------------------

**Dzongkhag Forestry Sector (DzFS) Punakha**

Mr Sonam Tobgay	DzFO Punakha
Mr Naphel	ADzFO Punakha
Ms Dorji Wangmo	FR I, DzHQ
Ms Choki Wangmo	GFEO Guma
Mr Kelzang Jatsho	GFEO Dzomi and Shengana
Mr Chimi Rinzin	GFEO Talo
Mr Karma Gyeltshen	GFEO Lingmukha
Mr Pema Namgay	GFEO Kabjisa
Mr Tsherab Dorji	GFEO Chuba
Mr Chimi Wangmo	GFEO Toewang
Mr Kinzang Namgay	Attached to DzFS for a case study on CF by-laws

**Territorial Division Wangdue Phodrang**

Mr Singye	Beat in Charge, Shengana Gewog, Punakha
-----------	---

**Members of Dadagoenpa CFMG, Shengana Gewog, Punakha**

Chairperson, treasurer, secretary, resoop (all m), messenger (f), 3 non-executive members (2 f, 1 m)

**Local government leader Wangdue Phodrang**

Mr Bap Pema	Dasho Dzongrab Wangdue Phodrang
-------------	---------------------------------

**Members of Tshokothangka CFMG, Nahi Gewog, Wangdue Phodrang**

Mr Tshering Wangchuk	Chairperson
Ms Sonam Zam	Secretary
Ms Tshering Zam	Clerk
Ms Karma	Messenger
Mr Sache	Resoop
2 CFMG members (f)	

#### **Members of Rucheykha CFMG, Rubesa Gewog, Wangdue Phodrang**

6 executive committee members (m)

1 non-executive CFMG member (m)

#### **Dzongkhag Forestry Sector (DzFS) Wangdue Phodrang**

Mr Sonam Norbu	DzFO Wangdue Phodrang
Mr Sangay Nidup	GFEO Nahi
Ms Sonam Yangden	GFEO Rubesa

#### **Territorial Division Wangdue Phodrang**

Mr Singye	Beat officer in charge, Nahi
-----------	------------------------------

#### **Local government leaders Tsirang**

Mr Tshewang Norbu	Gup Kikorthang Gewog
Mr Rinzin	Mangmi Kikorthang Gewog
Mr Bal Bahadur Tamang	Gup Rangthaling Gewog

#### **Members of Kikorthang CFMG, Kikorthang Gewog, Tsirang**

Secretary (m)

Treasurer (m)

Resoop/messenger (m)

Non-executive members (2 m, 1 f)

#### **Territorial Division Tsirang**

Mr Sithar Dorji	CFO/DFO Tsirang Division
-----------------	--------------------------

#### **Dzongkhag Forestry Sector (DzFS) Tsirang**

Mr Pem Tshewang	DzFO Tsirang
Mr Dorji Gyeltshen	ADzFO Tsirang
Mr. Karma Lama	GFEO Sergithang
Mr. Sonam Thinley	GFEO Patshaling
Mr. Karma Cheda	GFEO Barshong
Mr. Tshering Tenzin	GFEO Dunglagang and Rangthaling
Mr. Yogi Nidha Chapaga	GFEO Kikorthang
Mr. Dorji Rinchen	GFEO Goserling

**SAARC Forestry Centre**

Mr KJ Tempel

Participatory Forest Management Specialist

**HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan**

Mr Hansruedi Pfeiffer

Country Director

Ms Tashi Pem

Dy Country Director

Mr Chhimi Dorji

Sr Programme Officer

Mr Tshering Phuntsho

Programme Officer

## 4. Questionnaire

DoFPS, MoAF

PFMP III

Review team: Rinzin Dorji, Sr Planning Officer PPD MoAF, Kaspar Schmidt, consultant HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

### **Review of Community Forestry and Analysis of its Strengths and Weaknesses for Future Direction - Questionnaire to DoFPS field staff (Territorial Divisions, Parks, DzFSs)**

Thimphu, 13/05/2014

#### **Background**

Community forestry has developed very dynamically in Bhutan over the past few years. However, lately the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) has received a number of complaints concerning community forestry and various challenges and issues related to community forestry have been reported in the media.

At its third forestry conference held in December 2013 in Samtse, the DoFPS has passed a resolution asking SFED to carry out an analysis of community forestry to review its current strengths and weaknesses and to develop recommendations on how to address and resolve the issues raised.

Mr Rinzin Dorji, Sr Planning Officer PPD MoAF, and Mr Kaspar Schmidt, Team Leader Environment and Climate Change at the head office of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, currently jointly conduct this review. The team meets various stakeholders including representatives of community forest management groups, forestry services, local governments and other stakeholders in the field in Western and Southern Bhutan.

#### **Request for your input**

Herewith, the review team kindly asks for **your input to the review** by answering the questions below from your perspective and based on your experience with community forestry.

Please send us the replies to the questions below latest by **Friday, May 16th 2014** by e-mail to: [kaspar.schmidt@helvetas.org](mailto:kaspar.schmidt@helvetas.org) and [rzn\\_dorji@yahoo.com](mailto:rzn_dorji@yahoo.com).

Please note that your personal data and your replies will be kept **confidential** by the review team and will be rendered **anonymous** for any presentation and the review report.

We would like to thank you very much for your valuable contribution to this review.

Rinzin Dorji & Kaspar Schmidt

---

## Questionnaire

### Personal data (will be kept confidential)

Your name:

Your function/position:

Sex:                                      male    female

Division:

Protected area.

Dzongkhag:

Geog:

### Questions

1. What are, from your point of view, the **main objectives of community forestry** in Bhutan?
2. What do you see as **strengths** and **weaknesses** of community forestry and the current implementation of the community forestry programme in Bhutan?

Please list them in the table below.

**Strengths:** characteristics of community forestry that give it an advantage over other approaches to forest management make community forestry attractive;

**Weaknesses:** characteristics that place community forestry at a disadvantage relative to other approaches to forest management, issues that are challenging, difficult to tackle, issue that should be improved;

Internal factors of community forestry

#### Strengths

- 
- 
- 
- 

#### Weaknesses

- 
- 
- 
- 

3. What do you suggest changing to address the main weaknesses that you have identified and to improve community forestry in Bhutan?

- 
- 
- 

4. What do you see as **opportunities** and **threats** for community forestry and the current implementation of the community forestry programme in Bhutan?

Please list them in the table below.

**Opportunities:** external factors, elements in the wider environment of community forestry that the community forestry programme could use to advance further.

**Threats:** external factors, elements in the wider environment that could cause trouble for community forestry in Bhutan and thus put the successful implementation of community forestry at risk.

Internal factors of community forestry

**Opportunities**

**Threats**

- 
- 
- 
- 

- 
- 
- 
- 

4. Further comments or observations related to community forestry that you would like to share?

Many thanks for your kind contribution to this review!