

UNDERSTANDING THE PARTICIPATION OF MARGINAL GROUPS IN
ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA, NEPAL

A Dissertation

by

SMRITI DAHAL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

Understanding the Participation of Marginal Groups in Annapurna Conservation Area,
Nepal

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Major Subject: Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

ABSTRACT

Understanding the Participation of Marginal Groups in Annapurna Conservation Area,
Nepal. (December 2011)

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Participation has been promoted and studied in diverse disciplines including tourism, development, planning, health, politics, and others. In natural resource conservation, the shift from centralized to decentralized decision making which emphasizes community involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring of programs has been broadly encouraged, especially in developing countries. Although considered a more effective alternative to top down decision making, participatory conservation initiatives have been criticized for many reasons, mainly the exclusion of marginalized groups in programs which lead to unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits. This inequality is conditioned by social, physical and political structures which act as barriers to sustainable development of resources and communities.

Using a political ecology approach, this research explored the participation of marginal groups (poor, women, and lower caste) in Nepal's Annapurna Conservation Area. The main objectives of this study are: 1) To examine the perceived benefits of Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) and how marginal groups fare in the

distribution of benefits; 2) To analyze the level of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions; and 3) To identify the barriers to participation as perceived by marginal groups.

Field work for this dissertation was conducted during August – October 2010 using both quantitative and qualitative data, and employing participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Results indicate that benefits of the project were distributed unequally, and targeted towards elite members of the community. Findings also indicated that although marginal groups were involved in local management institutions, their representation was marginal and had not led to empowerment. Lastly, barriers to participation of communities were complex and deeply rooted in traditions and social norms.

Overall, the findings indicate that the definition of marginal groups go beyond gender and caste, and are more significantly defined by wealth, poverty, education, and access to information. The study concludes that ACAP needs to re-orient its conservation and development projects by adopting a more inclusive form of participation and that these projects should aim to overcome the barriers identified by the marginalized households.

DEDICATION

To the loving memory of my grandfather *Baba*, for all the lessons you taught me, not only about academia but also about life. I hope with the love and values you inscribed on me I can make a difference in the world. You are dearly missed, but I know you will always be my guardian angel, always with me.

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The completion of this dissertation and my Ph.D. is the result of the love and encouragement of my friends and family. Whatever I am today is because of the endless love and support from my parents. Mom and Buwa, the words 'thank you' seem inadequate to express my gratitude for all that you have done for me. I will never forget how you hiked up the steps of Ghandruk just to make sure I was safe. You have made so

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NOMENCLATURE

| | |
|-------|--|
| ABC | Annapurna Base Camp |
| ACA | Annapurna Conservation Area |
| ACAP | Annapurna Conservation Area Project |
| CA | Conservation Area |
| CAMC | Conservation Area Management Committee |
| CAMR | Conservation Area Management Regulation |
| CBC | Community Based Conservation |
| CBNRM | Community Based Natural Resource Management |
| CBO | Community Based Organizations |
| CPR | Common Property Resource |
| DNPWC | Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation |
| EMSC | Electricity Management Sub-Committee |
| ICDP | Integrated Conservation and Development Project |
| INGO | International Non Governmental Organization |
| MAS | Mul Ama Samuha |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| NPWCA | National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act |
| NTNC | National Trust for Nature Conservation |
| OIC | Officer in Charge |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| TMSC | Tourism Management Sub-Committee |

| | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| UCO | Unit Conservation Office |
| VDC | Village Development Committee |
| WAS | Ward Ama Samuha |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| <i>Adhiya</i> | Sharecropping |
| <i>Afno</i> | One self |
| <i>Ama</i> | Mother |
| <i>Baaje</i> | Grandfather |
| <i>Bahun/Brahmin</i> | Higher caste group usually priest |
| <i>Ban police</i> | Forest guard |
| <i>Ban samiti</i> | Forest group |
| <i>Bhari bokne</i> | Porter |
| <i>Bidhan</i> | Act |
| <i>Bikas</i> | Development |
| <i>BKa</i> | Lower caste group |
| <i>Byabasthapan</i> | Management |
| <i>Chetana</i> | Awareness |
| <i>Chhetris</i> | Second highest caste usually warriors |
| <i>Chito</i> | Purification of the body by sprinkling holy water on themselves |
| <i>Chulo</i> | Stove |
| <i>Dai</i> | Older brother |
| <i>Dalits</i> | Untouchable caste |
| <i>Damai</i> | Lower caste that follows the occupation of tailoring |
| <i>Didi</i> | Older sister |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Fufu</i> | Aunt |
| <i>Garib</i> | Poor |
| <i>Gau</i> | Village |
| <i>Gurung</i> | Ethnic group residing in the mountain regions of Nepal |
| <i>Hajur</i> | Form of addressing of someone with respect |
| <i>Hakim</i> | Boss |
| <i>Hami</i> | Us |
| <i>Jaatiya</i> | Landlord |
| <i>Kaam</i> | Work |
| <i>Kaami</i> | Lower caste that follows the occupation of blacksmith |
| <i>Karyakram</i> | Program |
| <i>Katuwal</i> | Messenger, Watchman |
| <i>Kheti kisani</i> | Farming |
| <i>Kisan</i> | Farmer |
| <i>Lahure/Gorkha</i> | Soldier |
| <i>Lekh padh</i> | Writing and reading skills |
| <i>Lyapche</i> | Fingerprint |
| <i>Mahila</i> | Women |
| <i>Manche</i> | People |
| <i>Mukhiya</i> | Village headman |
| <i>Mul</i> | Main |
| <i>Namaste</i> | Greetings |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Nokar</i> | Servant |
| <i>Padhai lekhai</i> | Ability to read and write |
| <i>Pani nachalne jaat</i> | Untouchables |
| <i>Pariyars</i> | Lower caste group |
| <i>Pichadiyeko barga</i> | Backward caste |
| <i>Proad sikchya</i> | Adult literacy |
| <i>Purji</i> | Permit |
| <i>Rai</i> | Caste belonging to an ethnic group |
| <i>Ropani</i> | Unit of land measurement in Nepal |
| <i>Samaj</i> | Society |
| <i>Samaj sewa</i> | Social Work |
| <i>Samaj sewak</i> | Social worker which means those that are active in the community and are helping in community activities |
| <i>Samuha</i> | Group |
| <i>Sarkar</i> | Government |
| <i>Sarki</i> | Lower caste that follows the occupation of cobbler |
| <i>Ta</i> | Form of demeaning language |
| <i>Taalim</i> | Training |
| <i>Tapai</i> | Form of addressing someone with respect |
| <i>Tarkari</i> | Vegetables |
| <i>Terai</i> | Southern lowlands of Nepal |

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

Following a paradigm shift from centralized to decentralized decision making in the 1970s, some form of participation can now be found in all conservation and development projects (Reed 2008). Participation is an essential component of a democratic government because it improves the quality of decisions by building trust and reducing conflicts among stakeholders (Martin 2007); and international organizations, governments, NGOs, and local communities have promoted participatory decision making as a win-win solution for development and conservation. Stakeholder participation not only introduces a diversity of knowledge and values but also enhances conservation outputs (Reed 2008; Parfitt 2004). Political and cultural ecology perspectives indicate that local level governance is politically necessary and practical for management of protected areas in a socially just way (Stevens 1997a; Nietschmann 1984; Zimmerer 2006).

In some cases these participatory conservation initiatives have worked (Steelman 2002; Taber, Navarro, and Arribas 1997; Campbell, Haalboom, and Trow 2007; Horwich and Lyon 2007) and in other cases failed miserably (Martin 2007; Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004; Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992).

This dissertation follows the style of *Society & Natural Resources*.

An extensive amount of research has been done in different participatory conservation initiatives to understand when these participatory processes work and when they do not (Njoh 2002; Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004; Sultana 2009; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; White 1996; Agarwal 2010; Austin and Eder 2007; Goodwin 1998; Sandstrom 2009; Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Hulme and Murphree 1999; Reed 2008; Twyman 1998).

Participation means not only including people but also empowering them to influence the decisions being made in conservation and development programs. In many cases participation has been adopted as a means to achieve project output rather than strictly as an end leading to empowerment of local people (Parfitt 2004). Cooke and Kothari (2001) even termed participation as a ‘new tyranny’ where a handful of elite members of the community captured all the benefits of participation, marginalizing some groups of people. Other scholars agree that in participation what happens in practice is often different from rhetoric (Senecah 2004; Graham 2004).

Most research related to participatory conservation is focused on a common property resource (CPR) framework of institutions and discussion of effectiveness of these institutions in understanding community based natural resource management (CBNRM) practices (Ostrom 1990; Neumann 2005). In such cases, communities are considered as homogenous units and the discussion of how different actors are affected by natural resource management decisions, made in conservation and development projects, are ignored (Neumann 2005). This leads to participatory exclusions and unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits (Cleaver 2001). This inequality is

conditioned by social, physical and political structures that act as barriers to sustainable development of resources and communities (Agrawal 2001; Ostrom 2009). Participatory conservation issues become more complex in developing countries due to the local people's dependence on natural resources for daily subsistence and well defined differences based on gender, age, race, etc. Furthermore, the influences of international and national organizations in developing countries play an important role in making some groups more powerful than others and reinforce the elite capture syndrome¹ (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). A critical understanding of these complexities of participatory conditions is therefore essential to improve participatory conservation policies and practices (Senecah 2004; Singleton 2000; Kapoor 2001).

Political ecology challenges the apolitical nature of participatory research. It looks beyond the simple cause and effect relationship of nature and humans, mostly in developing countries, to understand how these interactions are affected by political factors at different scales (Robbins 2004; Li 2007; Bryant 1992).

Applying a political ecology approach to participatory conservation aids in understanding relationships between different stakeholders (multilateral institutions, the state, private sector, environmental NGOs, grassroots actors) within a historical, political, social and economic context at different scales (community, local, regional, international) and how these interactions affect the level of participation of different groups. Therefore a critical understanding of these issues gives insights into the complexities of participation as it relates to marginal groups.

¹ Where the elite members of the community captured all the benefits of participatory conservation initiatives.

Participatory conservation programs started in Nepal in the early 1980s. The formation of community groups to manage the forests, establishment of buffer zones around protected areas for sustainable use of resources, ecotourism initiatives to conserve regions with high biodiversity, and the inclusion of an integrated conservation and development component in all projects were ubiquitous trends in the country. Blindly following the conservation and development agendas set forward by international organizations, these initiatives further marginalized the marginal communities as the village elites became the main beneficiaries of these programs instead of the intended beneficiaries, i.e., the marginal groups. In the context of Nepal and this research, marginal groups are defined as women (due to a strong patriarchal society), landless (due to economic vulnerability since 75% of the population are farmers), and lower caste Dalits (due to the rigid Hindu caste system)² (Nightingale 2003b; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Agarwal 2001).

This research examined a CBNRM program in a protected area of Nepal through the lens of political ecology. The goal of this study was to understand level of participation of marginal groups and how various factors are interlinked together to serve as barriers to participation for some groups of people.

² Nepal consists of a social hierarchy based on the Hindu religion. Each individual, by birth, belongs to one of the four *varna* or classes. The four caste divisions are Brahmins (priests or scholars), Chhetri (rulers and warriors), Vaisya (Merchant or traders), and Sudra (farmers, artisans, and laborers). Below all this are the Dalits or the untouchables. In this paper lower caste usually refers to the Dalits. The National Dalit Commission defines Dalits as “those communities who, by virtue of caste based discrimination and so called untouchability, are most backward in the social, economic, educational, political, and religious spheres, and are deprived of human dignity and social justice” (Pradhan and Shrestha 2005, 3).

Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) is the first and largest conservation area of Nepal. It is under the management of Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), initiated by a national non-government organization (NGO) called National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). Although a lot of research has been conducted in ACA (Hough and Sherpa 1989; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005; Spiteri and Nepal 2008; Khadka and Nepal 2010; Baral and Stern 2009; Wells 1994; Stevens 1997a) this research will be the first of its kind to focus solely on marginal groups and their level of participation in local management institutions.

Within ACA, Ghandruk village development committee (VDC)³ was chosen as the study site. Ghandruk serves as an ideal site for this research for several reasons: i) Ghandruk is where ACAP started as a pilot project; ii) Ghandruk has been running its programs since 1986; iii) the area is where majority of ACAP's activities and funding have been targeted; iv) CBNRM programs in Ghandruk are considered a successful model not only in Nepal but also internationally; v) Ghandruk is a tourism hotspot; and vi) Ghandruk has a significant percentage of marginal population.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Paradigm Shift in Protected Areas

The end of the 1800s saw preservation ideologies like un-spoilt wilderness, pristine conditions, and nature without humans gain popularity. Amidst this preservation movement, the first concept of a protected area was established in the United States with Yellowstone National Park in 1872 for recreation use and protection of scenic

³ VDC is the lowest political unit and each VDC consists of nine wards or sub-villages under it.

landscapes (Pimbert and Pretty 1997; Nash 2001). Building on this idea of untouched nature, the first half of the 1900s saw scientists and conservationists formulating an inverse relationship between nature and humans (Pimbert and Pretty 1997). Blaming the increasing resource degradation in the 20th century on local people, government felt the need to interfere with management of these natural areas. This resulted in the adoption of the fences and fine method and proliferation of the Yellowstone model, not only in the United States but also internationally (Phillips 2003).

The western idea of national parks was brought into Africa and Asia by colonial powers and later, with aid from international agencies, was copied by governments due to resource degradation crises (Hough and Sherpa 1989). Park managers failed to understand that these strict protection systems were not the best option for the need and lifestyle of developing countries (Hough and Sherpa 1989). The problem was more severe in developing countries because local people lived inside these protected areas and depended on its resources for daily subsistence (Raval 1994). In some cases the establishment of these strict nature reserves led to catastrophic results among the indigenous population living in and around these protected areas.⁴

Local people opposed these protected areas for many reasons: forced displacement, prohibited use of natural resources, establishment of the area without prior

⁴Some examples are - the relocation of the Bannock and Shoshone tribes who were the inhabitants of the Yellowstone region for the past 11 thousand years. Due to the relocation they faced physical, emotional and spiritual torture (Bartlett 1989, as cited in ; Stevens 1997b, 28-29); establishment of the Kidepo National Park in Uganda led the displacement of the hunter gathers of native Ik population which eventually led to the starvation of the entire tribe; and the resettlement of the Phoka tribe in Nepal's Rara National Park which resulted in the death of the entire tribe due to difficulties of adjusting in a new climate (Stevens 1997b).

consultation with locals, lack of incentives for protection, not providing alternative forms of income, and exclusion from design and implementation of protected area management policies (Heinen 1993; Stevens 1997a; Méndez-Contreras, Dickinson, and Castillo-Burguete 2008). Scholars stressed that if these conservation areas do not favor local welfare, they will not be able to conserve and will increase degradation (Spiteri and Nepal 2008).

There has been a heightened awareness of protected area issues at the international level, particularly as they relate to the need to reconcile conflicts between wildlife and people. Through international conferences occurring at regular intervals (World Park Congress, IUCN Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, etc.), the requirement of human inclusion in conservation programs through - UNESCO's Man and Biosphere program (1971), the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972) and the inception of integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) in the 1980s – protected area management has undergone a paradigm shift. Scholars consider this shift a new wave of conservation, or 'new conservation' (Hulme and Murphree 1999).

Today, protected areas serve as a major tool for protecting not only species and ecosystems of a geographical area, but also its culture and the sustainability of the people living there. Currently IUCN's protected area categories range from strict nature reserves to managed resource protected areas (Phillips 2003) (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: IUCN's Protected Area Category (Phillips 2003)

| Category | Name | Use |
|----------|---------------------------------|--|
| Ia | Strict Nature Reserve | Scientific research and knowledge |
| Ib | Wilderness Area | Wildlife protection |
| II | National Park | Ecosystem protection and recreation |
| III | Natural Monument | Conservation of natural features |
| IV | Habitat/Species Management Area | Conservation through management intervention |
| V | Protected Landscape/Seascape | Landscape/seascape conservation and recreation |
| VI | Managed Resource Protected Area | Sustainable use of natural ecosystem |

1.2.2 Decentralized Decision Making

The rationale behind decentralization is based on critiques of centralized state-led, top-down methods which were considered to be ineffective in conserving resources and ensuring sustainability of the community. The concept of decentralization has attracted interest from various sectors of society (e.g., conservation, health, development, politics, business, etc.). Decentralized decision-making has also become a mantra for all big and small conservation and development organizations. It is defined as a process through which central government formally cedes power to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (Ribot 2002, 4). This concept is based on the assumption that local institutions have better knowledge about local needs, and when given power to do so will respond to local objectives (Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006).

Two important decentralization processes related to protected area management and this research are CBNRM and ICDP. These initiatives focused on the idea that if conservation was carried out by including the local people who experienced the cost of conservation, it would lead to more productive outcome. Decentralized decision-making moved away from the idea of the protection of human and nature as separate and is based on the idea that human and nature co-exist together (Western and Wright 1994). Spiteri and Nepal (2006, 2) states that although these two concepts have the same idea, their focus is different. CBNRMs are geared more toward engagement of locals through their involvement in local institutions, and toward the management of natural resources. In the process, CBNRMs create accountability and ownership, geared toward empowerment. ICDPs are focused on increasing community support for conservation by generating incentives for local people for socio-economic development and sustainable use. Scholars also explain how under the larger umbrella of community-based conservation (CBC), ICDP is a form of participatory conservation practiced in and around protected areas (McShane and Wells 2004). Some (Spiteri and Nepal 2006) have also combined the strengths of CBC and ICDP and developed a concept termed as incentive-based conservation. Table 1.2 summarizes the main features of CBC, CBNRM⁵, and ICDP.

⁵ CBNRM and CBC, although two different terms, are used in this dissertation interchangeably as an overarching theme for decentralized decision making in conservation.

Table 1.2: Key Differences between CBC, CBNRM, and ICDP

| Term | Key features |
|--------------|---|
| CBC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based conservation (Western and Wright 1994) • A overall term for participatory conservation initiatives • Focus – communal and private lands • Inclusion of community in the conservation of natural resources that affect them |
| CBNRM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based natural resource management (Child and Dalal-Clayton 2004) • Focus – public, communal, and private lands/resources • More emphasis on market value of resources • Related mostly to wildlife management in Africa |
| ICDP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated conservation and development programs (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992) • Focus –Protected areas • Conservation of biodiversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with socio-economic needs of the local people |

1.2.3 CBNRM

CBNRM is based on the common property theory. Common property theory was developed directly by critiquing Hardin's concept of the tragedy of commons⁶ and asserts that local people can work together in the form of local institutions for effective management of natural resources (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Ostrom et al. 1999; Oldekop et al. 2010). According to Ostrom (1990), institutions are a set of rules that are used by a set of individuals to organize repetitive actions that produce outcomes affecting those individuals and potentially affecting others. Scholars were against the top-down resource management approaches and communities were envisioned as an

⁶ According to Hardin's tragedy of the common CPR are going to be degraded if it is not controlled either as private property or through government control, for example in the form of 'fence and fines' in protected areas (Hardin 1968).

alternative to the state that had failed to effectively manage natural resources (Li 1996). The use of attractive words like community, participation, and empowerment made CBNRM a concept that was readily accepted as a replacement to state led resource management options. Participation of the community was the main foundation of these CBNRM programs (Murphree 1994). These programs carried out participation through a local institution in the form of forest user groups, watershed management committees, community based organizations, etc.

1.2.4 ICDP

Environmental conservation and poverty alleviation are two important agendas present in the developing world today (Pollini 2011). Previously, conservationists considered development as a threat to conservation and development organizations perceived conservation as an obstacle to development (Brown 2002). To combine these two extremes ICDPs were developed. Considered a win-win situation for all, ICDPs are defined as an “attempt to ensure the conservation of biodiversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of local people” (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992, ix). These projects are based on the basic assumption that local people are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward conservation if their own livelihood needs have been met. Popularity of ICDPs in protected areas grew because of their efforts to combine three important areas of sustainable development: biodiversity conservation, public participation and economic development of the rural poor (Wells and McShane 2004).

1.2.5 Political Ecology

Political ecology provides insights into society-human interactions. It came into practice in the 1970s and combined the concepts of political economy⁷ and cultural ecology⁸. Although anthropologist Eric Wolf first coined the term (1972), political ecology gained popularity in the 1980s with geographers Blaikie and Brookfield's seminal work on land degradation that elucidated the interconnectedness of political, economic and cultural issues to environmental change (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). No one definition of political ecology exists because of its vast research agenda and the range of disciplines (geography, anthropology, ecology, political science, etc.) it draws on. Areas where political ecology have been applied include: food insecurities, soil erosion, landlessness, resource decline, human health crises, etc. (Robbins 2004).

1.2.5.1 Relevance of Political Ecology to Participatory Conservation

Political ecology represents an alternative to apolitical ecology⁹ (Robbins 2004). Although some researchers have used the concept of political ecology to study first world issues (McCarthy 2002), political ecology has mainly focused on third world problems. In conservation, political ecology is used to examine the relationship between humans and the environment with a historical, political, social, and economic context at

⁷ Political economy deals with the relationship between politics and economy and ignores the social and historical aspect in which the relationship might occur.

⁸ Cultural ecology approach deals with the interaction between culture and environment but it treats the culture as an island, isolated from the broader political, economical and historical forces that exist.

⁹ Apolitical ecology is based on the Neo-Malthusian concept and diffusion of technology as a cause of environmental degradation. Apolitical ecology does not look beyond a cause and effect concept to understand how different forces like market and globalization play a major role in influencing environmental practices.

different scales (i.e., community, local, national, regional, global) and how differences in the contexts and scales produce specific conditions of human-environment relationships. Through political ecology scholars examine how the discourses produced in these relationships influence environmental outcomes.

Robbins (2004) identifies political ecology as both a hatchet and a seed. As a hatchet it exposes how the environment is currently controlled by those with power and the need to critique this approach, especially from the “point of view of local people, marginal groups, and vulnerable populations”(12). Political ecology as a seed studies how communities cope with changes and come up with progressive results to adapt to these changes. To analyze issues relevant to natural resource management, Bryant and Bailey (1997) identified: i) the need for flexibility in institutional designs that seek to match dynamic ecological systems; ii) recognition that ecological systems are not passive recipients of human actions but instead these ecological agency can shape human/environment interaction, and; iii) the outcomes of environmental changes are felt unevenly by different social groups.

Political ecology in the developing world is relevant to issues of environmental degradation and marginalization, environmental conflict, conservation and control, and environmental identity and social movement (Robbins 2004; Bryant 1992). As an interdisciplinary field, political ecology offers an integrated understanding of the dynamics and complexities of participation in CBNRM programs. The three main assumptions of political ecology that inform this dissertation and shed light into the participation of marginal groups are that politics and the environment are thoroughly

connected; material struggles over the environment are complicated struggles; and unequal power relations inform access, control and distribution of natural resources (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 2004).

Many national and multinational agencies, through CBNRM programs, promoted community and participation but, in reality, on the ground projects rarely addressed issues of empowerment or of access and control over resources (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998). Participation in such projects was present just because it added credibility to the decisions that had already been made and participants were treated as beneficiaries and passive participants (Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004; Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999). Many programs follow participation as a means approach to accomplish project goals, but rarely is participation practiced as an end which leads to empowerment of the community (Parfitt 2004; McCool and Guthrie 2001; Salafsky 2011).

Participation as a means not only does not empower communities but also ignores the power relationships that occur in the community (Cleaver 2001; Parfitt 2004; Parkins and Mitchell 2005). In many cases, external organizations shape the result of projects to advance their own agenda (Cleaver 2001; Hailey 2001). NGOs generate “powerful discourses to explain environmental degradation and land use” and this makes certain groups of people more powerful than others (Sundberg 2003, 50).

In addition, this popular discourse of CBNRM in the 1980s and 1990s portrayed communities as homogenous units within a confined space, having shared norms and internal equality, and living in harmony with nature (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Zimmerer 2006; Peet and Watts 2004). This homogeneity in communities that CBNRM

programs assume is challenged by political ecology (Schroeder and Suryanata 2004). The assumption that communities practice consensus is a false image established by multinational organizations (Ghimire and Pimbert 1997; Little 1994). Communities are dynamic structures that change with time and are comprised of a different array of actors and interest groups (Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Berkes 2004). According to Bryant and Bailey, there are five major ‘actors’ that are important in understanding environment and development issues: multilateral institutions, the state, private sector, environmental NGOs and grassroots actors. Stonich (2000) further divides Bryant and Bailey’s grassroots actors into “rich and poor, women and men, young and old, ethnic groups,” etc.

Political ecology has been critical for the simplification and presentation of the ‘local’ in CBNRM. Many CBNRM programs have a handful of elite members with more power, due to various issues, who capture all the benefits of conservation while it is the poor that have to bear all the cost of conservation (Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Peet and Watts 1993; Agarwal 2001). Similarly, in many cases the socio-economic benefits of ICDPs are geared more toward local elites than to the community. This results in participatory exclusion where powerful actors exert control over the environment of less powerful and further marginalize them (Agarwal 2001). In some cases this unequal distribution of benefits has resulted in conflict between different groups (Bassett 1988).

Scholars in political ecology have often sought to find causes for environmental degradation and marginalization more than symptoms (Robbins 2004). These causes are

intertwined among different factors and scales. Protected area management options like ICDPs follow an apolitical ecology approach and assume that environmental degradation is occurring because of the poor and, therefore, if these poor are provided with economic benefit the degradation will stop. But political ecology shows it is not a simple cause and effect relationship, and sources of human-environment problems are complex and deeply rooted issues. It is problematic to assume that a technical policy solution is possible to conserve resources. For example, in her research in Honduras, Stonich (1993) found linkages between agriculture development, demographics change, associated patterns of capitalist accumulation, rural impoverishment, and resource decline. Therefore a need exists to understand relationships between micro level decision- making and macro level institutions that control the context over which these decisions are made.

In many cases, decisions in participatory processes are made by locally established institutions. These institutions exist in the same social and political spheres and function within the same social norms and power structures of the community. Scholars (Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999) also observe that diverse institutions¹⁰ influence the relationships between different actors and the components of the local environment. For example, in Ghana, permits, marriage and labor are all inter-related and affect access and control over resources (Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999).

As CBC grew in popularity, they were replicated as a tool kit approach, assuming what worked in one part of the world would also work in another. Participation in local institutions “is a political process involving contestation and conflict among different

¹⁰ Institutions here is not defined as organizations but as regularized patterns of behavior between individuals and groups in society (226).

people with diverse power, interests, and claims rather than methodology or set of facilitating techniques” (Stonich 2000, 20). These practices ignored the social, political, and economic context in which these communities existed. Scholars also critiqued how communities are removed from their historical, political, and ecological context, creating romanticized images of ‘constructed’ or ‘imagined’ communities that are designed to meet the objectives of the project and are not an actual display of the people and the place (Sundar 2000; Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998). So it is important to understand that environmental issues do not occur in isolation and are influenced by a politicized environment and this creates unequal power relationships and conflict over access to resources. In many cases this leads to increases in marginality and vulnerability of the poor (Bryant 1998).

Although not a perfect concept, participatory conservation programs are still a better option to centralized decision making (Berkes 2004). This concept is even stronger in developing countries where local people depend on biodiversity for daily subsistence (Western and Wright 1994). However, there is a need to examine these programs in social, economic, and political spheres to understand the complexities of communities and how various factors affect these CBNRM programs.

The growing popularity of political ecology in conservation and development projects, especially in developing countries, stresses the need to look at not only how but why problems exist (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). As mentioned above, literature has shown that certain groups of people are excluded from decision making process, but not a lot of focus has been on why these exclusions occur. What are some of the factors that

cause these exclusions? In terms of access to natural resources, understanding questions of who has access and control of resources is necessary to understand environmental conflict and degradation (Watts and Peet 2004). But it is also important to understand why access is concentrated in the hands of few while excluding others. Understanding the relationship between knowledge, power and practice, and how this influences politics in local institutions, is essential to gaining better insights into marginalization of certain groups.

1.2.6 Decentralized Decision Making in Nepal and ACA

1.2.6.1 Nepal

In the first half of the 1990s, due to increases in population growth, Nepal experienced a rapid degradation of natural resources, especially forests and grasslands. Nepal adopted a centralized management strategy with the passing of the Nationalization Act of 1957 that gave ownership of all forest lands to the national government (Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). The government was not only concerned about the disappearing forests but the effect habitat loss was having on wildlife. Hence it also passed the Wildlife Conservation Act in 1957 (Nepal 2002b). However, these centralized efforts were not successful in protecting biodiversity, but rather increased illegal resource use and further degraded the resources. As concern over natural resources grew internationally, Nepal passed the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (NPWCA) in 1973, establishing the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). This led to the establishment of Nepal's first national park,

Royal Chitwan National Park, followed two years later by the Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park to protect the Mount Everest region. Following the Yellowstone model of strict preservation, these parks restricted all human activities except tourism. As these protected areas evicted local people and also ignored their livelihood needs, it created social conflicts resulting in severe degradation of natural resources (Nepal 2002b).

A combination of factors - a push from international organizations toward more people inclusive practices, park people conflicts occurring throughout the country, and inability to stop resource degradation because of people's dependence on forests and grasslands for daily subsistence - led the government of Nepal to adopt a more decentralized approach. Some decentralization approaches the government adopted were: inclusion of people in forest management through the formation of forest user groups, added conservation area as a category of protected area, and an established buffer zone around national parks for subsistence use of resources.

1.2.6.2 ACA

Alarmed by the rate of natural resource degradation in the mountainous region of Nepal, World Wildlife fund (WWF) and NTNC sent a team of three conservationists to conduct a preliminary study in the ACA region. Although WWF had initially envisioned the Annapurna area to be established as a national park, the feasibility study and a strong push from the Monarchy suggested that a national park was inappropriate, keeping in mind the population of the area and the widespread opposition from the people (Stevens 1997a). However, the team suggested that the region be established into a conservation area with the inclusion of people in its management. Therefore, amendments were made

to the NPWCA in 1986 to add conservation areas as a category under protected area, and the management of ACA was handed over to NTNC on a conditional basis. NTNC started ACAP as a pilot project in Ghandruk in 1986. After four years of evaluation from DPNWC, ACA was legally established as a conservation area and NTNC was given the rights to manage the area for the next ten years. Currently, NTNC has been managing the ACA for 25 years. ACAP follows the ICDP model with the objectives of: i) conserve natural resources¹¹ of the ACA for the benefit of the present and future generation; ii) provide sustainable social and economic development¹² to the local people; and iii) develop tourism in the region with minimum negative environmental impact (ACAP 2009). To address some of the problems faced in the ACA region (fragile landscape of the mountainous region, high dependency on natural resources, deforestation, poverty, cultural erosion, and wildlife conflicts) ACAP focuses on four broad areas of concern: resource conservation, community development, tourism management and conservation education and extension.

Adopting a decentralized decision making concept (Figure 1.1), all the programs under these key issues were carried out through management committees that consisted of local residents. The Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC) is the local institution under ACAP required by the 1996 Conservation Area Management

¹¹ According to ACAP (2009), conservation of natural resources relates to institutional development of CAMC, forest conservation and sustainable supply of forest products to the local people, soil and water conservation through river bank protection, and wildlife conservation.

¹² ACAP focuses on basic infrastructure development activities such as construction of drinking water schemes, trail and bridges, toilets, school buildings, community building, etc. under their development focus. Most of ACAP's development activities are carried out in partnership with the local people, either through unskilled labor or monetary contributions (ACAP 2009).

Regulation and legally recognized under the Conservation Area Management Act. The Act stated that each VDC within ACA should have one CAMC to manage all the conservation and development program. Under the CAMC there are many different management subcommittees such as tourism management, drinking water, kerosene depot, school, health post, etc.

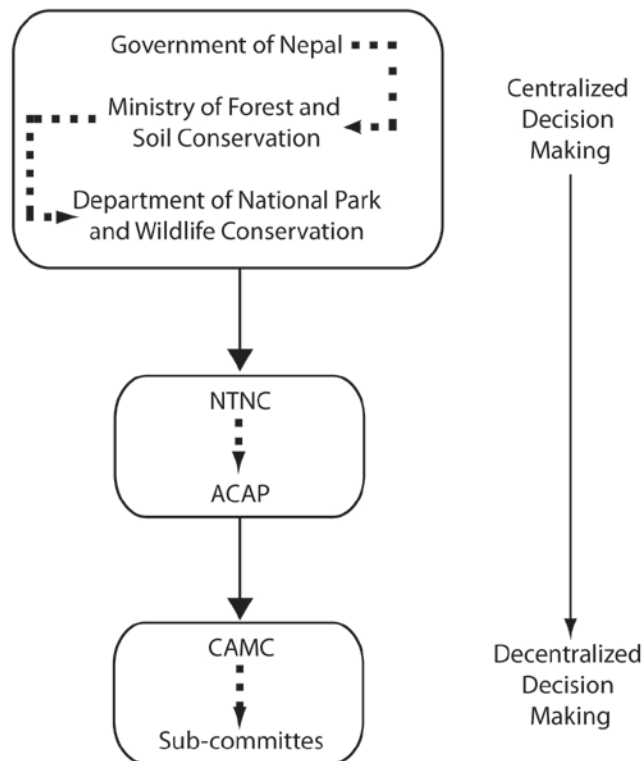


Figure 1.1: Decentralized Decision Making in ACA

1.3 Research Objectives

Political ecology, according to Robbins (2004, 13), “is something that people do, a research effort to expose the forces at work in ecological struggle”. Political ecologists also assumed that costs and benefits of environmental changes are not equally distributed across different actors, and this reinforces the unequal social and political inequalities that are present. Political ecology principles (e.g., relationships between different actors, inter-connectedness of network of factors, inequitable access to resources, multi scale analysis, etc.) guide the research questions in this study. Asking questions based on these principles sheds lights into different CBNRM principles (community, participation, and empowerment) in a protected area to determine the conditions that strengthen the participation of marginal groups in conservation and development projects. The overall objective is to understand factors that affect participation of marginal communities in conservation programs and how interaction between different actors involved affects this process. Using ACA in Nepal, one of the earliest examples of community based conservation program, this research aims to focus on marginal groups to address the following three specific objectives:

1. To examine the perceived benefits of ACAP as an ICDP and how marginal groups fare in the distribution of benefits
2. To analyze the level of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions
3. To identify the barriers to participation as perceived by marginal groups

1.4 Study Area

1.4.1 ACA

To address these objectives, this research was carried out in Nepal's first conservation area, ACA. Located on the north-central part of Nepal (Figure 1.2), ACA covers an area of 7,629 km². It consists of world's highest lake, the deepest gorge, and two of the ten highest mountains (NTNC 2009). ACA has a population of about 120,000 people belonging to diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. Gurungs are the dominant ethnic group followed by Thakali, Bhotia, Magar, Brahmins, Chhetri, Kami, Damai, and Sarki. This area is also home to 1233 plant species, 23 species of amphibians, 40 species of reptiles, 288 species of birds, and 102 species of mammals (NTNC 2009). Among these species are endangered species of mammals like snow-leopard, musk deer, Tibetan fox, blue sheep and Himalayan thar. The world's largest rhododendron forest is found in ACA and it is also the only protected area in Nepal where all six Himalayan pheasants are found (NTNC 2009, 2). This combination of culture and nature makes ACA a popular tourist destination. It is visited by more than 60% of the country's trekkers, making tourism an important source of livelihood for those communities living on the popular trekking routes. The major trekking routes are the Annapurna circuit, Annapurna base camp, and upper Mustang. Subsistence farming is the main source of livelihood for ACA followed by livestock raising (NTNC 2009).

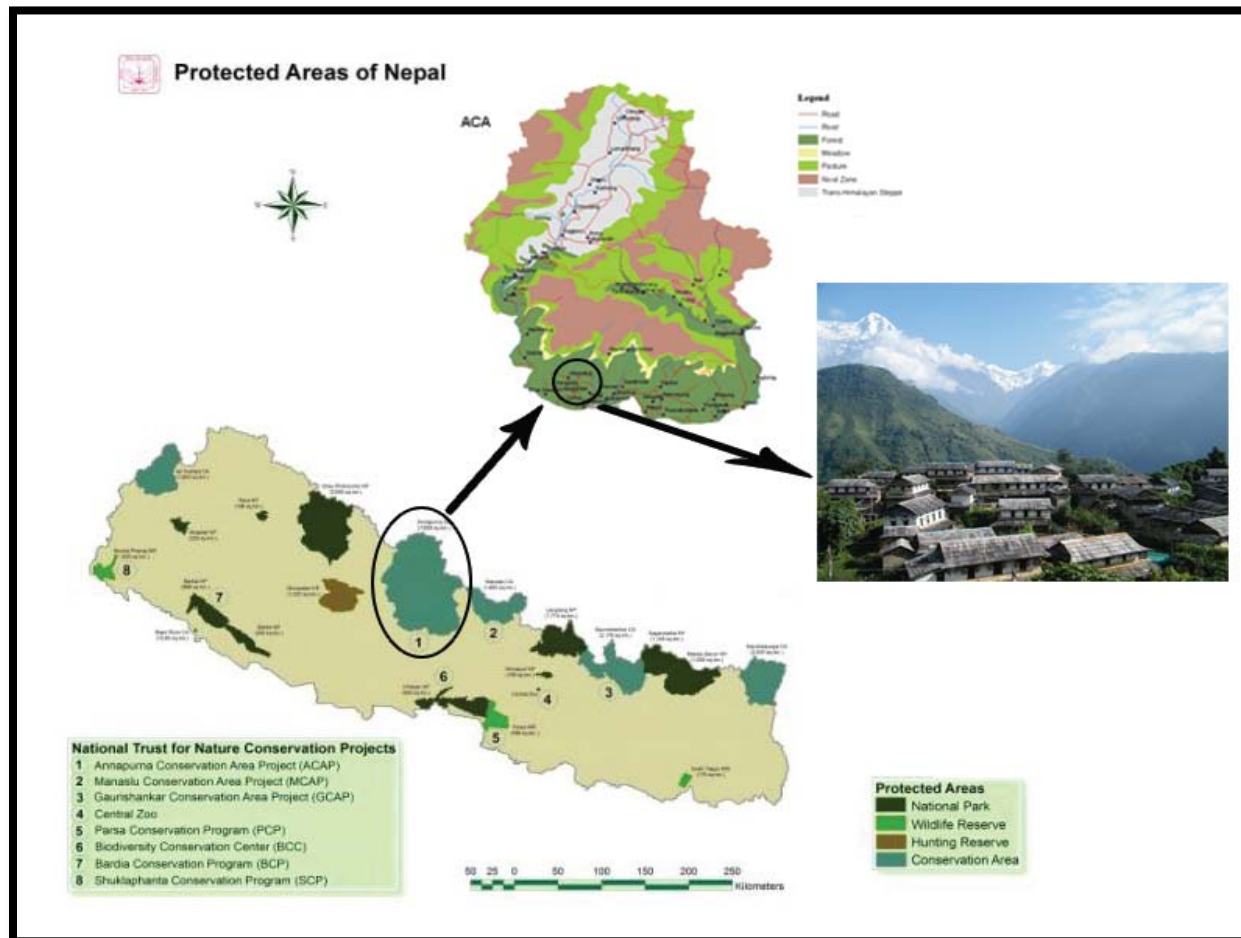


Figure 1.2: Protected Areas of Nepal, ACA and Ghandruk

1.4.2 Research Site

The study site was Ghandruk VDC, situated 2000m above the Modi River on the southern slope of ACA. Secluded from the bustle of city life (to reach the main village, you have to hike for approximately six hours from the trail head), Ghandruk is a popular tourism hotspot not only for international but national tourists as well. Located on the route to the Annapurna base camp (a popular trekking route), the unique features of this village are the magnificent views of the Annapurna range, a rich Gurung culture, and well managed tourism facilities. If, on one hand, the remoteness and the six hour trek to Ghandruk is what draws tourists, the lack of motorized roads, on the other hand, poses as a major problem for the villagers, especially for health, education and trade issues.

Spread over an area of 281.1 km², Ghandruk consists of nine wards (1-9). The VDC consists of 945 households with a population of 5080, out of which approximately half are male and half female. The majority of the population is made up of Gurungs (48%) followed by Dalits (30%), Brahmins/Chhetris (13%) and other ethnic groups. The majority of the population are subsistence farmers although only 4% of Ghandruk's land is agricultural land. Agriculture in Ghandruk consists of corn, maize, barley, millet, and potato in the higher elevations and rice and wheat in lower elevations. Livestock in Ghandruk include water buffalo, cows, sheep, and goats. Other occupations in Ghandruk are hotel owners, wage workers, employment in the Indian and British Army (for Gurung residents), and involvement in international labor migration (for occupational castes).

1.5 Methods

Data for this dissertation were collected using a mixed-method approach. Even though quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously, emphasis was given to qualitative data and the quantitative data was used to quantify participation and compare between groups. The reason for the emphasis on qualitative data was that issues of power and marginalization tend to be understood better by focusing on qualitative methods.

To understand how interactions between different actors affected the level of participation, data were collected from three sub groups: ACAP staff, management committee members, and marginal groups. Data was collected over a period of three months (August – October 2010) using interviews and participant observation.

1.5.1 ACAP Staff

Interviews were conducted with the entire eight field staff present in ACAP's Ghandruk field office. These staff were Ghandruk unit conservation office (UCO)'s officer in charge (OIC), six program officers (tourism, alternative energy, agriculture, natural resource management, environmental education, and community development), and the accountant. After the completion of fieldwork, in-depth interviews were also conducted with ACAP's director in Pokhara and the program officer for the mountain region at NTNC's office in Kathmandu. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions that dealt with topics like the duties of the staff, different programs, ACAP's mandates and priorities, benefits and its distribution, funding and its sources, ACAP's efforts to include marginal groups, ACAP's project-

people relationships, what steps ACAP was taking to ensure inclusion of marginalized groups in local institutions, and the future of the project (Appendix 1).

1.5.2 Management Committee Members

In this sub-group, 44 members of five different management committees were interviewed. The participants included eight members from the conservation area management committee (CAMC), 11 from the tourism management subcommittee (TMSC), 10 from the electricity management subcommittee (EMSC), 11 *Mul Ama Samuha* (MAS) members, and 10 from the Ward Ama Samuha (WAS)¹³. These five committees were chosen because they were related to natural resources and women's empowerment; both issues were relevant to the research¹⁴. Table 1.3 gives a brief description of these different management committees.

