

# REDD+ politics in the media

A case study from Nepal

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Working Paper 96

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# Abbreviations

ANSAB	Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
COP	Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC)
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFRS	Department of Forest Research and Survey (Nepal)
ENGO	Environmental Non-governmental organisation
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (World Bank)
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MoFSC	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (Nepal)
MRV	Monitoring, reporting and verification
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (known as RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests)
REDD Cell	REDD Forestry and Climate Change Cell (Nepal)
REDD	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation
R-PIN	Readiness Proposal Idea Note
R-PP	Readiness Preparation Proposal
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

# Authors' biographies

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# Executive summary

Nepal is well known for its participatory forest management, especially community forestry, which has been reported to be successful not only in improving forest conditions over the past few decades but also in supporting the livelihoods of rural communities. Forestry sector stakeholders in Nepal have welcomed REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries) with the hope that it will strengthen Nepal's decentralised forest governance system and support the livelihoods of the rural poor. In this context, it is imperative to understand how the REDD+ policy processes are moving and who is influencing the process. To achieve this, media content analysis, consultations with experts and journalists, and in-depth interviews with selected journalists were conducted to examine REDD+-related actions, actors and interests. We analysed how diverse actors' understandings and actions are reflected in the Nepali media. In other words, this study focused on investigating how the Nepali media has framed the REDD+ issue, what key concerns are being raised, and how these discourses are used by the actors representing different interests in the REDD+ policy process in Nepal.

Results show that, overall, REDD+ has received limited attention in the Nepali media. Within the overall climate change discourse in Nepal, the melting of the Himalayan ice-caps and glaciers has dominated all other discourses, including that on REDD+. Nepali journalists have found the science behind REDD+ to be very complex, making it difficult to understand and report. Moreover, technical topics such as REDD+ tend to attract less media attention than political issues. Our analysis also revealed that reporting on REDD+ has concentrated on major national and international events, such as the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Cabinet meeting of the Government of Nepal in Kalapatthar (Mt Everest base camp).

Similarly, the analysis of media framing shows that 'symptomatic', 'prognostic' and 'motivational' approaches prevail in reporting about REDD+ in Nepal. This tells us that the focus of media articles has been on the identification of specific issues and problems concerning REDD+, articulation of proposed solutions, and justification of why stakeholders should be concerned about the issue. We did not find a single article in which the views of adversaries of the dominant opinion were expressed. There are several potential explanations for this deficiency. First, policy discussions on REDD+ in Nepal are at the stage of identifying problems and

discussing possible solutions rather than evaluating a range of proposed solutions. Second, it is likely that the media has not made a concerted effort to dig deeper into the complexities of REDD+ and specific issues within it, partly because of journalists' shortcomings in terms of their willingness and ability to comprehend the issues. Many of the journalists that we consulted and interviewed attributed this to Nepali journalists' limited knowledge of and capacity to understand the science behind the concept of REDD+.

In terms of scale, reporting on REDD+ has gradually shifted from the international to the national and then to the local level since the concept was first introduced at COP 11 in Montreal in 2005. This shift in focus indicates that the discourses and debates over REDD+ have also reached the grassroots level in Nepal. Such a shift has been attributed to the efforts of awareness-raising and capacity-building projects implemented by various organisations, including the Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN) in collaboration with RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and others with a focus at the grassroots level.

Among the REDD+ issues reported in the media, 'ecology' and 'economics and markets' were more prevalent than 'politics and policymaking' and 'governance'. In contrast to countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, 'politics and policymaking' has not received much attention in the Nepali media. This indicates that the dominant REDD+-related discourse remains that Nepal can earn money by conserving forests. However, REDD+ has yet to become a political issue. The issues of 'equity' and 'governance' have also remained in the margins of REDD+ discourses in the media.

We found that the whole REDD+ debate is promoted by a few influential actors who are concentrated in the capital city of Kathmandu. This has marginalised the voices of weaker and less influential actors.

This report concludes with the argument that the Nepali media is not contributing adequately to informing the public about the broader spectrum of key issues surrounding REDD+. This has limited the space for marginal actors to become informed and actively engaged in related policy processes. This deficiency leaves space to develop the interests and capacity of Nepali journalists to foster more informed debate on REDD+ policy processes.