The samples were chosen using purposive sampling to include those in leadership positions (president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer) in each committee along with women, lower caste, and landless if they were present. Although an effort was made to get an equal sample from each ward and each committee, it was not possible due to either the group being inactive (in the case of the WAS) or in majority cases due to the unavailability of the member. For example in the CAMC, out of 15 members, the VDC chairman had not been elected to the political instability, three were no longer in the group and their replacement had not been

¹³ Note: the number of interviews when totaled comes to more than 44 because there was an overlap between the members and the different management committees.

¹⁴ The CAMC is the local institution under ACAP required by the 1996 Conservation Area Management Regulation and legally recognized under the Conservation Area Management Act. Under the CAMC there are many different sub management sub committees including those mentioned above.

appointed, and three were out of the village. The sample consisted of more women than men because two of the management committees were women only groups. The sampling frame for the management interviews was the membership list obtained from ACAP office for the different committees. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length.

1.5.3 Marginal Groups

For the third sample, interviews were conducted with 44¹⁵ individuals considered marginal (Dalits, women and landless). The sample consisted of 15 male (poor/Dalit) and 29 female (women/Dalit/poor). The number of females was higher for two reasons: gender was a criterion for choosing the sample and in many marginal households the men had been involved in international labor migration to Middle Eastern countries and only women were available for interviews. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample. The sampling frame was the household list obtained from VDC office. The interviews averaged 30 minutes in length.

¹⁵ The interviews for the two samples were collected simultaneously, so attention was given to ensure equal participants for each group. This was necessary to compare the two samples.

Table 1.3: Key Features of Management Committees

| Committees | Membership | Key features |
|-------------|--|--|
| CAMC | 15 members (9 members elected from each ward, 5 members nominated from ACAP, and the VDC president) Leadership position – president and secretary | Main local organization under ACAP Responsible for all conservation and development activities in the region Key tasks - Conservation of forests and wildlife, manage and maintain rules and regulations, control illegal use of resources, issue permits for trees, identify target participants for trainings and other programs, allocate funding for different programs, etc. Meeting – held every 5 th of the Nepali month |
| TMSC | All hotel owners are under the TMSC but regular members are 18 Leadership position – president, secretary, and treasurer | A subcommittee under the CAMC - responsible for management of hotels and tourism related activities in the region Key tasks – setting of menu prices and room rates, help CAMC in construction and repair of roads and trails, handles any problems present in hotels (for example robbery), etc. Meeting – held once every 3 months or earlier if needed |
| EMSC | 13 members (chosen from ward 3-8) Leadership position – President, secretary, treasurer, and manager | A subcommittee under the CAMC – in charge of the micro-hydro in the area Key tasks - Collects monthly electricity tariffs from households and hotels, responsible for all management and repair issues of the micro-hydro, etc. Meeting – held every 7 th of the month |
| MAS | 21 members (at least one representative from each ward) Leadership position – president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer | The main mothers' group consisting of only women Key tasks – perform cultural dances for wedding, cremation, tourists, and special guests; aid the CAMC for various conservation and development activities leading to empowerment of women (tree plantation, revenue generation through providing drinking water, etc.), provide small loans to women, etc. Meeting – held 5 th of each month |
| WAS | 16 different WAS in Ghandruk VDC (at least one in each ward), each WAS consists of all women in the ward as members Leadership position – president, secretary, and treasurer | A women only group in each ward responsible for conservation and development projects in their own ward Key tasks- cultural programs, investment of fund and labor in conservation (tree plantation) and development activities (repairing trail repair, building temples, providing donations to schools, lend utensils and pots and pans for functions, ward clean up, etc.) Meetings – held once every month, date varied according to ward |

1.5.4 Instrument and Operationalization of Variables for Management and Marginal Samples

The questionnaire for management and marginal sample was divided into two parts: quantitative (close-ended questions) and qualitative (open-ended questions). The quantitative part consisted of four different sections (Appendix 2 & 3). The first section examined basic demographic data including age, gender, caste, religion, education, occupation, and birthplace. The second section collected information on the economic status of the participants measured by land holding, crop growth, livestock, additional source of income and ability to support daily needs with income. Section three examined dependency and access to natural resources. The last section assessed level of participation by looking at membership, leadership position, knowledge about management committee, meeting attendance, and interaction with staff. In addition to these questions the marginal sample was asked to identify what they perceived as important barriers to participation. The barriers to participation were categorized into four themes: household, conservation area, social and technical (Appendix 3).

The qualitative section consisted of an interview checklist that gave insights into the daily life of the individual, their level of participation, knowledge about local institutions, social discrimination, and their views on ACAP.

Participant observation added to the richness of the data by providing a more descriptive analysis of the study and allowed the researcher to view social interaction at the household and community level. Observations were also made on how people spoke to each other, the different activities they were involved in, how they behaved in

meetings and other community functions, who sat where in these community activities, etc. The author attended four CAMC meeting, three for the MAS and WAS, one meeting for the TMSC and EMSC, and three different meetings for other sub committees in the main village. The author also attended religious and cultural programs, had informal conversations with many residents over tea and biscuit, and attended a ward clean-up organized by one of the WAS.

1.5.5 Data Analysis

Since the interviews were conducted in Nepali, they were translated and then transcribed. The transcript was coded using inductive coding to identify themes (Bernard 2000). The descriptions from participant observation were used to complement the themes and fill in the gaps whenever possible.

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Cross tabs were used to explore different variables and to quantify the results. Similarly, descriptive statistics were also used to measure participation with variables like attendance in meetings, visits with ACAP staff, knowledge about management group and its functions, etc. Since these data were not normally distributed, nonparametric tests were applied. Chi-square analysis was used to compare social (gender, caste, education, occupation, etc.) and economic (landholding, livestock, crop use, ability to support livelihood, etc.) factors between the management and marginal sample. All the Chi-square tests were followed with Cramer's V to test the strength of the relationship that was predicted by Chi-square.

The results from these quantitative and qualitative data were then merged together to develop a complete picture of the marginal group's participation in local management institutions in Ghandruk. In addition to this, secondary data were obtained from the study of documents such as ACAP's management plan, annual budget, minutes of meetings, CAMC operation plan, etc.

In many research projects, especially in rural villages, participants raise an expectation of financial or other benefits from taking part in the study. Extra care was taken to remove such expectation by reading the consent form and asking the participants to give a verbal consent before participating. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, all the raw data was kept confidential and participants were assigned a pseudonym to conceal their identity during transcribing.

Different mixed method design procedures were followed to ensure validity while collecting (asking the same question to different people, using the same questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data), and analyzing (joint display with quantitative categorical and qualitative themes, use of quotes to match statistical results) data (Creswell and Clark 2010, 240). Further analysis measures were adopted to ensure reliability by doing a thorough task of describing the research context and the central assumptions of the research. Peer debriefing was also adopted where a scholar who had done research in the ACA region was consulted during the analysis process.

1.6 Research Significance

The significances of this study are listed below:

Political ecology is based on the assumption that benefits associated with environmental control and access are unequally spread across the different actors, and it makes the social and economic inequality stronger in a community (Robbins 2004). This study provides a more comprehensive analysis of how marginal groups fare in the distribution of benefits in a CBNRM, what is their level of participation, and what are some of the factors that affect their participation. The strength of this study lies in the use of quantitative data (to quantify participation, identify socio-economic factors, and compare variables along groups) along with detailed descriptions and insights of qualitative data. This method was useful in illustrating not only who participated but also how a combination of power differences, social norms and traditions, interactions, market, and national and international influences aid in determining the level of participation. Also, the use of concepts from participation, CBNRM, political ecology, and protected area literature were combined to provide a more rigorous view of participatory process in CBNRM. Therefore, the study highlights the need to not only adopt various research methods but also to integrate concepts from various fields to ensure a deeper understanding of marginal groups and their participation.

Decentralized decision-making methods have been adopted in diverse studies including health, development, government, urban/rural planning, geography, tourism, business, etc. Therefore, having this holistic view of what occurs not only at the community level but also how different factors nested together at different levels affect

local management institutions and participation could provide insights to ensure a more effective method to decentralized decision making processes not only in conservation but also in other fields of study. The findings of this research will also assist different actors involved in CBNRM (State, NGO, civil society, market) in many ways. It can help the stakeholders to develop more effective policies to facilitate participation of different groups, understand the need to practice adaptive management practices, and be sensitive toward community complexities to ensure a more decentralized and sustainable CBNRM. More specifically, this research further enhances the implementation of conservation and development programs in ACA.

The research results will be shared with CAMC, ACAP staff, NTNC, and DNPWC, and can be used as a guideline to formulate the management plan for Ghandruk after 2012. Recommendations based on this research will strengthen their ability to design management plans that address these barriers to participation while simultaneously promoting a more sustainable community through increased awareness and capacity building of marginal groups. Although management plans for each area within ACA should be site specific, the results from this research can provide recommendations and key themes to consider while designing programs in other areas of ACA.

1.7 Section Overview

This dissertation follows the article format, with the aim of submitting these articles for peer review journals focused on conservation and development. Below is a brief synopsis of the sections that follow.

The main objective of section two is to understand the perceived benefits of ACAP as an ICDP and how marginal groups fare in the distribution of benefits. The homogenous community that these ICDPs assume is challenged by using a political ecology approach (Bryant 1998). This section provides insights into heterogeneity of the community and how different actors in a community view benefits of ACAP differently. It also examines how various micro and macro interests influence the decision an ICDP makes at a community level. Data for this section was collected mostly from in-depth interviews with ACAP staff, management committee, and marginal groups.

Political ecology as a hatchet (Robbins 2004) finds flaws with the current elite control of environment and stresses the need to change the local, regional and global political process in favor of the vulnerable and marginal (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Robbins 2004). Based on this principle, section three examines the inclusion and level of participation of marginal groups in five community-based local management committees. Data for this paper was collected, analyzed and interpreted using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Section four builds on the themes uncovered in the above two sections. Political ecology stresses that communities do not occur in a social and political vacuum. This section identifies how various social, political, economic factors interact with each other to affect the participation of marginal groups. It also gives a voice to marginal groups by highlighting the barriers that these groups perceive as important. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from ACAP staff, management committee members and marginal groups.

The final section briefly summarizes major findings of the research; discuss implications for literature, policy makers, and practitioners; and address potential limitations and future research options.

2. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF AN ICDP: THE VIEWS OF NGO, LOCAL MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS AND MARGINAL POPULATION

2.1 Introduction

Traditional forms of conservation have been oblivious to the needs of local people and have relied more on strict preservation and exclusion (Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Phillips 2003). Amidst human rights issues of displacement of indigenous people from protected areas, rapid natural resource degradation, and the rise of poverty, a new paradigm in protected areas that included humans not only for effective conservation but also for their livelihood securities started to emerge in the 1980s. Under a bigger umbrella of participatory conservation, integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) emerged with the aim of conservation of protected areas and the people living in and around these areas (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992).

Environmental conservation and poverty alleviation are two important philosophies present in the developing world today (Pollini 2011; Young 2003). Previously, conservationists considered development as a threat to conservation and development organizations perceived conservation as an obstacle to development (Brown 2002). To combine these two extremes the concept of ICDP was first developed by World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Wildland and Human Needs program (McShane and Wells 2004; Hughes and Flintan 2001). ICDP is defined as an "attempt to ensure the conservation of biodiversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with the social and economic needs of local people" (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992, ix). These projects are based on the basic assumption that local people are more likely to

develop favorable attitudes toward conservation if their own livelihood needs have been met. Many policies, acts, conferences, and reports have played a big hand in the merging of conservation and development (Figure 2.1) as it was considered a win-win situation for all (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000; Pollini 2011).

By the 1990s, ICDPs were adopted not only by conservation organizations but also by governments, international development agencies, and private foundations (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003; Garnett, Sayer, and Du Toit 2007; Sayer and Wells 2004). The pressure of international donors on national organizations in developing countries has led to ICDPs being part of every project and report, especially those funded by multinational and bi-national organizations (Sayer and Wells 2004). Due to a lack of alternative models for conservation, many organizations were in a hurry to adopt ICDPs without fully understanding what it actually was (McShane and Wells 2004). Wells and McShane (2004, 513) speculate how “an untested concept in biodiversity conservation had become conventional wisdom in just a handful of years”. A major attraction of ICDP was the combination of three important agendas of sustainable development: biodiversity conservation, public participation, and economic development of the rural poor (Wells and McShane 2004).

NGOs were considered the “primary catalyst” for the rise of decentralized bottom up movements (Kamat 2004). International donors and conservation agencies preferred working with NGOs in developing countries because they were less

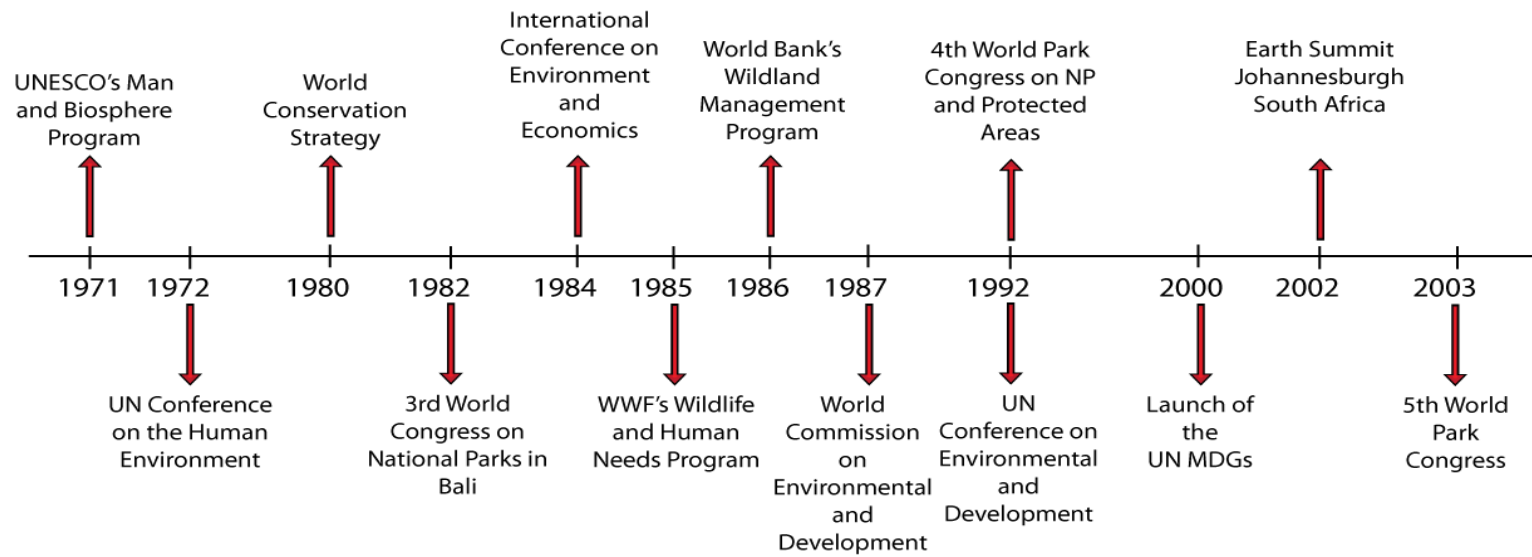


Figure 2.1: Merging of Conservation and Development (adapted from Roe 2008; Phillips 2003; Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992)

bureaucratic than the state agencies, trusted more by the local than the government, and had a greater understanding of local people and their needs (Feldman 1997; Farrington and Lewis 1993).

2.2 Criticism of ICDP

As popularity of ICDPs soared in the 1980s and 1990s, these projects with a dual mandate were highly criticized. Scholars compared these ICDPs to rural development projects and argued that instead of learning from the failure of previous projects, they were repeating the same mistakes (Sayer and Wells 2004). Dependent on external funding these ICDPs were being applied as a tool kit method, ignoring the diversity of the communities and issues of scale (McShane and Wells 2004). Some criticisms of ICPDs are discussed below.

2.2.1 Vague Objectives

A main criticism was ICDP's inability to achieve either of its goals (Adams et al. 2004; McShane and Wells 2004; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer 1998; Brown 2003). In many cases these projects had vague objectives without specifying whether their primary aim was conservation or development. Primarily developed to conserve biodiversity, the existence of ICDPs have been questioned by biologists today and who have accused them of being more favorable toward development and less toward protection of flora and fauna (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen et al. 2002; Hutton, Adams, and Murombedzi 2005). These scholars believed that focusing on people and development took away from the actual reason for the existence of protected areas, which was for the

conservation of biodiversity. This has led to the resurgence of the protectionism paradigm stressing the need to have conservation without people (Hutton, Adams, and Murombedzi 2005; Terborgh 1999; Oates 1999). Except for a few (Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000; Morgan-Brown et al. 2010), many ICDPs also have not been able to generate direct economic benefit. Although initiated with conservation in mind, Robinson and Redford (2004, 14-15) identify three possible objectives of ICDPs today: to conserve biodiversity, maintain the health of an ecosystem and its functions, or to aid in human livelihood needs. Scholars stressed a need for ICDPs to clearly specify the goals of the project before it is established so as to not build false community expectations that might cause failure of the project (Wells et al. 2004).

2.2.2 Linking Conservation and Development

ICDPs were also based on the assumption that providing development initiatives for the local people would enhance their support and attitudes toward conservation. Development initiatives provided by projects varied, but the most common indirect forms were: establishment of buffer zones, health care initiatives, schools and adult literacy classes, tourism, road construction, agriculture incentives, micro-enterprises and, in some cases, direct economic benefits through employment in the project (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992, 36). But the assumption of providing development to generate support for conservation has been questioned by some authors due to the absence of strong linkages between conservation and development activities (Spiteri and Nepal 2006). For example, Hughes and Flintan (2001) questioned how providing micro-enterprises for women would lead to biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the

construction of roads as a development initiative has resulted in land clearing and fragmentation, increases in migration, and illegal trade. Similarly, ICDPs assumed that increased access and opportunities to market would provide economic opportunities for local residents and decrease their dependence on natural resources (Ferraro 2001). But many ICDPs did not factor in the influences external factors exert on these human-environment relationships. For example, in her research in Honduras, Stonich (1993) discovered linkages between agriculture development, demographic change, associated patterns of capitalist accumulation, rural impoverishment, and resource decline. Sayer and Campbell (2004) give an example of how a project promoted the farming of cloves around buffer zones in Tanzania as a form of economic benefit for subsistence. But due to increased external demands, this initiative, started as a source of livelihood, increased in size and led to clearing of forests inside the protected area.

In many cases, these ICDPs did not consider market and policy implications on the project and operated without considering the macro and micro elements (McShane and Newby 2004). In such instances, experts from INGOs and NGOs plan for projects and implementation. Since they do not account for external changes in the planning process, they do not have the flexibility to adapt to the changes appropriately and if reality deviates from the plan there is a lack of management capability and funding. This results in project failure (Robinson and Redford 2004; Sayer and Wells 2004). For example, the market demand for a newly introduced crop might collapse due to the change in exchange rate or changes in trade policy (2004). In such situations, project

managers need to have adaptive management capabilities and follow up plans to keep the project running, which many ICDPs lack.

Therefore, for ICDPs to achieve effective conservation, projects should not only work toward establishing clear links between conservation and the economic development but should also factor in different variables at micro and macro levels that can influence these links (Morgan-Brown et al. 2010).

2.2.3 Community Complexities

Many ICDPs were based on naïve assumptions and over ambitions set by international and national NGOs. The generalized approaches these NGOs adopted failed to understand the complexities of issues like community, empowerment and sustainability. In many cases NGOs tended to simplify communities as spatial units comprising of a small population with shared norms and identities (Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

This homogenous assumption of community assumed that those who came forward to participate in these projects were the ones that represented the community (McShane and Newby 2004). The wave of enthusiasm with which these ICDPs were planned, was based on the assumption that ICDPs would be able to generate benefits to the local people and these benefits would be equally distributed to those living in and around the protected area (Wells et al. 2004). But in reality, projects showed that the costs and benefits of ICDPs were not equally distributed. Only selected groups benefited from these ICDPs and this reinforced the already existing socio-economic differences within a community, leading to decreased support for conservation (McShane and Wells

2004). This unequal distribution of benefits resulted, in many cases, in heightened differences between different groups and at times led to decreased support for conservation activities (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992).

2.2.4 Welfare Not Empowerment

NGOs, an alternative to government, stress the empowerment of local people in these ICDPs but whether and how actual empowerment occurs is questionable. Wells and Brandon (1992) in their analysis of 23 ICDPs in Asia, Africa and Latin America, concluded that although all of them stated participation and empowerment of the community as a goal, hardly any of the projects specified what they meant by participation and empowerment. Therefore NGOs implemented substantial surface changes within a short time period without achieving long term structural changes in the community. For example, in Mexico, NGO provided health care and portable water as a development initiative but did not have any program for structural changes that would uplift the position of marginal groups (Dolhinow 2005). Frequently these projects displayed a patron client relationship, treated the communities as passive beneficiaries rather than active collaborators, and in many cases made the community more dependent on the project instead of empowering them to be self reliant (Mawdsley, Townsend, and Porter 2002; Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992). In some cases ICDPs specified community members as partners, but on the ground projects were driven by the agendas of the conservation and development ‘experts’ and lacked local input (McShane and Newby 2004). Many of these projects failed because NGOs came into the community, backed by international funding, and set goals and objectives for the community without

understanding the community and acknowledging what the local people actually wanted (Ferguson 1990). Even if projects incorporated views of local residents, views of specialists and their own vision of what needed to be addressed still influenced the decisions (Sayer and Wells 2004). Dolhinow (2005) gives an example of Mexico where the community leaders identified paved roads and a water system as the primary needs of the community but the NGO's priority was different and focused more on housing projects.

In most cases, these ICDPs were funded by international organizations for a duration of only two to three years. Therefore shorter time frames and limited financial resources also were important causes of their failures (Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007; Wells and McShane 2004; McShane and Newby 2004). These ICDPs had limited funding and within a short time frame tried to encompass complex problems and issues that were present in the protected areas. They tried to simplify issues and achieve socio-economic development in a short time frame, with a typical funding lifespan of two to three years. Some termed ICDPs as 'flash floods' where projects spent a large amount of money for several years to achieve rapid improvements and then abruptly ended the funding, leaving the local people frustrated and handicapped (Sayer and Wells 2004). These short term benefits provided by projects were mostly aimed at reducing opposition against the establishment of protected areas rather than actual livelihood improvement and social changes (Neumann 1997). Research has shown that for ICDPs to be successful, consistent funding for at least a decade is necessary (Wells et al. 2004). In many ICDPs, authors criticized how in the early stages of projects, a bulk of the funding

was spent on surveys and planning and only a small percentage of funds seemed to reach the beneficiaries (Sayer and Wells 2004).

2.3 Political Ecology Approach

Political ecology emerged in the 1970s. As this concept became more accepted, scholars used this framework to examine human environment relationships as a product of social and political processes ranging from local communities to a global level (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Adams and Hutton 2007). Although political ecology was previously applied to anthropology and geography, the current shift in political ecology research explored issues related to conservation, including protected areas (Adams and Hutton 2007; Neumann 1997; Brockington 2002; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). Protected areas are complex units that consist of diverse forms of biodiversity and actors that differ in socio-economic and political aspects. Some of the ICDP criticisms that are relevant to this research are discussed below using a political ecology approach.

Political ecology research in protected areas has examined how people view nature and how this influences human-environment interactions (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). This interaction is further influenced by state and NGOs that, in the establishment of protected areas and their management, undermine the diversity of actors (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003; Adams and Hutton 2007). Political ecology focuses on the interactions between the way nature is perceived by different actors in the political and historical context and how the diversity of actors determine access and control of resources (Adams and Hutton 2007; Peet and Watts 2004; Schroeder and Suryanata 2004).

As ICDPs proliferated in practice, there was a need to introduce global models of environmental projects into a particular community without understanding the social, economic, political, and environmental context in which the community existed (Stonich 2000; Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998; Sundar 2000). Literature in political ecology has been critical toward the simplification and presentation of ‘local’ in these participatory conservation programs like ICDPs (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 2004; Robbins 2004). Within a community, the need to understand differences in gender, class, caste, ethnicity, etc., are necessary to understand the actual distribution of costs and benefits (Brockington 2003). Without understanding the complexity of not only the protected area landscape but also the people living in and around it, it is difficult to understand how the cost and benefits of these projects are being distributed among the range of stakeholders present in the community (Brown 2002; Spiteri and Nepal 2006).

According to political ecology, this unequal distribution of benefits reinforces the already existing social and economic inequalities that are present in protected areas (Robbins 2004). For example, in her study of marine protected areas in Mexico, Young (2003) examined how the benefits of ecotourism trickled down to only a few groups and this increased the degradation of certain natural resources, e.g., fish. Similarly, with research in Africa, Neumann (1997) blamed ICDP’s ignorance on unequal power relationships and stereotypes of communities as the main reason for its failure.

NGOs today play an important role in the management of protected areas and in applying people centered projects in these protected areas (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003;

Sundberg 2003). Rules and regulations established by these organizations rarely factor in the diversity of the protected area and what these different actors want. In most cases, projects in protected areas applied a tool kit method and therefore rarely resembled the anticipated outcomes described in the project blueprints (Ferguson 1990). These projects also did not understand that outcomes of ICDP were not a simplified win-win situation for all but were affected by a network of actors operating at various levels to translate ICDP's discourses about participation, government, community, nature, benefit, etc., into their own interest. The heterogeneity of community resulted in these discourses affecting different actors differently. Therefore, due to these restrictions enforced by state and NGOs, protected areas become areas of conflict and change the way nature is viewed (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003).

The visions of nature that NGOs portray in protected areas are influenced by state, market, donor funding, international policies and interaction of other factors (Sundberg 2003; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003; Young 2003). These NGOs practiced transfer of discourses into protected areas and served as agents of change, influencing the community-nature relationships. For example, in Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, NGOs generate “powerful discourses to explain environmental degradation and land use”(50). During her research Sundberg (2003) observed how, according to the NGOs, certain groups of people lived in harmony with the environment and thus had a more powerful status than those that were termed “harming the environment”. This not only resulted in unequal distribution of benefits but was also the reason others changed

their land use practices to look environmentally friendly in order to acquire NGO benefits (Sundberg 2003).

Although these practices are heavily criticized, scholars still admit that including people in the management of resources that affect their livelihood is a necessity if sustainable conservation is to be achieved (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Western and Wright 1994; Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Berkes 2004). Lack of adequate documentation of successful ICDPs and the identification of numerous unsuccessful ones raises questions about whether ICDPs are an effective approach toward biodiversity conservation.

Among the failures, one project that was termed successful (Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007; Wells 1994; Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992) in achieving its integrated conservation and development goal was the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in Nepal. ACAP has been considered successful in conservation of biodiversity¹⁶, development¹⁷ of the Annapurna region, and also the empowerment of the local people¹⁸ in improving their livelihoods. Recent attention to the concept of heterogeneous community has resulted in a few scholars looking at the distribution of benefits of ACAP across different stakeholders (Spiteri and Nepal 2008). This research is the first to understand not only the perception of benefits to marginal groups and how

¹⁶ ACAP defines conservation as the sustainable use and management of natural resources, especially forests.

¹⁷ Under its sustainable rural development ACAP focuses on enhancing the basic living standards of the local people by providing basic infrastructures. It also promotes sustainable tourism or tourism with minimal impact in the region.

¹⁸ Local people are empowered by being included in local management institutions and ACAP also provides trainings for skill building.

distribution occurs, but also, using a political ecology approach, this study examines how various other factors affect their perception and distribution.

The “homogenous community” that ICDPs assumed is challenged using a political ecology approach. This paper examined the political ecology of conservation, especially related to distribution of benefits of ICDPs in ACA’s Ghandruk VDC¹⁹ where the project started as a pilot project. The main objective of the paper was to better understand how these ICDPs distribute benefits to the community and how marginal groups fare in the distribution of benefits. Using concepts from political ecology, this research examined the perspectives of different actors in ACA (NGO staff, management committee members, and marginal groups) and how multi scalar influences affect the distribution of benefits. The paper focused on three specific questions:

- 1) What are the benefits of the ICDP?
- 2) How are the distribution of benefits perceived by NGOs, management committee members and the marginal population?
- 3) Are these benefits and the ICDP sustainable in the future?

Marginal populations in this paper and in the context of Nepal are defined as women, lower caste²⁰ and poor²¹.

¹⁹ In Nepal, VDC is the lowest political unit and each VDC consists of wards or sub-villages under it.

²⁰ Nepal consists of a social hierarchy based on the Hindu religion. Each individual, by birth, belongs to one of the four varna or class. The four caste divisions are Brahmins (priests or scholars), Chhetri (rulers and warriors), Vaisya (Merchant or traders), and Sudra (farmers, artisans, and laborers). Below all this are the Dalits or the untouchables. In this paper lower caste usually refers to the Dalits. The National Dalit Commission defines Dalits as “those communities who, by virtue of caste based discrimination and so called untouchability, are most backward in the social, economic, educational, political, and religious spheres, and are deprived of human dignity and social justice” (Pradhan and Shrestha 2005, 3).

2.4 Case Study Area

2.4.1 Background on ACAP

Taking a step toward natural resource conservation, Nepal established the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DPNWC) in 1971, and two years later passed the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act (NPWCA) in 1973. During this time, Nepal was following the fines and fences model and establishing national parks around the country. Nepal established its first national park in 1976, Royal Chitwan National Park, at the southern flat lands. Two years later, in the north east, Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park was established. These national parks followed the preservation and exclusion trend and were managed by the Army. Many conflicts arose around these protected areas due to relocation of indigenous people and restriction on use of natural resources that these people depended on for daily subsistence.

The late King Birendra, on his official visit to the ACA region, observed the rapid rate of deforestation and the increasing tourist influx in the region and “issued a directive to improve and manage tourism development while safeguarding the environment” (Wells 1994, p 263). National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)²² was established in 1982 by legislative mandate as an autonomous, not for profit NGO, and took the initiative to conserve the area, along with the aid of WWF. A three-member

²¹ According to the World Bank (2006), 31% of Nepal’s population is below national poverty level (US\$12/month). According to the World Bank, those that are the poorest in Nepal generally are farmers, wage earners, those with small land holdings or landless, those with illiterate household heads, households with seven or more members. In terms of caste and ethnic groups, the Hill and Terai Dalits are the poorest segments of the population (WorldBank 2006). In this paper, poor is defined as landless, and not able to support livelihood needs with annual income.

²² NTNC was previously known as King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTCN)

search team was sent to ACA for a feasibility study of the region. The results of the research showed that due to the large number of residents living in and around the region, it would be difficult to enforce strict national park rules and regulations. Therefore, recommendations were provided to establish the region as a conservation area. The concept of conservation area was new in Nepal and was not approved by the government. But due to NTNC being the largest and most prominent national NGO and having strong affiliation with the monarchy (the Crown Prince was NTNC's chairman), the government handed over the management of the Annapurna region to NTNC. The NGO started a pilot project in Ghandruk, and after a four-year initial review from the DNPWC, the area was officially designated as a conservation area in 1992. The DPNWC reviews ACAP's progress report every 10 years.

2.4.2 Annapurna Conservation Area

The ACA is the largest protected area of Nepal, situated in the north-central part of the country. This 7,629 km² protected area spans over five districts of Nepal. Started as a pilot in one VDC in 1986, ACAP expanded to 16 VDCs in 1990 and currently ACAP manages 57 VDCs under seven unit conservation offices (UCOs) under its jurisdiction (Figure 2.2). This area is rich in biodiversity and is home to 1233 plant species, 23 species of amphibians, 40 species of reptiles, 488 species of birds, and 102 species of mammal (NTNC 2009). The cultural diversity of the region is as diverse as its natural diversity. ACA has a population of about 120,000 people belonging to diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups (Baral and Stern 2009). Gurungs are the dominant ethnic group in the region followed by Thakali, Bhotia, Magar, Brahmin, Chhetri, Kami,

Damai and Sarki. Subsistence farming is the main source of livelihood for the region followed by livestock raising (ACAP 2009). Rice, maize, millet, wheat, potato, and barley are the major crops and buffalo, cattle, sheep, goat, yak, and chicken are the major livestock.

ACA is a popular tourist destination, visited by more than 60% of the country's trekkers, and therefore tourism is an important source of income for residents living on popular trekking routes (the Annapurna circuit, Annapurna base camp, and Upper Mustang trek).

Due to time and resource constraints, only one VDC within the ACA was chosen for this study. Ghandruk VDC, located in Kaski district, is situated on the southern slope of ACA and is located approximately 50km from Pokhara²³. Ghandruk meaning *kodaa* [a village on top of the hill] in Gurung language, is situated at 2000m above the Modi River, and offers magnificent views of mountains like *Annapurna* South, *Machhapurchre* (Fishtail), *Hiuchuli*, and *Gangapurna*. Ghandruk is also the first village en-route to the Annapurna Base Camp. The combination of mountainous landscape and a rich Gurung culture makes Ghandruk a popular tourist destination not only for international but also national tourists.

²³ Pokhara is the next biggest city after Kathmandu and is also where ACAP's headquarters are.

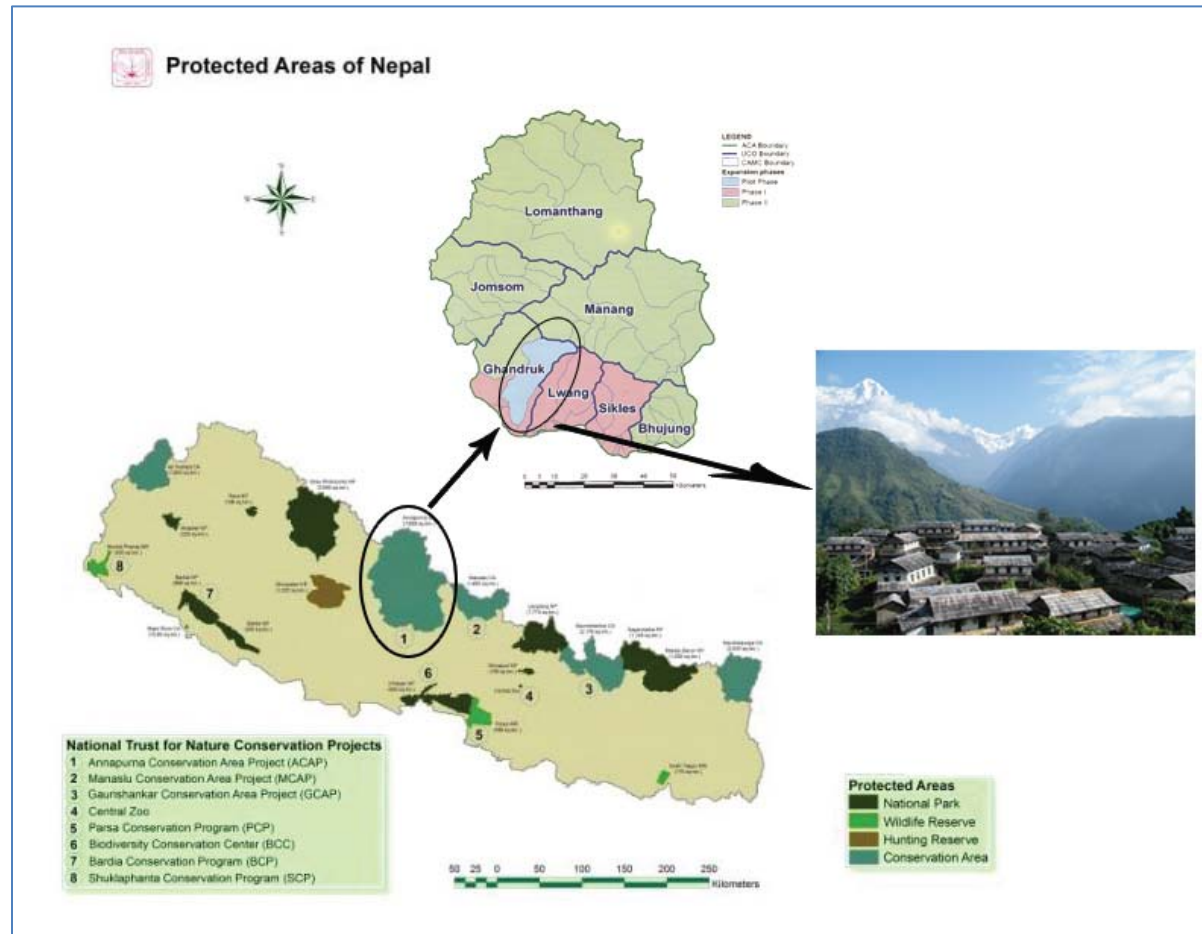


Figure 2.2: Map of ACA and Ghandruk (NTNC 2009)

Ghandruk VDC consists of 945 households and a population of 5080, out of which approximately half are men and half women. 48% of these residents are Gurungs, 30% Dalits (Sarki, Kami, and Damai)²⁴, 13% Brahmins/Chhetris, and the remaining are from various other ethnic groups. The majority of the villagers are subsistence farmers. The lower elevations of the village are used for rice farming whereas millet, corn, potato and corn are grown on the higher elevations (Gurung 2004).

2.5 Methods

Field work was carried out from August-October 2010, using participant observation and in-depth interviews with two groups, ACAP staff and community members.

2.5.1 ACAP Staff

Interviews were conducted with the entire eight field staff present in ACAP's Ghandruk field office. These staff were Ghandruk UCO's officer in charge (OIC), seven program officers (tourism, alternative energy, agriculture, natural resource management, environmental education, community development), and the accountant. After the completion of the field work, in-depth interviews were also conducted with ACAP's director in Pokhara and the program officer for the mountain region at NTNC's office in Kathmandu. All the staff were male. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average.

²⁴ Dalits are also known as the occupational castes. Kami are blacksmiths, Damai are tailors, and Sarki are cobblers.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions that dealt with topics related to the duties of the staff, different programs, ACAP's mandates and priorities, benefits and its distribution, funding and its sources, ACAP's efforts to include marginal groups, project-people relationships, and the future of the project.

2.5.2 Community Members

Interviews were conducted with 88 residents of Ghandruk VDC, divided into two sub-groups: management committee members and marginal groups.

2.5.2.1 Sampling

Using purposive sampling²⁵ 44 members of five different management committees under ACAP were chosen. The five different management committees²⁶ were: conservation area management committee (CAMC), tourism management subcommittee (TMSC), electricity management subcommittee (EMSC), *Mul Ama Samuha* (MAS) and *Ward Ama Samuha* (WAS). Table 2.1 gives a brief description of these different management committees.

²⁵ Purposive sampling is used when you want the informants to serve a specific purpose (Bernard 2000).

²⁶ There were other management committees present (for example health post sub-committee, school sub-committee, etc.) but these five committees were chosen because they were related to natural resources and women's empowerment

Table 2.1: About the Management Committees

| Committees | Membership | Key features |
|-------------|--|---|
| CAMC | 15 members (9 members elected from each ward, 5 members nominated from ACAP, and the VDC president) Leadership position – president and secretary | Main local organization under ACAP Responsible for all conservation and development activities in the region Key tasks - Conservation of forests and wildlife, manage and maintain rules and regulations, control illegal use of resources, issue permits for trees, identify target participants for trainings and other programs, allocate funding for different programs, etc. Meeting – held every 5 th of the Nepali month |
| TMSC | All hotel owners are under the TMSC but regular members are 18 Leadership position – president, secretary, and treasurer | A subcommittee under the CAMC - responsible for management of hotels and tourism related activities in the region Key tasks – setting of menu prices and room rates, help CAMC in construction and repair of roads and trails, handles any problems present in hotels (for example robbery), etc. Meeting – held once every 3 months or earlier if needed |
| EMSC | 13 members (chosen from ward 3-8) Leadership position – President, secretary, treasurer, and manager | A subcommittee under the CAMC – in charge of the micro-hydro in the area. Key tasks - Collects monthly electricity tariffs from households and hotels, responsible for all management and repair issues of the micro-hydro, etc. Meeting – held every 7 th of the month |
| MAS | 21 members (at least one representative from each ward) Leadership position – president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer | The main mothers' group consisting of women only Key tasks – perform cultural dances for wedding, cremation, tourists, and special guests; aid the CAMC for various conservation and development activities leading to empowerment of women (tree plantation, revenue generation through providing drinking water, etc.), provide small loans to women, etc. Meeting – held 5 th of each month |
| WAS | 16 different WAS in Ghandruk VDC (at least one in each ward), each WAS consists of all women in the ward as members Leadership position – president, secretary, and treasurer | A women only group in each ward responsible for conservation and development projects in their own ward Key tasks- cultural programs, investment of fund and labor in conservation (tree plantation) and development activities (repairing trail repair, building temples, providing donations to schools, lend utensils and pots and pans for functions, ward clean up, etc.). Meetings – held once every month, date varies according to ward |

The 44 individuals were chosen to include members in leadership positions and any marginal individuals present. Although an effort was made to ensure an equal number of samples from each ward and each committee, it was not possible due to either the group being inactive (WAS), or in the majority of cases, due to the unavailability of the member (they had either left the group or had left the village). The sampling frame was the household list obtained from the VDC office. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length.

For the marginal group, 44 participants were purposively chosen to include women, lower caste, and landless residents. The sample consisted of 15 male (landless/Dalit) and 29 female (landless/Dalit). The number of women was higher for two reasons: first, gender was a criterion for choosing the sample; and second, in many marginal households the men had been involved in international labor migration to Middle Eastern countries and only women were available for interviews. The response rate for the sample was 100%. The sampling frame was the household list obtained from the VDC office. The interviews lasted 30 minutes on average.

2.5.2.2 Instrument

The same instrument was used for the management and marginal groups. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was used to measure socio-economic information about the sample. Age, caste, gender, birthplace, education occupation were some of the social factors measured. Economic conditions of the participants were measured using landholdings,

crops grown and use, livestock owned and use, additional source of income, and ability to support livelihood needs.

The qualitative data was used to obtain detailed understanding of people's perspectives on issues related to benefits of ACAP, distribution of benefit, relationship with ACAP staff, role of ACAP in their area, expectations from ACAP, and views of ACAP's future.

2.5.2.3 Analysis

As the author is from Nepal, all interviews were conducted in Nepali without the use of an interpreter. The interviews were tape recorded (with the consent of the participants), translated and transcribed. The transcript was coded using inductive coding to identify themes, and data was categorized according to these themes (Bernard 2000). To ensure accuracy during translation, quotes and words in Nepali were used followed by their translation in parentheses. Although not requested by participants, for ethical reasons most opinion and quotes provided in the paper remained anonymous.

In addition to interviews, participant observation was also used to study interactions between different stakeholders and to provide a thick description of the study area. These descriptive insights were collected by attending meetings for different management committees, ward clean-up activity, and religious and cultural programs. Informal conversations with many residents also aided in providing insights to the research.

Secondary data sources such as ACAP's management plans, CAMC's operation plan, Ghandruk UCO's annual report, minutes of meetings, etc., were important in providing insight about program objectives and future goals.

2.6 Results

2.6.1 Respondent's Characteristics

The results are based on a sample of 10 ACAP staff, 44 management committee members, and 44 marginal individuals. The ACAP staff were all male and ranged in age from 30 to 65 years old. There were equal number of Brahmin/Chhetri and Gurung staff (4 each) and the remaining two were from other ethnic groups.

Out of the 88 community residents, 38.6% were male and 61.4% female. The majority (61.4%) of the population were 25-45 years old. Their level of education ranged from illiterate (40.9%) to approximately one third of them (34.1%) having secondary education. The sample consisted of Gurungs (43.2%), Dalit (42%), Brahmin/Chhetri (9.1%), and 5.7% were from other ethnic groups.

2.6.2 Benefit of ACAP

There was a difference in how the staff perceived the benefit of ACAP versus the villagers. All ACAP staff identified community involvement as a key reason for ACAP's success. They further talked about how ACAP worked with the community in every step, from the beginning to the end; and this was the reason that ACAP has been able to sustain for this long in the region. Six of the staff also talked about how the presence of field officers in villages provided easy access to the staff and opportunities. A staff said:

This concept is different from other organizations that work from the city and only visit the field once every few months. We could have worked from Pokhara too, but we do not do that, we feel that we need to be present in the village. (ACAP int 8)

A successful rate of conservation was another benefit mentioned by eight staff members. They talked about how previously people had to walk for three to four hours to collect wood and grass but today they get resources for fuelwood and fodder right outside their porch. Indirect or direct benefits from the program were also identified as a reason for success by five staff. Some other factors like transparency, the ease of getting work done as compared to government offices, and the international recognition that Ghandruk received because of ACAP were mentioned as benefits.

The villagers were asked to identify what they perceived as the main benefits of ACAP. All those who were permanent residents of the region admitted that ACAP had played a major role in the development of Ghandruk. Out of the 88 participants, 53% identified conservation as a benefit of ACAP. Table 2.2 reflects some views of villagers about conservation.

Table 2.2: Community's View on the Benefits of Conservation

"A household that has one buffalo does not have to go to the forest today for grass; the grass planted around the village is sufficient to feed one buffalo" (Mgmt int 2).

"Today we have to get *purji* to cut trees, there is security of the forest and we don't have to go far to get wood. Before people used to kill animals, and now they can't, so all that is good" (Marg int 26).

"ACAP does not let us cut trees; it's nice, because we cannot live without forest" (Marg int 36).

"It is easier for us women today because ACAP planted trees. Before we had to walk for hours to collect wood, but the forest is closer today and the grass is right outside our homes" (Mgmt int 16).

Seventeen percent also talked about developments like roads, water, and electricity as ACAP's benefits. Other benefits participants identified were women's empowerment through the formation of *Ama Samuha*, promotion of cleanliness and sanitation through cleanup programs and construction of toilets, and awareness and education. Reflecting back on how it was before ACAP, an older woman said:

Before ACAP you could not even step out on the road because it was filled with trash and human waste. We did not have toilets in the homes, so people used to do it on the roads and fields. Today our roads and village are clean. Previously the *Ama Samuha* used to fine people if caught littering on the roads. ACAP has shown us how to live a clean and healthy life, and because of the cleanliness tourists like coming to our village. (Mgmt int 12)

Some people also identified the distribution of vegetable seeds by ACAP as one of its benefits. An older management committee member revealed how “ACAP started the concept of vegetable farming in Ghandruk. Previously people of Ghandruk did not eat rice, vegetable, etc. *Dhido* [porridge like meal made from maize or millet] was the only thing people ate” (Mgmt int 10). Similarly, another member reflected on how when he was younger all his family ate was *Dhido* and now vegetable farming is common in Ghandruk because ACAP sells seeds for radish, carrot, spinach, cucumber, etc. at a subsidized rate.

The view toward ACAP’s benefits was different among the marginal and management groups. Majority (86%) of the people from the management group identified conservation as ACAP’s main benefit, whereas only 20% of the marginal participants identified conservation as the benefit. According to 39% of the marginal population, there were no benefits of ACAP. Table 2.3 gives a more detailed explanation of benefits of ACAP as identified by the residents of Ghandruk, and is further divided by management and marginal sample.

Table 2.3: Benefits of ACAP

| | MGMT (%) n=44 | MARG (%) n=44 | Residents (%) N=88 |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Conservation | 86 | 20 | 53 |
| Women's empowerment | 11 | 2 | 7 |
| Cleanliness | 18 | 9 | 14 |
| Development | 25 | 20 | 23 |
| Education | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| Vegetable farming | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| No benefit | 0 | 39 | 19 |

2.6.3 Distribution of Benefits

When the staff and the community members were asked whether benefits of ACAP had been distributed equally, almost all replied that it had not been. The staff admitted that the benefits of ACAP had not been distributed equally among all groups of people and all regions. They also accepted that hotel owners were the ones that had benefitted from ACAP the most. One of the field staff related to tourism indicated, “Yes, it is true that everyone has had to bear the cost of increasing expenses in Ghandruk because of the increase in tourism, but only a few hotel owners have been able to reap the benefit” (ACAP int 2). Another staff talked about how even if tourists had started coming to ACA region before ACAP the number accelerated and the quality of tourism increased because of ACAP. He explained:

None of the hotels had toilets, people did not know how to cook for the guests, and there were no beds for tourists to sleep in. We started making trails, the quality of

hotels increased; we provided cooking and baking as well as language and hotel management trainings for the hotel owners. (ACAP int 9)

All of ACAP's trainings and incentives were thus targeted at hotel owners. Alternative energy options like solar, back boiler, and improved stoves were also provided to these hotel owners at a subsidized rate to reduce the demand on fuelwood. The alternative energy officer added that due to high cost and lack of awareness, not a lot of farmers and lower caste people have adopted any alternative energy options in Ghandruk.

A field staff explained that this uneven distribution of benefit was mostly due to the sectoral focus that ACAP had been following till last year. According to this, the main focus in Ghandruk was conservation and tourism. Therefore, the majority of Ghandruk's funding was spent on conservation and tourism related programs. A staff further elaborated:

There are agriculture programs in Ghandruk too, but the main focus in Ghandruk is tourism. In Lwang [another VDC] there is more stress in agriculture; currently we are focusing on tea plantation in the Lwang region. Similarly, our focus on the Manang Mustang area is on heritage tourism because of the area's rich cultural heritage. It is not like we have not encouraged farming in Ghandruk, we have, but it is not our aim to promote large scale agriculture here. (ACAP int 2)

The agriculture officer said there was no form of vegetable farming in Ghandruk before ACAP. Currently ACAP distributes seeds for farmers, provides hands on trainings for farmers, and has also started a program called conservation farmers. All the agriculture related materials are also provided to villagers at a 50% subsidized rate.

The staff also admitted to unequal distribution of funding across the region. Because ACAP started in Ghandruk, during the first ten years, the majority of its funding was invested in Ghandruk. A few staff also talked about how within Ghandruk VDC there are places that have not benefitted as much as the main village. The main village consists of wards 4,5,6,7 (except Uri) and the old village of 8 (see Figure 2.3). A field officer talked about how currently they were trying to focus on areas that have not received as much benefit as the main village. He added:

We are currently trying to scope out what area is good for what things. Tourists are not going to go to all the areas within Ghandruk, so in places where tourism is not occurring, we are trying to promote other options. For example, Melanchi does not get a lot of tourists and the area is good for potato, so maybe we can encourage potato farming there. Currently we have started a small tea plantation in Uri too.

(ACAP int 1)

Although the staff admitted to unequal distribution of benefits, they also talked about how indirectly water, electricity, trails, cleanliness, health post, schools, etc., benefits everyone. They also identified conservation as the major initiative that everyone in Ghandruk had benefitted from. But a few staff also added how the people of

Ghandruk do not consider all these facilities as a benefit and only consider money and tourism as a benefit.

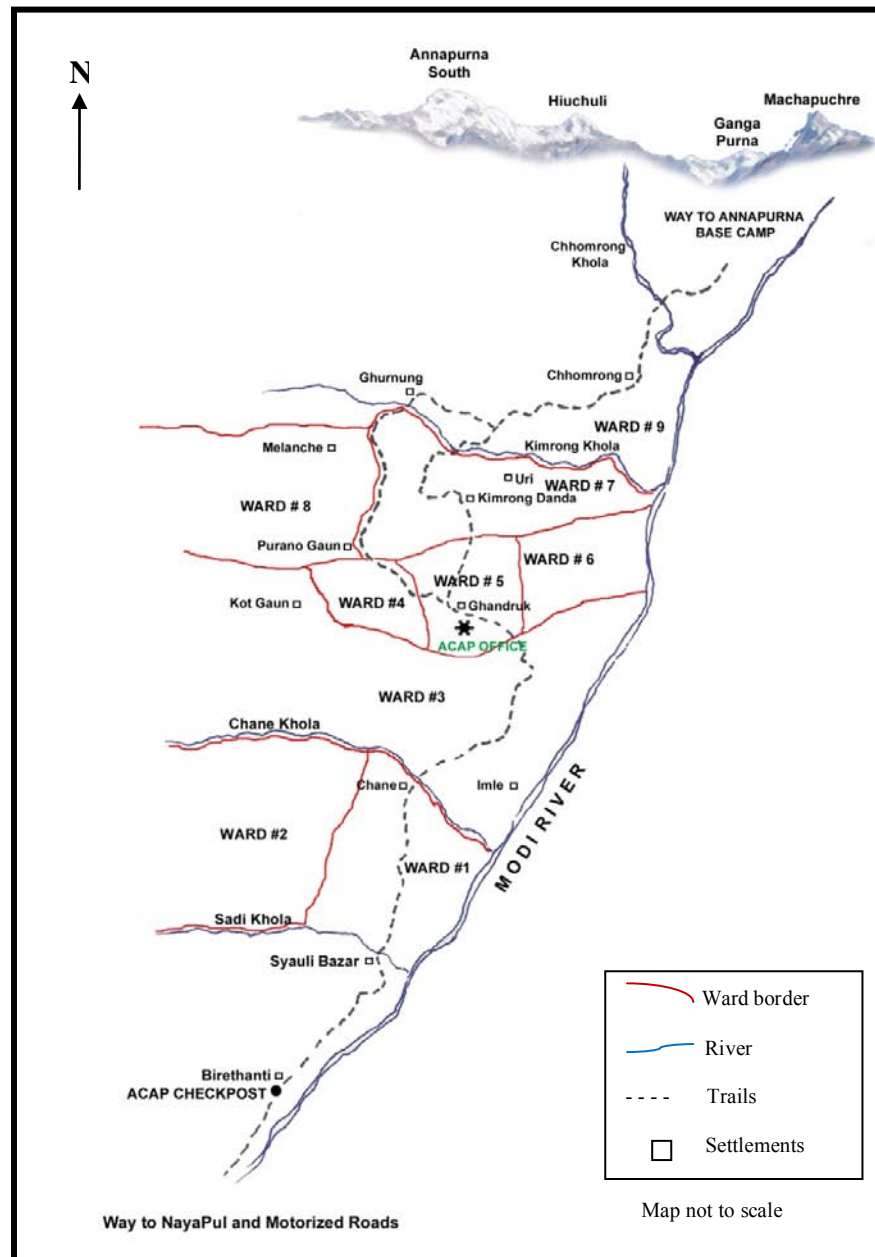


Figure 2.3: A Sketch of Ghandruk VDC (map by author)

In Ghandruk, the staff revealed how the demands of the villagers today are more geared toward bigger developments and tourism related activities. They also complained that when programs for the poorest of the poor, micro enterprises and empowerment are organized, the attendance of villagers is very low. “They only come for programs that have money in it, or they come for the *bhatta* [daily stipend] they receive for attending trainings” said a program officer (ACAP int 5).

According to the annual report for UCO Ghandruk (2009/2010), Ghandruk VDC spent 18% of its budget on conservation, 50% on development, 22% on empowerment, 6% on administration, and 4% on education²⁷. Table 2.4 gives a detailed explanation of what activities were carried out under each of the programs.

Table 2.4: Ghandruk VDC’s Budget Distribution According to Programs

| Focus | Activities |
|-----------------------|---|
| Conservation | Forest patrolling, bio-engineering and river bank protection, improved cooking stoves, alternative energy support |
| Development | Trail, road and bridge construction and repairs, agriculture (seed distribution, conservation farmer, agriculture nursery operation, drinking water supply repair, toilet construction, destination promotion and development, incineration program |
| Empowerment | Study tour of CAMC members, planning and program review workshop, CAMC networking workshop, savings and credit training, day care center operation and support, tea plantation training, conservation farmer workshop, farmer’s excursion |
| Education | Scholarships, world environment day and nature conservation year celebration, youth support |
| Administrative | Salary for CAMC secretary and forest guards, CAMC auditing, legal expenses |

²⁷ These programs were carried out based on the demands put forward by the villagers through the CAMC.

Both similarities and differences existed between the management and marginal groups' perception of distribution of benefits (Table 2.5).

Among the villagers, 92% of the total participants (84% management committee and 100% marginal group) stated that the benefits of ACAP have not been equally distributed. The main complaint was that ACAP was helping some people more than others. While talking about distribution of benefits, spatial distance was termed relevant by 22 % of the total participants. Communities that were not part of the main village were unhappy about how ACAP had not done anything for their wards. An *Ama Samuha* member from Uri explained that their village is the only one in Ghandruk VDC where not all the households have electricity. She also talked about how ACAP had helped them a long time ago by giving pipes for drinking water, but that is all they had done for Uri. She added, "I hope in the future ACAP can do something for us too. We have problems of road and electricity. Also I hope ACAP can do something to help tourists come in our area" (Mgmt int 39). Other residents of Uri also felt that ACAP had not done anything for them and if they could help tourists come to Uri it would open up some opportunities for them to earn some extra income. One resident said, "We would be able to get some extra cash by opening up a tea shop or a store if tourists came to our village" (Marg int 35).

A woman from Ward 1 complained that ACAP had not done anything for her ward. She elaborated on this issue by talking about how the day care center in Ward 1 lacked a building, and how she had asked ACAP for help many times but ACAP always talked about not having the budget for it. She geared her anger toward ACAP and said,

“They don’t have money for us, but they fund the day care center in the main village, although it is well established.” When further asked if ACAP had helped them with anything, she skeptically replied:

They had given a few farming related training at Ward 1, but that was a while back and it was something that was given to keep us quiet; all the bigger developments and benefits are always given to the above wards [main village]. (Mgmt int 37)

Table 2.5: ACAP’s Distribution of Benefits

| | MGMT (%) | MARG (%) | Residents (%) |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Spatial | 23 | 20 | 22 |
| Hotels | 50 | 36 | 43 |
| Management committee | 0 | 34 | 17 |
| Those that are active | 48 | 16 | 32 |

Note: The total number of residents is 88, which is divided into 44 management and 44 marginal samples

One example of uneven distribution of benefits was observed with roads. The roads in the main village and base camp route were well developed, whereas there were areas in Uri or the Dalit settlement in Ward 7 where roads were destroyed and walking through them was impossible, especially in the rainy season.

Fifty percent of the management committee and 36% of the marginal group reported how ACAP’s benefits have mostly been targeted toward hotel owners. Within the management committee, a few stressed how those that have built hotels on community land have benefitted most. Hotel owners agreed that to some extent the

hotels had gotten more benefit from ACAP, especially in the beginning when it was established. They stated how ACAP had provided trainings for hotel management (cooking, baking, housekeeping, etc.) and also taught them English so they could better interact with the guests. The owner of a popular hotel reflected on how ACAP taught him meanings of simple words and things a guest might need in the hotel. Since he was not educated, ACAP took extra care to teach him how to speak.

Thirty-six percent of the people also complained that although the hotel owners were reaping the benefit, it was the poor farmers that were bearing the cost. These participants perceived the increase in forest cover and wildlife as something that was negatively affecting their livelihood by damaging crops. According to them, increasing forest cover, especially due to *Utis*²⁸ (*Alnus Nepalensis*), was casting shade on the crops, taking over the farmland and decreasing their crop production. Similarly, crop damage due to monkeys and deer was also perceived as a major negative impact of ACAP. Walking through the village, there were many instances where monkeys could be seen in trees. In one instance, the author observed a monkey stealing corn that was hanging outside a home.

Although the hotel owners admitted that farmers had not benefitted as much as hotels, they also stated that there were a lot of options available for farmers that they were not taking. For example, a member of several different management committees and the owner of one of Ghandruk's bigger hotels stated:

²⁸ *Utis* was considered an ideal species for the bare hills of ACAP at the time of its establishment because of its rapid growth rate which made it ideal for landslides and as a means to control soil erosion. These trees also propagated by seeds (which resulted in the species spreading over the village quickly) and was a good species to use for fuelwood and leaves for fodder (Manandhar 2002).

We have the newest technology today and we are thankful to ACAP for that. But there is an option for the farmers and hotels to work together. There are so many people who bring eggs and vegetables from the city and sell it to us at more than double the regular price. But we have no choice; we have to buy it because we need it for our hotel. If the local people here could supply that to us, it would benefit us and them both. But the farmers here do not want to do it. They complain that hotels are getting all the benefits, but then not even one farmer has ever tried to plant vegetables and sell it to us. I could understand if they tried and no one bought their vegetables, but how can they complain without trying? (Mgmt int 18)

Another hotel owner complained how the residents of Ghandruk do not show interest in farming and are only interested in earning money, either through tourism or through international labor migration.

One third of the marginal sample also reported how those people in the management committee were getting all the benefits and the rest of the population were getting left behind. “Those on the committee are getting richer and people like us whose daily meals depend on working for them [those on the management committee] and doing manual labor, we are getting poorer day by day due to the increasing expenses in Ghandruk,” said a marginal household head (Marg int 18).

Although 84% of the management committee admitted that the distribution of benefits was not equal, all of them denied that they were getting more benefits than those not on a committee. One person retaliated:

We are the ones who are spending so much of our time for the village, we are the ones that are not getting paid, and our own businesses and family life are suffering because of the time conflicts from attending meetings. So I do not understand how people can say we are getting more benefit than others! (Mgmt int 29)

According to 32% of the total participants (48% and 16% of management and marginal group respectively), those that are able to voice their opinion and ask for things have benefited more than others. Explaining this issue, a Nepali proverb that was repeated by many was '*Bolne ko pitho pani bikcha, nabolne ko chamal pani bikdaina*' which literally translates to 'those who can speak up can even sell their flour, but those that don't speak up cannot even sell their rice'.

A resident of Chhomrong explained how the distribution of benefits, to an extent, depends on the villagers themselves. He talked about how ACAP is there for technical support and to add to whatever help the villagers need. He felt it was up to the villagers to take the initiative. Reflecting back to the time of establishing a water project in Chhomrong, he explained how he along with other people, had gone down to the *Naya Pul* (trail head) and carried water pipes up to the village. Therefore, to him and a few others, if some regions are less developed than others, a part of it has to do with the people's own skills and actions more than ACAP. Using a Nepali proverb, "*bacha royo bhane po ama le dudh dincha*" (the mother will not give milk unless the baby cries), a woman from the *Ama Samuha* conveyed how there is a need for people to go and ask ACAP for help and not expect ACAP to come to their doorstep with opportunities.

Four people in the management committee stressed the need to look at the bigger picture and how, on the social scale, everyone has benefitted from ACAP. A member of the electricity committee responded:

If we have electricity we can use TV, phone and other electronics. Due to the schools built with ACAP's help our children have been able to learn. They are talking about getting x-ray machines for the health center; it will be used by all of us. So I think overall everyone has benefitted, although direct financial benefits might be aimed at hotels. (Mgmt int 38)

In summary, all three groups agreed that the distribution of benefits was not equal in Ghandruk. The majority of benefits have been targeted toward hotel owners, those living in the main village, and those that possess the ability to voice their opinion and are active.

2.6.4 Sustainability of the Benefits and the Project

A common theme people in Ghandruk echoed was 'ACAP was good in the beginning but in the last ten years they have not done anything for us.' The staff admitted that the number of programs in Ghandruk had decreased in the last ten years, but stated that ACAP was still investing in Ghandruk. The staff provided two reasons for the decline in programs: decreases in funding and the need to distribute funding to other areas.

The major issue was funding. ACAP's main source of funding is the Rs. 2000/person collected from tourists entering the ACA²⁹. A field officer spoke about how previously ACAP used to get financial assistance from other organizations and ACAP also used to submit proposals to UNEP, DFID, and other conservation and development agencies. A staff familiar with the budget disclosed how before the war he used to manage a budget as big as 2.5 *crores* (one crore is equal to ten million) because there were many international and national donors. He added, "ACAP had a budget from the national planning commission because of the Trust's affiliation with the royal palace. But currently, due to the political situation of the country, all external funding has stopped" (ACAP int 6). Another field staff expressed a slightly different view when he said:

I do not know whether the decrease in funding is due to the instability of the government, or due to the incapability of those in the management position to get donor funding, or it can be due to both of these reasons. (ACAP int 7)

Currently ACAP is self sustained on tourist entry fees. It runs on the entry fees; everything from program planning to development to implementation is paid for by money collected from tourists. The staff noted that due to political instability, the number of tourists coming to ACA plunged since 1999 and reached a record low of 36,224 in 2005. But in 2006, the ten-year long Maoist insurgency ended with the overthrow of the monarchy and Nepal was declared a People's Republic. Since then

²⁹ US\$1 = Nepalese Rs. 73 (As of August 2011)

there has been a steady incline in the number of tourists entering the ACA. In 2010, the number of tourists entering the ACA reached an all time high of 88,000. Figure 2.4 illustrates the number of tourists entering the ACA region from 1990-2010.

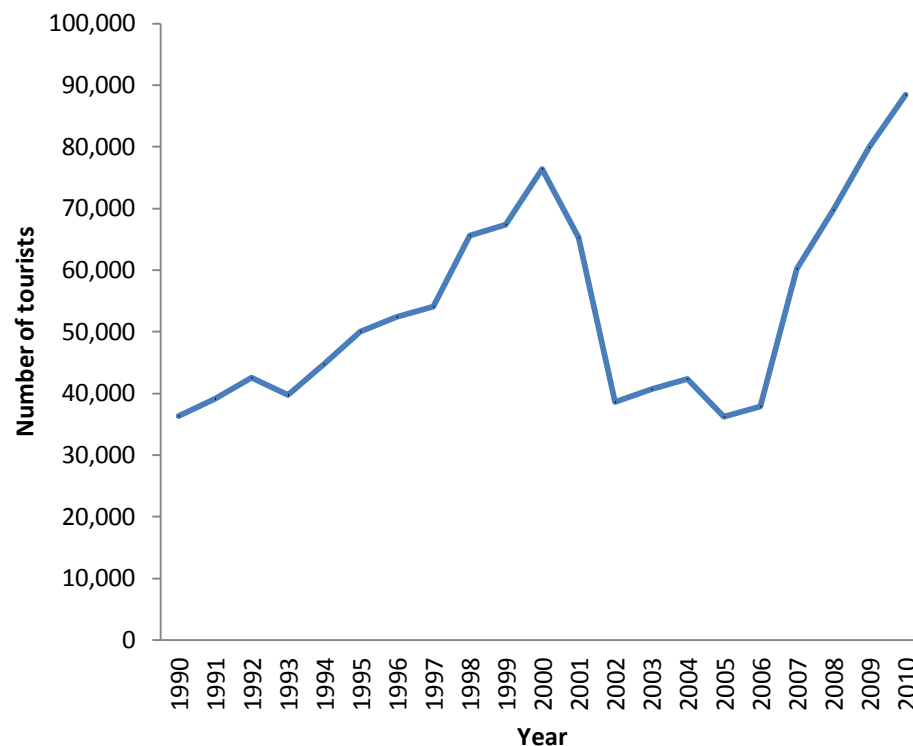


Figure 2.4: Number of Tourists Entering ACA from 1900-2010 (Raw data obtained from Nepal Tourism Board and ACAP)

The issue of tourist fees in Ghandruk was an important issue among the staff and management committee members. Twenty-three percent of the management committee stated that they were oblivious to how ACAP used tourist fees and complained that

ACAP was not investing any money in Ghandruk. A hotel owner and a TMSC officer stated:

I have a friend who works in the trekking agency and he said that last year, in one group he brought 54 Koreans; 54 times 2000, that is 108000 for just that one group. So you can imagine how much they [ACAP] make in one year. We had asked them to show us the exact amount of money they got, but instead they posted the data they had on the number of tourists on their bulletin board. (Mgmt int 31)

A staff familiar with the budget explained how the entry fees collected from tourists first goes to NTNC and the NGO hands it over to ACAP in the form of a yearly budget. He further explained the process of handing over the budget:

NTNC receives the tourist fees, and keeps 25% of the budget as management support and specifies the available amount to headquarters. The headquarters then gives UCOs a budget ceiling or a boundary and, based on the available money, we tell the communities to categorize their wants. The ceiling is important because otherwise they [community] will ask for everything and we cannot give them everything. The ward representative for the CAMC then has a ward meeting to collect inputs from the villagers about what programs they want. The CAMCs then have to categorize their demands according to importance, for example 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., and propose the demands at the budget workshop which is attended by OIC, program staff and CAMC members. The staffs look at the proposal and make

adjustments, trying to balance the demands of the people with their actual needs.

(ACAP int 6)

The field accountant then compiles the budget and sends it to headquarters. After approval headquarters sends it to NTNC where the board of directors look over it and, after approval, send it back to headquarters and then to the field offices. Figure 2.5 gives a visual representation of the entire process. If certain portions of the budget do not get spent; it goes into the reserve fund.

Besides decreases in funding, another issue the staff identified was the need to distribute the entry fee among 57 VDCs within ACA, out of which Ghandruk was just one of them. For example, for the budget allocation for Ghandruk UCO in 2009, only 31% was used for Ghandruk VDC, and the rest was for other VDCs under the UCO. Figure 2.6 gives the representation of the budget distribution among different VDCs under Ghandruk UCO.

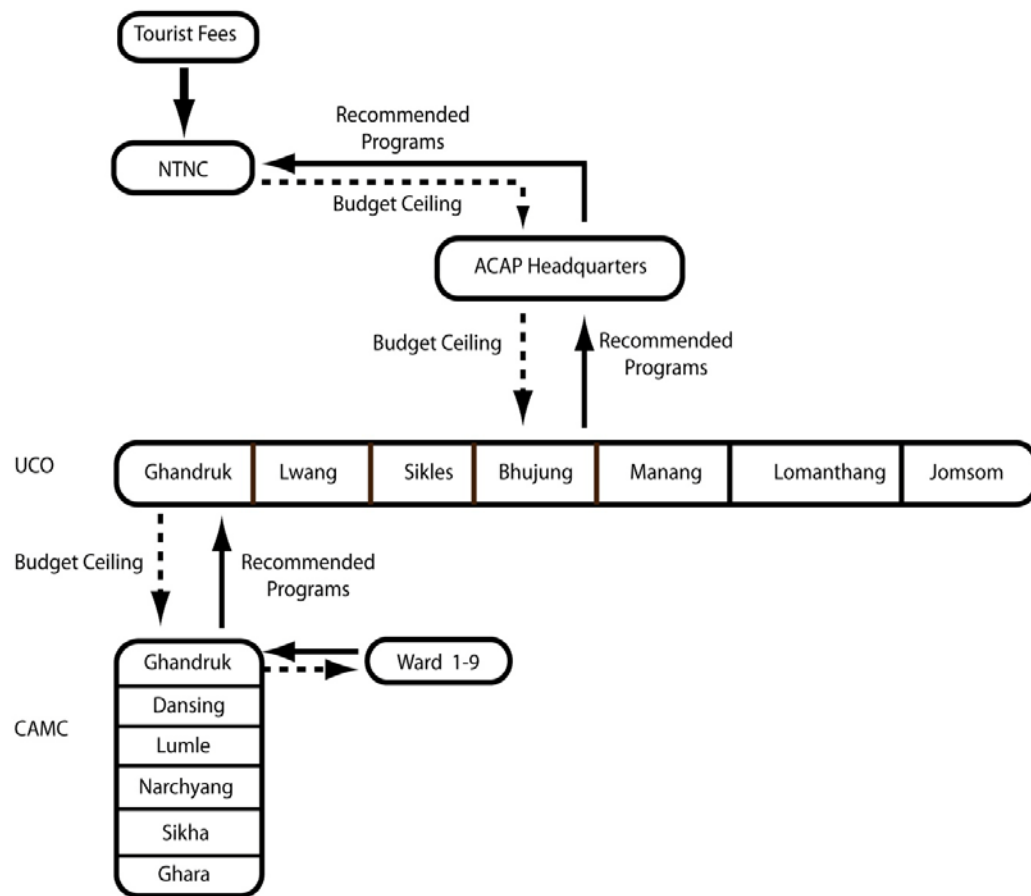


Figure 2.5: ACAP's Budget Allocation Process (figure by author based on the information collected from interviews with ACAP staff)

The staff complained that people of Ghandruk did not understand that the budget had to be distributed to those areas that needed it more than Ghandruk, since Ghandruk was already well developed. “They think all the money should be spent on them only,” added a younger field staff (ACAP int 4).

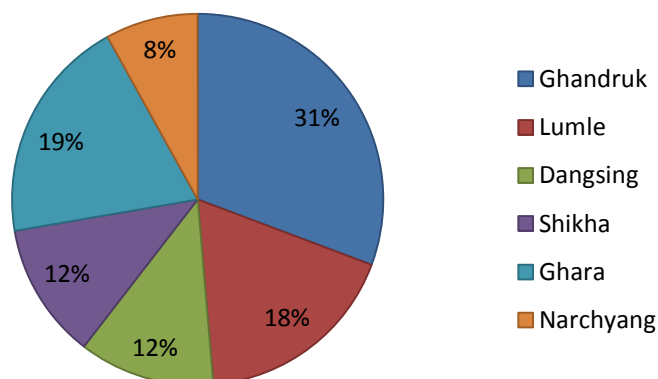


Figure 2.6: UCO Ghandruk's Budget Distribution According to VDC (CAMC 2009)

This issue was further confirmed when a hotel owner in the base camp area wanted ACAP to invest at least 10-15% of its total funding in his region because he felt that ACAP was selling the Annapurna Base Camp name to get tourists to come in. Another participant from Ward 1 talked about how his ward was the first ward that tourists entered the VDC through so ACAP should invest a certain amount of money in his area. He even added, "If ACAP does not start having programs in our ward, we will set up our own check post and not let tourists enter until they pay us at least Rs. 50" (Mgmt int 42).

2.7 Discussion

The paper focused on three specific objectives: i) what are the benefits of ACAP, ii) how are the distribution of benefits perceived by NGO, management committee members, and marginal population, and iii) are these benefits and the ICDP sustainable

in the future. Results showed that the perception of benefits by the various community members varied considerably, the distribution of benefits was not equal among different groups, and their ability to be sustainable in the future was questionable.

2.7.1 Perceptions of Benefits

ACAP is considered a successful example of ICDP due to a combination of factors: successful rate of conservation, development initiatives and the empowerment of local people (Wells 1994; Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007; Stevens 1997a). ACAP also believed that by providing basic community infrastructure development, alternatives to fuelwood, and economic opportunities for livelihood securities, not only would the demand on natural resources decrease but people would also develop favorable attitudes toward conservation. To an extent, this was true for ACAP. Observations showed that the once bare hills today were covered with lush forests and grasslands. Due to ACAP, people in Ghandruk have also developed a more positive attitude toward conservation. Also, in terms of development, today Ghandruk has the latest facilities that most villages in Nepal are lacking. Examples include health posts, schools, day care center, well managed roads and trails, drinking water in almost every household, electricity, solar panels, television and cable channels, cell phone towers, and the telecommunication center that is currently being constructed. Therefore, unlike other ICDPs (Adams et al. 2004; McShane and Wells 2004; Wainwright and Wehrmeyer 1998; Brown 2003), research showed that ACAP was successful in ensuring both of its objectives: conservation and development. However, similar to other research (Berkes 2004), differences existed in how staff and residents of Ghandruk perceived these benefits.

ACAP's objective, as specified in its management plan, is conservation, development and empowerment (ACAP 2009). These factors coincided with the views of ACAP staff when they identified major benefits of ACAP as community involvement and empowerment, successful rate of conservation, and the presence of field offices for easier access to staff and opportunities. But literature on political ecology illustrates that conservation and development projects have a political facet to them and are influenced by the power that different actors with different interests have in these projects (Stonich 2000; Bryant and Bailey 1997). These issues, in turn, influence the perception of the different actors. Similarly, in Ghandruk, the community perceived benefits differently than the staff. Only half of the participants identified conservation as the benefit, less than one third identified development, and very few people talked about empowerment as a benefit. Further, this perspective of benefits differed between the management and marginal sample.

The majority of the marginal sample identified no benefits of ACAP and, on further questioning, did not have any knowledge about who had provided them with electricity, water, education and other development programs. Results also showed that people mostly related benefits to financial benefits, especially those related with tourism. In many cases marginal committee members, due to lack of education and awareness about ACAP and its programs, were unable to identify its benefits and therefore assumed that there were no benefits. Therefore, there is a need for ACAP to generate awareness about its objectives, activities, and contribution in the village. Previous research has

shown that there is a need for people to value the benefits for them to generate future support for conservation and the project (Songorwa 1999).

Similar to other research (Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Wells et al. 2004; Sommerville et al. 2010), different perceptions showed that benefits of ACAP have not been equally distributed in Ghandruk. The benefits are more concentrated toward hotel owners and less toward farmers. ACAP's operational plan in 1986 clearly stated that, along with conservation, ACAP would focus on tourism in Ghandruk (Sherpa, Coburn, and Gurung 1986). The influx of international tourists played a hand in ACAP's investment in tourism in Ghandruk. The number of tourists entering ACA was rapidly increasing and since the early 1990s ACAP started charging tourist entry fees. Therefore, to provide clean and well-managed accommodations for the increasing number of tourists, and to promote ACAP as a tourism destination, the majority of the project's budget was invested in training hotel owners and supporting tourism entrepreneurs. Also, a push from the King to promote tourism in ACA and NTNC's strong affiliation with the monarchy were some of the explanations of this unequal distribution of benefits in Ghandruk. Not only did this affect unequal distribution among community members, but this also determined which area ACAP invested more in. The main villages and the Base Camp area got more attention due to their ability to attract tourists because of their natural beauty and the view of the mountains. Other areas that did not have these picturesque views were left behind.

The results presented here portray a complex picture of ACAP and its distribution of benefits. Results clearly showed that ICDPs do not present a

straightforward option. The influence of various actors (government, monarchy, NTNC, tourists) all played a role in this unequal distribution of benefits in Ghandruk. Following this agenda set forward by various external actors, ACAP focused its benefits on tourism without analyzing the heterogeneity of Ghandruk VDC. Hence, more than half of the participants complained that ACAP has not benefitted farmers and those lower on the social hierarchy.

ACAP's focus on tourism and the economic benefits villagers receive from tourists also affected the way people perceived benefits in Ghandruk. This aided in building up people's expectations that go beyond the project's capability, a trend common with many conservation and development projects (McShane and Newby 2004; Ferguson 1990; Dolhinow 2005). Although social benefits like schools, electricity, water, health and sanitation were things everyone had equal opportunity to, these development initiatives were rarely perceived as a benefit in Ghandruk by the majority of residents. Results showed that only benefits from tourism were perceived as 'real' benefit. This has led to the development of a strong desire among the residents of Ghandruk to be involved in tourism related activities. This supports Sayer and Campbell's (2004) finding that a member of a community will want to be involved in the same activities that other members are benefitting from. Similarly, in Ghandruk the unequal distribution of benefit has resulted in a lot of farmers abandoning their traditional farming practices in search for better economic opportunities. Therefore, as stated by Sundberg (2003) ACAP has played an important role in changing the occupation of the residents from farmers to tourism related occupations to be more in

line with ACAP's interest in accessing benefits. However, there are limited tourism related opportunities available for people in Ghandruk. In the future, as hotel owners and farmers mentioned, there is a need for ACAP to explore the possibility of combining agriculture and tourism. Also, indirect benefits associated with tourism need to be explored.

Policy makers and managers need to ensure that a diverse range of people get the chance to be involved with tourism related opportunities. For example, observation showed that a hotel owner in Ghandruk not only had a hotel and a restaurant but also sold chocolate, chips, beer, and other packaged food in the lobby. One of the hotels in the base camp area had a table outside the hotel that sold gloves, hats, umbrellas, etc. Therefore there is a need to limit the number of tourism related activities a person can be involved in and distribute the benefits of tourism to a larger population.

Hence, examining ICDPs through a political ecology lens showed that ACAP reinforced the already existing power differences in Ghandruk. The results showed that marginal populations in Ghandruk were not limited to caste, wealth, and gender. Due to the transfer of different discourses and benefits, ACAP has made hotel owners and those living in the main village more powerful. Trying to achieve immediate results in the first 5-10 years of its establishment and the ignorance of community diversity has resulted in a wider gap between those involved in tourism versus those that are not. ACAP has also played an important role in changing human-environment relationships, where the farmers are abandoning farming practices with the expectation of reaping better economic opportunities offered by ACAP.

2.7.2 Financial Sustainability

A major issue of conflict between the staff and community members in Ghandruk today was due to financial instability. The literature has many examples of ICDPs that have failed due to lack of adequate funding over a longer period of time (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; McShane and Wells 2004). ACAP's long term commitment in the region and adequate funding until now had been one of the reasons for the project's success (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007). However, today, due to a decrease in the number of tourists and the absence of external donors because of Nepal's political instability, ACAP has experienced a drastic decrease in its funding and thus its number of programs. Also, the rapid scaling of ACAP in the first 10-15 years due to international and national attention overwhelmed the community, creating the 'flash flood' symptom (Sayer and Wells 2004). Due to the decrease in funding today, the expectations of the people of Ghandruk are not being met and they are questioning ACAP's use of entry fees and its financial transparency. The residents of Ghandruk displayed disappointment with the project because they had become dependent on ACAP for trainings, development and other benefits. Therefore, results proved that ICDPs require continuous financial support (McShane and Wells 2004), but in the case of ACAP, even 25 years was not enough for the project to be self sufficient. This also raises the issue of whether under these circumstances, ICDPs are the best solution for conservation and development problems.

ACAP currently has empowered the CAMC to collect hotel taxes, money from tree permits and other fines. But this money is sufficiently smaller in amount compared

to the larger amount of funding people in Ghandruk are accustomed to through tourist entry fees. Therefore, project managers and NGOs need to be aware that in such cases many ICDPs do not have the capacity to generate sufficient revenues to cover their program costs as well as generate benefits for the community (Wells et al. 2004).

ACAP's large area and the need to distribute the funding over 57 VDCs have also affected the project. Previously ACAP had focused the majority of its funding in Ghandruk, but now it has realized the need to spread conservation and development initiatives over all of ACA. There is disagreement on how the funding should be spread over ACA, not only among the villagers and the staff but also between different VDCs and regions of the conservation area. Similar issues of financial distribution of benefits were seen in the Lupande project in Zambia where chiefs of different groups argued that their area should get more money because their area had more wildlife (Child and Dalal-Clayton 2004). Within the ACA region, and even within one VDC, people have started raising their concern that since most tourists come to their areas, they should get a fixed percentage of the tourist revenue each year. But ACAP has to make the residents of Ghandruk VDC understand that tourists visit the ACA not just for base camp but for other attractions like the Annapurna Circuit and the Manang-Mustang area which is known for both nature and culture.

The need to focus funding and programs to other VDC of ACAP is reasonable on ACAP's part. But before shifting to a regional focus, ACAP needs to develop an exit strategy from Ghandruk so there are no miscommunications between the NGO and the villagers. Rapid scaling of projects and then its stoppage without following a slow

decline and proper exit strategy often tends to generate negativity toward the project and tends to affect long term conservation effectiveness (Sayer and Wells 2004).

ACAP's dependence on tourist entry fees can also pose a problem in the future. Results showed that after 2006, the number of tourists in the ACA has steadily increased and the tourist arrival rate reached a record high in 2010. However, the tourist arrival rate is dependent on many factors including, but not limited to, politics, economic crisis, spread of diseases, terror attacks, natural disasters, etc. Thus, management and policy makers need to diversity the source of funding and develop partnerships with government and other organizations to ensure future sustainability of the project.

Therefore, in order to ensure sustainability of the project and support from the residents of the Ghandruk ACAP should understand the need to change this current pattern of unequal distribution of benefits, and work toward ensuring a fair share of benefits to all participants. ACAP also needs to understand how politics, markets and other external factors play a role in influencing attitudes of different actors and the sustainability of the project.

2.8 Conclusion

The debate whether ICDPs are the right approach to manage protected areas still exists, but the popularity of ICDP and other incentive-based conservation programs has not diminished (Wells and McShane 2004). Some scholars feel that for effective conservation these two needs must be balanced, and some feel the win-win situation of integrating conservation and development looks good on paper but is unrealistic in practice. No matter what the verdict of ICDPs, there is consensus on how local people

have to be included in the management of protected areas to ensure effective conservation, especially in areas where natural resources are a means of subsistence (Mbaiwa and Stronza 2011; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Oldekop et al. 2010).