# 1. Introduction

In recent years, recognition of the important role of forests in helping to mitigate climate change through the global environmental service of carbon sequestration and storage – popularly known as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+) – has increased (Irawan and Tacconi 2009, Parker *et al.* 2009, Blom *et al.* 2010, Skutsch and McCall 2010). Although the modalities of REDD+ are yet to be agreed upon in international climate change negotiations, many developing countries have engaged in implementing the mechanism with optimism. Following international trends, Nepal has embraced the promise of REDD+ and is actively developing policies, a legal framework, and organisational structures for its implementation. This ongoing process has received mixed responses from the various stakeholder groups engaged in REDD+ readiness activities at different levels. The government, donors and some international and national non-governmental organisations (I/NGOs) seem optimistic about the potential financial benefits of REDD+ and its contribution to the livelihoods of local communities. However, many non-state actors are sceptical about the extent to which Nepal can benefit from REDD+, and whether such benefits will ultimately reach the rural poor (Ojha *et al.* 2008, Bushley and Khatri 2011). REDD+ is thus occupying a growing space in climate change discourses in Nepal, and the media plays an important role in facilitating such discourses.

Climate change has become one of the most pressing global issues during the past few decades, and the media has demonstrated its capacity to play a key role in shaping public discourse and policy agendas (Boykoff and Boykoff 2007, Anderson 2009). This is because the media acts as a vehicle for information to educate policymakers, other stakeholders and the public at large, thus helping to frame and formulate consensus on a position on a particular issue (Boykoff and Boykoff 2007, Anderson 2009). The media thus acts as an ‘influential and heterogeneous set of non-nation-state actors’ (Boykoff 2008: 550) that makes an important contribution in shaping public discourses.

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has initiated a ‘Global Comparative Study of REDD’ (GCS-REDD), which aims to understand

the REDD+ policy process across developing countries and the potential consequences of such policy processes on the effective, efficient and equitable design and implementation of REDD+ policies (Brockhaus and Di Gregorio 2012). A sub-research component of GCS-REDD employs the research tool of media analysis to meet three broad research objectives:

- a. to understand the dominant discourses surrounding REDD+ in the media
- b. to reveal the way in which the discourses have been framed
- c. to identify the actors representing the various interests that are promoting such discourses.

This study focuses on the question of how the Nepali media is shaping the REDD+ policy process and communicating it to the public. The study is jointly carried out by CIFOR and ForestAction in Nepal.

Established in 2000, ForestAction (Forest Resource Studies and Action Team) is a Kathmandu based policy research institution in the field of Forestry, Agriculture and Climate Change. It comprises a multidisciplinary team of professionals combining natural and social science. It has made significant contribution in transforming Nepal’s forest governance and policy process towards a deliberative, collaborative and community based approach.

This study led by ForestAction seeks to answer such questions as ‘What frames do different actors use to define and influence REDD+ policy debates?’ and ‘How are such policy debates portrayed in the media?’ This understanding is important to identify policy options that can facilitate effective, equitable and efficient REDD+ mechanisms in Nepal.

This report is divided into seven sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 sets the context of decentralised forestry and the emergence of REDD+ in Nepal. Section 3 discusses the historical context of the media in Nepal and its role in shaping public discourse. Section 4 outlines the methodology used in the media analysis. Section 5 presents the findings of the media analysis. Section 6 discusses the findings in relation to the role of the media in informing policy processes and as a vehicle for communication. The report ends with a brief conclusion.

## 2. Decentralised forestry and the emergence of REDD+ in Nepal

Nepal is well known for its participatory forest management system, especially community forestry, which is viewed as successful not only in improving forest conditions over the past few decades, but also in supporting the livelihoods of rural communities. In this context, REDD+ has been welcomed with the hope that it will strengthen Nepal's decentralised forestry system and support the livelihoods of the rural poor. This section sheds light on the decentralisation of the forestry sector and the emergence of REDD+ in Nepal.

### 2.1 Decentralisation of Nepal's forestry sector

Scholars generally divide the history of Nepal's forestry policy and governance into three major eras: feudalistic forestry, nationalised forestry and decentralised forestry (Hobley *et al.* 1996). After its formation as a nation state in 1769, Nepali society was structured around a feudal production system led by the ruling Shah monarchy and the Rana oligarchy (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). The aristocratic landlords (Rana) controlled most of the valuable forests of Nepal through localised feudalistic arrangements until 1951. Communities were granted limited rights to use the forests and some maintained customary management regimes (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). In 1957, the government nationalised most privately held forestlands (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). This led to the further alienation of communities and signalled the beginning of a state-centric mode of forest governance that lasted for about three decades. A decentralised and participatory mode of forest governance (i.e. community forestry) has been entrenched since the 1980s.

The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (1989) provided a broad policy framework oriented towards decentralised and community management; this was later institutionalised by the Forest Act 1993 and Forest Regulations 1995. The Act granted local communities the rights to manage and use forest products under the programme that is popularly known as community forestry. From the mid-1990s onwards, the government increasingly transferred

forests to local forest user groups. Today, about 1.6 million ha of forestland is managed by more than 17 685 groups, involving approximately 35% of Nepal's population (Department of Forests 2012). During the past three decades, community forestry has resulted in the rehabilitation of degraded hill forests (Yadav *et al.* 2003, Gautam *et al.* 2003), increases in livelihood benefits (Kanel and Niraula 2004), and strengthening of local institutions and democratic forest governance (Pokharel *et al.* 2007).

The decentralisation of forest governance has created space for diverse actors to emerge and engage in forestry sector policies and practices. In addition to government agencies, a number of citizen networks and other civil society actors are actively engaged in facilitating the community forestry movement and contributing to the forest policy process. In particular, the Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), a national network that represents all forest user groups, defends community rights to forest resources and actively participates in the policymaking process. Similarly, donor agencies and international development partners play an active role in supporting forest decentralisation, as well as in influencing the policy process.

### 2.2 Evolution of REDD+ in Nepal

In 2008, Nepal received support from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) to initiate REDD Readiness. The FCPF approved Nepal's initial *Readiness Proposal Idea Note* (R-PIN) in 2008 (Wollenberg and Springate-Baginski 2010), setting the stage for further support. In 2009, the government created the REDD Forestry and Climate Change Cell (REDD Cell) within the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) to carry out readiness activities. The government of Nepal also formed a national REDD Working Group as an advisory body with representation from government, donors and civil society organisations (CSOs) for the development of policy and legal frameworks, institutional arrangements and the reference scenario. Moreover, there is an Apex Body for policy approval

and coordination, comprised of top-level officials from nine government ministries and the National Planning Commission. With support from the FCPF and other donors, Nepal developed its *Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP)* – a document outlining the overall national REDD+ readiness process – in July 2010. The R-PP was approved by the World Bank and is now being implemented by the government. As part of this preparation phase, Nepal is also preparing a *National Interim REDD Strategy* to guide the readiness process until 2013 (Bushley and Khatri 2011). The timeline of major REDD+ policy events in Nepal is given in Annex 1.

In addition to these official policy development efforts, several CSOs are closely involved in the process. They have been implementing various pilot activities to support REDD+ readiness and demonstrate its social and technical viability at the national and subnational levels. The International

Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources (ANSAB) and FECOFUN are conducting a pilot project on carbon measurement and benefit sharing in community forestry. Similarly, NGOs including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Winrock International and ForestAction, are engaged in research, pilot and policy advisory activities. RECOFTC and FECOFUN are jointly working to raise grassroots awareness of REDD+ concepts and issues. In addition, FECOFUN and the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) are actively engaged in understanding the concerns and interests of community forest user groups and indigenous peoples, and educating them on relevant issues. All of these initiatives collectively constitute ‘REDD readiness’, or efforts to build Nepal’s capacity and institutional ‘architecture’ to engage in REDD+ after its inception, now expected in 2013.

# 3. The media and public discourse in Nepal in the context of REDD+

This section describes the role of the media in shaping public discourse in Nepal. It begins by briefly outlining the history of the Nepali media. This is followed by a description of the country's current media landscape, and then a discussion of the role of the Nepali media in shaping public discourse.