ACAP, an ICDP that was implemented 25 years ago, has achieved success in terms of both conservation and development. One of the tangible outcomes of the ICDP has been the gradual change in local people's awareness of and attitude towards environmental conservation. Unlike many other ICDPs (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992), the participation and empowerment of local people in Ghandruk is appreciable with the formation of CAMC, and other management sub-committees. But today, in Ghandruk, conflicts related to perception of costs and benefits, unequal distribution of benefits, financial sustainability, budget transparency, and differences in expectations of NGO staff and local residents have started to emerge. Similar to other studies (Wells et al. 2004; Kellert et al. 2000), people's expectations of the project fall short; people are questioning the project's existence, and external influences are affecting the project's outputs.

The distribution of benefits is not equal. The majority of ACAP's benefits have been targeted toward those involved in tourism and those living in the main village. Therefore, this research recommends that marginal groups, in the case of ACAP, are not confined to gender, caste, and wealth. NGO agendas and external influences, due to their unequal distribution of benefits, play a role in making some groups more powerful and marginalizing others.

An additional shortcoming of ICDPs in ACA is their dependence on the number of tourists visiting the conservation area. ACAP needs to develop ways to understand how to integrate funding into internal sources. ACAP, till now, has been operating in a socio-economic and political vacuum and the country's current political turmoil has affected the management capacity of the staff and the project. Therefore, ACAP needs to follow an adaptive management strategy in the future that is capable of incorporating changes not only on the national level but also internationally. Project managers need to understand that although ICDPs are context specific, they are highly affected by international and national factors. ACAP has been successful in developing partnerships with the community, but a successful ICDP also needs partnerships between different organizations, NGOs, donors, and government as a criteria for success (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; McShane and Newby 2004), and this is something ACAP needs to work toward in the future.

2.9 Study Limitations and Future Research

This research was carried out using a limited spatial area within ACA. Although Ghandruk is a good representation of ACAP and its program, the diversity of ACAP's climate, people and environment requires a more detailed study. Ghandruk is more developed than other regions and has had a longer tourist influence. Although studying all 57 VDCs within ACAP would require a lot of resources, future research should focus on comparing Ghandruk to other VDCs (those within and outside the UCO) that are less developed and those that ACAP is slowly investing in. It would be interesting to

understand if differences in community members' attitudes towards ACAP and conservation differ within other VDCs.

There is a need to understand how the political and the financial situations play out in the future. Future research would also help understand whether ACAP decided on following through with the handover and how it would formulate its next 10 year's management plan if it decided to stay. Many of the ICDPs are based on qualitative data and perception of local people and not on actual monitoring and quantitative data (Morgan-Brown et al. 2010). Therefore a more quantitative assessment of ACAP and its programs will add credibility to the project.

3. MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL CONSERVATION INSTITUTIONS: ACTUAL EMPOWERMENT OR QUOTA SATISFACTION?

3.1 Introduction

Over the last century protected area management has seen a shift from traditional top down “fines and fences” model to a more people-inclusive management strategy (Phillips 2003). The main reason for this paradigm shift is the failure of centralized decision-making in conserving natural resources. State-led initiatives failed to stop the rapid degradation of natural resources, mainly in developing countries, due to the local people’s unfavorable attitude towards conservation (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Kideghesho, Røskoft, and Kaltenborn 2007).

Demand for decentralized decision-making that is flexible and encompasses a variety of knowledge and values is increasing on local, national and international scales (Reed 2008). This is especially true in protected areas, as illustrated in numerous case studies (Schaaf 2003; Stevens 1997a; West and Brechin 1991; Hough and Sherpa 1989; Nepal 2002a; McNeely and Miller 1984; Brandon, Redford, and Steven 1998; Pimbert and Pretty 1997). But current literature has shown that these decentralized processes have led to unequal distribution of socio-economic benefits (Cleaver 2001; Kapoor 2001) and also to the exclusion of marginalized groups (Cooke 2001). Many have also stated that participation in such processes does not necessarily lead to empowerment but is a tool through which development practitioners have tried to include those that were previously excluded to maintain their bottom-up image (Cleaver 2001; Cooke and Kothari 2001). Scholars emphasize the need to promote empowerment and equity as an

integral part of these people-centered management practices (Kothari 2001; McCool and Guthrie 2001).

Most research related to participatory conservation is focused on a common property resource (CPR) framework of institutions and discussion of effectiveness of these institutions in understanding community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) practices (Agrawal and Chhatre 2006). In such cases, communities are considered as homogenous units and the discussion of how different actors are affected by natural resource management decisions, made in conservation and development projects, are ignored (Neumann 2005). Participatory conservation issues become more complex in developing countries due to local people's dependence on natural resources for daily subsistence and well-defined differences based on gender, age, race, etc. Furthermore, the influences of international and national organizations in developing countries play an important role in making some groups more powerful than others and reinforce the 'elite capture syndrome' (where the majority of the project benefits are captured by the elite members of the community) in CBNRM programs (Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

Scholars in political ecology challenge the apolitical nature of participatory research. Using political ecology they provide insights into society-human interactions, keeping in mind how different actors (state, private sector, environmental NGOs and grassroots actors) at different scales (community, regional, national, and global) influence these interactions. Robbins (2004, 12) states that the environment is currently

controlled by those with power and asserts the need to critique this approach, especially from the “point of view of local people, marginal groups, and vulnerable populations”.

Based on this principle, this article builds on the assumption that decentralized decision-making will be most effective if there is equal representation of all stakeholders in the decision-making processes (Agrawal and Gupta 2005). It is in the best interest of all groups, especially those that have been traditionally excluded, to have some influence in the decentralized conservation and development programs because the decisions made in them determine access to natural resources and development benefits. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research paper examined levels of participation of marginal groups in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), Nepal. The Annapurna conservation area project (ACAP) has been considered a ‘model’ for participatory initiatives due to the inclusion of local people in all stages of its programs (Spiteri and Nepal 2008; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005; Baral and Stern 2009; Stevens 1997a).

The following two research questions were addressed:

- (i) Have marginal groups been involved in local management institutions?
- (ii) What is the level of involvement of marginal groups in these management committees?

Based on literature and the context of Nepal, in this study marginal groups have been defined by using socio-economic factors. Marginal in the social context are women

and lower caste³⁰. Marginal in the economic context are poor defined by those that do not own land and those that are not able to support daily livelihood needs with annual income³¹.

3.2 Literature Review

3.2.1 Paradigm Shift in Conservation: Centralized to Decentralized

Establishment of protected areas for strict preservation has remained unsuccessful in stopping resource degradation because the local people lived in these areas and depended on the natural resources directly for subsistence (Kideghesho, Røskoft, and Kaltenborn 2007; Raval 1994). The exclusion of local people from within protected area boundaries due to displacement caused by government imposed policies and programs has resulted in declining livelihood opportunities and the deterioration of local peoples' well-being, a reason why local people increasingly resent such policies and programs (Raval 1994).

Contrary to command and control, the bottom-up model of management tries to bridge the gap that existed in traditional models between conservation and economic

³⁰ Nepal consists of a social hierarchy based on the Hindu religion. Each individual, by birth, belongs to one of the four varna or classes. The four caste divisions are Brahmins (priests or scholars), Chhetri (rulers and warriors), Vaisya (Merchant or traders), and Sudra (farmers, artisans, and laborers). Below all this are the Dalits or the untouchables. In this paper lower caste usually refers to the Dalits. The National Dalit Commission defines Dalits as "those communities who, by virtue of caste based discrimination and so called untouchability, are most backward in the social, economic, educational, political, and religious spheres, and are deprived of human dignity and social justice" (Pradhan and Shrestha 2005, 3).

³¹ According to the World Bank (2006), 31% of Nepal's population is below the national poverty level (US\$12/month). According to the World Bank, those that are the poorest in Nepal generally are farmers, wage earners, those with small land holdings or landless, those with illiterate household heads, households with seven or more members. In terms of caste and ethnic groups, the Hill and Terai Dalits are the poorest segments of the population (WorldBank 2006). In this paper, poor is defined as landless, and not able to support livelihood needs with annual income.

development, where conservation posed a threat to economic development and a serious negative effect on local livelihood practices (McShane and Wells 2004; Brandon and Wells 1992; Phillips 2003; Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003). Ghimire and Pimbert (1997, 8) state that “conservation programs are only valid and sustainable when they have the dual objective of protecting and improving local livelihoods and ecological conditions”. Today protected areas extend their mission beyond biodiversity conservation to livelihood securities by allowing resource use and improved options for economic benefits for the local people living in and around these areas (Naughton-Treves, Holland, and Brandon 2005). This agenda for participatory conservation was made stronger by policies enforced due to a push from international scholars and advocates. For example, the Brundtland Report (or Our Common Future) published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development and United Nation’s Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 set forth major initiatives that identified decentralized resource management approaches as the best strategy to deal with the environmental crisis occurring worldwide (Peet and Watts 2004). In addition, and particularly relevant to protected areas, the Fourth World Parks Congress held in Caracas, Venezuela in 1992 identified the need to understand the relationship between people and nature, stressing participation and equality in protected area management (Phillips 2003). Today in many cases these strategies have been successful in generating more awareness and favorable attitudes in local people towards conservation (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998).

Following the push towards decentralized decision-making, different forms of bottom-up management options started to emerge. Some examples are community-based conservation (Western and Wright 1994), community-based natural resource management (Child and Dalal-Clayton 2004), co-management (Singleton 2000), integrated conservation and development programs (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992), incentive based conservation (Spiteri and Nepal 2006), grassroots ecosystem management (Weber 2003), and collaborative decision-making (Gray 1989). Table 3.1 gives a brief overview of these different decentralization decision-making options in conservation.

A concept that has been widely adopted in the management of biodiversity, especially in developing countries, is community- based conservation (CBC), also known as community based natural resource management (CBNRM)³² (Western and Wright 1994; Zanetell and Knuth 2004). According to Murphee (1994, 403), CBNRM “contains an objective – conservation – and an organizational approach through which to achieve this objective – the community”. CBNRM is participatory in nature; the main notion behind these programs is that local people are likely to be more favorable towards conservation if they play an integral role in the management of natural resources that they depend on for their livelihood and well-being (Western and Wright 1994). Therefore ‘participation’ of ‘communities’ in conservation initiatives forms the core basis of CBNRM.

³² Although different, CBC and CBNRM are used interchangeably in this paper to denote inclusion of people in management of natural resources.

Table 3.1: Participatory Conservation Initiatives

| Approach | Description |
|--|---|
| Community-based conservation (Western and Wright 1994) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall term for participatory conservation initiatives with a focus on communal and private lands • Inclusion of community in the management of natural resources that affects them |
| Community-based natural resource management (Child and Dalal-Clayton 2004) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A form of participatory conservation with a focus on public, communal, and private lands/resources • More emphasis on market value of resources • Related mostly to wildlife management in Africa |
| Co-management (Singleton 2000) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A combination of centralized and decentralized processes where the state and community are combined together for the management of natural resources • Related to communal and private lands/resources |
| Integrated conservation and development (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of biodiversity by reconciling the management of protected areas with socio-economic needs of the local people • Focuses on protected areas |
| Incentive based conservation (Spiteri and Nepal 2006) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A form of participatory conservation that combines the strengths of community based natural resource management and integrated conservation and development • Focuses mostly in developing countries |
| Grassroots ecosystem management (Weber 2003) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A form of decentralized decision making that integrates various forms of participation that simultaneously promotes environment, economy, and community • Focuses on entire ecosystem rather than on one issue • Related to environmental issues in the United States |
| Collaborative decision making (Gray 1989) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process where stakeholders with different visions come together to constructively explore their differences and search for solutions • Usually adopted for resolving conflicts • Related mostly to environmental problems in the United States |

3.2.2 Participation: “Means or End”?

Participation can be defined in various forms but the main idea behind it is shifting the power of responsibility from a centralized decision-making to the hands of the locals through local institutions. Key features of participation include the involvement of a variety of stakeholders, and the integration of a range of knowledge possessed by local as well as scientific communities (Scheyvens 1999; Cohen and Uphoff 1980; Kapoor 2001). In most protected areas, participation of local people occurs through the formation of local management institutions that are responsible for the management of natural resources within the park boundary. Many studies have stressed that flexible institutions are critical for effective common property management (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Ostrom 1990; Agrawal 2000). Institutions create a set of rules that determine what actions are allowed and constrained and how these decisions are finalized.

Even though CBC has been considered a better option than centralized management (Kellert et al. 2000; Agrawal and Gibson 1999), and participation has become a buzz word in all conservation projects today, the issue of participatory conservation is not as perfect as it seems. The main criticism that started in the late 1990s was based on how participation was defined by scholars and park officials. Some projects aimed for participation as a form of stakeholder empowerment, whereas for most conservation and development projects participation was a way of achieving project objectives (Little 1994). This ambiguity of participation, as a means versus an end, has different implications on power relationships. In many participatory

conservation programs participation occurs as a means, which does not look at power relationships because its aim is to achieve the output of conservation, not actual empowerment of the community (Parkins and Mitchell 2005; Parfitt 2004; Cleaver 2001). These projects assume communities as living in harmony with nature and having characteristics of shared common norms, internal equality, and living within a confined small spatial unit (Zimmerer 2006; Agrawal and Gibson 2001). This homogeneity in communities that CBNRM programs assume is challenged by political ecology (Schroeder and Suryanata 2004). Li (2002) explains how the word “community” as used in CBC literature is a simplification of reality. Communities are dynamic structures that change with time and are comprised of different arrays of actors and interest groups (Berkes 2004; Spiteri and Nepal 2006). According to Bryant and Bailey (1997), there are five major ‘actors’ that are important in understanding environment and development issues: multilateral institutions, the state, private sector, environmental NGOs and grassroots actors. Stonich (2000) further divides Bryant and Bailey’s grassroots actors into “rich and poor, women and men, young and old, ethnic groups,” etc.

However, to the state and many conservation organizations, a community is often seen as a homogenous unit with “intrinsic powers, which speaks with a single voice” (Peet and Watts 2004, 24). They tend to ignore the fact that these communities are not isolated but rather interlinked with the larger social and political structures. In theory CBNRM is supposed to include all involved stakeholders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs, resulting in good governance that would balance the needs and wants of all and not prioritize one group over the other. But in reality, research has

shown that participation in such programs have led to marginalization of different groups and has resulted in further depletion of natural resources (Kellert et al. 2000; Nygren 2005).

In many cases these local CBC institutions are formed to legitimize the decisions made by a handful of powerful actors (Timsina 2002). Most conservation programs suffer from the ‘elite capture syndrome’ where a handful of elite members of the community make all the decisions and capture the project benefits while leaving the poor alienated (Kellert et al. 2000; Agrawal and Gupta 2005). These exclusions occur mainly due to the ignorance of practitioners on the diversity of ‘communities’ (Little 1994; Spiteri and Nepal 2006). Practitioners tend to ignore the social, cultural and political differences that encompass a community. Scholars also critiqued how communities are removed from their historical, political, and ecological context, creating romanticized images of ‘constructed’ or ‘imagined’ communities that are designed to meet the objectives of the project and are not true representations of the people and the place (Sundar 2000; Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998). Little (1994, 358) explained how some long histories of conflicts between different interest groups in South America have excluded some indigenous populations as candidates of CBNRM programs. In addition, some cultural and social norms, the same norms that were once considered a characteristic of a community, prevent some groups from taking part in CBC initiatives. For example, due to social norms in many developing countries women are excluded from community forestry programs which has led to failed conservation initiatives because these women are the primary users of these natural resources (Agarwal 2001).

Therefore, these CBNRM programs that are supposed to intensify the voices of the community in many instances has actually strengthened the already existing power structures present, giving more voice and authority to the local powers rather than an equal representation for all (White 1996). As mentioned above, examining the complex power structures within communities is important.

Sometimes participation is present in projects because it adds credibility to the decisions that have already been made. For example, forms of participation in government programs in the United States resulted in a single public hearing which informed the people about a project that was already being implemented (Depoe, Delicath, and Elsenbeer 2004). Another example is from Zambia where government has formed a number of women groups as a display of adopting participatory decision making in projects, adding legitimacy to their decisions. But the participation of women in these groups is nominal; women admit to membership in the group but hardly attend any meetings or take part in committee activities (White 1996). The concept of participation is not just being a part of it; it involves having actual power to contribute to the process. Participation as a means not only masks community diversity but also aims at “short term exercise; the local population is mobilized, there is direct involvement in the task at hand but the participation evaporates once the task is completed” (Oakley 1991 as cited in ; Parfitt 2004, 539). Parfitt (2004) further writes how project managers, to mobilize communities, will denote community as a whole and assume benefits will be equally distributed among all.

In conservation programs, the actual empowerment of community, especially those that are marginal, are cases that rarely exists in practice. While looking at CBC programs in India and Nepal, Agarwal (2001) found that women were included in projects to satisfy the women quota system that was established by the government, and were hardly ever asked to contribute in decision- making processes and were silent participants. Even today participation has not been practiced with certain groups and if participation occurs without the actual distribution of power, then the process is termed as meaningless (Arnstein 1969).

So scholars in political ecology stress that it is important to understand that environmental issues do not occur in isolation and are influenced by a politicized environment and this creates unequal power relationships and conflict over access to resources. In many cases this leads to increases in marginality and vulnerability of the poor (Bryant 1998).

3.2.3 Levels of Participation

Building on this concept of how stakeholders get included, scholars have different typologies of participation, basically ranging from mere presence to having an actual voice in the decision-making process. Gruber (2010) distinguishes between consultation and participation, and argues that effective participation is critical in sharing of power and responsibilities. Agarwal (2001, 1624), in her typology of participation, defines consultation as “being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions”. A popular typology is Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969) which uses eight rungs of a ladder to differentiate the types of participation (Figure 3.1).

The level of participation increases at the upper hierarchies of the ladder, with the lowest rung consisting of “manipulation and therapy” and are termed as nonparticipation. This type of participation does not encourage people to participate but it is a means through which power holders ‘educate or cure the participants’. The next three rungs (informing, consultation, and placation) are termed as ‘tokenism’ where the have-nots can hear and be heard but lack the power to ‘ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful’. “Partnership” is the next rung that enables the powerless to ‘negotiate and engage in tradeoffs’ with what Arnstein terms as the ‘traditional power holders’. At the top of the ladder is “delegated power” and “citizen’s control” where the decision-making power is in the hands of those that were traditionally powerless (217).

Another example is Pretty’s (1995) typology of participation that starts with manipulative participation, in which local people have the least impact on the projects, to self-mobilization where participation initiatives are started by the local people without any help from external organizations. Most of the participatory processes even today aim at the lowest level participation. For example, in the case of a development project in Bangladesh, participation was nominal with locals attending meetings just to satisfy attendance requirements (White 1996).

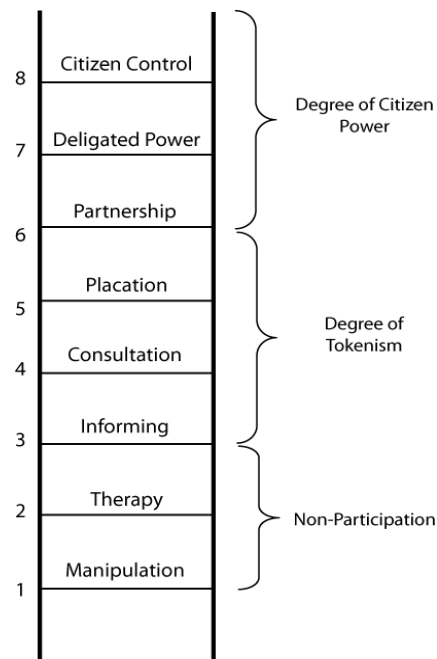


Figure 3.1: Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969)

Therefore, while studying CBNRM there is a need to understand the different actors present and to what level these different actors influence the decisions that are being made (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). According to Kilby (2006), participatory conservation not only means conservation and temporary welfare for the community but also providing actual structural changes in the society to retain their sustainability. The end result of bottom up conservation should be in the formation of local institutions, self-help management groups and independence of community members. These empowerment initiatives should not only be sustainable but also generate long term structural changes by ensuring equal opportunities for participation of all stakeholders, not only those that are higher up on hierarchy due to social and political affiliations. This

can only be achieved by not ignoring the socio-political and historical context in which the community exists (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998).

3.2.4 Protected Areas and Participatory Conservation in the Context of Nepal

This section looks at the evolution of decentralized conservation initiatives in Nepal and factors that are important in the context of the country. Degradation of natural resources, especially forests, goes back to the early 1950s in the Terai flat lands of Nepal with rapid increase in population and livestock grazing. Centralized management strategies were adopted throughout the country, and Nepal's first national park, Royal Chitwan National Park, was established in 1973, followed by the establishment of Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park two years later. These protected areas followed the Yellowstone model of strict preservation and exclusion of indigenous people and were managed by the army (Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2006). Similar to other parts of the world, in some cases in Nepal the establishment of these strict areas established solely for preservation has led to catastrophic results for many indigenous populations. For example, due to the establishment of Rara National Park in 1976, the Phoka tribe was forced to resettle from the mountainous region to the Terai low lands (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975). Due to this drastic change in the physical climate a large population of the tribe died due to malaria and other causes (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975).

Scholars who were familiar with Nepal repeatedly stressed that these strict protection areas were not benefitting the community (Sherpa, Coburn, and Gurung 1986; Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Heinen 1993). Nepal failed to achieve success in centralized conservation initiatives for forest and grasslands because a large population of the

country depended on fuelwood and fodder for daily subsistence (Stevens 1997a). Realizing that state-led programs were not working, the government, with the help of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), slowly started incorporating the needs of the local people while keeping in mind the socio-economic effects these strict reserves were having on the livelihood of local people. The concepts of buffer zones and conservation areas were thus ideas that started emerging in Nepal in the mid 1980s. Management staff also started discovering strong linkages between tourism, protected areas and local communities (Nepal 2000).

Similar to the international level, in Nepal policies and regulations played a big role in promoting inclusion of local people in protected area management. The 4th amendment in 1993 to the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act (NPWCA) addresses issues of participatory conservation and conflict between local communities and protected areas. Understanding the issues of poverty and dependency of local people on natural resources, further amendments to the NPWCA in 2002 legally declared the establishment of buffer zones surrounding national parks to increase community participation (Heinen and Shrestha 2006).

3.2.5 Background on ACAP

One of the first examples to include local people in protected area management in Nepal, which served as a model not only for Nepal but for the world, was the Annapurna Conservation Area. Due to concerns on the international and national level regarding displacement of local people, and also alarmed by the rate of natural resource

degradation in the Annapurna region, a team of three conservationists spent six weeks in the area, discussing with locals the proposal for the establishment of a protected area in the region. Understanding the importance of including locals in participatory process, interviews were conducted and local feedback was incorporated before the establishment of the conservation area. Initially WWF had envisioned the Annapurna area to be established as national park but the planning team and the feasibility study suggested that “a national park was inappropriate because of the widespread opposition” (Stevens 1997a, 245). Instead, the team suggested that the region be established into a conservation area with a majority of the management given to the local people. Therefore, under the management of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) which was legally established as a NGO by the government, the government handed over the management of the Annapurna area to the NTNC as a pilot project in 1986, and established the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). After four years of evaluation, ACA was officially declared a conservation area, giving rights to NTNC for its management for the next ten years. Currently, NTNC has been managing the ACA region for over 25 years. ACAP has been considered successful at integrating social, economic, and ecological objectives. NTNC identifies one of the main reasons for ACAP to be established as a model project in Asia as its involvement of local communities in all stages of the program from planning to implementation and evaluations (NTNC 2009).

The need to understand communities and their heterogeneous nature becomes even more important in the context of Nepal due to its strong social caste structure

(based on the Hindu religion) and clearly defined gender roles that exists in this patriarchal society. In community forestry programs most lower caste members did not receive information about meetings, were uninformed about the creation of community forest user groups and even if included due to pressure from the government or international organization, were hardly ever appointed in leadership position (Lama and Buchy 2004; Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Li 2007). In Nepal, poorer households are more dependent on natural resources, but research has shown that in most of these programs the poor are excluded from decision-making processes resulting in them bearing the major cost of conservation while receiving very few benefits (Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Agrawal and Gupta 2005). Furthermore, Lachapelle et al. (2004, 5), in the context of Nepal, found that power to make decisions in community programs was affected by inferiority (established by caste, gender and education), vulnerability (due to lack of private resources, mainly land), and a lack of transparency (in terms of trust and access to information).

Several studies have been conducted in ACA to understand the dynamics of participatory conservation programs (Spiteri and Nepal 2008; Khadka and Nepal 2010; Baral and Stern 2009; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2006). Research has shown that ACAP has not only been effective in conserving biodiversity but also improved the living standards of the local people and communities, and empowered them by forming local institutions to manage the area, mainly the Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC) (Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2006; Baral and Stern 2009). Currently there are 57 CAMCs and 190 different sub-committees under ACAP (NTNC

2009). But only recently have the concept of what constitutes a community, and how different actors in the community have been affected by these CBC programs, been studied in ACA. Scholars have found unequal distribution of cost and benefits of conservation in the area (Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2006; Nyaupane and Thapa 2004). In addition, in their study of perceived benefits of ACAP in Manang-Mustang region, Spiteri and Nepal (2008) illustrated how benefits from conservation and development projects were not effectively targeted towards poorer residents of the area. A recent study by Khadka and Nepal (2010) also indicated a significant difference in level of participation between residents of tourist villages and non-tourist villages, the former benefiting the most from tourism and conservation programs in the area while the latter benefiting the least. Baral and Heinen (2007) also found that even though ACAP has been successful in promoting participatory conservation and empowerment, the inclusion of some ethnic groups and women still remains a major issue.

Although not perfect, participatory conservation is still the best strategy to capture local support for conservation (Spiteri and Nepal 2006). This research makes a significant contribution to the theoretical understanding of participatory conservation by exhibiting how participation in conservation and development programs in Nepal cannot be divorced from issues of equality and social justice due to the present dominant caste system and socio-economic variables mentioned above. The study goes further by examining the level of participation of marginal groups that were previously excluded from community based organizations (CBOs). The overall objective of the paper was to understand whether their inclusion is leading to actual sharing of responsibilities, or if

including them is another way of practicing the top down development agenda, while giving the impression of being more inclusive by appearing to empower the marginalized poor (Parfitt 2004). Although a considerable amount of research has been carried out in the ACA region (Hough and Sherpa 1989; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005; Spiteri and Nepal 2008; Nyaupane and Thapa 2004; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2006; Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007; Khadka and Nepal 2010; Baral and Stern 2009; Gurung 2004; Wells 1994) this paper will be the first to focus on level of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions.

3.3 Study site

Annapurna Conservation Area is the first and largest protected area of Nepal (7,629 km²), officially established in 1992 (Figure 3.2). ACA is also the first protected area of Nepal that is not under the management of the government but is managed by a NGO, NTNC. Not only is the area rich in biodiversity but it also holds a diverse ethnic population of 120,000 people belonging to different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups (Baral and Stern 2009). Because of its rich cultural and natural beauty ACA is a popular tourist destination with more than 60% of the country's tourists visiting the area (Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005). Currently ACAP is responsible for the management of 57 VDCs³³ spread over five districts of north-central Nepal. Even though ACAP's main focus is conservation, it is also involved in community development, tourism management, and conservation education. Recognized as one of

³³ In Nepal, VDC is the lowest political unit. Each VDC consists of wards or sub-villages under it. In majority cases, there are nine wards under each VDC.

the pioneers and models for CBC (ACAP 2009; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005; Spiteri and Nepal 2008), ACAP follows the integrated conservation³⁴ and development³⁵ project (ICDP) model (Wells 1994). It believes that if people are provided with development opportunities they will likely generate a more positive attitude towards conservation. Therefore, ACAP carries out all its conservation and development programs through local management institutions, ensuring local empowerment throughout the process.

Due to time and resource constraints, only one VDC (Ghandruk VDC) within ACA was chosen for the study. Ghandruk lies in the Kaski district and is located on the southern region of ACA (Figure 3.2). Ghandruk VDC has nine wards and is the first major village in route to the Annapurna Base Camp (ABC). Ghandruk covers an area of 281.1 km² out of which 44% is barren land, 25% is covered with forests, 15% is grassland, and the rest is glaciers, rivers, shrubs, agriculture land and sand/gravel (ACAP 2009). Although only 4% of Ghandruk's area is agriculture land, the majority of the population is made up of subsistence farmers. The lower elevations of the village are used for rice farming whereas millet, corn, and potato are grown on the higher elevations (Gurung 2004).

³⁴ ACAP defines conservation as the sustainable use and management of local natural resources, especially forests.

³⁵ Development, according to ACAP, focuses on enhancing the basic living standards of the local inhabitants mainly through tourism development, infrastructure improvements, health and sanitation improvement, etc.

Table 3.2: Distribution of Ghandruk's Population According to Caste (ACAP 2009)

| Caste | Number of Households | Household (%) | Population | Population (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Gurung | 460 | 48.68 | 2447 | 48.17 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 119 | 12.59 | 637 | 12.54 |
| Newar | 1 | 0.11 | 5 | 0.10 |
| Dalits/Untouchables | 289 | 30.58 | 1547 | 30.45 |
| Other Ethnic Groups | 76 | 8.04 | 444 | 8.74 |
| Total | 945 | 100.00 | 5080 | 100.00 |

Choosing only one VDC prevented a complete study of the ACA region which is much larger, but Ghandruk is a good representation of ACAP because it encompasses the majority of the programs, has a diverse ethnic population, is a tourism hotspot, and is where ACAP implemented the majority of its programs in the first 15 years of its establishment.

3.4 Methods

To understand the level of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions, a mixed-method approach was used to carry out research in Ghandruk from August –October, 2010. According to Cresswell and Clark (2006) mixed methods research provides strengths that help offset weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research alone. Further, Nightingale (2003a) states that issue of power tends to be studied better when the richness of qualitative interpretation is combined with other methods. Even though quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed

simultaneously, emphasis was given to qualitative data and the quantitative data was used to quantify participation and compare variables between samples.

This article was part of a bigger study for which data was collected from three sub-groups: 10 ACAP staff, 44 members of local management institutions and 44 marginalized individuals. Since the main objective of this paper was to examine the participation of marginalized groups in local management institutions, this article will only focus on the 44 members of the local management institutions. Data were collected over a period of three months using semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

3.4.1 Sample

Interviews were conducted with 44 members of five different management committees. The CAMC is the local institution under ACAP required by the 1996 Conservation Area Management Regulation and legally recognized under the Conservation Area Management Act. Under the CAMC are many different sub-management committees. The five management committees studied were CAMC, tourism management subcommittee (TMSC), electricity management subcommittee (EMSC), *Mul Ama Samuha* (MAS) and ward *Ama Samuha* (WAS). Table 3.3 explains the tasks of these management committees and the sample chosen from each committee. Although there were other sub-management committees under the CAMC³⁷, these five

³⁷ In Ghandruk, some of the other sub-committees under ACA were health post sub-committee, school sub-committee, day care center sub-committee, mule association sub-committee, etc.

committees were chosen because they were related to natural resource management and gender empowerment.

The sample was chosen using purposive sampling to include the president and secretary of each committee along with women, lower caste, and landless individuals if they were present. Even though efforts were made to get an equal sample from each ward and each committee, it was not possible due to either the group being inactive (for example some of the WAS), or in most cases due to the unavailability of the members. For example in the CAMC, out of 15 members, the VDC chairman was unavailable, three were no longer members and their replacement had not been appointed, and three were out of the village. Although the research aimed for equal gender representation, since two of the committees that were studied consisted only of women (MAS and WAS) and women in the committees were purposively included, the numbers for women are higher. The sampling frame for the management interviews was the membership list obtained from ACAP for the different committees. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes.

Table 3.3: Management Committee and Sample

| Committee | Tasks | Number of members | Sample selected |
|--------------|--|--|------------------|
| CAMC | Responsible for all conservation and development activities Conservation of forests and wildlife, management of rules and regulations, control illegal use of resources, issue permits for trees, conduct trainings, allocate funding, etc. | 15 (9 members elected from each ward, 5 members nominated by ACAP and VDC president) | 8 |
| TMSC | Responsible for management of hotels and tourism related activities in the region Setting of menu prices and room rates, assist CAMC in construction and repair of trails, handle problems related to tourists and tourism, etc. | 18 (all the hotel owners are members but regular members are 18) | 11 |
| EMSC | Responsible for the management of the micro-hydro power source collect monthly electricity bills, manage and repair micro-hydro, provide short term loans to villagers, etc. | 13 (members chosen from ward 3-8) | 10 |
| MAS | The main mothers group Perform cultural programs, assist CAMC in various conservation and development activities, provide small term loans to women, conduct women's empowerment programs, etc. | 21 (women representatives from 9 wards) | 11 |
| WAS | A women only group, formed in each ward, responsible for conservation and development in their own ward Cultural programs, tree plantations, trail repair, build temples, ward cleanup programs, etc. | 16 WAS in Ghandruk, each ward has at least 1 WAS, each household is a member | 10 |
| Total | | | 50 ³⁸ |

³⁸ Note: the number when totaled comes to more than 44 because there was an overlap between the members and the different management groups

3.4.2 Data Collection

The questionnaire consisted of both close-ended questions that collected quantitative data and open-ended questions that collected qualitative data. The quantitative part consisted of four different sections. The first section examined basic demographic data including age, gender, caste, religion, education, occupation, and birthplace. The second section collected information on the economic status of the participant, measured by land holding, crops grown, livestock raised, additional source of income, and ability to support daily needs with income. Section three examined dependency and access to natural resources. The last section quantified participation and assessed level of participation by looking at membership, leadership position, knowledge about management committee, meeting attendance, and interaction with staff. Table 3.4 gives a more detailed explanation of the operationalization of variables.

The qualitative section consisted of open-ended questions divided into three broad themes. The instrument started with general questions that provided insights into daily life of the individual, perceived problems, and changes in their socio-economic status. The second section consisted of institutional questions which were further divided into questions about the management committees, meetings, positives and negatives of involvement, and the individual's views on social discrimination and involvement of marginal groups. The last section consisted of questions related to ACAP (role of ACAP in the local institutions, the degree to which ACAP encourages participation of different groups, programs targeted at marginal groups, and positives and negatives of ACAP).

Participant observations added to the richness of these data by providing a more descriptive analysis of the study. It also helped understand issues of relationships and interactions between different participants. Observations were made in five CAMC meetings, three MAS and WAS meetings, one meeting for the TMSC and EMSC, and three different meetings for other sub committees in the main village. The author also attended religious and cultural programs, had informal conversations with many residents over tea and biscuits, and attended a ward clean up organized by one of the WAS.

In addition to these procedures, secondary data were obtained from the study of documents like ACAP's management plan, annual budget, minutes of meetings, CAMC operation plan, etc.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Since the interviews were conducted in Nepali they were translated and then transcribed. The transcript was coded using inductive coding (Bernard 2000) to identify themes. The descriptions from participant observation were then used to complement these themes and fill in the gaps whenever possible. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Cross-tabs were used to explore different variables and to quantify the results. Similarly, descriptive statistics were also used to measure frequency of meeting

attendance, contact with ACAP staff, etc. The results from quantitative and qualitative data were then merged together to develop a complete picture of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions in Ghandruk.

Different mixed method design procedures were followed to ensure validity and reliability while collecting (asking the same question to different people, using the same questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data), and analyzing data (joint display with quantitative categorical and qualitative themes, use of quotes to match statistical results, thick description of the research) (Creswell and Clark 2010, 240). In many research projects, especially in rural villages, participants expect financial or other benefits from taking part. Extra care was taken to remove such expectation by reading the consent form and asking the participants to give a verbal consent before participating. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, all raw data were kept confidential and the participants were assigned a pseudonym to conceal their identity.

Table 3.4: Operationalization of Variables

| Variables | Operationalization |
|--|---|
| Social variables | |
| <i>Age</i> | 5 categories of age group measured as <18, 18-24, 25-45, 46-65 and >65 |
| <i>Gender</i> | Two categories of 1= male and 2= female |
| <i>Caste</i> | A categorical variable measured as 1=Gurung, 2= Dalit, 3= Brahmin/ Chhetri, 4 = other ethnic groups |
| <i>Education</i> | Level of education attained by the individual. Measured by 1=no education, 2 = primary education (<5 th grade), 3 = secondary and higher (=>6 th grade) |
| <i>Birth place</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether they were born in Ghandruk or not |
| <i>Occupation</i> | A categorical data measured by 1=farmer, 2 = hotel owner, 3=wage worker, 4=salaried employee, 5 = business (shop) |
| Economic variables | |
| <i>Landholding</i> ³⁹ | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household owned any land (land size was measured in ropani, with 1 ropani = 508.72 m ² or .05 hectares) |
| <i>Crops grown</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household grew crops |
| <i>Crop use</i> | Categorical variable measured on whether the crop was used for 1=subsistence, 2=market, 3 =subsistence and market, (if the crop was used for market, income from crop was measured in NRs/year, where US\$1 =NRs73) |
| <i>Livestock raised</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household owned livestock |
| <i>Livestock use</i> | Categorical variable measured on whether the crop was used for 1=subsistence, 2=market, 3 =subsistence and market (if the crop was used for market, income from crop was measured in NRs/year). |
| <i>Additional source of income</i> | A yes or no dichotomy on whether the individual/household had any additional source of income, with 1=yes and 2= no. If yes, source of income was further classified into 1= salary/pension, 2=business (shops, restaurant, hotels), 3= wage work, 4= combination of pension and business |
| <i>Ability to support livelihood needs</i> ⁴⁰ | Categorical variable to understand an individual's ability to support daily livelihood needs based on the annual income, measured with 1= always, 2= sometimes, 3=never |
| Participation | |
| <i>Number of groups</i> | Collected in absolute value for the number management committees the individual is a member of |
| <i>Leadership position</i> | Collected in absolute value for the number of management committee in which the individual holds a leadership position in |
| <i>Knowledge about group</i> | Collected in string value on the ability to name background of committee formation, tasks of the committee, and achievements |
| <i>Meeting attendance</i> | Collected in categorical value measured as 1=frequently, 2=sometimes, 3=never, 4=don't know |
| <i>Office visits</i> ⁴¹ | A categorical value measured with individual visiting ACAP office in the last one year where 1= never, 2=1-3 times, 3= 3 or more |
| <i>Staff visits</i> | A categorical value measured with individual meeting an ACAP in the last one year where 1= never, 2=1-3 times, 3= 3 or more |

³⁹ Adapted from Agrawal and Gupta (2005)

⁴⁰ Adapted from Mehta and Heinen (2001) and Spiteri and Nepal (2008)

⁴¹ Adapted from Ojha (2006)

3.5 Results

The results are based on data collected from 44 members of five different management committees.

3.5.1 Respondents' Characteristics

The majority (61.4%) of the population were 25-45 years old. Males constituted 43.2% of the sample and females 56.8%. Their level of education ranged from illiterate (27%) to almost half of them (45.5%) having secondary education or higher (one person had attended university). The majority of the management members was Gurungs (77.3%), and in addition there were eight Dalits (18.2%) and two members from the higher caste (Brahmin and Chhetri). There were only seven people in the management committee who were not originally from Ghandruk, one male and six female. Six of them moved to Ghandruk because of marriage and their spouse lived there and one woman moved in search of better livelihood.

There were 29 people who identified themselves as farmers, 12 as hotel owners, two as wage workers and one woman was a teacher at the day care center. All except one woman owned land. The average land holding was 18 *ropani*, with the amount of land ranging from 0 to as much as 74 *ropani*. Almost all the participants grew crops (95.5%) out of which 47.6% said they used the crops for subsistence and 52.4% said for both market and subsistence. The average annual income from crop sale was Rs 5,000. Many (79.5%) raised livestock (cow, buffalo, goat, and chicken) and used it for subsistence. The majority of the sample (93.2%) reported to be always able to support

their daily livelihood needs with annual income, whereas 6.8% said this was only possible sometimes. Overall, out of the 44 individuals, there were 26 (59.1%) people who satisfied one or more criteria of marginality (woman, Dalit, inability to support livelihood needs, and landless). Table 3.5 illustrates the dimensions of marginality. The degree of marginality increases as one goes down the list.

Table 3.5: Marginalized Groups and Management Committees

| Marginal criteria | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Female, non Dalit | 18 | 69 |
| Dalit, male | 1 | 4 |
| Dalit, female | 4 | 15 |
| Dalit, female, inability to support livelihood needs | 2 | 8 |
| Dalit, female, inability to support livelihood needs, landless | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

3.5.2 Group Membership and Leadership Positions

An equal percentage of people (34.1%) were members of either one or two different management committees, 20.5% of the members belonged to three different committees, 6.8% to four and 4.5% of the sample belonged to five or more different management committees. Studying the minutes of different meetings and observing village activities also supported these data. In the CAMC meetings it was the same people who always spoke up, were always present, and the meetings did not start until these individuals came, even if they were not officially a part of that particular management committee. For example, there was an older Gurung resident who owned a

hotel in the main village and was present in all the management meetings, and sat in the front and spoke up more than the actual members of the committee. With almost two-thirds of the sample being members of more than one group, and the same people being present in all the meetings and getting involved in decision making, it is questionable whether only a handful of people are making all the decisions in all the local management institutions.

In terms of social variables, there was not much difference in the number of group membership according to the caste (Table 3.6). It is true that there were more Gurungs in the management committee (77.3%) as compared to Dalits (18.2%). But for the amount of people represented in the group, the distribution between the Gurungs and the Dalits seems to be the same. In the case of gender, the distribution of members according to group number was a little more inclined towards men, with majority (84.2%) of the men being involved in more than one group, and 10.5% even being in five or more groups. Women's involvement was much lower with only 52% of the women being involved in more than one group.

Economic factors were significant in determining membership, as all but one member owned land and majority were able to support livelihood needs with income. But once in the committee, there was no discrimination according to the economic conditions for the number of groups of which an individual was a member. For example, a Dalit woman who did not own any land was part of four different groups.