## 3.1 A brief history of the Nepali media

The Nepali media started with the publication of Gorkhapatra, the state-owned daily newspaper, in 1901 (in Nepali). The newspaper was followed by the establishment of Radio Nepal and Nepal Television (NTV) in 1950 and 1985, respectively. All three of these mediums of mass communication are owned and controlled by the state. During the era of the active monarchy (until 1990), these media served the interests of the political regime at the time. They began to gain relative autonomy only after the establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990. Since then, private companies have also entered the media sector, creating a more pluralistic politico-cultural space.

The establishment of multi-party democracy in 1990, and the subsequent entry of private companies into the media sector, was a turning point that led to freedom of expression (Onta 2004). Established in 1992, Kantipur became the first private media company – and is now the largest media corporation – to have both electronic and print media. It owns Kantipur (daily Nepali newspaper), The Kathmandu Post (English-language daily newspaper), Radio Kantipur and Kantipur TV (both in Nepali) and a number of magazines (e.g. Nari, Nepal). In addition, there are many private media companies with wide coverage throughout the country.

## 3.2 The current media landscape in Nepal

According to the records available from the Department of Information and Communications, as of August 2011, Nepal had 100 daily newspapers and 399 weekly newspapers published across the

country. Furthermore, Nepal had 15 television stations and 319 radio stations (mostly FM stations) officially registered and operating throughout the country. Television stations are popular in urban and peri-urban areas with widespread electricity access. Newspapers have limited distribution in rural areas; that is, most newspaper readers are people in urban areas who have access to the policymaking process. In recent years, radio stations have spread throughout the country, including remote areas, and are becoming increasingly popular for several reasons, not least that radio reaches even very remote parts of the country. There are a number of radio networks, including the Ujyaalo 90 Network and the Community Information Network, which produce programmes in Kathmandu and broadcast them from a large number of radio stations across the country. However, most radio stations rely on newspapers for news updates.

## 3.3 The media's impact on public discourse in Nepal

In the words of Navasky, '...it is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind' (Navasky cited in Zelizer and Allen 2002: 1). The mass media plays an important role in shaping public opinion on specific socio-political issues (Fields 2005, Boykoff 2008, Crow 2010). It is precisely because of this key role of the media that policymakers and CSOs seek to use the media to influence the policy process. In Nepal, freedom of expression became legally enshrined only after the promulgation of the first democratic constitution in 1990. The government media is still regarded as a government mouthpiece and often appears to favour government priorities. The rapid proliferation of private media companies over the past two decades has, to some extent, increased public trust in the media (Onta 2004), although it remains questionable as to whether privately owned media are in fact free from the influence of government and private interests. However, the fact that privately owned media outlets have gained public trust in Nepal allows them to play a role in shaping public discourse.

Following is an example to illustrate how the media can shape the policy agenda in Nepal. In 2010, the media aggressively reported on deforestation and corruption in the Terai, a flat plain area in the south of Nepal that has productive land and the valuable Sal forest. The media pointed to the involvement of community leaders, government officials and local politicians. The media coverage led to questions about the legitimacy of many established institutions, including in the political, administrative and civic domains. The Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources and Mining formed a parliamentary task force in 2010 to commission a study on deforestation and corruption in the Terai. In response to the final report, Constituent Assembly Chairman Subas

Nembang said: 'I felt like crying after reading the report prepared by the committee. I strongly urge the authorities concerned to bring the wrong-doers to book' (The Himalayan Times, 28 September 2010).

Following the report, the government (MoFSC) imposed a ban on the harvesting and trade of timber for about six months and commissioned a series of investigations, including a high-level judicial commission to investigate charges of deforestation and corruption. The judicial commission recommended amendments to the Forest Act 1993 to control the activities of local forest user groups, which led to the government drafting a bill to amend the Act.

## 4. Methodology

This study uses multiple tools and methods. However, it mainly relies on content analysis from selected newspapers to understand how the media both reflects and influences REDD+ policy processes in Nepal. Newspapers were selected because newspaper articles are available in archives, and because newspapers are well established as key information sources for policymakers and are considered a reliable and accessible media form. Although radio (particularly FM radio) is popular in rural areas of Nepal, we relied on newspaper articles and interviews with journalists working in selected newspapers. Interviews were also conducted with some radio journalists to triangulate the information extracted from the newspaper articles and from our interactions with print journalists. The methodology for this analysis is based on Di Gregorio *et al.* (2012).

### 4.1 Coding and analysis of newspaper content

The newspaper content was analysed through a media frame analysis using the code book for analysis of media frames developed by Di Gregorio *et al.* (2012). Goffman (1974, cited in Boykoff 2008: 555) defines 'media frames' as '[the] ways in which elements of discourse are assembled that then privilege certain interpretations and understanding over others'. Similarly, according to Bennett (cited in Boykoff 2008: 555), 'a media frame is a broad organising theme for selecting, emphasising, and linking the elements of a story such as the scenes, the characters, their actions and supporting documentation'. These definitions suggest that media 'framing' is used to highlight a specific understanding or interpretation of a particular issue. For this study, we considered both the 'frames' of the media and the frames of other actors as reported by the media.

The media frame analysis was undertaken based on a predetermined code book that investigates three levels of analysis: key descriptive variables in the articles, main characteristics of the primary and secondary frames, and the key actors mentioned and their positions on REDD+. The code book follows Boykoff's (2008) suggestions and identifies

both primary and secondary frames. While the initial few paragraphs of an article often reinforce or elaborate the key message captured in the title, later paragraphs may provide different angles on the story. In such cases, there may be more than one frame. We attempted to identify the different frames used in the articles and to understand the different perspectives presented. After determining the primary frame and the supporting evidence for it, we identified the secondary frame.

### 4.2 Newspaper selection

Three newspapers – Kantipur, Gorkhapatra and The Himalayan Times – were selected for the REDD+ content analysis. The newspapers were selected based on circulation, the diversity of political positions portrayed in the reportage, and the degree of government influence on the newspaper. Kantipur, the largest-selling Nepali daily and the country's first commercial newspaper, was launched in February 1993. Gorkhapatra was the nation's first daily newspaper, and is still owned and controlled by the government. The Himalayan Times, launched in 2001, claims to be the largest-selling English-language daily in the country. We chose to include an English-language daily because many experts and representatives of donor agencies write articles for English-language newspapers.

### 4.3 Selection of newspaper articles and coding

Our objective was to identify newspaper articles that focus on issues related to REDD+. We first identified articles related to 'climate change'; in total, we found 459 articles published from January 2005 until the end of 2011. From these, we selected those articles related to 'climate change' and 'forest'. Finally, we selected only the articles with the key words 'REDD (+)' and/or '(forest) carbon trading'. Through this process, we identified 35 articles for detailed coding and analysis.

Level 1 coding captures descriptive variables only, including the title, the date and author, the length



of the article, the publication date, and the section of the newspaper in which it appeared. While largely used for identification purposes, level 1 coding also helps to identify articles related to 'REDD+' or forest carbon, in order to limit the number of articles for further analysis.

Level 2 coding involves the analysis of primary and secondary media frames. Identifying the primary and secondary frames enables an assessment of the comparative importance that journalists and editors give to the different angles of a topic (Boykoff 2008). Through level 2 coding, information about different variables of the media frames was collected, including the type of frame (diagnostic, prognostic, symptomatic or motivational); the scale at which REDD+ issues were discussed in the frame (international, national, subnational or local); and the main topics and subtopics of the frame (e.g. economics, ecology, politics, science, culture, governance).

In level 3 coding, key actors and their stances in relation to REDD+ were identified. Major advocates and adversaries of the media frame were identified and their positions were analysed. In this context, *advocates* are the actors who support the specific frame (or understanding) of REDD+, while *adversaries* are the actors who oppose it.