Table 3.6: Membership in Number of Committees

| Marginal conditions\Number of group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | >5 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Caste | | | | | |
| Gurung | 35.5 | 29.4 | 23.5 | 5.9 | 5.9 |
| Dalit | 12.5 | 62.5 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 0 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gender | | | | | |
| Male | 15.8 | 42.1 | 21.1 | 10.5 | 10.5 |
| Female | 48.0 | 28.0 | 20.0 | 4.0 | 0 |
| Landholding | | | | | |
| Yes | 34.9 | 34.9 | 20.9 | 4.7 | 4.7 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Ability to support livelihood with income | | | | | |
| Always | 36.6 | 34.1 | 19.5 | 4.9 | 4.9 |
| Sometimes | 0 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 0 |

Table 3.7: Number of Leadership Positions

| Marginal conditions \ Leadership positions | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Caste | | | | |
| Gurung | 20.6 | 61.8 | 11.8 | 5.9 |
| Dalit | 50.0 | 37.5 | 12.5 | 0 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 50.0 | 50.0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 26.3 | 57.9 | 10.5 | 5.3 |
| Female | 28.0 | 56.0 | 12.0 | 4.0 |
| Landholding | | | | |
| Yes | 27.9 | 55.8 | 11.6 | 4.7 |
| No | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Ability to support livelihood with income | | | | |
| Always | 26.8 | 58.5 | 9.8 | 4.9 |
| Sometimes | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 0 |

While looking at the leadership positions in different management committees, 27.3% of the people did not hold any leadership position. More than half the people (56.8%) held leadership positions in one committee, 11.4% in two different committees and 4.5% held leadership positions in three different committees. Table 3.7 shows the results of distribution of the leadership positions according to socio-economic variables. Leadership position according to gender was not significantly different between men and woman. Approximately the same number of men (57.9%) held a leadership position in one committee as the women (56%). For example, there was a Gurung man and a Gurung woman who held a leadership position in three different committees. However, the woman who was in three different committees and was also the treasurer of one of the WAS said, “I do not have any education, so when I have to keep track of the finances for the committee, my husband helps me and he writes everything down for me in the book and keeps track of the money” (Interview 17). This questions the actual level of participation of these women. Yes, this woman was part of three different groups, but her actual role in the committee and her level of participation is questionable.

There were differences in leadership position according to caste. Fifty percent of the Dalit members did not hold any leadership position; whereas 80% % of the Gurungs were leaders in at least one of the committees. Similar to group membership, no difference in leadership position occurred due to economic status.

3.5.3 Level of Participation

Adding more depth to the quantitative data presented above, this section will use the results from the interviews to examine the level of participation in the five management committees, highlighting the participation of marginal groups.

3.5.3.1 Knowledge about the Management Committee

In the management committee, 45.5% had knowledge about how their committee started, and 54.5% did not have any background knowledge about their group. The people who had the knowledge were residents of the area and had been part of the management committees for many years, most of them since the committee had been formed by ACAP. There was a major difference according to caste, where all of the eight Dalit committee members did not have any knowledge about how the group started. A common answer that emerged from the Dalit population was reflected with “I don’t know; I was not a part of the group [who formed the committee] and so I do not know how it started” (Interview 3). One of the older Gurung women from the WAS talked about how the ACAP started:

In the beginning when ACAP was established they had a female staff and she was responsible for generating awareness among the mothers of Ghandruk and taught us about cleanliness and savings and credits programs, and that is how our *Ama Samuha* started in the villages. The *samuha* was there before but it was not organized and we did not have a budget, so it was after ACAP came that we started thinking about budget and having meetings and other programs. (Interview 20)

In terms of gender, there was a difference with 57.9% men and 36% women having background knowledge about their group. Further questions were asked to gain a better understanding of the knowledge members had about their group. There were 61.4% who could talk about what their group did and 38.6% were not sure what their group's tasks were. Knowledge of committee according to gender showed that 15.8 % of the men and more than half of the women (56%) could not identify details on committee tasks. For example, a woman from the MAS, when asked what her committee does, limited her answer to "I don't know we just come when called, we bring garlands for the guests when they call us, and at times when a group of tourists come, we sing and dance for them" (Interview 30). In terms of caste, 70.6% of the Gurungs could talk about their committee and what they do versus the 37.5% Dalits who could do the same.

3.5.3.2 Attendance in Meetings

Within the management committees, 70.5 % said they always attended meetings, 27.3% said sometimes, and one person said they had never attended a meeting in the last one year. The one that had never attended was the president of one of the Dalit mothers group that had been inactive for a few years. Analysis of the distribution of meeting attendance according to gender and caste indicates that attendance differed significantly only with respect to gender, but not caste. Between castes, 73.5% of Gurungs always attended meeting, and 62.5% Dalits did the same (Figure 3.3).

Among the men, 89.5% attended meeting frequently and 10.5% only attended sometimes. Among the women, only 56% said they attended meetings always, 40% sometimes and 4% said they never attend meetings (Figure 3.4). On the day of one of the

Ama Samuha meetings, when an advisory member of the committee was asked if she was going to attend the meeting she replied:

I will but I have to wait for *dai* [means brother but she was referring to her husband] to get back home. I cannot leave the house like this, so I will come if he gets back in time, if not, then maybe next time. I had told him in the morning, but I don't think he will come back soon, let's see. (Interview 8)

Similarly, observations showed that in one of the WAS meetings, there were more men than women in the meeting, mainly because the meeting was held at 8pm and the women were busy cleaning up after dinner and had to take care of the children, so instead the male member of the household came to the WAS meeting.

Two common trends that were observed in Ghandruk were that meetings never started on time and many times the meetings got canceled after waiting for them to start. For example, in the three months, out of the three scheduled meetings of the *Ama Samuha*, only one meeting was carried out and the other two were cancelled after a handful of people waited in the office for three hours. The reason for the cancellation was due to low attendance.

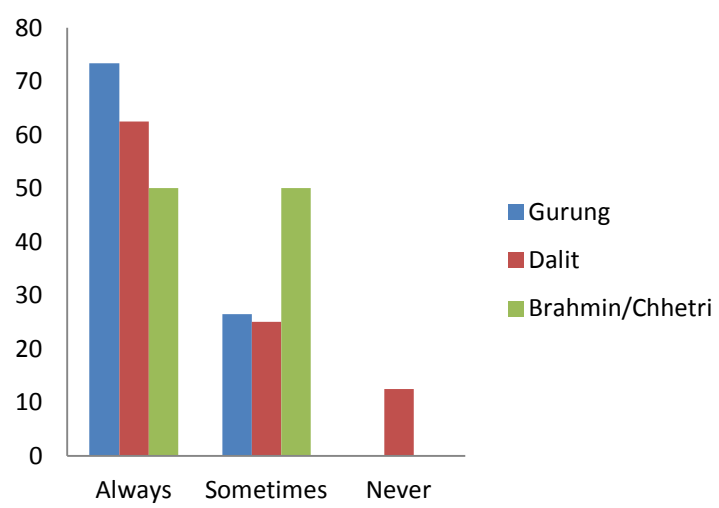


Figure 3.3: Frequency of Meeting Attendance According to Caste

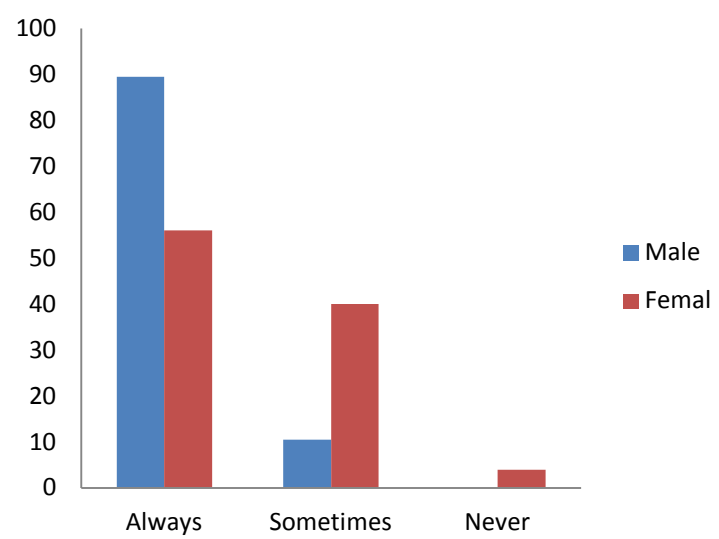


Figure 3.4: Frequency of Meeting Attendance According to Gender

The assistant secretary of the MAS added:

If everyone shows up in our meeting, we are supposed to have 21 people, but this never happens, mostly we have 3-4 people in the meeting, sometimes 8-10, sometimes we have 25 but this only happens when there is any issue related to money, even nonmembers come to the meeting to see if they can benefit financially in some way. But mostly it is 3-4 people, and we have to wait for hours and hours for everyone and at the end of the day we end up cancelling the meeting. In many cases it is the president that does not come; the main problem with our group today is that we have a useless leader. She should at least inform us that she is not coming, but no she just does not show up! (Interview 25)

Even if not this extreme, a similar situation was occurring in the CAMC meetings. Out of the five CAMC meetings attended by the author, none of them started on time (it would be fair to say the earliest they started was four hours late). One of the meetings was related to opening a new trekking route, and for this a lot of community members had shown up, but the meeting got canceled after people waited from noon to 5pm, because not enough CAMC members were present for the meeting to convene. In Ghandruk this trend did not surprise anyone and instead the author was told to ‘get used to it’.

3.5.3.3 Access to Information

In order to understand level of participation, one of the questions asked was related to access to information, to discern whether everyone getting information about meetings and various programs. In Ghandruk, all external notices first come to ACAP and then ACAP disseminates the information to all the management committees. All the letters then go to the president of various groups. The president of the group then distributes the information in his/her own ward and contacts the ward representative for the other wards, and similarly it is the ward representative's task to distribute the information to its own ward members. In some cases and groups, the committee keeps a *katuwal* or a messenger that goes from door to door giving information, but this trend is now disappearing because of the presence of cell phones. In the management committees, only four people said that they do not regularly get information about different things happening. All four of them stated that since their ward was farther away from the main village, sometimes information takes time to reach them.

3.5.3.4 Interaction with Park Officials

Interaction with park officials was measured using two questions. The first one asked how many times an individual met with an ACAP staff during the last year and the second question asked how many times the person visited the ACAP office during the last year. For that time frame 4.5% of the management committee said they had not met with an ACAP staff, 47.7% said they met with a staff 1-3 times and an equal percentage said they met an ACAP staff more than three times. Similarly, for the number of times an individual visited the ACAP office during the last year, 4.5% said never, 50% said

they went to the ACAP office 1-3 times, and 45.5% said they went more than three times.

Data showed that interactions with ACAP staff varied greatly across gender and caste; 21.1% of men said they interacted with ACAP staff 1-3 times during a year and 78.9% of men said their interaction was more than three times a year. Similarly 21.1% of men visited ACAP office 1-3 times during a year and 78.9% visited more than three times a year. Among women, only 8% reported not meeting ACAP staff or visiting the office in the last one year. Sixty eight percent said their interaction with ACAP staff was 1-3 times a year and 24% interacted more than three times a year. Seventy two percent of women had visited the ACAP office 1-3 times a year and 20% visited more than three times a year.

Table 3.8: Number of Interactions with ACAP Staff

| Marginal conditions\ACAP staff | 0 | 1-3 | >3 |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|--------------|
| Caste | | | |
| Gurung | 2.9 | 38.2 | 58.8 |
| Dalit | 12.5 | 75 | 12.5 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 0 | 21.1 | 78.9 |
| Female | 8 | 68 | 24 |

Table 3.9: Number of Visits to ACAP Office

| Marginal conditions/ACAP office | 0 | 1-3 | >3 |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Caste | | | |
| Gurung | 2.9 | 41.2 | 55.9 |
| Dalit | 12.5 | 75 | 12.5 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 0 | 100 | 0 |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 0 | 21.1 | 78.9 |
| Female | 8 | 72 | 20 |

A majority of the women that had visited the ACAP office said they went there to collect seeds for farming, and not for other reasons, whereas all the men said they went to ACAP to ask for technical and financial assistance and to attend meetings. There was a difference between the Gurungs and Dalits for interaction with ACAP staff and office visits. In the last year, 58.8% Gurungs met with an ACAP staff more than three times, 38.2% interacted with the staff 1-3 times and 2.9% had never met a staff. Similar numbers existed for office visits: 55.9% of Gurungs visited more than three times in the last year; 41.2% visited 1-3 times during a year; and 2.9% had never visited the office in the last year. The percentage of Dalits interacting with ACAP staff was same as the percentage of Dalits visiting the ACAP office: 12.5% never interacted with ACAP, 75% interacted 1-3 times in the last year, and 12.5% more than three times. Table 3.8 and 3.9 give an overview of the interactions.

3.5.3.5 What are Marginalized Individuals Doing in Management Committees?

CAMC – The two Dalit women in the CAMC were more active than most other members but did not hold leadership positions. They attended all the meetings, sat in the front of the room along with Gurung men and voiced their opinions loudly and clearly. When the older Dalit woman spoke on about things, the president or the secretary of the CAMC told her to stop talking. The younger Dalit woman was not only active among women but also among Dalit men. After joining the CAMC, she took the initiative and asked CAMC and ACAP for help and started a savings and credit group in her ward. Today she is the president of the group and also someone all the women in her ward consult in times of need. The Dalit women in her ward stated that since Bidya has become their representative she has always fought for their rights.

TMSC – There were no lower caste members in the TMSC. Although a Dalit in ward 2 owned a tea shop, he was not part of the committee. The TMSC only consisted of owners of big hotels. When efforts were made to interview the Dalit tea shop owner, he was out of town, and his wife and daughter did not have any knowledge that the TMSC existed. “Once every few years, we get a notice that we need to pick up a new menu from the office, but other than that we do not know anything about the committee or what it does” said the daughter.

Almost all hotels in Ghandruk were owned by men, so all except one were male members. The female member attended meetings but did not hold a leadership position and did not have adequate knowledge about how the TMSC was formed or its specific tasks. She said that her husband used to be in the committee until a few years ago

(currently he is in Japan for employment), and she has not been in the TMSC for more than 3-4 years.

EMSC –A Dalit male and a Gurung female were part of the 13 member team in the electricity committee. Both of them were general members and did not hold leadership positions. The Dalit male was active in the committee and had more knowledge about the committee than the woman. He admitted that on the household level the discrimination towards Dalit was present, but the opportunities to take part in committees were not affected by this discrimination. He stated:

If you are a Dalit, really interested in working in the committees and for the betterment of the village, no one will stop you from participating. I think the reason that not a lot of Dalits are present in these management committees is not because of discrimination but because of lack of interest on the parts of the Dalits themselves. People in the village had asked me to stay in the secretary position in the committee, but I declined because if you are in the post [leadership position], you have to sacrifice all your personal work and be ready to give 200% to the committee, go everywhere for the committee; and currently due to my own household situation I am not ready for that commitment.” He also added, “We should not let our desire to do something for the village and its people get affected just because we cannot enter a Gurung’s house. (Interview 21)

The contribution of the female member in the committee was very limited⁴². Her participation was minimal and her name was on the membership list just to satisfy the female quota. When asked what her role in the EMSC was she replied:

They call me in every group; they call me in the school group, in the electricity group, in the child care group, every group in the village. But I am not a member in any of them, just the president of the *Ama Samuha*. (Interview 1)

As she did not even know she was a member of the EMSC, it was not surprising that she had no knowledge about this committee.

MAS – The MAS consisted of only women. Out of the five leadership positions (president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer) Gurung women occupied all except one. The vice president of the committee was a Dalit. Her involvement in the group was through the quota system and her leadership position was because of Maoist activists who felt the need to have a Dalit vice president in the MAS since the president was a Gurung. However, the vice president had no knowledge about the management committee, how or when it was formed, what its achievements were and what her duty in the group was. She mentioned coming to meetings as her duty. Study of the meeting minutes showed that she had attended only two MAS meeting in the last one and half years. Her reason for not attending a recent MAS program was “Oh I thought it was on Sunday, so I came on Sunday instead of Saturday and found out that

⁴² This woman was also the president of the *Mul Ama Samuha*.

the *karyakram* had already finished” (Interview 36). The secretary of the *Ama Samuha* said:

She [the vice president] does not understand anything; she never attends meetings.

We have told her so many times that she needs to come to meetings, and learn about the group and take part. She says ok when we tell her but the next month she does not show up again. Once she sent her mother to the meeting, she thought that her mother could represent her in the meetings. She thinks it is about just showing up, whether it is her or another person from the house. In rare cases that she shows up she does not say a word. (Interview 13)

The treasurer was active in the committee, but the secretary and assistant secretary hardly spoke up in meetings and did not attend meetings regularly. Participation of not only Dalit women, but also Gurungs, was very low in the committee. Women hardly attended meetings, no one in the committee could state the exact number of members (answers ranged from 9-22), and the committee had hardly achieved anything during the three years since its reestablishment. A common reason why this was the case, according to the members was “our leader is useless, she is never there”. The president of the MAS was accused of money laundering, lack of financial transparency, absence in meetings, and not incorporating the views of other committee members. During one meeting, the other women started speaking against her but due to her age and status in society; the women were forced to keep quiet when she shouted at them.

An example of how she did not incorporate the views of other committee members was observed while organizing a program for the MAS. The MAS had recently received Rs 100,000 from a life insurance company. The president and the treasurer had gone to receive the money and the insurance company staff was coming to Ghandruk the following week to meet all the people. While trying to organize a program for the insurance staff the president did not incorporate views of the members. Instead of asking her group members on what they should do, she went to the ACAP office to ask them, she asked the opinion of prominent Gurung men in the village, and never asked the opinion of her committee members.

Women had asked her to step down from the president's position a few months ago but she refused. The other members felt that the best option would be to wait for one more year until her term⁴³ is over and re-elect another person as president. Some people also said:

Today we hardly have anyone in village, everyone has moved to the city. It is hard to find people who want to take leadership positions, especially women because it takes a lot of time. So if we remove her from the position, what if we cannot find anyone who wants to become the president? What do we do then? So that is why a lot of us are quiet about this issue. (Interview 8)

WAS – Some WAS were more active in Ghandruk VDC than others, and some had been inactive for a while. Therefore, the presidents of the more active *Ward Ama*

⁴³ The CAMC serves for a five year period, and the other sub-committees serve for a four year term.

Samuha knew much more about the committee than the presidents of the inactive ones. The two WAS (from ward 5 and 3) that were active had regular meetings and monthly clean ups. The leaders in these groups were Gurung women who were the original residents of Ghandruk and part of the committee when it was formed. In spatially bigger wards or wards with higher population there were more than one *Ama Samuha*, one for Dalits and one for Gurungs. In ward 5, the Gurung *samuha* was active and the Dalit *samuha* was inactive. The president of the Dalit WAS did not know anything about the group; they did not have a budget, and had not achieved anything. The president said:

They [the Gurungs] told us to form our own group, so we formed the group, but we do not have meetings or have not done anything. We still go to different programs that they organize, if they call us, other than that, we have not done anything.

(Interview 44)

A similar situation occurred in ward 7 Dalit *Ama Samuha* where the group was inactive and the president did not know anything. Overall, majority of the WAS were inactive and had not done anything in the last 2-3 years.

3.5.4 Reasons for Involvement

In terms of involvement, 15.9 % said their reason was voluntary, 13.6% said they were nominated by ACAP, 20.5% were nominated by other committee members, 11.4% said they were nominated by villagers, and 38.6% were nominated by both villagers and the committee members. For example, the secretary of the CAMC was elected as his

ward representative and within the committee, the members appointed him secretary.

The Dalit women in the CAMC said:

They [ACAP] felt that they should not leave Dalits behind and that is what the Maoists think too. Dalits should be treated as equals and that is why I am part of the group, I am here because of the Dalit quota that they have. (Interview 4)

A Gurung woman who was the president of the ward 4 *Ama Samuha* had a different take on the issue, she said:

I did not join the group and take on the responsibility of the president because I wanted to. In our ward we mothers take turns taking this position. Since I had not done it earlier, I was forced by the villagers saying you have to stay. I already have a lot of personal issue. My husband is not here, he runs a hotel in the Base Camp area, and I have an old mother-in-law to take care of. That is why I did not want to commit to this, but they forced me to stay. My four year term is almost over, I am not going to stay in the group after this, and I have already told them. I don't know who will be the president next. We all have our own problems and other commitments, so people are very hesitant about taking this responsibility. And once you stay they won't let you leave until the term is over. (Interview 19)

This story was similar to what majority of the women in management committee stated. In all the committees lower caste members were nominated by ACAP instead of being elected by the community.

3.5.5 Benefits of Involvement

While exploring the benefits of involvement in management committees, 27% said that there were benefits of involvement. Some of the benefits members mentioned were: learned new things, learned how to speak in front of people, got more recognition in the village, and other members helped you in times of need. A Dalit woman in the CAMC said:

Today I can speak up in meetings, even in annual functions that we organize; I don't feel nervous or panic. Before I did not know what to say in meetings but today I can speak confidently. All this I learned by being a part of the group. (Interview 3)

On the other hand, 73% said there were no benefits of being part of the committee. Some of the negative aspects of involvement were: criticism from villagers and other committee members, time consuming which resulted in conflicts with household work, farming and in the case of the hotel owners, the management of their hotels. A member of the electricity committee stated:

Benefit? There is no benefit at all, it is just a headache. The meetings never start on time, you have to force people to come, all the work that we do never satisfies everyone so there is always complains. Rather than benefits there are negative aspects of involvement. We do not get paid for being in the committees, but we have to give a lot of our time for it, and not get any monetary benefit in return. So I think it is a waste of our time. (Interview 24)

An older Gurung man, who was involved in four different groups and held a leadership position in one of them said:

They forced me into the group saying that I was older and had been in the village all my life. But I cannot read and write, so it is very difficult for me being part of the group. As a president in the committee people expect me to speak up in all meetings, and I do not know what to say. So rather than benefit, being in the group is very embarrassing for me and it is a huge burden. (Interview 6)

A lot of the members (64%) said they were involved in the group for *samajh sewa* or social work. The concept of doing *samajh sewa* for Ghandruk was stronger in Gurung men.

3.6 Discussion

The idea behind participatory conservation efforts are that communities will collectively manage natural resources and ensure equal access among all the stakeholders (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Equal representation of all stakeholders in these CBNRM programs are also issues of social justice as these institutions are the ones making decisions regarding access to natural resources and development opportunities.

Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the study was used to answer two research questions in ACA, Nepal:

- (i) Are marginal groups involved in management committees?
- (ii) What is their level of participation?

Socio-economic variables were used to define marginality and compare participation between different individuals. Overall the findings suggest that marginal groups were included but their involvement was marginal and their participation was limited by various socio-economic conditions (Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Mehta and Heinen 2001; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Agarwal 2001; Allendorf 2007; Spiteri and Nepal 2008).

3.6.1 Participatory Inclusion

Poorer households, lower caste and women are the majority users of natural resources and are highly dependent on them for fuelwood and fodder. Results showed that except for one member, all of the management committee members were landowners and the majority was able to support their daily livelihood needs with annual income. All decisions regarding access to natural resources and opportunities for trainings and other empowerment options are offered through these management institutions and the minimal representation of poorer residents affect their chances of benefitting from these opportunities. This further marginalizes these groups that are already on the lowest level in terms of socio-economic status (Timsina 2002; Agarwal 2001).

CBC programs in Nepal have been dominated by upper caste members (Agarwal 2001; Lama and Buchy 2004; Mehta and Kellert 2002; Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Agrawal and Gupta 2005). In Ghandruk, results showed that management committees were not dominated by higher caste Brahmins and Chhetris, mainly due to

the low population (only 12.5%) of these groups⁴⁴. Instead these management committees were dominated by Gurungs. The Gurungs in Ghandruk are the largest caste, biggest landowners and hotel owners, are more literate, loan money to other castes, and are mostly retired from reputed occupations like the British and the Indian Army. In an earlier study on a Peasant caste in Rampura, India, Srinivas (1959, 1) identified a caste as dominant if “it preponderates numerically over the other castes, and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low.” He further added to this definition that dominance is made stronger by level of education and the type of occupation caste members pursue. The Gurungs, although lower on the caste hierarchy⁴⁵, due to their dominance (because of a combination of various factors mentioned above) command respect from everyone including the Brahmins and Chhetris in the area. Although higher caste did not dominate the management committees, results showed that caste served as a significant indicator of who was excluded. The Dalits also termed as untouchables, although present in local management institutions, were minimally represented. In five different management institutions, no more than three Dalits were present in any committee.

As in many developing countries, women in Nepal have traditional roles, are rarely included in the decision-making process at home and at the community level and have unequal opportunities to participate in local management institutions (Agrawal and

⁴⁴ People of Nepal are either Indo-Aryan descends or the Mongolic descends from Tibet. Due to the Indo-Aryan decent of these higher caste, they are mostly situated in the flat lands or the middle hills of the country and only a very limited population reside in the mountainous region of Nepal (Bista 2004).

⁴⁵ Gurungs are not traditionally under the caste system because they follow Buddhist religion but are situated as equal to the forth level or the *Sudra* caste system.

Gibson 2001; Sultana 2009; Schmink 1999; Lama and Buchy 2004; Agarwal 2001; Cornwall 2003). Similarly, women, although part of management committees, were limited to membership in women-only groups. In mixed gender groups, the representation of women was almost absent.

Results showed that inclusion in management committees in Ghandruk was not limited by caste, gender, and wealth alone. It was a combination of various factors that made certain groups of people more powerful than others. Although the generic categories of marginality, as defined in this research, was important to understand participation of certain groups, results suggested that within these marginal groups there were various other factors that combined together to make certain individuals more powerful than others. For example, within the Dalit— those with education, time, wealth, fewer family obligations, and ability to support daily livelihood needs— had a better opportunity to participate in management committees than other individuals.

3.6.2 Levels of Participation

Women and Dalits were part of management institutions in Ghandruk. But participation is not just being part of something; it means having actual power to influence decisions being made (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Gruber 2010; Cleaver 2001). The marginal groups had low levels of attendance in meetings, lacked adequate knowledge about the management committees and their functions, barely interacted with ACAP staff and had minimal input in decisions being made in management committees. Dalits and women did not hold leadership positions in most of the groups, and even if they did, it was limited to a Dalit-only or a woman-only group. Those in leadership

positions practiced passive forms of participation. The Dalit vice president of the mothers group did not know what her duty in the group was or how many members her committee had. Similarly, the treasurer of the same group could identify her duty but due to lack of education, was not able to carry out the tasks of the treasurer. Instead, it was her husband who was doing it for her. Therefore, although quantitative data showed that these women were members of the group; further analysis showed that their level of participation was minimal which correlated with other studies (White 1996; Agarwal 2001).

ACAP started its initiative to include women from the initial stages of the project. ACAP's operation plan in 1986 mentioned women and the need for their participation in conservation programs (Sherpa, Coburn, and Gurung 1986). As a part of their gender empowerment programs, ACAP separated women into their own groups and formed the *Ama Samuha*. This step had been effective in the first few years to empower the women, but today due to social and political issues, the women have become more vulnerable than they were because the mother groups are inactive, lack financial transparency and effective leadership, and do not have any input in major decisions being made in Ghandruk. Also, the lack of women representatives in the CAMC have resulted in further marginalization of women and has also resulted in lack of interest for these women to be part of management committees (although there were two Dalit women present in the CAMC, they were nominated through the Dalit quota and are more focused towards the Dalit representative than women in general).

Similarly, in many cases Dalits have their own WAS, established mainly by separation from the Gurung women⁴⁶. But the formation of these separate committees does not ensure empowerment of the Dalit women. The separate Dalit *samuh*as in most cases were inactive and existed in name only. The separation of marginal groups from mainstream groups was a means through which existing power relationships were applied and reproduced (White 1996). Further, Agarwal (2001) writes about how these 'exit options' of formation of separate groups and the result of marginal voices not being heard in the main group does not ensure actual participation if the majority of the decisions regarding access and use of resources is determined by the main group. Therefore, women and Dalits, if not adequately represented in mixed gender groups do not achieve actual empowerment, as these groups are the ones that make the decisions regarding all conservation and development programs in Ghandruk. These cases are examples of participation as a means to achieve project outputs and maintain a participatory image (Parfitt 2004).

Women and Dalits attended very few meetings. Participant observation showed that those that did attend meetings were quiet and did not give input into the decision-making process in most cases. Agarwal (2010) relates attending meetings and speaking up in them as a form of active participation for marginal groups; something that is necessary to influence decision making. Lack of adequate levels of participation also led women and Dalits to have very little knowledge about the management committee and

⁴⁶ The Gurungs separated the Dalits from their WAS and told them to form their own. The different WAS have spent a part of their budget on buying pots and pans for wedding and other events. Households in the village can borrow these pots and pans for different function. The Gurung women therefore did not want the Dalits using the same vessels for cooking and eating.

its functions. Marginal groups hardly interacted with ACAP staff, and even if they did it was for economic incentives like seeds⁴⁷, whereas for Gurung men the interaction was for information sharing and learning. Increasing number of interactions with project staff has proved to be important when understanding access to benefits and resources in other studies too (Ojha 2006; Agrawal and Gupta 2005). Men's office visits were aimed more at inquiry and participation issues and this generated more awareness and interest in committees and functions. This made men more aware of ACAP activities and participatory opportunities that were available. Women identified the lack of female staff as one of the reasons why their interaction was limited. Similarly, as different groups in Ghandruk considered their own caste member as their representative in management committees, the interaction of Dalits with ACAP staff might increase if ACAP had a Dalit staff member in their office. Therefore, to ensure adequate participation of different groups of people, NGOs need to incorporate the social and cultural context of the community while hiring field staff and project managers.

In most cases, Dalits and women in management committees had difficulty in speaking up and making contributions due to social structures present in community. According to Agarwal (2010, 98) there is a need to move away from this 'western assumption' that people "once inducted into a decision making body will attend meetings and speak up at them". Not only discrimination at the household level (Dalits not being able to enter homes of other castes) but separation of Dalits by some Gurungs in public spaces like meetings, confirmed the concept of 'untouchable' still being

⁴⁷ To promote agriculture in the region ACAP distributes vegetable seeds to villagers at a subsidized rate.

prevalent in Ghandruk. These social differences created unequal power structures in local management committees and restricted the participation of marginal groups (Parkins and Mitchell 2005; Parfitt 2004; Cleaver 2001; Kothari 2001).

Social norms and traditions also prevented women's level of participation in management committees. In many instances heavy workloads, both at the house and the farm, prevented these women from giving adequate time to committee activities. The issue of time was stronger in meetings, because of the nature of meetings in Ghandruk: they never started on time and they lasted the whole day. In villages, social norms prevent women from staying out from the house after dusk. Agarwal (2001, 1638) also found 'restrictions' to what women of 'good character' do, as something that prevented women from fully participating in these programs. The burdens of ruining a family name and reputation by staying outside of the house and sharing public spaces with other men prevent women from attending meetings regularly. This was also observed in committee meetings in Ghandruk where women were always worried about how long the meetings were taking to start, and in some cases they started getting phone calls from home or had their children come call them from meetings. Therefore, among women, social norms made it difficult for those who were younger, or had greater family responsibilities, from actively being involved in management institutions. To ensure adequate presence of women and Dalits in management committees ACAP should keep these social restrictions in mind while scheduling meetings, and other committee activities.

The lack of awareness and education about the different management committees and its functions also proved to be an important issue while examining the level of

participation of Dalits and women. Women in these management committees did not have the education to adapt to the technicality and requirements of the different management committees. Therefore, a lot of marginal individuals were further marginalized in these committees because of this lack of education and awareness. The lack of knowledge about these committees further prevented them from speaking up in meetings and being active participants.

Therefore, results showed that it was not only being a woman, or a Dalit that prevented these individuals from participating in management committees. The findings demonstrate that it was a combination of several other factors (wealth, domestic responsibilities, social norms and traditions, issue of time and interest, education, occupation, etc.) that influenced the level of participation of individuals.

Many conservation and development programs require representation of certain groups to satisfy project requirements (Agarwal 2001; Brown 2002). Similarly in Ghandruk, under the CAMR (HMG 1996), each VDC should have a CAMC consisting of 15 members, out of which 5 should be nominated by ACAP's conservation officer. These five members should include *mahila* [women], *pichadiyekko barga* [backward caste which ACAP has denoted as Dalits, and *samaj sewak* [social worker which means those that are active in the community and are helping in community activities]. The sub committees within ACAP followed the example of the CAMC to ensure the inclusion of Dalits and women in their group. In most cases this was to satisfy the quota requirements and hardly resulted in the actual empowerment of marginal groups. An example of this could be seen in Ghandruk with the nomination of the *Ama Samuha* president in the

electricity committee without the woman having the knowledge that she was included in the group. Similar to other research, (Timsina 2002) men in Ghandruk never expected the woman to participate in the committee even though her name was in the membership list. In such cases, marginal groups lacked interest in the committee and resulted in being inactive members (Agrawal and Chhatre 2006).

The quota system established in many countries is part of a policy effort to include those that are traditionally not included in management, and this is the concept behind participatory decision-making and democracy (Arnstein 1969). Similarly, participation of women and Dalits in Ghandruk has been encouraged by the quota system and the political influence of the Maoists. But results showed that forceful involvement due to political affiliation is not sufficient to ensure attendance in meetings, to generate knowledge about management committees and to make significant contributions in the decisions being made. Also results showed that inclusion of woman and Dalits as a representative of the entire woman or Dalit population does not lead to adequate representation of different stakeholders that are present in a community.

As found in earlier studies (Cleaver 2001; Parfitt 2004) project managers mostly focus on participation as a means when they label a project as successful, and they chose to ignore how decisions are actually made and the level of empowerment of different individuals. Such conditions make stronger the criticism that most CBC programs, no matter how 'successful' they are termed, still follow the participation as a means to achieve project outputs rather than actual empowerment (McCool and Guthrie 2001).

Having truly representative participatory process that involves those that were traditionally excluded can be a long and complicated process (Jeanrenaud 2002). Since the quota system and awareness of inclusion of marginal groups (especially the Dalits) is a recent phenomenon in Ghandruk, there is a need to monitor the process of participation and re-evaluate it in a few years to understand if changes have occurred in the inclusion and empowerment of marginal groups.

Most research related to participation follows a case study method, or uses surveys to quantify participation in conservation programs. The use of mixed methods in this research not only quantified participation but also examined the actual level of participation. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data in this research provided a complete picture of participation of marginal groups and shed light into distribution of power in the community. Backing quantitative data with qualitative results and quotes gave insights into the level of participation of marginal groups and how much contribution they were actually making to the management committees. Issues of traditions, norms and discrimination cannot be understood without a combination of a variety of research methods.

ACAP's aim is to empower the local community and make them capable. But most of the marginalized individuals in the management committee lack information about the different management committees and in many cases management committee leaders do not understand their duty in the group. This situation results in lack of self-confidence and the inability to speak up in meetings (Ojha 2006). There is a need for ACAP to focus more on generating awareness and conducting trainings to ensure an

increase in self-motivation skills among marginal groups. Along with education and awareness, it is also important to understand that people will not participate by mere invitation of including them through specific requirements. It is important for ACAP and other organizations to understand social norms and traditions present, and identify trends that are likely to reproduce the social power differences in management committees. Although legally abolished, the caste system and concept of ‘untouchability’ is prominent in villages like Ghandruk even today. Therefore, policy makers need to ensure not only inclusion of Dalits through the quota system but also in aiming for structural changes by generating awareness among community members on equality, through both formal education and informal programs.

Understanding the issues of how different power is distributed among different actors in a CBNRM and how the combination of different factors influence the level of participation produces a greater understanding of participatory conservation initiatives.

3.7 Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper is based on the foundation that stakeholder participation in environmental decision making can enhance the quality of the decisions being made (Agrawal and Chhatre 2006; Reed 2008; Spiteri and Nepal 2006; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005; Western and Wright 1994). However, participation can only be termed effective: first “as a measure of citizenship and means of empowerment” and secondly “for its potential effects on equity, efficiency and sustainability” (Agarwal 2001, 1624). ACAP is considered a successful example of participatory conservation initiatives because it adopted a community-based approach from the initial stages of its

project and has established CBOs for management of all conservation and development programs. This study made an attempt to examine the participatory approaches in ACAP to understand whether the process was inclusive and to what level marginal groups participated in local management institutions.

Findings of this study indicated that although ACAP has taken initiatives to include marginal groups in local management institutions the participation of marginal groups is still 'marginal' as these processes are still affected by caste, gender and wealth in rural Nepal. Similar to other studies (Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Timsina 2002; Ojha 2006; Spiteri and Nepal 2008; Lama and Buchy 2004; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Khadka and Nepal 2010; Varughese 1999), in local management institutions in Ghandruk individuals of more wealthy households generally held leadership positions, men had better access to processes of participatory decision-making than women, and power differences due to social norms and traditions made the Dalits more vulnerable than other castes in committees. These individuals also differed in terms of membership, leadership role, knowledge about the committee, attendance at the meeting, and interaction with staff.

However, within these generic categories of marginality defined by the literature, there was a combination of other factors that made some individuals more powerful than others. Taking previous literature a step further, this study recommends that generic denotation of certain groups based on caste and gender tends to assume the concept of homogeneity within groups, an assumption that is strongly criticized by political ecology literature. Therefore, marginality needs to be examined by understanding the complexity

of participation and how various factors are intertwined together with the social, political and historical context to make some individuals more powerful than others.

Decentralized decision-making is supposed to ensure that stakeholders of different interests and views are included in decision-making processes (Agrawal 2001; Western and Wright 1994; Gruber 2010). Results from Ghandruk showed that if someone gets involved in one group they automatically get recruited into other groups, mainly due to convenience, lack of people who want to take leadership positions in management committee, and increased outmigration due to the political instability of the country. Participation is a popular discourse that conservation and development projects follow, but the actual empowerment and equal representation of all stakeholders remain a myth in the majority of projects even today (Cornwall 2003). Even though termed as a model for participatory conservation and development, the different management committees studied in Ghandruk still practiced highly centralized decision-making. There was a handful of individuals who held membership in numerous committees, and it was these same people who had adequate knowledge about the functioning of the group and made all the decisions. This goes against the basis for a decentralized decision-making process, and in the case of Ghandruk has affected the effective functioning of management committees like the mothers groups.

Therefore, the case of Ghandruk served as a good example of how it is necessary not to examine only who participates but also how the participation occurs and in what capacity the participation takes place (Sultana 2009). In the case of Ghandruk, the state-backed quota system has been successful in the inclusion of women and lower caste. But

in most cases these individuals had very low levels of participation. For example, participation as a form of tokenism (Arnstein 1969) to satisfy requirements and passive participation (Pretty 1995) were common forms of participation in Ghandruk's different management committees. This form of inclusion adopted by ACAP tends to mask the differences within groups that exist. For example, among women, a combination of various factors — education, caste, wealth, occupation, family responsibilities — all combine together to make some women more powerful than others. Therefore results reflect that ACAP's aim is surface improvements instead of aiming for achieving long term structural changes, a common trend followed by many NGOs (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; Dolhinow 2005).

It is true that traditional norms and social structures that communities have been practicing for centuries, especially those based on religious beliefs, are hard to break. But to ensure effective participation and empowerment of different actors, ACAP needs to ensure those that are termed 'marginal' are chosen by the community members as ward representatives instead of being nominated by ACAP through the quota system. ACAP also needs to ensure that residents of Ghandruk have adequate information about the different management committees and functions. Awareness and education, both formal and informal, need to be promoted to generate enough confidence for individuals to speak up in meetings and community activities, which in turn can lead to taking initiatives in management institutions.

This research contributes to the literature on participation of marginal groups and how it is necessary to factor in the socio-political and historical context of the area

(Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998) to understand the level of participation of different groups. Results also showed that without the distribution of power, participation in the management committees in Ghandruk is termed ineffective.

This study also had some limitations due to the short time frame, recent political instability in the country, and limited spatial areas. Therefore, future research could study local management institutions in multiple VDCs within ACAP and access the degree to which level of participation in other areas of ACAP is similar or different. It would also be valuable to study participation in other protected areas in Nepal where the management authority is with the Government and examine how participation of marginal groups is being carried out. Finally, since this study site was dominated by Gurungs, with the higher caste Brahmins and Chhetris present as a minority, it would be valuable to study other participatory conservation initiatives where there were more Brahmins to determine if this affects their dominance in the group and how this affects the participation of Dalits.

4. IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION OF MARGINAL GROUPS IN ACAP'S MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS

4.1 Introduction

Identified as a more effective alternative to top down decision making, participation has become a buzz word since the 1970s. Today some form of participation can be found in all conservation and development projects. International organizations, governments, NGOs, and local communities have promoted participatory decision making as a win-win solution for conservation and development (Cornwall and Brock 2005). But scholars have criticized how participation is not as bottom up and inclusive as made to look on paper (Parfitt 2004; Njoh 2002; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; White 1996; Sandstrom 2009). Criticism against participation has come up from time to time, with the strongest critique against participatory approaches by Cooke and Kothari (2001) when they termed participation as the 'new tyranny'. They felt that this strong detonation was necessary as previous criticism on participation had failed to generate effective improvements and better results in projects (3).

As the concept of participation began to flourish, program managers started using it as a tool kit approach, assuming what worked in one part of the world would also work in another. The majority of these participatory projects were carried out at a community level with the assumption that communities were a homogenous unit (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998). These practices not only ignored the social, political and economic diversity of the country, but also the social hierarchy and diverse populations that existed

in a single community. Communities consisted of populations that differed in gender, age, race, and ethnicity, and these differences established a social hierarchy in communities, a fact ignored by conservation and development projects.

The ‘new tyranny’ of participation states that participation is currently not used as a tool for liberation and distribution of power; rather it aids in masking power differences within communities by denoting community as a single unit (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Many development agencies are employing participation as a tool to satisfy project needs and in turn are aiding in maintaining, or in some cases making stronger, the existing power differences within communities. Therefore, there is a need to replace a tool-kit approach to participation to specific participation that is based on the context and objective of the place (Kapoor 2001; Reed 2008).

In many community-based conservation practices, an elite capture syndrome exists where a handful of community elites capture all the benefits of conservation, while the poor have to bear all the cost of conservation (Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). This results in participatory exclusion where certain community groups on the lowest social hierarchy are further marginalized (Agarwal 2001). In many cases decisions in participatory processes are made by locally established institutions. These institutions exist in the same social and political spheres that the community exists in and function within the same social norms and power structures; the same social rules determine the rules of these local institutions and participatory processes.

This paper examines how different socio-economic and political factors influence power and participation, and how some groups are more vulnerable to suppression and at a disadvantage than others. Using the political ecology framework this paper addresses the following research questions: (i) what social, economic, and political factors affect the participation of marginal groups⁴⁸, (ii) what are the factors perceived by marginal groups as significant barriers to participation, and (iii) what role do management institutions play in facilitating the participation of marginal groups.

4.2 Political Ecology Framework

The concept of political ecology combines concepts of political economy⁴⁹ and cultural ecology⁵⁰. No one definition of political ecology exists because of its vast research agenda and the range of disciplines (geography, anthropology, ecology, political science, etc.) it draws on. Some areas where political ecology have been applied include: food insecurities, soil erosion, landlessness, resource decline, human health

⁴⁸ Marginal in this paper and in the context of Nepal is defined as women, lower caste, and poor. Caste - Nepal consists of a social hierarchy based on the Hindu religion. Each individual, by birth, belongs to one of the four *varna* or class. The four caste divisions are Brahmins (priests or scholars), Chhetri (rulers and warriors), Vaisya (Merchant or traders), and Sudra (farmers, artisans, and laborers). Below all this are the Dalits or the untouchables. In this paper lower caste usually refers to the Dalits. The National Dalit Commission defines Dalits as “those communities who, by virtue of caste based discrimination and so called untouchability, are most backward in the social, economic, educational, political, and religious spheres, and are deprived of human dignity and social justice” (Pradhan and Shrestha 2005, 3). Poor - According to the World Bank (2006), 31% of Nepal’s population is below national poverty level (US\$12/month). According to the World Bank, those that are the poorest in Nepal generally are farmers, wage earners, those with small land holdings or landless, those with illiterate household heads, households with seven or more members. In terms of caste and ethnic groups, the Hill and Terai Dalits are the poorest segments of the population (WorldBank 2006). In this paper, poor is defined as landless, and not able to support livelihood needs with annual income.

⁴⁹ Political economy deals with the relationship between politics and economy and ignores the social and historical aspect in which the relationship might occur.

⁵⁰ Cultural ecology approach deals with the interaction between culture and environment but it treats the culture as an island, isolated from the broader political, economical and historical forces that exist.

crises, etc. (Robbins 2004). Although anthropologist Eric Wolf first coined the term (1972), political ecology gained popularity in the 1980s with geographers Blaikie and Brookfield's seminal work on land degradation that elucidated the interconnectedness of political, economic and cultural issues to environmental change (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). According to them, the three issues of concern for political ecologists are: 1) the interactive effects of social process and environmental degradation through time, 2) the importance of scalar influences, and 3) contradiction between social and environmental changes through time (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, 13).

Political ecology represents an alternative to apolitical ecology⁵¹ (Robbins 2004, 5). Political ecology is a broad term and can be defined in several ways but scholars agree that it “sets out to unravel the political forces at work in environmental access, management and transformation” (Robbins 2004, xvi). The two basic principles of political ecology are: environmental problems reflect a broader political and economic forces and there is a need to change the local, regional and global political process in favor of the ‘poor’ (Bryant and Bailey 1997, 3). Similarly, Robbins (2004) further identifies political ecology as both a hatchet and a seed. As a hatchet it exposes how the environment is currently controlled by those with power and the need to critique this approach, especially from the “point of view of local people, marginal groups, and vulnerable populations.”(12) Political ecology as a seed studies how communities cope with changes and come up with progressive results to adapt to these changes, and move

⁵¹ Apolitical ecology is based on the neo-Malthusian concept and diffusion of technology as a cause of environmental degradation. Apolitical ecology does not look beyond these concepts to understand how different forces like market and globalization play a major role in influencing environmental practices.

toward a more sustainable livelihood. The main assumptions of political ecology are that politics and the environment are thoroughly connected; material struggles over the environment are also complicated political-struggles; and unequal power relations inform access, control and distribution of natural resources (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 2004).

This social construct of nature varies between different groups, especially between those that have power and those that are powerless (Robbins 2004) and natural resource conflicts result from the interaction of different actors that have different aims and interests (Bryant and Bailey 1997, 24). According to Bryant and Bailey, there are five major ‘actors’ that are important in understanding environment and development issues: multilateral institutions, the state, private sector, environmental NGOs and grassroots actors. Stonich (2000) further divides Bryant and Bailey’s grassroots actors into “rich and poor, women and men, ethnic groups,” etc. Tying the concept back to participation, she states, “participation is a political process involving contestation and conflict among different people with diverse power, interests, and claims rather than methodology or set of facilitating techniques”(20).

Although some researchers have used the concept of political ecology to study first world issues (McCarthy 2002), political ecology has mainly focused on third world problems. Third world political ecology is relevant to issues of environmental degradation and marginalization, environmental conflict, conservation and control, and environmental identity and social movement (Robbins 2004; Bryant 1992). In order to understand how management of natural resources often occur in third world countries,

power relationships determined by class, gender, race, ethnicity, education, and kinship have been studied in detail. Some examples of case studies that deal with political ecology in the third world and are relevant to this paper are highlighted below.

Schroeder and Suryanata (2004) challenge the concept of homogenous communities using the example of agroforestry in two specific cases in Java and Gambia. According to them agroforestry has led to an increased interclass land tenure conflict in Java while, in the case of Gambia, these practices have led male landholders to control women's labors. The authors feel that the idealized view of agroforestry tends to ignore "the internal working of property and labor claims". By ignoring community dynamics that exist within and between groups, this further increases already existing gender and class conflict. This case of agroforestry ties in with participatory processes in many community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programs (Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Agarwal 2001; Li 1996; Berkes 2004).

Similarly, Carney (2004), in her research in Gambia, discusses the role of political and economic forces and how they produce gendered access to land and labor among rice farmers. She uses case studies about two forms of irrigated land conversions—irrigated rice schemes and horticultural projects—to examine gender struggle over resources, as well as the capture of women's labor by male household heads for surplus production. Thus, feminist political ecologists like Carney stress the need for a better understanding of gender relationships and the social spheres that determine women's rights.

Studying deforestation in Madagascar, Jarosz (1996) questions ‘popular’ or Western beliefs about the causes of environmental deforestation. Tying this back to apolitical ecology, blaming deforestation on overpopulation covers up the issue of overconsumption in the North and shifts the blame to the “poor subsistence cultivators of the South” (p 152). Jarosz uses political ecology to understand environmental problems instead of the over-simplified cause and effect relationships that project managers and multinational organizations follow. In Madagascar, French colonists felt that shifting cultivation or ‘tavy’ as it was practiced by the local people was irrational and was the main cause for deforestation. But the real reason behind deforestation in Madagascar was the introduction of coffee farming which was used as a cash crop for export. Not only was this introduction harmful to the environment but it also “forced the Malagasy into wage work by depriving them of independent means of subsistence.”(157) So, environmental problems are often constructed by the powerful to suit their own needs to gain greater control over resources, and to exert control over the less powerful as seen in the case of Madagascar.

Participatory conservation has also been criticized heavily due to the influence of external organizations and how they shape the result of projects to advance their own agenda (Hailey 2001; Cleaver 2001; Mosse 2001). NGOs today play a big hand in conservation projects and in determining human-environment relationships (Sundberg 2003). In Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, NGOs generate “powerful discourses to explain environmental degradation and land use.”(50) During her research, Sundberg observed how, according to the NGOs, there were certain groups of people who were

living in harmony with the environment and thus had a more powerful status than those that were termed 'harming the environment.' These NGOs perceive those that have been trained in the Western world to have more true knowledge about the environment and thus more power to decide what is good for the environment, as compared to the indigenous knowledge possessed by locals(52).

For Neumann (2005), political ecology is a research agenda and its central theme is society-environment interaction. Bassett (1988) uses this approach to explain human nature interaction and issues of land rights. He examines the conflict between the Senufo peasant and Fulani herder in Ivory Coast over land access, even in areas with abundant land. The main reason for the Senufo peasant to oppose the herders is due to uncompensated crop damage. Of interest is how different political parties use this conflict to advance their own political agendas and result in further amplification of the conflict. Therefore, the case of Ivory Coast stresses the need to understand that environmental conflicts do not occur in isolation and politics influences decision making.

Another example of external influences is from Cucurpe, Sonora, illustrating how peasant communities are dealing with existing political and economic inequalities. According to Sheridan (1988, xvii) "Exploitation, distribution and control of natural resources is always mediated by different relationship of power within and among societies." These inequalities have resulted in conflict over control of irrigation water and land for grazing. In an arid environment like Sonora, small scale ranchers have used

conflict as a tool to interact and adapt with market forces. They have formed corporate communities to ensure their access to land and water.

These case studies present an overview of the kind of research political ecologists conduct, and how different actors within the community and outside influence human-environment interaction. Scholars in political ecology highlight the need for understanding the social, cultural, political and historical spheres in which these projects occur, rather than a simple cause and effect relationship that apolitical ecology advocates.

A lot of political ecology research has focused on protected areas, their establishment and its effect on access and control of resources (Zimmerer and Bassett 2003). Following the trends of decentralized decision making, protected areas have seen a shift from fortress conservation⁵² to a more participatory approach that includes involvement of local people in the management of protected areas and biodiversity within it. This approach has taken various forms such as community-based conservation (Western and Wright 1994), incentive-based conservation (Spiteri and Nepal 2006), integrated conservation and development (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992), participatory conservation (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001), participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1994), collaborative decision making (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000), ecotourism (Stronza 2001), etc.

⁵² Nature is termed as Eden and local people have caused damage and made it a 'degraded Eden'. But the Western world has the knowledge to restore nature back to its pristine form by the establishment of protected areas that exclude the local people that live in and around the area and depend on the natural resources for subsistence (Brockington 2002).

But literature has shown that this process is not so simple, and community is not as homogenous as scholars, multinational institutions and project managers perceive it to be. Within a community there are various internal (age, gender, caste, ethnicity, education, wealth, political affiliations, etc.) and external factors (state, market, globalization, politics, history, multinational organizations, NGOs, etc.) that determine the direction of conservation within these protected areas, and how and why access exists to natural resources by local people.

Previous literature has identified specific socio-economic variables (Timsina 2002; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004) but has not incorporated a holistic view of the interaction of these variables. Most of the literature in community based conservation (CBC) and protected area literature has focused on site specific analysis only. Using concepts and ideas from fields of participation and political ecology, this research aims to look at micro and macro level factors that construct power relationships in the community and how these relationships shape conservation initiatives and determine access to natural resources in Nepal's ACA. This analysis becomes more important in the context of Nepal and ACA due to strong social hierarchy, increasing differences between rich and poor, fragile landscape of the mountainous region, ACAP's high dependence on tourism, and the political unrest of the country.

4.3 Study Site

Spread over five districts of north-central Nepal and encompassing an area of 7,629 km² Annapurna Conservation Area is the first and largest protected area of Nepal

(Figure 4.1). Due to its wide range in elevation (790m to 8,091m), ACA is rich in species diversity. It is home to 1140 plant species, 21 species of amphibians, 39 species of reptiles, 478 species of birds, and 101 species of mammal (Khadka and Nepal 2010). Not only is the region rich in biodiversity, but also holds a diverse ethnic population of 120,000 people belonging to different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups (Baral and Stern 2009). Because of its rich cultural and natural beauty, ACA is a popular tourist destination. The number of tourists entering the ACA region in 2010 was 88,418⁵³.

Some of the problems faced in the area include its fragile mountainous landscapes, deforestation due to high dependency on natural resources, poverty, cultural erosion, and human-wildlife conflicts. To address these issues ACA is managed by a non-government organization, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), making it the first protected area of Nepal that is not under the management of the government. To address conservation problems in the region, NTNC established ACAP in 1986. After four years of evaluation, ACA was officially declared a conservation area, giving rights to NTNC for its management for the next ten years. Currently, NTNC has been managing the ACA region for over 25 years.

ACAP is responsible for the management of 57 VDCs spread over 5 districts. Although ACAP's main focus is conservation, it is also involved in community development, tourism management, and conservation education. ACAP carries out all its conservation and development programs through local management institutions, ensuring local empowerment throughout the process.

⁵³ Raw data obtained from ACAP office in Pokhara

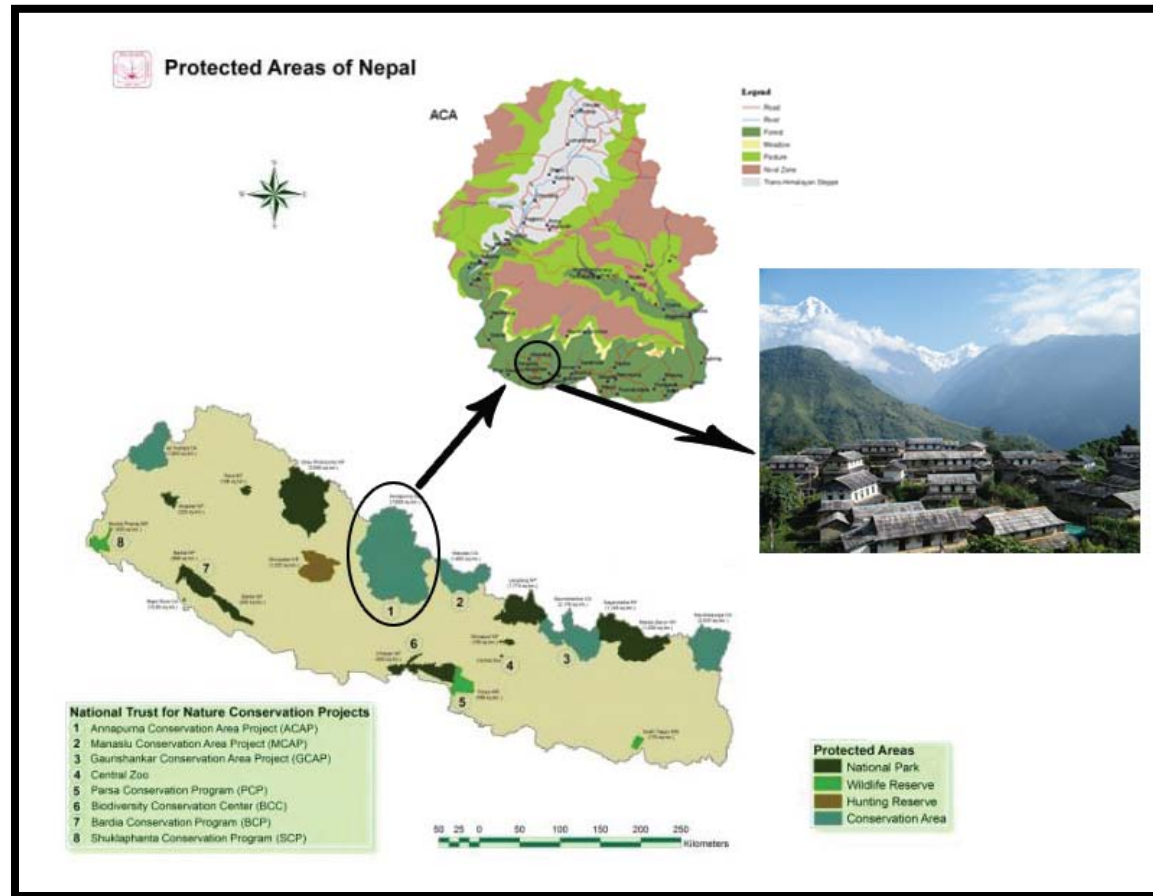


Figure 4.1: Map of ACA and Study Site

Due to time and resource constraints, only Ghandruk VDC in the southern region of ACA was chosen for the study. This prevented a complete study of the ACA region which is much larger; however, Ghandruk is a good representation of ACAP's initiatives. ACAP was first established in Ghandruk as a pilot project in 1986 and it has a diverse population, is a tourism hotspot, and is where ACAP implemented the majority of its programs in the first 15 years of its establishment.

The first major village en route to the Annapurna Base Camp (ABC), Ghandruk is about a 6-hour trek from the trail head. Ghandruk covers an area of 281.1 km² out of which 44% is barren land, 25% is covered with forests, 15% grasslands, 8% glaciers, 4% agriculture land, 3% shrub land, and the rest is sand and gravel.

Also known as a model Gurung village Ghandruk consists of 945 households with a population of 5080. Table 4.1 gives a more detailed description of the distribution of the population according to caste.

Table 4.1: Ghandruk's Population According to Caste (ACAP 2009)

| Caste | Number of Households | Household (%) | Population | Population (%) |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| Gurung | 460 | 48.68 | 2447 | 48.17 |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 119 | 12.59 | 637 | 12.54 |
| Newar | 1 | 0.11 | 5 | 0.10 |
| Dalits/Untouchables | 289 | 30.58 | 1547 | 30.45 |
| Other Ethnic Groups | 76 | 8.04 | 444 | 8.74 |
| Total | 945 | 100.00 | 5080 | 100.00 |

The majority of the populations are subsistence farmers although only 4% of Ghandruk's land is agricultural land. Agriculture in Ghandruk consists of corn, maize, barley, millet, and potato in the higher elevations and rice and wheat in lower elevations. Livestock in Ghandruk include water buffalo, cows, sheep, and goats. Other occupations in Ghandruk are hotel owners, wage workers, employment in the Indian and British Army (for Gurung residents), and involvement in international labor migration (for occupational castes).

4.4 Methods

To understand the barriers to participation of marginal groups in local management institutions, a mixed method approach was used to carry out research in Ghandruk from August –October, 2010. According to Cresswell and Clark (2006) mixed methods research provides strengths that help offset weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research alone. Further, Nightingale (2003a) states that power issues tend to be studied better when the richness of qualitative interpretation is combined with other methods. Even though quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed simultaneously, emphasis was given to qualitative data⁵⁴ and the quantitative data was used to quantify the barriers and compare different variables between samples.

4.4.1 Sampling

Data were collected from three sub groups: ACAP staff, management committee members and individuals, satisfying the marginality criteria as mentioned above. Field

⁵⁴ The reason for a stronger emphasis on qualitative data is because it will provide better insights into issues of power and discrimination.

work was carried out over a period of three months (August – October 2010) using interviews and participant observation.

After almost a month of site orientation and participant observation interviews were conducted with all the eight field staff present in Ghandruk UCO. The participants consisted of Ghandruk's officer in charge (OIC), six different program officers, and the accountant. After completion of the field work, interviews were also conducted with ACAP's program director in Pokhara and the program director for the mountain region at NTNC office in Kathmandu.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions that dealt with topics related to the duties of the staff, different programs, ACAP's mandates and priorities, benefits and its distribution, funding and its sources, ACAP's efforts to include marginal groups, project-people relationships, and the future of the project. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average.

The second group interviewed was 44 members of five different management committees. The five management committees were conservation area management committee (CAMC), tourism management sub-committee (TMSC), electricity management sub-committee (EMSC), *Mul Ama Samuha* (MAS) and ward *Ama Samuha* (WAS). The CAMC is the local institution under ACAP required by the 1996 Conservation Area Management Regulation and legally recognized under the Conservation Area Management Act. Under the CAMC are many different sub

management sub-committees⁵⁵. Table 4.2 explains the tasks of these management committees and the sample chosen from each committee.

The sample was chosen using purposive sampling to include the president and secretary of each committee along with women, lower caste, and landless if they were present. Although an effort was made to ensure an equal number of samples from each ward and each committee, it was not possible due to either the group being inactive (for example some WAS) or, in most cases, due to the unavailability of the member. For example, in the CAMC, out of 15 members, the VDC chairman was unavailable (not yet elected due to political instability), three were no longer members and their replacements had not been appointed, and three were out of the village. Out of the 44 respondents, 19 were men and 25 women. The sampling frame for the management interviews was the membership list obtained from ACAP for the different committees. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length.

⁵⁵ Although there were other sub management committees under the CAMC these five committees were chosen because they were related to natural resource management and gender empowerment.

Table 4.2: Management Committee and Sample

| Committee | Tasks | Number of members | Sample selected |
|--------------|--|---|------------------|
| CAMC | Responsible for all conservation and development activities | 15 (9 members elected from each ward, 5 members nominated by ACAP and VDC president) | 8 |
| TMSC | Is a network for all hotel owners and is responsible for management of hotels and tourism related activities in the region | 18 (all the hotel owners are members but regular members are 18) | 11 |
| EMSC | Responsible for the management of the micro-hydro power source | 13 (members chosen from ward 3-8) | 10 |
| MAS | A women only group, carries out cultural activities, conservation and development programs | 21 (women representatives from each 9 wards) | 11 |
| WAS | A women only group, formed in each ward, each household a member | 16 (this is the number of WAS in Ghandruk, one WAS in each ward and in some cases even 2 or more) | 10 |
| Total | | | 50 ⁵⁶ |

For the third sample, 44 individuals⁵⁷ were purposively chosen to include women, lower caste, and landless residents. The sample consisted of 15 male (poor/Dalit) and 29 female (women/Dalit/poor). The number of women was much higher for two reasons: first, gender was a criterion for choosing the sample, and second, in many marginal households the men had been involved in international labor migration to Middle Eastern countries and only women were available for interviews. The sampling

⁵⁶ Note: the number when totaled comes to more than 44 because there was an overlap between the members and the different management groups.

⁵⁷ The interviews for the two samples were collected simultaneously, so attention was given to ensure equal participants for each group. This was necessary to compare the two samples.

frame was the household list obtained from the VDC office. The interviews averaged 30 minutes in length.

4.4.2 Instrument and Operationalization of Variables

The questionnaire for management and marginal samples were divided into two parts: close ended questions to collect quantitative data and open ended questions to collect qualitative data. The quantitative part consisted of four different sections. The first section examined basic demographic data including age, gender, caste, religion, education, occupation, and birthplace. The second section collected information on the economic status of the participant measured by land holding, crop growth, livestock, additional source of income and ability to support daily needs with income. Section three examined dependency and access to natural resources. The last section assessed level of participation by looking at membership, leadership position, knowledge about management committee, meeting attendance, and interaction with staff. Table 4.3 gives a more detailed explanation of the operationalization of variables. In addition to this, for the marginal sample, questions were asked to identify significant barriers to participation.

The qualitative section consisted of an interview checklist that gave insights into the daily life of the individual, their level of participation, knowledge about local institutions, social discrimination, and views towards ACAP.

Table 4.3: Variable and their Operationalization

| Variables | Operationalization |
|--|---|
| Social variables | |
| <i>Age</i> | 5 categories of age group measured as <18, 18-24, 25-45, 46-65 and >65 |
| <i>Gender</i> | Two categories of 1= male and 2= female |
| <i>Caste</i> | A categorical variable measured as 1=Gurung, 2= Dalit, 3= Brahmin/ Chhetri, 4 = other ethnic groups |
| <i>Education</i> | Level of education attained by the individual. Measured by 1=no education, 2 = primary education (<5 th grade), 3 = secondary and higher (>=6 th grade) |
| <i>Birth place</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether they were born in Ghandruk or not |
| <i>Occupation</i> | A categorical data measured by 1=farmer, 2 = hotel owner, 3=wage worker, 4=salaried employee, 5 = business (shop) |
| Economic variables | |
| <i>Landholding</i> ⁵⁸ | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household owned any land (land size was measured in ropani, with 1 ropani = 508.72 m ² or .05 hectares) |
| <i>Crops grown</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household grew crops |
| <i>Crop use</i> | Categorical variable measured on whether the crop was used for 1=subsistence, 2=market, 3 =subsistence and market, (if the crop was used for market, income from crop was measured in NRs/year, where US\$1 =NRs73) |
| <i>Livestock raised</i> | A yes or no dichotomy based on whether the individual or his household owned livestock |
| <i>Livestock use</i> | Categorical variable measured on whether the crop was used for 1=subsistence, 2=market, 3 =subsistence and market (if the crop was used for market, income from crop was measured in NRs/year). |
| <i>Additional source of income</i> | A yes or no dichotomy on whether the individual/household had any additional source of income, with 1=yes and 2= no. If yes, source of income was further classified into 1= salary/pension, 2=business (shops, restaurant, hotels), 3= wage work, 4= combination of pension and business |
| <i>Ability to support livelihood needs</i> ⁵⁹ | Categorical variable to understand an individual's ability to support daily livelihood needs based on the annual income, measured with 1= always, 2= sometimes, 3=never |
| Participation | |
| <i>Number of groups</i> | Collected in absolute value for the number management committees the individual is a member of |
| <i>Leadership position</i> | Collected in absolute value for the number of management committee in which the individual holds a leadership position in |
| <i>Knowledge about group</i> | Collected in string value on the ability to name background of committee formation, tasks of the committee, and achievements |
| <i>Meeting attendance</i> | Collected in categorical value measured as 1=frequently, 2=sometimes, 3=never, 4=don't know |
| <i>Office visits</i> ⁶⁰ | A categorical value measured with individual visiting ACAP office in the last one year where 1= never, 2=1-3 times, 3= 3 or more |
| <i>Staff visits</i> | A categorical value measured with individual meeting an ACAP in the last one year where 1= never, 2=1-3 times, 3= 3 or more |

⁵⁸ Adapted from Agrawal and Gupta (2005)

⁵⁹ Adapted from Mehta and Heinen (2001) and Spiteri and Nepal (2008)

⁶⁰ Adapted from Ojha (2006)

In addition to interviews, participant observation was also used to study interactions between different actors and to provide a multidimensional description of the study area. These descriptive insights were collected by attending meetings for different management committees (four CAMC meeting, three for the MAS and WAS, one for the TMSC and EMSC, and three different meetings for other sub committees in the main village), ward clean up activity, and religious and cultural programs. Informal conversations with many residents also aided in providing insights to the research.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Since the interviews were conducted in Nepali they were translated and then transcribed. The transcript was coded using inductive coding to identify themes (Bernard 2000). The thick descriptions from participant observations and note taking during the interviews were used to validate the answers.

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Cross tabs were used to explore different variables and to quantify the results. Similarly, descriptive statistics were also used to measure participation with variables like attendance in meetings, visits with ACAP staff, knowledge about management group and its functions, etc. Since the data was not normally distributed, non- parametric tests were applied. Chi-square analysis was used to compare social (gender, caste, education, occupation, etc.) and economic (landholding, livestock, crop use, ability to support livelihood, etc.) factors between the management and marginal samples. All the Chi-square tests were

followed with Cramer's V to test the strength of the relationship that was predicted by Chi-square.

The results from quantitative and qualitative data were then merged together to develop a complete picture of marginal groups' barriers to participation in local management institutions in Ghandruk. In addition to this, secondary data were obtained from the study of documents such as ACAP's management plan, annual budget, minutes of meetings, CAMC operation plan, etc.

In many research projects, especially in rural villages, participants expect financial or other benefits from taking part in the study. Extra care was taken to remove such expectation by reading the consent form and asking the participants to give a verbal consent before participating. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, all the raw data was kept confidential and participants were assigned a pseudonym to conceal their identity during transcribing.

Different mixed method design procedures were followed to ensure validity while collecting (asking the same question to different people, using the same questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data), and analyzing (joint display with quantitative categorical and qualitative themes, use of quotes to match statistical results) data (Creswell and Clark 2010, 240). Further analysis measures were adopted to ensure reliability by doing a thorough task of describing the research context and the central assumptions of the research. Peer debriefing was also adopted; a scholar who had done research in the ACA region was consulted during the analysis process.

4.5 Results

The results are based on the data obtained from 10 ACAP staff, 44 members of five different management committees, and 44 individuals that satisfied the marginality criteria of women, lower caste and landless.

4.5.1 Group Comparisons

Socio-economic variables were compared between the management and marginal samples to identify factors that determine membership in management committees.

Table 4.4 gives the detail comparison and the significant factors explained below.

4.5.1.1 Social Factors

There was a strong difference in caste between the management and marginal group (chi-square value = 42.603, p-value = .000 and Cramer's V = .696)⁶¹. In the management group the majority of the population was Gurungs (77 %), and the Dalits only consisted of 18.2%. Whereas in the marginal sample, the majority of the population consisted of Dalits (65.9%) and the Gurungs were only 9.1%. In the CAMC, the main institution that makes all the conservation and development decisions in the village, there were only two Dalit members, both of which were women.

Education showed a significant difference between the two groups ($\chi^2=7.515$, $p=.023$, $CV=.292$) even if the difference was not very strong. In the marginal group, more than half (54.5%) of the sample did not have any education, whereas in the management committee a little less than half (45.5%) had at least a secondary education.

⁶¹ From here on, Chi square, p-value and Cramer's V will be abbreviated as χ^2 , p, and CV respectively)

Table 4.4: Differences in Socio-Economic Factors between Management and Marginal Sample

| | Management (n=44) (%) | Marginal (n=44) (%) | Total (N=88) (%) | Comparison of management and marginal groups | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---|----|---------------------------|---------------|
| | | | | Chi- square value | Df | p- value ⁶² | Cramer's V |
| Gender | | | | .767 | 1 | .381 | .093 |
| Male | 43.2 | 34.1 | 38.6 | | | | |
| Female | 56.8 | 65.9 | 61.4 | | | | |
| Caste | | | | 42.603 | 3 | .000 | .696 |
| Gurung | 77.3 | 9.1 | 43.2 | | | | |
| Dalit | 18.2 | 65.9 | 42.0 | | | | |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 4.5 | 13.6 | 9.1 | | | | |
| Other ethnic group | 0 | 11.4 | 5.7 | | | | |
| Education | | | | 7.515 | 2 | .023 | .292 |
| No education | 27.3 | 54.5 | 40.9 | | | | |
| Primary | 27.3 | 22.7 | 25.0 | | | | |
| Secondary & higher | 45.5 | 22.7 | 34.1 | | | | |
| Born In Ghandruk | | | | 5.729 | 1 | .017 | .255 |
| Yes | 84.1 | 61.4 | 72.7 | | | | |
| No | 15.9 | 38.6 | 27.3 | | | | |
| Occupation | | | | 18.396 | 4 | .001 | .457 |
| Farmer | 65.9 | 79.5 | 72.7 | | | | |
| Hotel Owner | 27.3 | 0 | 13.6 | | | | |
| Wage Worker | 2.3 | 15.9 | 9.1 | | | | |
| Salaried employee | 4.5 | 2.3 | 3.4 | | | | |
| Business | 0 | 2.3 | 1.1 | | | | |

⁶² Measured at 95% confidence interval.

Table 4.4 Continued

| | Management (n=44) (%) | Marginal (n=44) (%) | Total (N=88) (%) | Comparison of management and marginal groups | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---|----|---------------------------|---------------|
| | | | | Chi- square value | Df | p- value ⁶³ | Cramer's V |
| Landholding | | | | 24.242 | 1 | .000 | .525 |
| Yes | 97.7 | 52.3 | 75.0 | | | | |
| No | 2.3 | 47.7 | 25.0 | | | | |
| Crops grown | | | | 8.494 | 1 | .004 | .311 |
| Yes | 95.5 | 72.7 | 84.1 | | | | |
| No | 4.5 | 27.3 | 15.9 | | | | |
| Crop use | | | | 28.689 | 2 | .000 | .571 |
| Subsistence | 45.5 | 70.5 | 58 | | | | |
| Subsistence & market | 50.0 | 2.3 | 26.1 | | | | |
| Don't grow crop | 4.5 | 27.3 | 15.9 | | | | |
| Livestock | | | | .073 | 1 | .787 | .029 |
| Yes | 79.5 | 81.8 | 80.7 | | | | |
| No | 20.5 | 18.2 | 19.3 | | | | |
| Livestock use | | | | 1.14 | 2 | .564 | .114 |
| Subsistence | 63.6 | 72.7 | 68.2 | | | | |
| Subsistence & market | 15.9 | 9.1 | 12.5 | | | | |
| Don't grow crop | 20.5 | 18.2 | 19.3 | | | | |
| Other source of income | | | | .727 | 1 | .394 | .091 |
| Yes | 45.5 | 54.5 | 50.0 | | | | |
| No | 54.5 | 45.5 | 50.0 | | | | |
| Ability to support | | | | 45.085 | 2 | .000 | .716 |
| Always | 93.2 | 22.7 | 58.8 | | | | |
| Sometimes | 6.8 | 59.1 | 33.0 | | | | |
| Never | 0.0 | 18.2 | 9.1 | | | | |

⁶³ Measured at 95% confidence interval.

One of the older members (also the owner of one of Ghandruk's oldest hotels) had attended University.

Significant differences existed between the two groups in terms of occupation ($\chi^2=18.396$, $p=.001$, $CV=.457$). The management sample consisted of 65.9% farmers, 27.3% hotel owners and 2.3% wage earners. In contrast, the marginal sample had 79.5% farmers and 15.9% wage earners; none of the marginal participants were hotel owners. The two groups showed significant difference on whether the participants were born in Ghandruk or not ($\chi^2=5.729$, $p=.017$, $CV=.255$), but the difference was not very strong. The majority (84.1%) of the management sample was born in Ghandruk and, of the marginal population, only 61.4% were born in Ghandruk.

4.5.1.2 Economic Factors

There was a significantly strong difference in landholding between the two groups. ($\chi^2 = 24.242$, $p < .000$, and $CV = .525$). In the management committee, with the exception of one person, everyone was a land owner. The average land holding was 18 *ropani*, within a range from 0 *ropani* to 74 *ropani*. The landless member of the management committee was a Dalit woman who was a member of the MAS and the president of the Ward 1 WAS. Further inquiry about the issue of land ownership showed that she had recently moved out of her husband's house and was a single mother living with her young son. She explained that since she was a teacher at the local day care center she did not have the time or the manpower to farm. Almost half (47.7%) of the marginal sample did not own land. The average land holding for this group was two *ropanis*, with land holding ranging from 0 to 17 *ropanis*. In many cases, landless farmers

followed the *adhiya* (sharecropping) system where half of the crop produced belonged to the land owner and other half to the farmer.

Another difference between the two groups was in crops grown ($\chi^2 = 8.494$, $p=.004$, $CV=.311$) and crop use ($\chi^2 = 28.689$, $p<.000$, $CV=.571$). Ninety five percent of the management sample and 72.7% of the marginal sample grew crops. There existed a strong difference in crop use between the two groups. Half of the management committee used their crops for both subsistence and market and the average annual income from crop sale for the management committee was Rs. 5,000. For the marginal sample, 70.5% used crops only for subsistence. There was only one person in the marginal sample who said his parents sold potatoes, which amounted to Rs. 3000 in yearly income. When the marginal sample was asked about sale of crops, a common answer was:

It is not even enough for us to eat three meals a day with what we grow, where will we have enough to sell? We even have to buy vegetables or other crops from time to time, so there is no question of selling. (Marg int 17)

There was a strong difference, between the two groups' ability to support daily livelihood needs with annual income ($\chi^2 = 45.085$, $p < .000$, $C V = .716$). In the management committee, participants were able to support their daily livelihood needs with annual income, mostly always (93.2%). In the marginal group, less than one third of the population (22.7%) answered always. Fifty nine percent of the marginal sample

said they were only able to support their livelihood needs sometimes and 18.2% said they were never able to support their daily livelihood needs with their annual income.

4.5.2 Management Committees and Their Functions

To measure the marginal sample's knowledge about management committees, marginal individuals were asked whether they knew the different management committees under ACAP. Only 48% had knowledge about the different management committees that existed under ACAP. A common response by many interviewees was that they did not know about the committees. A Dalit woman said:

I do not know what the committee does or anything else about them. I have not heard anything about them or gotten any information about them. I think we do not know about these committees because we do not get information but also because we do not go to these committees. Maybe if we had constant contact with them up there [ACAP office], and visited regularly, then maybe we would know more. I don't think it is anyone's fault but our own weakness. No one has stopped us, but whenever they call for something, the same day we have other things in the house that we need to take care of and we don't go. (Marg int 4)

Out of the 36% that were able to name at least one management committee, a management committee that all of them named was 'the *ban samiti*' or the forest group, and by this they meant the CAMC. The CAMC is in charge of the forest and where individuals go for permits to cut trees; hence it was called the forest committee by the villagers. Another committee frequently named was the *Ama samuha*. Only 30% knew

the functions of these committees. Their knowledge on the tasks of these management committees was limited to general issues like road development and forest conservation, and when further asked about specific functions, no one was able to state anything specific.

4.5.3 Access to Natural Resources

All marginal participants said their access to natural resources was not affected by social or economic issues. Some participants (15.9%) said that because of ACAP they could not cut what they wanted, but the majority mentioned that today there was no shortage of grass and wood, and collection took less time than it did in the past. Everyone said they frequently collect dead trees, and no one collected live trees (for which they would have to get a permit from the CAMC and pay the royalty). All of them knew that to cut a live tree, they needed a '*purji*' which according to 39% of respondents was issued by the *ban samiti*, 32% said VDC, 20% said ACAP and 9% said the village. Other resources people collected frequently were grass (75 %), whereas everyone answered 'never' to collecting meat and fish, and only 13.6% said they use the forest land for livestock grazing. For the majority (81.8%) of the population, the community forest was their source of natural resources. Only 4.5% said they collect from their own forest, 6.8% said from both the community forest and their own forest, and a similar percentage said they collect from the community forest and sometimes buy what they cannot collect. Questioning the cost issue of buying trees, they answered that it was easier since they did not have the time and manpower to go collect the tree; they usually bought it from someone. For example a woman said,

We buy the wood from someone else, a family in our village that we know, they usually charge by the tree. With one tree, if we use it very economically, we can make it last for even one year. We carry the wood and bring it ourselves, the kids help when they have holidays too. So for one tree, on average we spend around 900-1000. If we hire someone to carry one load it takes us around 200 per person per load, so we try to save that money and do it ourselves. (Marg int 11)

4.5.4 Access to Information and Other Opportunities

When asked if they were informed on the formation of the different committees, 43% said they had not gotten any information on how and when the committees were formed. “They do not tell us anything. We have not gotten any letters till now, so we do not know anything about any *karyakram* [program] they have, they take all the benefits, so you will have to ask them and not us,” an elderly Dalit woman answered in a frustrated tone (Marg int 32). When inquired who the ‘they’ were, she said, “those Gurungs you know, they tell all their own people only.” On the other hand, 57% answered that they do get information on different activities from time to time.

To ensure empowerment of villagers, ACAP conducts periodic trainings for the local people. In the marginal sample only four people said that they had attended any training. Two people had attended sewing and knitting training, one had attended a savings and credit training, and one attended tea plantation training. All four women identified some relationship with a management committee member as the reason for

attendance. One of them said “I am from *fufu*’s gau⁶⁴, so when they need Dalits to come for programs she usually calls me to see if I can do it” (Marg int 31). Another woman explained that the Dalit representative in the CAMC was her friend and that is how she attended the savings and credit training.

Out of those that had not attended trainings, 35% said it was because they did not get information, and the rest said it was because of lack of time and interest. One woman said:

These trainings take the whole day and I have heard that for some it is more than a day. I cannot go to these trainings because my husband is in Saudi [Middle East] and I need to take care of the children and the house. I have to farm; we do *adhiya* on Gurung land, so I do not have time. (Marg int 5)

This quote reflects a theme that was prominently present in poorer women in the village. In answer to how often they attend meetings arranged by ACAP and the management committee, half of the sample answered that they had never attended any meetings; 41 % said sometimes, whenever they have time; and only 4.5% said that they attended frequently. Only 32% said they sometimes went to ACAP office and met with ACAP staff. The majority said the reason for visiting the office was to get seeds for farming.

⁶⁴ The Dalit woman was from the same village or *gau* as one of the active Gurung woman in the ward. To show respect she used the term *fufu* or aunt.

4.5.5 Barriers Perceived by Marginal Groups

To understand what prevented these marginal populations from participating in community activities, questions were asked to identify important barriers perceived by the participants. The barriers to participation were categorized by four different issues: household, conservation area, social, and technical.

4.5.5.1 Household Related Barriers

Demands from household chores were an important barrier for 43% of the sample. The same percentage said schedule conflict with agriculture related activities was a somewhat significant barrier. Participants also identified demands from family and childcare responsibilities as a somewhat important barrier. Even though not a lot of people said conflict with other employment was an important reason, people did mention this in the interviews. A person who worked at the health post said, “There is no question of people like us who work, to take part in these committee meetings, there are other people who do not work and can take the time off to do these things” (Marg int 13).

4.5.5.2 Conservation Area Related Barrier

When the participants were asked if there were any CA related rules, regulations or procedures that prevented them from participating in these committees, the majority (75%) answered ‘don’t know’ and 25% said it was not something that prevented them from participating. In addition, when asked if their reason for not participating was

because the ACAP staff prevented them, 41% said this was not the reason and 57% said they did not know.

4.5.5.3 Social Barriers

None of the statements in this category were considered significant by the marginal population. There were some people (41%) that mentioned “I do not know how to become involved” as somewhat significant. Even though people did not identify gender, caste and wealth as a barrier in the survey, the results from the interviews and participant observation showed opposite results. A Dalit male said:

Ward 7 is a big ward and we have a lot of Gurungs in our area, so they are the ones that are more active and they are the ones that take part in all these things. They do, however, call us if there are any repairs in the village; one person from each house has to go help in repairs. Recently we had to help in digging of the water pipes, but for meetings and programs, we don't go. (Marg int 1)

All of the people interviewed said discrimination has decreased a lot more over the last ten years. When the participants were asked what they thought the reason for this was, four common answers were: promoted by the government, increased education and awareness, it is illegal to discriminate, and because of the Maoist revolution.

Most people (70%) said there was no discrimination based on caste in community activities. But at the household level, the Dalits were not allowed to enter the Gurung's home. To the majority of the Dalits this form of exclusion was not considered discrimination but rather tradition. A Dalit women stated, “There is no question of us

going into their *chulo* [*chulo* literally translates to stove, but it was used to mean kitchen], and it is also out of question for them to come to our house and eat” (Marg int 22). But 30% said even though discrimination has decreased, it has not stopped, even in community activities. For example, a woman said, “In community meetings, the other woman still separate themselves from us, leave the meeting or tell us to move somewhere else when it is time to drink tea” (Marg Int 2).

More than discrimination, the factors that prevented women in Ghandruk from participating was their role in heavy household and agricultural activities. A woman’s day started as early as 4am and ended at 9pm. Table 4.5 gives an example of what an average day in the life of a woman in Ghandruk looks like.