#### 4.4 Interviews with radio journalists

Because not all people have access to newspapers, we also interviewed journalists working in radio stations with nationwide networks. The radio journalists were selected from Radio Sagarmatha, the Community Information Network (a network of community radio stations in Nepal) and the Ujyaalo 90 Network. Sagarmatha was the first community radio station in all of South Asia to prioritise environmental issues, the Ujyaalo 90 Network was the first radio

network established in Nepal, and the Community Information Network is the largest network of community radio stations in Nepal, with direct connections to more than 100 local radio stations across the country. The questions developed for these interviews are given in Annex 2.

#### 4.5 Journalist consultation workshop

A workshop featuring selected journalists was organised as part of this study. Nine journalists working in the field of environment and forests participated in the workshop (see Annex 3 for a list of participants). The workshop participants were reporters from newspapers with a large circulation and radio stations with a nationwide network. The workshop was structured to collect in-depth information from the reporters about REDD+ and other related issues. The discussion was based on the following major questions pertinent to the REDD+ discourse in Nepal's media:

- How are climate change and REDD+ framed in the Nepali media?
- Who is promoting climate change and REDD+ discourses in the media in Nepal and what are the reasons behind this promotion?
- What are the challenges of reporting on REDD+?

The workshop was organised to triangulate the information we gathered from the content analysis. In addition, the workshop sought to understand the journalists' perspectives on the following key question: To what extent is Nepal's policy process promoting effective, efficient and equitable REDD+ implementation in Nepal?

The quantitative results of the media analysis are presented, interpreted and discussed in the subsequent 'Results' and 'Discussion' sections.

# 5. Results

## 5.1 Climate change and REDD+ in the media: Himalayas top the climate change agenda

This subsection provides a broad picture of media coverage of REDD+ in Nepal, based on the level 1 coding of newspaper articles (see Section 4.3 for a description of the different levels of coding used in this study), supplemented by qualitative data gathered through interviews with journalists. The findings and observations are primarily based on analyses of newspaper articles from 2005, when the role of forests in climate change mitigation in general, and in REDD+ in particular, became an important part of the climate change debate.

During the period from 2005 to 2007, there was little coverage of climate change in the Nepali media. As shown in Figure 1, the three newspapers published a total of 9 and 13 articles on climate change in 2005 and 2006, respectively. In 2007, the year of COP 13 in Bali, media attention to climate change in Nepal increased substantially, with 26 articles published. Climate change received most attention in the Nepali media in 2009, the year COP 15

was held in Copenhagen, with the total number of articles on climate change in the selected newspapers reaching 160.

In aggregate, 459 articles related to climate change were published in the selected newspapers between January 2005 and December 2011. Thirty-five of these were written about REDD+. The first article about REDD+ in the Nepali media was published in Kantipur on 19 December 2007. The article was written by Dr Sohan Ghimire, who touched upon REDD+ with the following: ‘The Bali Conference reached a consensus that developed countries should pay [developing countries] through some mechanisms to curb the problem of deforestation, which will ultimately help to reduce greenhouse gases’.

The trend in Figure 1 shows that REDD+ first appeared in the Nepali media in 2007 and the number of articles increased gradually in subsequent years. The number of articles on REDD+ peaked in 2009 and decreased substantially thereafter. As shown in Figure 2, 14 (40%) of the articles related

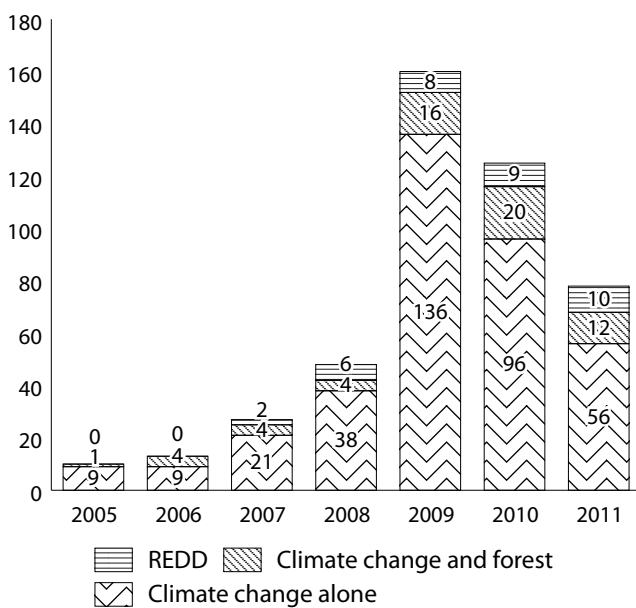


Figure 1. Frequency of appearance of the terms ‘climate change’, ‘climate change and forest’ and ‘REDD+’ in selected newspapers

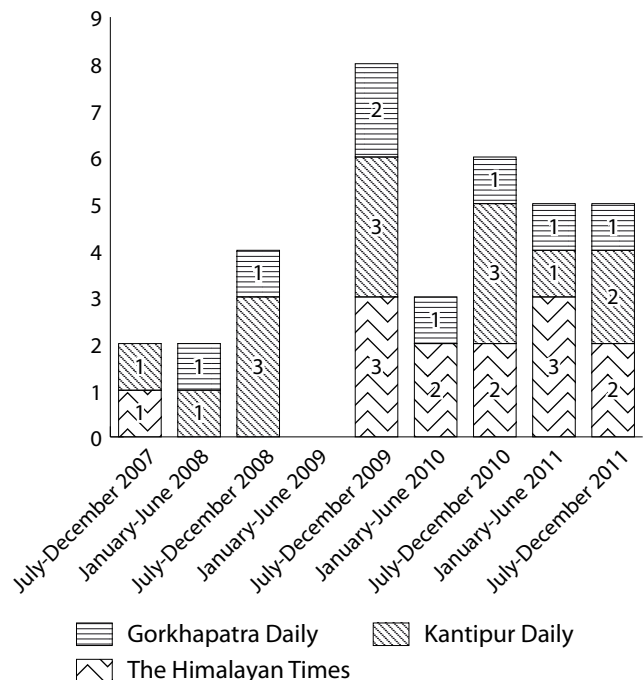


Figure 2. Frequency of articles on REDD+ published in three daily newspapers (July 2007 – December 2011)

to REDD+ were published in Kantipur, 13 (37%) in The Himalayan Times and 8 (23%) in Gorkhapatra. Interestingly, most of these articles about REDD+ were written by experts or officials working in the MoFSC, rather than by journalists.

Through the newspaper content analysis and discussions with journalists, we learnt that REDD+ received relatively little attention within the overall climate change news. Many journalists suggested that media coverage on REDD+ was limited mainly because it was a new topic for them. Shyam Bhatta, senior reporter for Nagarik (daily newspaper), said: ‘First, REDD+ is difficult to understand by ourselves; secondly, if we write something on it and send it to the editorial team, they find it highly complex and very often dump the news’. According to Abdullah Miya, senior reporter for Kantipur, issues such as climate change and REDD+ do not receive priority because ‘inside the newsroom, the issues of climate change or forests are treated as the non-governmental organisation/international non-government organisation (NGO/INGO)-sponsored issues. So these issues have never been the priority of the media house’. These explanations from journalists indicate their limited knowledge of and capacity for engaging in issues such as climate change and REDD+.

Similarly, the issues of climate change and REDD+ tend not to attract the attention of chief editors. Krishna Murari Bhandary, a senior journalist and columnist, said, ‘REDD+ has not yet attracted journalists’ attention because it is too technical and it is unclear how the community would benefit [from it]. Thus articles on REDD+ have come mainly from experts who have been trying to establish it as one of the major issues in the forest sector, but it’s not a big topic for journalists as “walk the talk” has not happened on this issue’.

By contrast, within the climate change discourse, the issue of mountains dominates the attention of the Nepali media, partly because of the controversial claim made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007) that all the glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region will have disappeared by the end of 2035. The debate on the issue received considerable space in the global media; the IPCC eventually publicly admitted to its mistake in 2010 (IPCC 2010). Further discussion on the importance of mountains in Nepal’s climate agenda is given in Section 6.