Table 4.5: Activities in the Life of an Average Ghandruk Woman

| Time | Tasks |
|---------|---|
| 4:30 am | Get up |
| 5- 8 | Agriculture related - tend to the livestock and get milk Household related– sweep and mop house, get water, religious activities, cook lunch |
| 8-10 | Family related - feed family, send family off to work and school, eat lunch Household related – wash dishes, clean kitchen, wash clothes |
| 10-3 | Agriculture and employment related – work in the fields, collect grass and wood from forest, perform wage work if relevant |
| 3-4 | Household related - come home and make tea and snacks for the family |
| 4-5 | Agriculture related - tend to livestock for milk and relax |
| 5-9 | Household and family related – prepare dinner, evening tasks in the house, evening prayer, eat dinner, clean the kitchen, wash the dishes |
| 9pm | Spend time with family, get ready for bed |

Participant observations also showed that social structures were replicated in meetings where men sat at the front of the room and spoke up, whereas women sat at the very back and were silent participants. Figure 4.2 gives a picture of how seating arrangements in community meetings were structured.

The marginal sample did not perceive being from a poor household as a significant barrier (Table 4.6), but interviews, participant observation and analysis of other factors identified being poor as a major barrier to participation in management committees and meetings. The poor had to work long hours to earn their livelihood, showed very little interest in participating and had no knowledge about management committees. When a landless man, who was taking care of a Gurung's house, was asked the reason for not participating, he said: "What is being part of the committee going to give us? Will it feed us two meals?" (Marg int 33) When a woman was asked the same question she got angry and said:

I don't even know what I am going to feed my children for dinner, do you think I want to go participate and sit with these rich people and talk about how to improve our roads or how to increase tourists? What kind of useless question is this? How will these issues help us poor? The tourists are not going to spend money on us! (Marg int 34)



Figure 4.2: Typical Meeting Setting

Note: These two pictures display the typical setting of management committee meetings in Ghandruk VDC. The officer of the management committee sat at the front of the room as displayed in the top picture. The other attendees sat in a 'U' shaped format facing the front of the room as displayed in the bottom picture. As seen in the picture the men occupied seats in the front and the women sat against the wall at the back of the room.

Table 4.6: Barriers to Participation as Perceived by the Marginal Sample⁶⁵

| | Most Significant (%) | Somewhat Significant (%) | Not Significant (%) | Don't Know (%) |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Barriers | | | | |
| Household related | | | | |
| Demands from household chores | 43% | 36% | 20% | 0% |
| Schedule conflicts with agriculture activities | 30% | 43% | 27% | 0% |
| Schedule conflicts with livestock grazing | 23% | 43% | 34% | 0% |
| Scheduled conflicts with other employments | 18% | 25% | 55% | 2% |
| Demands of family and childcare responsibilities | 32% | 32% | 36% | 0% |
| ACA related | | | | |
| Park / conservation area policies: specify | 0% | 0% | 25% | 75% |
| ACAP officials do not want me to participate | 0% | 2% | 41% | 57% |
| Social | | | | |
| I am not invited to participate | 25% | 27% | 48% | 0% |
| When I have participated in the past, I was made to feel unwelcomed | 0% | 0% | 91% | 9% |
| I did not know I could participate | 2% | 9% | 80% | 9% |
| I do not know how to become involved | 14% | 41% | 43% | 2% |
| No one should listen to me, so why should I participate | 0% | 11% | 82% | 7% |
| I am a women so I am not allowed to participate | 0% | 2% | 91% | 7% |
| I am from the lower caste so I am not allowed to participate | 0% | 9% | 84% | 7% |
| I am from a poor household so I am not allowed to participate | 0% | 20% | 75% | 5% |
| Technical | | | | |
| The meeting place is too far from my home | 27% | 27% | 43% | 2% |
| I have no free time | 55% | 36% | 9% | 0% |
| I am not interested in participating | 18% | 14% | 68% | 0% |
| I don't have the skills to participate | 43% | 23% | 34% | 0% |

⁶⁵ The barriers were adapted from Khadka and Nepal's (2010) study where they compared community participation and its barriers in tourist and non tourists villages of Upper Mustang area in ACA.

4.5.5.4 Technical Barriers

Not having free time and not having the skills needed to participate were perceived as important technical barriers. The issue of time was considered a most important barrier to 55% and somewhat important to 36% of the sample. Not having enough time ties back to conflicts with household related barriers and social barriers mentioned above. A male Dalit was OK with not being a part of any group because of the time commitment being involved would require. He said:

I am OK being an outsider and not a part of the group. If you are part of the committee they will ask you to come for meetings and other programs, and sometimes the meetings last the whole day, and they have a meeting almost every day. So I cannot afford to be part of the group, because even if I miss one day of work, then I will be losing a lot of money, and I need the money to feed my family.
(Marg int 1)

This was a similar story for a lot of participants who were wage workers in the village. Therefore, poverty and the need to work for daily subsistence were tied to the issue of time.

Lack of skills needed to participate was considered most significant by 43% and somewhat significant by 23% of the participants. When further probed about the term “skills”, people explained that it meant education. A woman answered:

I don’t have *lekh pahd* [writing reading skills] so I don’t want to participate; without education what can I contribute to the group? I also don’t know how to speak

properly. Had I attended school maybe I would know what to say, but I don't even know how to write my name, so what is the use of me staying in a group and occupying a space? (Marg int 3)

Similarly, another person said, "What will a person like me who does *lyapche* [fingerprint] do in a group?" (Marg int 40) When a person from ward 3 was asked why not a lot of women and Dalits participate in management committees, she answered:

I don't know why people do not participate from our ward; it can be both due to the reason that we don't get information or we don't have the capability. I don't think just because we get *proad sikchya* [adult literacy] for a month, then that is enough for participation, it only teaches us how to write our name, it is not sufficient to take part in these communities. You should be able to jot down things in meetings, speak up when asked a question, keep accounts, and at the end of the day be able to come back to your ward and tell everyone what the results were, and we cannot do that. So that is why Karna sir [a Dalit teacher in the ward elementary school] and Yam *dai* [a Gurung retired from the Indian Army] go to these committees and meetings. (Marg int 10)

The other two barriers in this category, the meeting place being too far and not interested in participating, were considered not significant. The issue of location was significant for only those people that lived farther away from the main village (Wards 4,

5, 6, 7 and parts of Ward 3 and 7 are considered the main village in Ghandruk). Figure 4.3 gives a rough sketch of the map of Ghandruk VDC to give a better idea of wards.

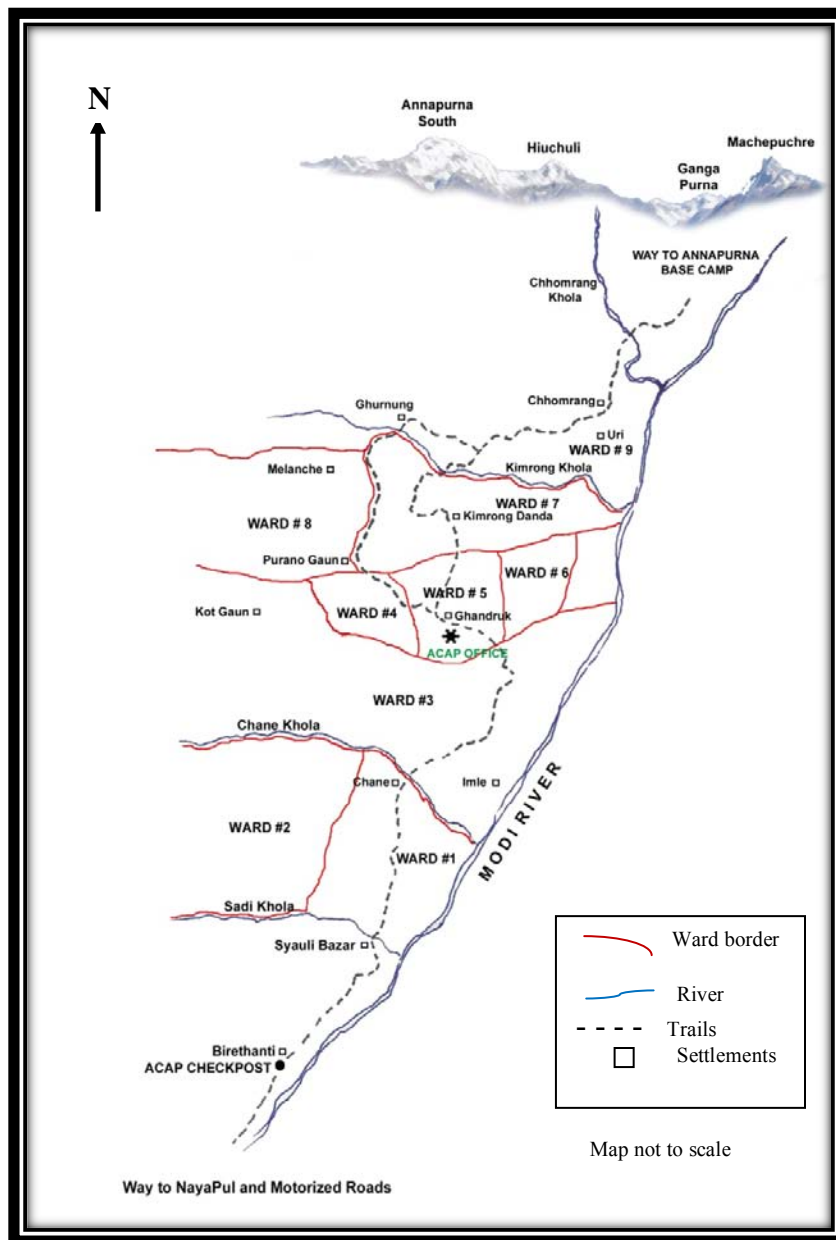


Figure 4.3: Sketch of Ghandruk VDC and its Wards (Map by author)

4.5.6 What do the Management Committees Think of Marginal Groups

4.5.6.1 Participation

Management committee members felt that the main barriers to participation for marginal groups were: lack of education, economic hardship, and lack of time.

According to the committee members, women, lower caste and the poor are given equal opportunity to participate in community programs and management committees. But all of them also stressed that the poorer population have a hard time trying to earn money or grow crops to feed their family and will not take part in management committees.

All of them said the participation of women and Dalits was increasing today. A Gurung woman who had been part of various committees since ACAP started said:

In the case of Dalits, yes it is true that not a lot of them come to community programs. But this is mostly because they do not have education and most of them are wage workers. We get involved in these committees for *samajh sewa* [social work], and to do *samajh sewa* you have to have a little bit of financial stability, you need time, and not be worried about how you are going to feed your family on a day to day basis. For a lot of women, especially the poor, instead of working, if they start going to meetings, their husbands and families are going to get mad, and in many cases even beat them up. She added, I know how difficult it is because I am a woman myself, but the staff only says you have to include women, without trying to understand our situation. A few years ago there was a baking training in another ward and I wanted to go. But my husband was in the Indian Army and my children were small, so my mother-in-law did not let me go. I still remember her telling me it

does not look nice if the daughter-in-law of the house is gone for the whole day and leave her young children, what will people say! (Mgmt int 8)

A lot of other women in the management committee had similar views where they felt the women in villages faced a lot of problems and hardship that prevented them from actively participating in management committees. Another woman said:

You cannot just say we need women to participate, there are so many things we have to think about, our families, making sure we have food ready, feeding the livestock, cleaning the house, farming. This is the first priority for most women and all of this takes a lot of time. (Mgmt int 9)

A common trend that was observed in community programs (except for the *Ama Samuha* programs), was women sitting at the back of the room and hardly speaking up. The CAMC president later clarified that this was true, even if women came to meetings the majority will never speak up because they are not used to it. Since they are not educated and for the Gurung women, since they do not know the language well, a lot of them do not feel comfortable speaking in meetings. He added, “Because of this, women do not feel comfortable speaking in meetings, they do not know how to answer questions, and are afraid they will say something stupid” (Mgmt int 41).

4.5.6.2 Discrimination

A majority of the management committee members felt that discrimination against Dalits is not present today, especially in community activities. Similar to the marginal sample, management committees did not consider preventing Dalits from entering other castes' household as a form of discrimination. The secretary of the CAMC said:

Today the Dalits are treated equally. I know how it was before, even during my parent's time, if the *kami damai*⁶⁶ touched us on the road or even if they passed on the road we would have to put *chito*⁶⁷ before we entered the house. This kind of discrimination was present when I was a kid. But today we sit down with them and drink tea with them; definitely there is a change. (Mgmt int 2)

When the management sample was asked if there was any change in the participation of marginal groups in the last 5-10 years, it was agreed that Dalits did not take part and speak up like other castes, but people also felt that those who came spoke up and voiced their opinion, more than they did five years ago. Today it is not legally correct to discriminate, said a representative of the electricity committee and a hotel owner. He added that today other castes cannot tell the Dalits "*aye ta nabol, taile bolna paaudainas!*" which translates to "You don't speak; you don't have a right to speak." Another hotel owner said:

⁶⁶ These are the skilled castes under the Dalits; Kami means blacksmith, Damai means tailor.

⁶⁷ The Dalits are considered untouchables, so if they touch you, you will be considered impure and to purify yourself, you have to sprinkle yourself with holy water.

If a Dalit comes to my hotel and pays for the food, then I treat him like any other customer and he does not have to wash his own dishes. But if he comes and does not pay then he has to wash his own dishes outside. It is similar to if they came to our homes and we gave them tea, they would have to wash their own dishes. (Mgmt int 6)

According to 77% of the sample this change has come about due to government policy, 40% said due to the increase in education among villagers, and 60% said due to the Maoist revolution⁶⁸. Inquiring about why there were not a lot of Dalits in management committees, the majority of the Gurungs answered that it was because of their own lack of interest and their own weakness, not due to discrimination. An older Gurung man said:

We keep on telling them to speak up and give them opportunities to take part, but they are just not interested, we cannot force them. It has to come from inside, they should have the want to work for the community and to make the village better. There are two or three Dalits that are active in committees and the rest do not show interest. (Mgmt int 10)

This answer not only reflected the view of the Gurungs but also of the Dalit members of the management committee. A Dalit member of the electricity committee

⁶⁸ Note the numbers add up to more than 100% because participants gave more than one reason for the change

felt that the lack of participation of Dalits has much more to do with lack of interest and education than discrimination. He explained:

I am a Dalit and in most cases I have seen that they do not come forward; in many cases even if they participate, it is by force. So it is not right to blame the lack of participation on discrimination and other castes only; there are other reasons too, on why Dalits do not participate. (Mgmt int 21)

Few people (14%) in the management committee felt that this integration of caste should not be occurring. Six women said that it was better before when the Gurungs had their own group, and the Dalits had their own group. They also stated that they had not sat together in the meetings with Dalits, and would not do so in the future. One woman said:

It is our tradition; we have been doing it since our forefather's times. So I don't know why we need to change it today. I am not going to drink tea with them no matter what anyone says. Let the radio and television preach it as much as they like, I am not going to do it at this age. (Mgmt int 12)

Observations in meetings also showed that the forest guard, who was an older Gurung male, served tea to the Gurungs before going to the two Dalit women in the CAMC. Similarly, even in the day care center, children aged 3-5 years old sat together with their own castes, with the Dalit children sitting at the back of the room.

4.5.7 What is ACAP Doing to Ensure Marginal Participation?

ACAP has been working on gender issues since the early 1990s and gender development has been an integral part of all their programs. One of the achievements of ACAP is women's participation and empowerment. The staff feels that women might not be present in leadership roles but their activities and achievements have been remarkable. Today the women acknowledge that it is because of ACAP that they could do all this for their own wards. ACAP has also established the day care center to lighten the work load for women where women can leave their kids from 9am to 3pm. ACAP provides yearly financial assistance to Ghandruk day care center. It is also financially and technically helping to establish day care centers in other wards.

Previously, ACAP was not looking at the representation of all groups, but today it is changing that and trying to focus on those lower on the socio-economic hierarchy in the village, with many programs targeted at marginal populations, stated ACAP's tourism officer. In the three years after re-establishment, ACAP has been focusing on the lower caste. So according to ACAP, marginal populations today are the Dalits and the poor. ACAP Staff admitted that it had not been able to do much for the poor until now, but it was shifting its programs today to focus more on the poor and the farmers. The staff felt that they could not uplift the Dalits because of the persistence of the strong caste system in Nepal. Today they have programs targeted specifically at some marginal groups. According to the ACAP staff, the discrimination between Gurungs and Dalits still exists, even though it has decreased. The OIC of ACAP said:

The status of the Dalits has definitely been up-lifted compared to what it was 10 years ago, but I feel that more than the whole Dalit community, it is only a few that have risen up. Only those few have been able to rise out of the suppression, but the number is very few right now.

The ACAP field staff felt that in Ghandruk, not only the Dalits but other castes have also been suppressed by the Gurungs. The tourism officer for ACAP gave the example of how ACAP is helping women, especially Dalit women more than the mainstream community. A Dalit woman had come to ask ACAP for financial and technical help in starting a savings and credit group in their ward. A similar request had come from a Gurung women's group in another ward. Since ACAP had money only to help one of the groups, it decided to give the money to the Dalit group instead of the Gurung group. They gave the group Rs. 20, 000 as seed money to start the savings and credit group and also gave the women in the ward three day training.

The OIC talked about uplifting the Dalit community and how as a part of the infrastructure development program, ACAP gives materials for building toilets for Dalit households. ACAP provides the materials and the people have to do the construction. For the year 2009-2010, ACAP allocated Rs. 69,635 for its toilet constructions program (CAMC 2009). But the ranger talked about how there are many households that have not built the toilets even after receiving the material. He added:

The Dalits in this region are one of the laziest people I have seen. They do not want to take any initiative; they expect you to do everything for them. This is the

difference between them and the Gurungs. The Gurungs come to our office regularly and ask for help and take initiatives for different programs. Yes, sometimes their demands are unreasonable but at least they try to do things for Ghandruk and for their own benefit. But with Dalits it is totally different, even after we gave them the tin, pan, cement, everything, they still won't construct the toilet. In case of one household, the tin and pipes have already rusted, the cement is ruined. All of our development programs are carried out on a partnership basis with the locals, so they have to put in their share in the project either through cash or kind. We cannot go to their homes and construct the toilets for them.

Similarly, the conservation education and extension officer described how, under his program, ACAP gives scholarships to Dalit women for higher education (grade 11 and 12). ACAP's accountant stated that yearly ACAP allocates a budget of Rs.30, 000 for providing Dalit female students with scholarships. ACAP also provides scholarships to Dalits in the local primary and secondary schools. To encourage the participation of Dalit women, the day care center fee for Dalits is lower by 50% than for the other castes. But out of the three Dalit students that received scholarships for higher education, only one actually completed the 12th grade and the other two left school in the middle of the 11th grade. The education officer added:

Today there are students that have better grades and showing more interest for higher studies. But since we are focusing more on Dalits, actually the whole country is, so

we have to give these scholarships to Dalit students, even if there is another Gurung female who is much more deserving than the Dalit.

The tourism officer mentioned a similar case:

The other day in one of the villages I spotted a young *Rai*⁶⁹ boy taking care of the livestock. But I also know that he was a good student when he was in Ghandruk's secondary school. So I asked him how come he did not study after the 10th grade. He said his step-mother did not want to spend the money on his education so his father did not allow him, and he ended up helping with the agriculture at home missing out on the opportunity to study because our higher education scholarships are only allocated to Dalit women, whether they are interested in studying or not. And while limiting it to only Dalits, other capable but financially vulnerable students are missing out on the opportunities.

ACAP does not have specific trainings for marginal groups, but according to the OIC almost all of its training encourages the inclusion of women and Dalits. Some training is focused more on women, for example, kitchen garden training or sewing training. In such trainings ACAP ensures that a few Dalits from each ward are also present. ACAP has also established a quota system in the CAMC where they can nominate five people, and “we try to fill these positions with women and Dalits,” said

⁶⁹ Rai is a form of ethnic group, similar to the Gurungs

the OIC. But a major problem in Ghandruk is lack of people who want to get involved.

The accountant for ACAP added:

People do not want to stay in committees; they are only interested in making money.

They see the quick money coming from tourism, so everyone wants to open a hotel in community land, whether they have the capability to do so or not.

An example of this was seen in one of the community meetings attended by the author for opening a new route. The number of people attending the meeting was surprisingly large. The tourism officer said, “Whether they have the skills or the money, all the people of Ghandruk are interested in is opening hotels in community land to take in money from foreigners.” Another trend that has started with Dalits is international labor migration to Malaysia and Middle Eastern countries, so they are not interested in taking part in community activities and are only interested in earning money. This was a theme repeated by all the ACAP staff.

Therefore, the staff felt that Dalits do get enough opportunities to participate but they do not take advantage of the opportunity, rather they want ACAP to do everything for them. The ranger added:

There is no discrimination against Dalits, not in Ghandruk anyway. If you want to see real discrimination you should go to the Terai (southern lowlands of Nepal) and see what the condition of the Dalits are. But the Dalits present here are discriminated by themselves only; they have the mindset that we are Dalit and we are helpless. It is more internal discrimination in their mind than external.

4.6 Discussion

The main aim of this paper was to use the political ecology framework to examine how different socio-economic and political factors influenced power and participation in ACAP's Ghandruk VDC. The specific objectives were to discover (i) what social, economic, and political factors affect the participation of marginal groups, (ii) what are the factors perceived by marginal groups as significant barriers to participation, and (iii) what role do management institutions play in facilitating the participation of marginal groups.

Overall the findings suggest that significant differences in socio-economic factors existed between the management and marginal samples; marginal groups perceived household and technical barriers as the most significant barriers to participation; management institutions felt that marginal groups were not participating due to their own weakness and not due to discrimination.

4.6.1 Relevant Differences between the Management and Marginal Groups

The literature suggests that communities are not homogenous entities and, within a single community, social and economic differences exist which give some individuals more power than others (Bryant 1992; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Peet and Watts 2004). In Ghandruk, significant differences existed between the management and marginal samples in terms of social and economic factors. Caste was an important factor; the majority of the committee members consisted of Gurungs. Historically, Ghandruk was known as a Gurung village, and until a few decades ago, these ethnic groups were the majority residents of the area due to their Tibetan descent into Nepal's mountains (Bista

2004). In recent years, in migration of the Dalits and out migration of the Gurungs has led to an increase in Dalit population. Currently Dalits comprise 30% of Ghandruk's total population (ACAP 2009). Even with the change in population composition, the management institutions in Ghandruk are still ruled by richer Gurung residents that hold power in the area. Historically used concepts like *Mukhiya* (village headman) and *Jamindar* (landlord) are still widely used in Ghandruk. The older, more prominent members of the management committees are addressed as *mukhiya baaje*, denoting not only wealth and prosperity but also respect.

The difference in gender between the two samples was not statistically significant. The number of males and females in each sample was about the same. But this equality has to do more with biases from the sample selection and less to do with representation of women. Since two of the management committees under study were a female only group and gender was a criterion for marginality, the representation of women in both samples was biased. In an important committee like the CAMC that made all the decisions about conservation and development programs in the ACA, only two women were present. Scholars have agreed that in countries like Nepal with a strong patriarchic lineage, the representation of women in mixed gender local management institutions tends to be very limited (Agarwal 2001; Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Lama and Buchy 2004; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). Further, many of these CBNRMs promote participatory exclusion and reinforce the already existing gender differences in the community (Schroeder and Suryanata 2004; Agarwal 2001).

Differences existed in the amount of land each group held. In the management sample, all except one owned land and therefore did not have to share the crops and could generate additional income by selling part of what they produced. Whereas in the marginal population, almost half were landless, were involved in sharecropping and produced only for subsistence. Besides farming, many management samples were hotel owners, whereas marginal samples were wage workers. The time commitment and economic earnings of the marginal sample and their occupation prevented them from participating in management committees. Statistically, additional source of income was not significant, but looking in detail at what the sources were for the two groups revealed a stark difference. For the management committee, their additional source of income was salary/pension whereas for the marginal sample it was wage work. The marginal groups had a more labor intensive and time consuming method of additional income source. Joining the army as a *lahure* is common among Gurung men and the pension not only brings them larger sums of money but also more respect (Bista 2004). After accumulating all the above factors, it was of no surprise that a significant difference in ability to support livelihood needs with annual income existed between the two samples. Many of the marginal population were wage workers or small scale subsistence farmer, landless and farmed others' land.

Level of education differed significantly between the marginal and management population. Education of women and lower caste was not a popular trend in Nepal until a few decades ago. Women were prevented from attending school because, as the reasoning went, one day they would have to be married off and take care of their

husband and his family. Educating women seemed purposeless in Nepali culture. Dalits were not allowed in the same social space as other castes, so attending schools and sitting besides children of other castes was not even a topic of consideration.

Therefore, the main factors that differentiate the two groups were: caste, education, land holding, and occupation. These differences corresponds to other research where the more powerful member or the 'elite' members of the society dominate local institutions in various conservation and development programs (Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004).

4.6.2 Marginal Sample and their Perceived Barriers

Various economic and social factors affect the participation of marginal groups in community-based conservation and development programs (Kellert et al. 2000; Singleton 2000; Tosun 2000; Agrawal 2000; Njoh 2002; Ribot 2003). This research adds to the literature by understanding what the marginal groups themselves perceive as significant barriers to their participation.

Although access to natural resources was not affected by various socio-economic and political factors, these factors combined together to serve as important barriers to participation in local management institutions. The marginal sample identified education as a significant factor that prevented them from participating in management committees. Previous research has shown that the relationship between education and participation can be both negative (Agrawal and Gupta 2005) and positive (Kideghesho, Røskaft, and Kaltenborn 2007; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). In the case of Ghandruk, participants perceived that not having education has resulted in them not

knowing what to do or say at committee meetings. They also had a perception that to be part of management committees, individuals should be educated. This perception was developed mainly due to the NGOs and conservation and development projects that, to 'improve' the quality of community member's lives, make participatory initiatives technical with the introduction of keeping minutes books, writing everything down and keeping budgets (Townsend, Porter, and Mawdsley 2004; Kamat 2004; Jarosz 1996; Li 2007). For example, in a day care center meeting, members developed a new rule that those present cannot use fingerprints but have to sign their names for attendance. This led to those not able to write feeling embarrassed and, at the end, this technical formality was fulfilled with literate women signing for those that were illiterate. Therefore, not only education, but education combined with ACAP's push toward these technicalities has led those without education to feel unqualified to take part in management committees.

Lack of awareness about existence of management committees also added to educational barriers where people felt they did not know anything about the management committee and therefore those who had more knowledge were the ones who were supposed to take part in committees.

This lack of education and awareness also resulted in marginal groups identifying not knowing how to participate as a significant barrier to participation. Lack of access to information adds to lack of awareness and education (Pellow 1999). Although marginal peoples' access to natural resources was not affected by social and economic variables, their access to information and opportunities was affected. Half of the marginal samples

did not get information on the formation of different groups. The dissemination of information in Ghandruk is done through a '*katuwal*', or a messenger who is supposed to give information house to house in each ward. Four *katuwals* that the author had informal conversations with explained that they do not go from house to house, but rather they tell a few main people in the community and those people pass on the information to their neighbors. In many cases, these main people are those on the management committee and are more prominent in the village. Also, location of the village and its distance from the main village was something that affected access to information.

Although marginal groups lacked knowledge about management committees and specific rules and regulations related to conservation area policy, results showed that they had adequate awareness about conservation. The entire sample knew that they could not cut down trees without getting a permit. Although marginal groups were at a disadvantage in terms of participating in local institutions due to lack of awareness and information, results showed that this had not affected their attitude toward conservation. Although ACAP's aim toward empowerment was not inclusive, its efforts to promote awareness about conservation and 'environmentality' among the marginal population was successful.

Also, the combination of issues of time and demands from household chores, agriculture activities and poverty served as a significant barrier for marginal groups. Time conflicts with other activities (domestic and occupational) prevent marginal individuals from taking time out to go to meetings and getting involved in management

committees. The long duration of these meetings and the time of the day they are held results in villagers having to take time off from wage work or farming. The issue of time has been identified by other scholars also as a reason stakeholders won't participate in CBC programs (Cheng and Mattor 2006; Tosun 2000). To these individuals, other responsibilities (family care, providing for the family, employment, etc.) have greater priority than attending a meeting or taking part in a committee.

The domestic responsibilities become more prominent for women in villages. Women not only have to take care of home and family, but also have to work in agriculture fields and collect wood and grass. Other scholars also talk about the time constraints of managing a household, often preventing women from attending meetings and taking part in community activities (Lama and Buchy 2004). Participants did not directly perceive gender as a significant barrier to participation. But results showed that a combination of other social barriers and social norms stopped women from participating in management committees. Even today, in the rural villages, if a woman is gone from home for a long period of time, family members and neighbors start talking negatively about them. The in-laws do not like it when their daughter-in-law is not there to cook and have tea ready in the afternoon. For one of the women members of the CAMC in one of the meetings the author attended, her husband and mother-in-law started calling her a lot after 4pm and the woman had to leave and go home before the meeting ended. Also, the outmigration of men for various reasons has an effect on the participation of women. For example, many Gurung men serve in the British and Indian Army. Currently there is also a high demand for laborers in Middle Eastern countries

that is fulfilled by men from the occupational castes. This out migration of male members in Ghandruk has added to the work-load of women and their already busy schedule. Therefore, a combination of various factors did result in being a significant barrier to participation for many individual women.

Similarly, landless individuals did not identify being from a poor household as preventing them from participating, though a combination of other factors affected participation of these poorer households. Poverty ties in with social issues like feeding the family, taking care of the house, working in the fields or wage work to support family, and the time it takes to fulfill these domestic obligations prevents the poor from participating. Agriculture in Ghandruk is not as productive as in other places, and hardly meets daily subsistence needs. One hour that they have to spend on a community activity results in a decrease of one hour of work from their wage income. Therefore, poverty and the issue of time combined to serve as a major barrier for the poor in Ghandruk. Those that are not financially stable cannot think about taking part in community activities. Similarly, Tosun's (2000) research on tourism development projects in developing countries showed that the poor were left out because the majority of their time was spent on daily survival, leaving them very little time to take part in the project.

Participation of lower castes in local management institutions is something that has been studied extensively in Nepal, mostly in community forestry programs (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Mehta and Heinen 2001). Looking at caste as a barrier to participation showed conflicting results between quantitative and qualitative data. The majority of the marginal sample perceived caste as

a not significant barrier, and the majority of the management committee mentioned that no one stops the Dalits from participating; but participant observation and further analysis of interviews showed different results. Almost the entire sample stated that discrimination in Ghandruk was not present today, mainly due to education/policies/Maoist war. But observations showed that at the household level, discrimination is still present where Dalits are not allowed to enter Gurung households, and in some cases not allowed to sit together with the Gurungs. It was surprising to see that the Gurungs did not consider this as a form of discrimination and said “we don’t discriminate” but “we just don’t allow them to come into our homes” in the same sentence. Along the same lines, the majority of the Dalits also did not identify not being able to enter Gurung households as a form of discrimination. This trend was rather identified as a tradition, something that has been going on for years. Within the Dalits themselves, *Pariyars* were not allowed to enter *BKa*’s homes because the former is lower caste than the latter. Not visible on the surface, caste related social structures are still present in villages like Ghandruk and act as an invisible barrier and form invisible boundaries between the Dalits and other castes. This, in turn, affects the level of participation of the Dalits.

Results showed that the older generation were stricter towards the caste system and discriminated more than the younger generation. Women discriminated more than men. Older Gurung women admitted that they would never sit and eat/drink with the Dalits no matter what. Participant observation showed that the forest guard of the CAMC, an older Gurung man, served tea first to the Gurung men before offering it to

the two Dalit members of the committee. Also, older Dalit women automatically separated themselves from the Gurungs in community activities. These social rules, although not present in formal institutions, generate a mindset of discrimination that automatically translates to barriers for marginal groups.

Besides social structures present in the community, discrimination was practiced through silent forms like language and dependency. In Nepali, '*ta*' is used as a form of demeaning language, used by those in power to address those that are less powerful in the community; whereas those in lower status socially address elites with respect in the form of '*tapai*' or '*hajur*' (Ojha 2006). Through participant observation, it was seen that Gurungs addressed Dalits and the poor as '*ta*' and felt they could order them around. The poor and Dalits on the other hand when they talked to Gurungs addressed them not only as '*tapai*' but also use relationship terms signifying respect. For example, younger Dalit women call the CAMC secretary as '*baaje*' which translates to Grandfather and automatically denotes respect.

Another form of control the rich had over the poor and lower caste was through control of labor and financial dependency. The lower caste people work as laborers and farm workers for the Gurungs. Hiring these workers is denoted as doing them a favor by the Gurungs and the wage workers are always grateful to the landlords. This establishes more power and control over the poor and the lower caste and also gives landowners more leisure time to take part in community activities.

The poorer residents went to the Gurung landlords to ask for loans, which is easier for them than going to the bank in the city since Ghandruk does not have a bank.

Since the majority of Dalit households are currently following the trend of international labor migration to Middle Eastern countries, the financial dependency on Gurungs for the Dalits is increasing⁷⁰. Hence a combination of various micro factors makes the social hierarchy in villages stronger and affects the participation of marginal groups.

Even though not having interest was considered not significant, interviews and participant observation showed that a combination of poverty and economic opportunities generated less interest toward being part of the management committees for marginal populations. Research carried out in Tanzania showed that communities were not interested in the programs and even if there was interest, it was temporary and was influenced by economic benefits (Njoh 2002). Similarly, Spiteri and Nepal (2006) in their research on conservation programs in developing countries showed participation in CBCs were affected by financial incentives.

In Ghandruk, this argument was made stronger by lack of interest in participation but increased interest in opening hotels on community land to attract financial benefits. Participant observation showed that compared to other committee meetings where only a handful of people showed up, a meeting concerned with opportunities for opening hotels in community land was attended by more than 40 people. Tourism has been a business that has brought a lot of money to the residents of Ghandruk. Since they see the income hotel owners and shop keepers are making in Ghandruk, farmers and the poor have lost

⁷⁰ Currently the approximate rate in Nepalese Rupees that a person has to pay for, including manpower agency, tickets, and other expenses is Rs80,000 (source: personal conversation, Director, Manpower agency). The loans that Dalits take from Gurungs for such labor migration is large in amount and takes the Dalits many years to pay back. During this period, the Dalits feel obliged to the Gurungs and therefore a form of domination exists.

interest in farming, want to be involved in tourism related business, and do not care about taking part in committees and meetings.

As mentioned above, many Dalit households are involved in international labor migration. This out migration and its contribution of remittances to the family back home has implications on participation. Although on one hand this migration for work provides the Dalits with economic opportunities to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the family, on the other hand this migration generates lack of interest from Dalit women to be involved in local management institutions, interact with other castes, and work toward community activities. This further ties back to the issue of monetary benefit from participation and how if these monetary benefits are being fulfilled from international labor migration, many residents feel that there is no need to participate in local management committees.

The combination of results obtained from comparing the differences between the two groups, and the perceived barriers identified by marginal groups showed that the issue was more complicated than just gender, wealth and caste. The combination of various factors made some groups of individuals in Ghandruk more powerful than others. Various socio-economic and cultural variables intertwined with each other to act as significant barriers to participation for certain groups of people. Therefore, this study recommends that understanding barriers to participation of marginal groups was not as simple as a cause and effect relationship. This further contributes to the political ecology literature that challenges the apolitical nature of participatory conservation initiatives and the need to look beyond a simple cause and effect relationship (Robbins 2004; Peet

and Watts 2004). For example, being from a Dalit household or being a woman, or poor, was not necessarily a simple cause of not participating. The issue was more complicated and a combination of various factors at various scales that served as significant barriers to participation.

This study recommends that categorizing individuals according to caste, gender or wealth is not sufficient to identify barriers to participation. Various factors at local, regional and international scales, interact together to serve as potential barriers for participation. Therefore, a detailed understanding of these factors is necessary to ensure adequate measures to promote CBNRMs that are truly participatory.

4.6.3 What are Management Committees and ACAP Doing to Facilitate Marginal Participation?

In the case of Ghandruk, due to the promotion of gender development since the early 1990s, and the formation of the *Ama Samuha*, women have not necessarily been identified as marginalized. People identified a major barrier to participation for women as household related chores. ACAP staff felt that due to its gender empowerment initiatives, women in Ghandruk are more capable here than in many other places. But today, due to the changing situation of the country, the majority of Ghandruk's women were not interested in participating and did not have the 'skills' to participate. The poor that had a hard time satisfying daily livelihood needs had no interest or capability to participate.

The management committee and ACAP staff identified limited abilities and lack of interest as the Dalits' primary barrier to participation. But when asked how those

barriers can be removed, all the answers reflected that Dalits are *pichadiyeko barga* or a backward class and they do not understand things and do not show interest. These kinds of discourses that NGO promote to undermine certain groups as backward and underdeveloped is not new (Walker et al. 2007). Lack of education and awareness about the existence and function of management committees coupled with a history of social discrimination makes Dalits segregate themselves from the Gurungs and hesitant to take part in community activities. The Dalits perceive this lack of education and awareness as something that supports their reason for not going to these community meetings. Today, Dalits once not allowed in the same spatial area as other castes find not having education and awareness a major barrier to participation, even if various programs are trying to include them. These social barriers are made stronger when NGOs that are supposed to act as agents of structural change come into the community with predefined notions about community members and promote these discourses through local institutions (Sundberg 2003).

ACAP has periodic skill development trainings like sewing and knitting, carpentry, kitchen garden, tea plantation, cooking, baking, etc. But due to the current political condition of the country, ACAP's budget has decreased and so has the frequency of these trainings and education programs. In many cases, even if ACAP requires the inclusion of certain percentages of Dalits and women in these trainings, the participants of these trainings are chosen by the CAMC and other officers of different management committees, keeping in mind kinships and concept of *afno manche*. Therefore, ACAP needs to understand how information institutions, that scholars

(Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999) define as a regularized patterns of behavior between individuals and groups in society(226), influence the relationships between different actors and how this, in turn, can lead to some marginal groups benefitting more than others.

Similar to other research (Ojha 2006; Agrawal and Gupta 2005), results in Ghandruk showed that frequent interaction with project staff, regular attendance in meetings and contacts with prominent village members affected the level of participation and access to opportunities of marginal groups. But due to lack of information about different committees and programs, marginal committees get left behind on the empowerment and education programs ACAP organizes.

ACAP needs to have better evaluation programs of committees. ACAP hands over the authority to the CAMC, but there were a few houses that had received the cement and toilet pan but still had not constructed the toilets. But ACAP had not followed their progress. Out of the three Dalit women who got the higher education scholarship, only one actually completed the 12th grade. ACAP prides itself in gender empowerment and, truthfully speaking, has done a lot for gender development in the past. But currently the *Ama Samuha* in Ghandruk is falling apart and ACAP feels that it is not its responsibility to find out why. The issue of NGO and accountability has been widely researched in literature (Kamat 2004; White 1999; O'Reilly 2006). In cases like this, NGOs are accountable to the centralized forces like the state and hardly to the community. According to Kamat (2004), no mechanism exists to make the NGOs accountable to the local people (p. 156). Therefore, as part of the state's requirement to

include Dalits as beneficiaries, ACAP has welfare programs targeted at Dalits and women to satisfy up-ward accountability. But ACAP needs to also monitor these activities to ensure that these marginal groups are actually benefiting from the programs. National politics and the Maoist movement in Nepal have positively affected the participation of marginal population in Ghandruk. The main concept behind the Maoist movement or the “people’s war” is “based on a sense of injustice due to the way in which a social group is treated” (Murshed and Gates 2005, 122). Because of the civil war that started in 1996, class struggle between different castes has intensified, each wanting greater domination of political and economic advantages. Currently there are many local groups that have been formulated to ensure marginal groups have a voice in decision making in the country’s political system. The country has witnessed resistance and opposition, in some cases even violent riots, from these groups demanding an equal status. Even though the political instability is negatively affecting the participation of rich and higher castes due to migration to the city, it is helping the lower castes. As part of the Maoist movement to collect all castes and gender together to create a wholesome new Nepal, Dalits are raising their voices for equality and realizing that discrimination against caste is illegal. This is promoting awareness among a few to get involved in committees and increase participation. Future research in Ghandruk could examine whether Nepal’s multi-party democracy will play a significant role in uplifting the marginal groups from social oppression (Sheridan 1988) or whether different political parties will use these marginal groups to advance their own agenda as observed in Ivory Coast (Bassett 1988).

Therefore, results from Ghandruk showed that identifying specific factors and studying them at a micro level was not adequate to understanding barriers to participation. Using concepts from political ecology showed that issues of participation and barriers are not a simple cause and effect relationship (Robbins 2004; Jarosz 1996). Various factors are intertwined with each other and these factors are embedded in a bigger social and political sphere that makes issues of power and access complex (Stonich 1993). These influences, then, are responsible for affecting attitudes and behaviors that affect participation.

4.7 Conclusion

Participatory programs that are supposed to integrate a variety of interests and ensure equal representation of all stakeholders often end up creating a stronger inequality in the community and give more power to those that are already higher on the social hierarchy. Similar to many other conservation and development programs (Njoh 2002; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Sultana 2009; Cooke and Kothari 2001; White 1996), results from Ghandruk showed that socio-economic and political factors played an important role in preventing marginal samples from participating in local management institutions.

Kothari (2001, 141) discusses how power is present in all and is practiced through means of social norms and customs throughout society. ACAP is taking steps to uplift marginal populations by providing development initiatives toward Dalits and poor. But these initiatives are carried out by ACAP through the CAMC, the same CAMC that consists of 12 Gurung men and only two Dalit women. The concept of kinship, *afno*

manche, social norms and traditions are very prominent in Ghandruk, and these determine the allocation of opportunities and information. Therefore, even among the marginal groups (Dalits, women and poor), some individuals hold more power than others due to their contact with the elite members of the community that are a part of local management institutions. What ACAP needs to focus on more is to understand how informal institutions, along with these formal institutions, play a hand in distribution of benefits. There is a need for participatory conservation programs to understand the social and cultural spheres in which these participatory programs exist and how these norms and traditions influence the level of participation of individuals.

ACAP has been successful in generating awareness about conservation among the residents of Ghandruk. However, as mentioned on ACAP's management plan, its future objective is not limited to conservation, but also empowerment of the local people, including the poor, farmers, and lower caste. Results showed that its empowerment initiatives are more for short term gain and project requirements rather than actual empowerment of these marginal groups and long term structural change.

Lack of education and awareness among the marginal groups was identified as a major barrier to participation. Therefore, instead of directing its efforts towards infrastructural development for marginal groups, there is a need for ACAP to ensure adequate educational programs, not only formally in schools, but also informal education for villagers is needed.

Also, the integration of various socio-economic factors serve as a major barrier to participation for certain groups. Applying concepts from political ecology to CBRNM

programs highlights the need for these programs to be informed by not only the cultural, political, economic, and environmental contexts in which they work but also by how these contexts, at various scales, combine together to make some individuals more powerful than others. Findings of this research indicate that definitions of marginal groups go beyond gender and caste, and are more significantly defined by wealth, poverty, education, time, and access to information. Developing a deeper understanding of the needs, goals, opportunities and constraints faced by the participants of these conservation programs and, further, how these issues influence their behavior, attitudes and perception to participation will ensure participation and thus strengthen the effectiveness of CBNRM.

Therefore, understanding the complexities communities face, ACAP needs to reconsider its management strategy based on ever changing local, regional, national and international conditions. ACAP needs to focus its management strategies to aim for structural change to ensure effective participation of marginal groups (Dolhinow 2005; Bryant and Bailey 1997). This can be achieved by moving away from the generic notion of marginality as defined in CBNRM literature and to understand how the combination of micro and macro level factors are combined together to serve as barriers for certain individuals.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

Participatory conservation efforts, although a more effective alternative to centralized decision-making, have been criticized for many reasons, mainly for benefiting the elite members of the society and excluding marginal communities (Cooke and Kothari 2001). This issue is critical in the context of Nepal where communities are part of a strong social hierarchy based on religion, gender and economics. To achieve meaningful participation, conservation and development projects should focus on the inclusion of multiple stakeholders within a community (Agrawal and Gibson 2001). But most research in participatory conservation is based on the common property framework and focuses on effectiveness of institutions in understanding CBNRM. In most cases the discussion of how multi-scalar social, political, and economic factors and their interaction affect the natural resource management decisions being made in conservation and development projects are ignored (Neumann 2005).

Scholars in political ecology challenge the apolitical nature of such participatory research and provide a different insight into the society-human interactions. The main assumptions of political ecology are that politics and the environment are thoroughly connected, material struggles over the environment are also complicated political struggles, and unequal power relations inform access, control and distribution of natural resources (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Peet and Watts 2004).

Therefore using the lens of political ecology, the broad objective of the research was to examine the participation of marginal groups and how interaction of various

factors at different scales affects the level of participation of marginal groups. Followed by an introduction section, the research was divided into three sections that had specific objectives:

1. To examine the perceived benefits of ACAP as an ICDP and how marginal groups fare in the distribution of benefits
2. To analyze the level of participation of marginal groups in local management institutions
3. To identify the barriers to participation as perceived by marginal groups

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data collected from ACAP staff, members of management committees and marginal groups provided valuable insights into these issues. This research has applicability to scholars, policy makers, and managers related to CBNRM programs.

The ACA is the largest and first conservation area of Nepal. It also serves as an example of Nepal's first initiative to include people in the management of a protected area through the formation of local management institutions. This study focused on understanding how the ACAP incorporates participation of marginal groups in Ghandruk (where the project started as a pilot project) and identified some of the limitations of the process.

5.1.1 Perceived Benefits of an ICDP and its Distribution

The first article provided an overview of ACAP as an ICDP. The main objectives of the paper were to understand the benefits of ACAP, how different actors (NGO staff,

management committee, and marginal groups) perceived these benefits and how marginal groups fared in the distribution of the benefits.

A tangible outcome of ACAP as an ICDP has been a heightened awareness among local residents in Ghandruk about the importance of environmental conservation, and that "environmentality" is gradually being embedded in people's minds and livelihood experiences. However, the views of staff and villagers differed in what they perceived as benefits of ACAP. The staff identified three major benefits of ACAP: community involvement and empowerment, a successful rate of conservation, and the presence of field offices for easier access to staff and opportunities. Whereas, in the case of villagers, although they agreed with conservation as a benefit, other benefits identified were cleanliness in the village and developments like electricity and water. Within the villagers, this perspective differed between the management and marginal sample. Majority of the marginal sample identified conservation as a benefit whereas the marginal sample identified no benefits of ACAP.

ICDPs were planned with the assumption that they would be able to generate benefits to the local people and these would be equally distributed (Wells et al. 2004). But in reality, results from Ghandruk showed that benefits of ACAP were not equally distributed because of the presence of varied interests and capacity of community members as well as differences in spatial locations.

The majority of ACAP's benefits were targeted toward hotel owners and tourism entrepreneurs. The reason for this was the 'sectoral approach' the ACAP followed until a few years ago. ACAP was first established in Ghandruk to control the rapid rate of

deforestation caused by increases in population and tourism. Therefore all its development efforts and empowerment activities were targeted toward hotel owners, leaving poor farmers more marginalized than before.

Within marginal groups, many individuals did not understand what contributions ACAP had made in Ghandruk. The majority of the marginal group stated that ACAP had not done anything for them; but on further probing as to how they got water and electricity, people were not able to answer. Some complained that ACAP had not done anything for them in the hope that the project would give them financial benefit in the future. This finding makes stronger the notion that NGOs develop a patron client relationship in communities which makes the people more dependent on the project (Mosse 2001; O'Reilly 2010).

Due to transfer of different discourses (e.g., participation, empowerment, trainings, etc.) and benefits, ACAP has made the hotel owners and those living in the main village more powerful. Trying to achieve immediate results in the first 5-10 years of its establishment and the ignorance of community diversity has resulted in a wider gap between those involved in tourism versus those that are not. Therefore, marginality in the case of Ghandruk extends beyond caste, gender and wealth to include other aspects like location and occupation. ACAP has also played an important role in changing human-environment relationships, where the farmers are abandoning farming practices with the expectation of reaping better economic opportunities offered by ACAP.

In the past 15 years, ACAP has experienced a decrease in the number of tourists and an absence of external donors due to the political instability of the country. This has resulted in a drastic decrease in its funding and thus its number of programs. Although the number of tourists entering the region is slowly increasing following the end of the decade long Maoist war, the sustainability of the project is questionable when its sole source of funding relies on the number of tourists entering the region.

Also, the rapid scaling of ACAP in the first 10-15 years, due to international and national attention the project received, had overwhelmed the community, following the ‘flash flood’ symptom (Sayer and Wells 2004). But today, due to the decrease in funding the expectations of the people of Ghandruk are not being met and they are questioning ACAP’s use of entry fees and lack of financial transparency.

NGOs like ACAP operated in a social and political vacuum (Peet and Watts 2004; Nightingale 2005). In a rush to get instant results and external funding, these ICDP programs were started in a community with the assumption that communities were homogenous (Kellert et al. 2000). Also, NGOs come into a community with predefined notions and assumptions and invest on issues that are more important to the NGO than to the local people (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995).

ICDP literature suggests that projects need long term investment and at least a decade is necessary for ICDPs to be successful (Wells et al. 2004; Baral, Stern, and Heinen 2007). But the case of ACAP and Ghandruk shows that not even 25 years was sufficient to ensure inclusion of all stakeholders and sustainability of the project.

Political instability, varying perceptions of different actors and the instability of funding is causing challenges to the sustainability of ACAP.

5.1.2 Involvement and Empowerment of Marginal Groups in Local Management Institutions

Participation is defined as a process that enhances the capacity of individuals to improve their own lives and facilitate social changes to the benefits of those that are disadvantaged (Cleaver 2001). ACAP follows a participatory conservation approach by involving local people in management institutions responsible for all conservation and development programs in the conservation area. This paper focused on understanding the institutional composition of management committees and to examine the level of participation of marginal groups in these community based organizations. Levels of participation were evaluated by examining numbers of membership, leadership positions, attendance in meetings, knowledge about management committees and their functions, ability to influence decisions, and interaction with ACAP staff.

The results indicate that women and Dalits have been included in the management institutions but their participation has been minimal. Marginal groups did not hold leadership positions in groups, they did not attend meetings regularly, had fewer interaction with ACAP staff, had no influence in decisions being made and, in many instances, did not know who was a member in their committee or the functions of their committee.

Even though termed as a model for participatory conservation and development (Wells, Brandon, and Hannah 1992; Bajracharya, Furley, and Newton 2005), the

different management committees studied in Ghandruk still practiced highly centralized decision making. There were a handful of individuals who held membership in numerous committees, and it was these same people who had enough knowledge about the functioning of the group and made all the decisions. Although committee membership was related to elite domination, results also showed that this was an outcome of outmigration of other leaders who were previously members of the management committees. Therefore, along with social domination, committee involvement was the result of political instability in the country.

Echoing the thoughts of Li (2002) success in these projects should not be measured by understanding only the effectiveness of the conservation output or passing of legislation that pertains to it, but should also be measured by understanding the effects the project has on peoples' lives. Therefore, the case of Ghandruk served as a good example of how it is necessary to examine not only who participates but also how participation occurs and in what capacity the participation takes place (Sultana 2009).

In the case of Ghandruk, the state-backed quota system has been successful in the inclusion of women and lower castes. But in most cases, these individuals had very low levels of participation. Participation is a concept of citizenship in which participants should have a voice and influence in decision making (Hickey and Mohan 2004; Arnstein 1969). Results showed that marginal groups followed the minimal level of participation. In most cases these groups were included as a form of 'tokenism' (Arnstein 1969), to satisfy the quota for women and Dalits. This lack of empowerment of marginal members was not only limited to caste, gender and wealth but was a result of a

combination of factors. Education, ACAP's push toward technical requirements in management institutions, domestic responsibilities, occupation, political influences, ability to support livelihood needs, etc. all combined together to influence the level of participation of marginal groups. Therefore empowerment of marginal groups should be studied by examining the complexities of context and scale. There is also a need for structural transformation of power relations to have control over decision-making in local management institutions (Cleaver 2001).

5.1.3 Perceived Barriers Affecting the Participation of Marginal Groups

After concluding in section three that the level of participation of marginal groups in local management committees was minimal, this paper studied what marginal groups perceived as important barriers to participation. This paper assumed marginality using caste, gender and wealth and explained how these factors alone and together combined to influence participation of marginal groups in management committees.

While comparing the management and marginal group results showed that caste, education, birthplace, occupation, landholding, crops grown and ability to support livelihood needs with annual income were relevant differences. Many studies in Nepal have identified socio-economic factors as significant in determining participation in CBC programs (Timsina 2002; Lachapelle, Smith, and McCool 2004; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). This paper took the research a step further and identified what specific socio-economic factors marginal groups perceived as important barriers to participation. The results

showed that different socio-economic factors need to be studied in relationship to each other and in the context of scale to understand actual barriers to participation.

Conflicts with household chores and family responsibilities, agriculture related activities, lack of education, issues of time, and not knowing how to get involved were all perceived as important issues that prevented these marginal groups from participating. These factors combined together to make some individuals more vulnerable in the community and limited their ability to participate in local management institutions.

Almost half of the marginal group in Ghandruk did not have knowledge about the existence of management committees, and even if some could identify the committees, their knowledge was limited. This lack of knowledge also coincided with barriers related to conservation area rules and regulations where 75% of the interviewees answered that they did not know whether conservation area rules and regulations prevented them from participating. Similarly marginal groups also identified not knowing how to participate as somewhat important. Although marginal groups were limited in terms of access to information and knowledge about management committees, they did possess adequate awareness about conservation. The entire marginal sample identified the need to get a permit for cutting trees, and how only dry leaves and fallen twigs could be collected from community forests.

Education was an important barrier identified by marginal groups as something that prevented them from being involved in management committees. The majority of them stated that they could not contribute to the committee without having the ability to

read and write. This perception was made stronger by the need of projects to have complex accounting systems, audit projects, to take notes in meetings, publish project reports frequently, etc. giving rise to the need of Western knowledge to be part of these NGOs (Kamat 2004; Townsend, Porter, and Mawdsley 2002; Miraftab 1997).

Although quantitative data showed that marginal groups did not perceive social barriers as important, a combination of other factors and the prevalence of social norms and traditions served as an important factor that prevented the participation of certain groups. For example, being from a poor household or being a woman or even being a Dalit was not perceived as significant by the marginal groups. But a combination of other factors like household responsibilities, the need to carry out wage work, financial dependence on higher castes, discrimination at the household level, lack of education, out migration of male members in households, inability to support livelihood needs with income, etc., all combined to make these social constructs a major barrier for certain individuals. For example, the out-migration of male members in Ghandruk has added to the work load of women and their already busy schedule. So although being a woman was not perceived as a barrier, a combination of factors resulted in serving as a barrier, and this in turn resulted in lack of interest toward participation. Also, lower caste people worked as laborers and farm workers for the Gurungs. Hiring these workers is denoted as doing them a favor by the Gurungs and the wage workers are always grateful to the landlords. This establishes more power and control over the poor and the lower caste and also gives more leisure time for landowners to take part in community activities. Hence,

a combination of various factors at various scales makes the social hierarchy in villages stronger and thus influences participation.

Observations showed lesser interest from marginal groups in participating in management committees. Although the majority of management authority and ACAP staff identified Dalits having no interest and being lazy as a reason why they were not participating, few efforts were made by these actors to understand why these Dalits were apparently 'not interested' in participating. These results coincide with other research in political ecology where issues related to participation and powers are not as simple as a cause and effect relationship (Robbins 2004; Jarosz 1996). There are various factors that are intertwined with each other and these factors are embedded in a bigger social and political sphere that makes issues of power and access complex (Stonich 1993). This integration serves as a major barrier to participation for certain groups.

Applying concepts from political ecology to CBRNM programs highlights the need for these programs to be informed not only by the cultural, political, economic, and environmental contexts in which they work, but also by how these contexts, at various scales, combine together to make some individuals more powerful than others. Based on these principles, this research recommends that definitions of marginal groups go beyond gender and caste, and are more significantly defined by wealth, poverty, education, time, and access to information. Developing a deeper understanding of the needs, goals, opportunities and constraints faced by the participants of these conservation programs and how these issues influence behavior, attitudes and perception toward participation will strengthen the effectiveness of CBNRM.

In conclusion, to achieve meaningful participation, conservation and development projects should not only understand the heterogeneous nature of communities but also examine the interaction among different actors and the process through which certain individuals exert power over others. Many CBNRM programs occur in a social and political vacuum. But results show that socio-political complexities possess significant challenges to the project output, even for a well-established model projects like the ACAP.

Overall, this research contributes to the rich body of literature in political ecology by situating the level of participation of marginal groups within broader historical, political and social dynamics. By examining the perceived barriers of marginal groups, this research examined power relations and micro-politics that determined who participates in local management institutions. The research also provided insights into NGOs as actors of change that influence the participation of different groups in local management institutions. Despite the presence of varied interests and power relationships, due to the abundance of natural resources, there was no conflict over access to natural resources. But CBNRM practices are not only about access to material resources but also about social relations and authority to mediate people's engagement in these local institutions that control the natural resources (Agarwal 2001; Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999).

5.2 Recommendations

These are some recommendations for literature, policy makers, and managers that are connected with participatory conservation initiatives, especially in developing

countries. These recommendations are based on the field experience from Ghandruk and do not represent the entire ACA region.

5.2.1 Contribution to the Literature

This research adds to the work of other scholars that have looked at the affect of CBNRM projects on marginal groups (White 1999; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Njoh 2002; Agrawal and Gupta 2005; Agarwal 2010; Dolisca et al. 2006; Flintan 2002; Lama and Buchy 2004; Sikor and Nguyen 2007). The strength of the study is the integration of a vast range of literature regarding protected areas, participation, and political ecology to understand the complex picture of participation of marginal groups.

ICDPs and participatory conservation have been questioned by biologists today for focusing more on people and development which, in turn, takes away from the actual reason for the existence of protected areas—conservation of biodiversity (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen et al. 2002; Hutton, Adams, and Murombedzi 2005). This research adds to the conservation literature by stating how ICDPs (although consisting of faulty assumptions) do have the capability to conserve natural resources. People-centered conservation initiatives have the power to generate a more favorable attitude towards conservation and develop a favorable attitude toward conservation which can generate the concept of ‘environmentality’ among local people.

The VDC chosen for this study was considered a model for CBNRM because of its high rate of success in conservation and also, empowerment of local people. But further analysis showed that the project was not as decentralized as it should be and only

benefitted a handful of participants. Although considered successful, participatory initiatives were not necessarily highly participatory. In many instances, a project is defined as successful if it achieves the program output without looking at the inclusion and empowerment of the community (Parfitt 2004). Hence, this study adds to the literature that success in CBNRMs needs to be defined in ways that include not only the conservation outputs but also the effects on the empowerment of different stakeholders. This study adds to the literature of participatory conservation by highlighting how inclusion does not necessarily lead to empowerment (Parfitt 2004; Kellert et al. 2000; Zanetell and Knuth 2004; Cooke and Kothari 2001). Results showed that there is a need to develop indicators for assessing CBNRM success that take into account the level and quality of member participation in decision making. Although studies have focused on participation of marginal groups in community forests user groups in Nepal (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Timsina 2002), this study adds to the literature by applying these issues in the context of protected areas.

Conservation initiatives have shifted toward criticism of the elite capture system and exclusion of marginal groups, but this research show that efforts to remove this system created by unequal power balances, is not an easy process. Participation of marginal groups is a complex process embedded in socio-cultural environment, influenced by social norms and traditions, and affected by NGO, government and international influences. Therefore, there is a need to adopt a context specific and multi scalar approach to understand how inclusion and exclusion in community institutions are produced.

Political ecology challenges the apolitical nature of participatory programs (Robbins 2004). This research suggests that issues of social discrimination, especially in rural communities, are hard to remove due to deep-rooted norms and traditions that are present. Hence, scholars need to understand that structural changes that give voice to marginal groups take longer than the literature suggests.

Literature in CBNRM has adopted a generic category of marginality defined by women, poor and lower caste (Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004; Nightingale 2003b; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Hildyard et al. 2001; Lama and Buchy 2004). Taking previous literature a step further, this study recommends that generic denotation of certain groups based on caste and gender tends to assume the concept of homogeneity within group, an assumption that is strongly criticized by political ecology literature. Therefore, marginality needs to be examined by understanding the complexity of participation and how various factors are intertwined together with the social, political and historical context to make some individuals more powerful than others.

The majority of previous research in CBNRM programs has either employed a quantitative or qualitative method. Both have their own advantage and disadvantages. This study applied a mixed method approach in data collection and analysis, and has illustrated how this method maybe more beneficial in community settings where power and participation are studied, understanding the level of participation and how social norms and traditions and power affected this level of participation. Results for this research has provided a holistic view of participation of marginal groups by using mixed data collection methods and detailed field insights and observations. This research

design has improved the quality of the study as compared to the use of only one form of research method (Adhikari, Di Falco, and Lovett 2004). Using a mixed-methods approach also helped identify how several factors affected the level of participation of marginal groups; it was the inter-connectedness of various factors that served as either an enhancer or a barrier to participation.

5.2.3 Recommendations for Policy Makers

Decentralized decision- making in protected areas has been promoted by policies and regulations not only in Nepal but throughout the world. Local governments have made additional efforts to ensure inclusion of marginal groups. In the context of Nepal, such efforts have established a quota system for women and Dalits. But governments and policy makers need to ensure that only requiring a quota system will not resolve these traditional social constructs. Along with policies, there is a need for programs that create awareness about the rights of these marginal groups. In many cases Dalits are unaware of their rights as an individual; only a small percentage of Dalits in rural villages have knowledge that it is illegal to discriminate based on caste. Not understanding the right to equality makes it hard for marginal groups to rise above the social oppression they have been experiencing for years.

The government also needs to transmit awareness and education programs thorough popular media channels. Along with non-formal education and awareness, there is a need to promote formal education in schools for marginal groups. Providing financial benefits for Dalit children or reserving certain percentage of seats for women and Dalits in school does not ensure that these marginalized children receive an

education. Policies that ensure that Dalits and women attend school, at least to a certain age limit, need to be developed.

Although NGOs play a critical role in engaging local community members, facilitating participation by showing more response to the needs of local people, they are also handicapped in terms of making substantial changes in the community without political support from governments and financial support from international organizations. Therefore partnerships of NGOs with the government, development of NGO networks and other organizations working toward conservation most likely will result in not only better conservation initiatives but also sustainability in the long run.

It is important to be aware that social and political landscapes are dynamic and constantly changing. What worked in the past may not work now. So it is important for community-based projects to have an adaptive management strategy and change their management initiatives according to the changes that occur. Adaptive management can be defined as a locally-based approach and planning and implementation of programs that are based on the changes of the local conditions (Salafsky and Margoluis 2004).

Nepal, along with other developing countries, is currently experiencing a rapid incline in international labor migration (ILM). Therefore for community-based projects, policy makers and practitioners need to realize that the skilled and qualified population is decreasing in rural villages like Ghandruk. Those that are left behind, in most cases, lack the capacity of interest to participate. For some groups like women, these participatory processes are assumed as a greater burden to an already busy schedule (Agarwal 2010). The issue of ILM is something that is larger than what research alone

can tackle, and this research contributes to the issue highlighting that it is something policy makers need to think about.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Project Managers

The unpredictability of the tourism industry may impose limitation to projects if the main source of funding for protected area relies solely on tourism. Many ICDPs in protected areas also promote tourism as an incentive for economic development. This research showed that promotion of tourism as an incentive for economic development in areas where most people are dependent on agriculture is not the best or most effective way of achieving sustainability in the future. There is also a need for projects to focus more on agriculture and to increase productivity so that it is compatible with tourism.

NGOs usually base their activities in easily accessible areas or areas that will likely ensure recognition. ACAP has followed a similar trend by focusing more on tourism related areas and thus resulting in unequal distribution of benefits across the protected areas. Therefore, managers need to ensure balanced regional and rural development efforts from the initial stages of the project.

Participation of different stakeholders results in the bringing together of different views and perspectives. Therefore divergent views need to be brought together in the beginning of the project and not later when the project is fully established. This situation affects the level of knowledge people have about the committees and the level of self confidence needed to participate in local institutions. In the preliminary stages, projects target prominent members to ensure support for the project. In most cases, projects also assume that those that come forward to participate represent the community, but this

results in the prominent few dominating the management committees in the future which, in turn, results in continued marginalization.

CBNRM projects are highly criticized because of their assumption of 'homogenous community.' Therefore, project managers need to ensure that the same assumption is not repeated when promoting the inclusion of marginal groups. Project managers need to understand that within groups of women and Dalits, there are various factors that make certain individuals more powerful than others. This diversity within different marginal groups needs to be considered to ensure representation of those most marginalized in the community.

Understanding social norms of rural villages, Government and projects should practice inclusive employment programs by employing staff of varied ethnicity and gender. This is important to ensure equal participation for all stakeholders, since access to benefits and participatory approaches were directly related to interaction with staff. Therefore, NTNC and ACAP should work toward employing Dalits and women in their field offices to ensure equal participatory opportunities.

Time was identified as an important obstacle for people's participation and for attendance in meetings. So efforts need to be taken by management to ensure that meetings start on time, do not last the whole day, and are not scheduled on times that conflict with household chores. Related to time was spatial distance and how it resulted in those living near the main village participating more than others. Therefore, one recommendation would be to have meetings and programs circulate between different wards to ensure that all get a chance to participate.

ICDPs are largely criticized because of their failure to meet both goals: inability to conserve biodiversity and improve livelihood of people. Therefore it will be important for ACAP to monitor and find indicators to show changes in biodiversity and socio-economic benefits. ACAP needs to focus more on research or to collaborate with academic institutions to incorporate research findings, not only on the status of biodiversity but also to measure improvements in the social-economic conditions of the people.

5.3 Study Limitations and Future Research

Despite its theoretical and practical contribution in the field of participatory conservation, several limitations of the study should be noted along with future research options. Although the author was careful in stating no economic benefit from the study, the expectation of getting something from the research and ACAP biased the answers of some residents when they failed to acknowledge what ACAP had done for them. For example, when a woman was asked if she had gotten any benefit from ACAP, she answered “no” but further inquiry showed that her sister was the recipient of the higher education scholarship that ACAP awards to female Dalit students. This is common in projects in rural villages, where people state that they have not gotten anything from the project in the hope of acquiring some benefits in the future. Therefore future research conducted in participation in conservation and development should consider these biases while conducting CBNRM research. The best approach that needs to be taken to negate such biases is to use different methods of data collection and interaction with different actors in the field.

The study was limited by studying only one VDC within the ACAP. This limited the results of the research to be generalized to the entire ACA region. Therefore, future research needs to focus on the study of other VDCs within ACAP to understand the general trend for participation of marginal groups in the region. A study of more VDCs in ACA will also increase the validity of the study and provide a better representation of the conservation area and the ACAP.

The issue of time was one of the biggest limitations of the study. Issues of structural changes take a longer time to be effective. Therefore, future research is needed to conduct a prolonged study of the participation of marginal groups over a few years to understand whether the changes in the socio-political situation of the country has been successful in achieving empowerment of the marginal groups and how the macro and micro climate has affected the nature of relationships of community members and project staff.

The timing of the research also limited the ability to gain more insights into some issues. First of all, the research was conducted only a few years after the ten-year long Maoist war had ended. Although this shed light into how the country's political instability had affected the ACAP and local participation, it limited the study of different management committees that had been dismantled due to the war, and also affected the complete sampling of all committee members due to out-migration from the village. Second, the study was carried out two years before ACAP's proposed handover date of 2012. All staff interviewed in this study unofficially stated that the handover will not be possible in 2012 and the management of ACA under NTNC would extend for another

ten years, but no formal decisions had been made. Future research could study the management approach ACAP adopts after 2012 and how the project addresses different issues that have come up in this research (funding, unequal distribution of benefits, participation of marginal groups).

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APPENDIX I

ACAP STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date: _____

Start/end time: _____

Location: _____

Individual information

1. What is your educational background? (degree, previous employment, area of interest)
2. How long have you been working for ACAP?
3. What is your current position?
4. What are your basic duties in this position?
5. In general, how has your experience been working for ACAP? What do you like the most and least of your job?

Background on ACAP

6. Can you please give me some background on how ACAP was established?
7. What is your opinion about the role of the project in Annapurna Conservation area?
8. Who do you think ACAP has benefitted the most and the least and in what way?
9. Are there any local community members employed by ACAP? How many and what positions do they hold?
10. What is ACAP's priority in terms of conservation? Development? Empowerment?
11. Does ACAP provide any financial contributions to the community? How about any other forms of assistance?
12. Does ACAP receive any financial assistance from the government, private or international agency?
13. What is the ultimate goal of ACAP?

Management Committees

14. Currently what are the programs carried out by ACAP?
15. How many local management institutions are there in ACAP currently?
16. Can you give me brief explanation of what these management committees do?
17. How were the community representatives chosen when these institutions were first established?
18. Does ACAP have a say in who gets elected in the executive positions of these management committees?
19. What role does ACAP have in the daily functioning of the local management communities?
20. How often does an ACAP official visit these management committees?
21. Who is the primary point of contact for an ACAP official in these committees?
22. Have you attended any of the committee meetings? If yes, can you tell me how these meetings function?
23. How do these management committees respond to unpredictable circumstances? Do ACAP officials step in on such situations? (eg property damage due to natural disasters)

Marginal groups

24. What are some of the cost and benefits incurred by the villagers due to conservation?
25. In your opinion, do you think the costs and benefits of conservation are equally distributed in ACA?
26. Does ACAP employ democratic and participatory approaches in its programs?

27. What are the impacts of these programs on the poor? Do they empower the poor?
28. In your opinion do you think the power structure present in the community is reflected in the management of local institutions? Does issue of caste, gender, wealth affect the composition of management communities and access to resources?
29. Do the marginal communities have power in the execution of decisions regarding various conservation and development issues? If yes, please give examples.
30. Has ACAP taken any steps in ensuring equal representation of all social caste and gender in these management committees? If yes, please give examples of such initiatives.
31. Are there any programs/trainings aimed specifically at marginal groups?
32. Have you noticed any changes in the social and economic status of the marginal groups in the region?
33. If yes, what do you think are the causes of these changes?

Future visions

34. Do you have a vision of when ACAP will move out of the community?
35. Do you think the local people are capable of managing the conservation area once ACAP moves out of it?
36. What is the role of the government, especially the DNPW, in how ACAP functions?
37. Who do you submit your progress report to? Can you talk about the accountability of ACAP, to the community or to the government?
38. Why do you think ACAP is considered as a successful model for CBNRM?
39. Anything else you want to talk about that I might have missed?

-
- d. Have you experienced any social mobility/improvement because of the migration? Yes
 No If yes, please explain
-

18. Are you able to support your food and clothing needs with your current annual income? ⁷¹
 Always Sometimes Never Don't know

Dependence on natural resources

19. What are some of the natural resources you use and where do you get them from?

| Resources | Frequently | Sometimes | Never | Don't know | Source |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Dear trees and wood | | | | | |
| Live tree | | | | | |
| Plants and herbs | | | | | |
| Wild animals – meat and fish | | | | | |
| Land for livestock grazing | | | | | |
| Other: Specify | | | | | |

20. What do you mostly use these resources for? (pick all that apply) ⁷²

- ☐ Construction
☐ Food
☐ Areas for livestock
☐ Medicines
☐ Economic opportunity – commercial sales
☐ Religious or traditional activities
☐ Heating
☐ Cooking
☐ Other : Specify _____

21. Do you have to get permission to collect natural resources from the conservation area?
 Always Sometimes Never Don't know

22. If yes, from whom? _____

⁷¹ This question was used by Mehta and Heinen (2001) to classify the respondent as wealthy or poor.

⁷² This question was used by Spiteri and Nepal (2008)

Participation and ACAP

Involvement with ACAP

23. How many groups/committee are you a part of? _____

24. List all the groups you are a member of

25. Do you hold leadership position on any of these groups? If yes, which one?

26. How did you get involved in the group?

- ☐ Elected
- ☐ Voluntary
- ☐ Asked by ACAP
- ☐ Nominated by committee members
- ☐ Nominated by the villagers
- ☐ Others _____

27. How often do you attend meetings organized by different groups?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Don't know

28. Relationship with ACAP officials, in the past year

a) How many times did you meet with an ACAP official?

0 1-3 > 3

b.) How many times did you visit the ACAP office?

0 1-3 > 3

29. Relationship with Government, in the past year⁷³

a) How many times did you meet with a Government official?

0 1-3 > 3

b.) How many times did you visit a Government office?

0 1-3 > 3

⁷³ This question has been adapted from the PhD Thesis of Ojha (2006) on forest governance in Nepal

Checklist for interview with executive members of the management committee

General questions

1. Can you describe a typical day for me in your life?
2. What are some of the main issues/problems that the village is facing?
3. Do you think your economic and social status has increased over the last 5 years?
4. If yes, what are the causes for it?

Institutional questions

About the committee

5. What does your committee do?
6. Can you tell me how your committee started?
7. What is your position in the committee?
8. What are specific tasks and duties related to your position?
9. In your opinion what are some of the major achievements of the committee till now?
10. How does the management committee make its decisions? Who makes these decisions? (probe: president, vice president, etc.)
11. How does the committee respond to unusual circumstances (example, landslide destroying a house)? Is there additional benefits and assistance that the management committees provide to the households under such unpredicted circumstances? face
12. How many members does this management committee have?
13. Is there a membership fee? Is yes, how much?

Meetings

14. How often do you have meetings?
15. Do you attend all the meetings organized by your committee?
16. How do you inform the community about meetings and other functions?
17. Can you describe what a typical meeting is like?
18. Who makes the final decisions in these meetings?

Benefits

19. Has being part of the group been beneficial to you and your family? In what ways?
20. Who do you think these committees have benefitted the most and the least? (probe: examples)
21. Do you think these committees have any negative impacts? If yes, in what way?
22. Are there any obstacles or difficulties you face while in the groups? If yes, what?
23. Are you happy / unhappy with the way the committee works and the decisions it makes?
24. Would you like to see any changes in the way the committee works or the things it does?

Related to marginal groups

25. In your opinion, lower caste, poor and women given the same opportunity to participate in these groups?
26. Do the marginal groups come to the committee with problems? Is yes, can you give some examples?
27. How do you ensure that they get information about meetings and other programs?
28. What is the level of attendance of these groups in the meetings?
29. If they attend meetings, do they get involved or are silent participants?
30. Have there been any instances in which issues recommended by these marginal groups been considered while decisions have been made? (examples?)
31. The government is promoting social equity and treating the lower castes as equal, what is your opinion on this issue?

32. Do you think there is any change in the way marginal groups are treated in the past 5-10 years?
33. Do you think there is any change in the level of engagement of marginal groups in the past 5-10 years?

Related to ACAP

34. How often do you interact with ACAP officials?
35. What is the role of the ACAP officials in these local institutions?
36. Do they have a say in the decisions made by the management committee?
37. Do you think ACAP officials understand your problem and needs and are willing to help you? Is yes, in what way give some examples?
38. How does ACAP encourage you to participate in these committees and other programs?
39. Do you know if ACAP has special programs that are targeted at marginal groups? If yes, what are they?
40. Do you think ACAP has had any impacts (either positive or negative) for the village and the region? In what ways, give examples?

APPENDIX III

MARGINAL GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Number: _____ Village name: _____ Date: _____

Demographics

1. Name: _____
2. Age: under 18 18-24 25-45 46-65 66 and above
3. Sex: Male Female
4. Caste: _____
5. Religion: _____
6. Education: no education primary lower secondary secondary university
7. Occupation: _____
8. Is this your birth place? Yes No
9. If no,
 - a. How long have you lived here? _____
 - b. Where did you move from? _____
 - c. Why did you move? _____

Socio Economic Status

10. What is your land holding? _____ ropani _____ anna
11. Do you grow crop? Yes No
12. If yes,
 - a. What crops do you grow? _____
 - b. Do you use the crop for: subsistence market both
 - c. If you sell it, how much money do you get from it per year? _____
13. Do you own livestock? Yes No
14. If yes,
 - a. What livestock do you have? _____
 - b. Do you use the livestock for: subsistence market both
 - c. If you sell it, how much money do you get from it per year? _____
15. Do you have any other additional source of income? _____
16. Is anyone in your house involved with international labor migration? Yes No
(If no, go to question 18)
17. If yes,
 - e. How many people are involved with international employment? _____
 - f. How long have they been employed for? _____

- g. Have you experienced any economic/livelihood improvements because of the migration?
 Yes No If yes, explain how

- h. Have you experienced any social mobility/improvement because of the migration? Yes
 No If yes, please explain

18. Are you able to support your food and clothing needs with your current annual income? ⁷⁴
 Always Sometimes Never Don't know

Dependence on natural resources

19. What are some of the natural resources you use and where do you get them from?

| Resources | Frequently | Sometimes | Never | Don't know | Source |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|
| Dear trees and wood | | | | | |
| Live tree | | | | | |
| Plants and herbs | | | | | |
| Wild animals – meat and fish | | | | | |
| Land for livestock grazing | | | | | |
| Other: Specify | | | | | |

20. What do you mostly use these resources for? (pick all that apply) ⁷⁵

- ☐ Construction
☐ Food
☐ Areas for livestock
☐ Medicines
☐ Economic opportunity – commercial sales
☐ Religious or traditional activities
☐ Heating
☐ Cooking
☐ Other : Specify _____

21. Do you have to get permission to collect natural resources from the conservation area?
 Always Sometimes Never Don't know

22. If yes, from whom? _____

⁷⁴ This question was used by Mehta and Heinen (2001) to classify the respondent as wealthy or poor.

⁷⁵ This question was used by Spiteri and Nepal (2008)

Participation and ACAP

23. Do you know that there are different management committees under ACAP? Yes No

(If no go to question 26)

24. Can you name some of the groups that are in the village?

25. What are some of the functions of these committees?

26. Are you member of any local groups or management committees? Yes No

(If no go to question 31)

27. If yes, list all the groups you are a member of

28. Do you hold leadership position on any of these groups? If yes, in which group and what is your position?

29. What are some of your duties in the group?

30. How did you get involved in the group?

- ☐ Elected
- ☐ Voluntary
- ☐ Asked by ACAP
- ☐ Nominated by committee members
- ☐ Nominated by the villagers
- ☐ Others _____

31. What prevents you from participating? ⁷⁶

| Barriers | Most significant | Somewhat significant | Not significant | Don't know |
|---|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Household related | | | | |
| Demands from household chores | | | | |
| Schedule conflicts with agriculture activities | | | | |
| Schedule conflicts with livestock grazing | | | | |
| Scheduled conflicts with other employments | | | | |
| Demands of family and childcare responsibilities | | | | |
| ACA related | | | | |
| Park / conservation area policies: specify | | | | |
| ACAP officials do not want me to participate | | | | |
| Social | | | | |
| I am not invited to participate | | | | |
| When I have participated in the past, I was made to feel unwelcomed | | | | |
| I did not know I could participate | | | | |
| I do not know how to become involved | | | | |
| No one should listen to me, so why should I participate | | | | |
| I am a women so I am not allowed to participate | | | | |
| I am from the lower caste so I am not allowed to participate | | | | |
| I am from a poor household so I am not allowed to participate | | | | |
| Technical | | | | |
| The meeting place is too far from my home | | | | |
| I have no free time | | | | |
| I am not interested in participating | | | | |
| I don't have the skills to participate | | | | |
| Other: Specify | | | | |

32. How often do you attend meetings organized by different groups?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Don't know

33. When was the last time you attended a meeting organized by a management committee?

- ☐ Within the last one month
- ☐ Within the last 1-6 months
- ☐ Within the last 6-12 months

⁷⁶ Some of the factors for this question were taken from the study by Spiteri and Nepal (2008); Khadka and Nepal (2010). These scholars focused their studies on the barriers to participation in general. My study will add to their research by focusing on barriers to participation of marginal groups.

- ☐ More than a year ago
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Don't know

34. Relationship with ACAP officials, in the past year

a) How many times did you meet with an ACAP official?

0 1-3 > 3

b.) How many times did you visit the ACAP office?

0 1-3 > 3

35. Relationship with Government, in the past year

a) How many times did you meet with a Government official?

0 1-3 > 3

b.) How many times did you visit a Government office?

0 1-3 > 3

Checklist for interview with marginal households

General questions

1. Can you describe a typical day for me in your life?
2. What are some of the main issues/problems that the village is facing?
3. Do you think your economic and social status has increased over the last 5 years?
4. If yes, what are the causes for it?

Institutional questions

About the committees

5. What do you think of the management committees?
6. Were you informed of the creation of the management committees? If yes, who informed you and when?
7. Can you tell me what you know about these management institutions?
8. What are some of the major achievements of the committees till now?
9. Do you know how these management committees make their decisions? Who makes the decisions?
10. Who do you go to if there is immediate crisis and you need resources or other help? Do you know any such instances in the village and how it was dealt?
11. Has anyone ever approached you to be part of the management committee? If yes, what happened?
12. Have you gone to these committees with any problems you were having? If yes, were they helpful?
13. Have there been instances in which your inputs have been taken in to formulate decisions? Give examples
14. Have there been any instances in which you felt that these committees have misinformed or withheld information from you? If yes, give examples.
15. Do you trust the executive members of these management committees?
16. Overall, how do these management committees treat you? Give examples

Meetings

17. Do you know how many meetings are organized by the management committee yearly?
18. Does the committee inform you about meetings that they organize?
19. If yes, do you usually attend them? If you don't attend them, why not?
20. Can you describe what the meeting you attended was like?
21. What do you do in these meetings?
22. Do you take part in discussions in the meeting or voice your opinion about anything? If yes, give examples, if not, why not?
23. Who makes the final decisions in these meetings?
24. Do you think these decisions are made while considering the point of view of the villagers?
25. Are the decisions made in the meetings shared with you and other villagers?

Benefits of the committees

26. Has the management committees been beneficial to you? Elaborate (Hint: financial benefits, trainings, access to resources)
27. Who do you think these committees have benefitted the most and the least? (probe: examples)
28. Do you think these committees have any negative impacts? If yes, in what way?
29. Are you happy/unhappy with the way the committee works and the decisions it makes?
30. Would you like to see any changes in the way the committee works or the things it does?

Related to involvement of marginal groups

31. In your opinion, are you given the same access to benefits and resources as compared to other community members? Give examples
32. Have you ever gone to these local institutions with your problem? If yes, please give example.
33. How were your problems and issues handled/solved by the management committee?
34. Do these committees inform you about different programs carried out by them?
35. Have you attended any training provided by the group?
36. Do you get equal opportunity to participate in these programs?
37. What are some of the barriers to participation in these groups?
38. Have there been instances where you have been able to influence rule creation or any decisions made by the management committee?
39. The government is promoting social equity and treating the lower castes as equal, what is your opinion on this issue?
40. Do you think social equity is promoted by these management communities?
41. Do you think there is any change in the way marginal groups are treated today as compared to 5-10 years ago in the region?
42. Has your level of engagement in these groups and community activities increased or decreased over the past 5 years? What are the reasons behind the increase/decrease?

Related to ACAP

43. Have you heard of ACAP? What can you tell me about it?
44. Have you taken part in any trainings or programs organized by ACAP? If yes, explain what and when.
45. Do you feel ACAP is beneficial to the community? Why or why not?
46. Do you know how ACAP officials are related to your local institutions?
47. Do you think ACAP officials understand your problem and needs and are willing to help you? Is yes, in what way give some examples?
48. Does ACAP encourage you to participate in different committees and other programs? If yes, give examples
49. Do you know if ACAP has special programs that are targeted at the poor, or women or lower caste people? If yes, what are they and have you been involved in any?
50. Do you think ACAP has had any impacts (either positive or negative) for the village and the region? In what ways, give examples?
51. Do you think ACAP is taking sufficient initiatives to ensure everyone participates and benefits from these programs? Why or why not?
52. Are there any changes you would want to see in the region that ACAP should be working for?
53. Is there anything else you want to talk about that we have not covered?

VITA

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