## 5.2 Event-centric reporting on REDD+

The results presented in Figure 2 also tell us that about a quarter of all articles on REDD+ appeared during the six-month period (July–December 2009) leading up to COP 15. This finding matches global trends, because the Copenhagen meeting was the most widely covered of the COP events to date (Painter 2010). In total, 3487 journalists were registered for COP 15, compared with only 1317 for COP 13 (Bali) and 750 for COP 14 (Poznan). Seventeen journalists from Nepal attended the Copenhagen meeting, whereas only three attended COP 13 in Bali, and none attended COP 14 in Poznan. COP 15 and the preceding Cabinet meeting at Kalapatthar were two landmark events that attracted considerable media attention in Nepal. These important national and international events aroused journalists’ interest in reporting on both international and national issues related to climate change and REDD+.

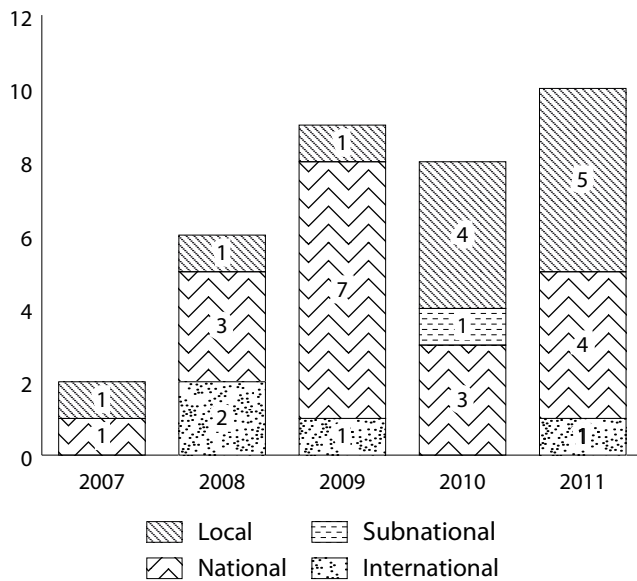
These findings tell us that reporting on climate change in general, and on REDD+ in particular, tends to be concentrated on key national and international events related to climate change.

## 5.3 Shift in focus of REDD+ reporting: International to local

This subsection presents the results of the analysis of the media coverage of REDD+ at different scales of governance (from international to local). As shown in Figure 3, national REDD+-related news received the greatest amount of coverage. Eighteen (51%) articles covered national-level news, seven of which appeared in 2009, the year the Cabinet meeting was held at the Mt Everest base camp. Local issues were reported in 12 (34%) articles, whereas the international context was covered in only 4 (13%) articles and the subnational context in only 1 (3%).

Articles on the national context focused on the need to conserve forests as a way of obtaining money through carbon trading. ‘If the forests in the nation are protected, then there is the possibility of getting millions of dollars under REDD+,’ wrote Bikas Thapa, journalist for Kantipur, in an article published on 24 August 2009.

An analysis of the coverage of different governance levels in REDD+ reporting shows that, although



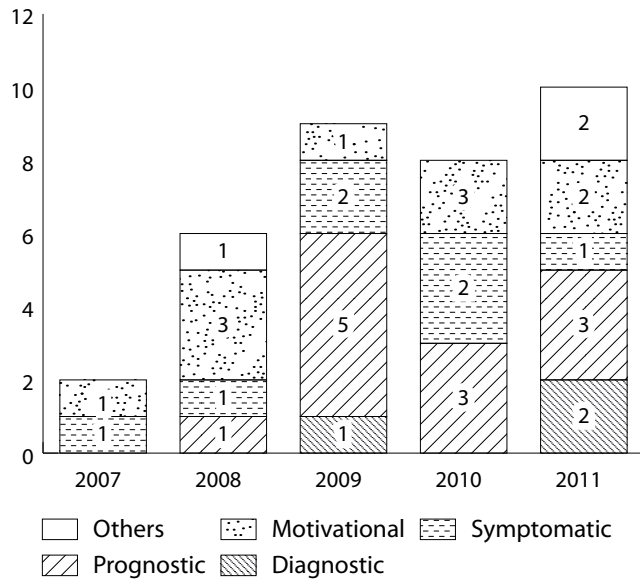
**Figure 3. Number of articles covering issues at different governance levels in Nepal**

the media focus is spread across all levels, the focus on the local level has increased in recent years. This trend coincides with the broader gradual shift in the REDD+ debate towards the national and local levels. Initially, the REDD+ debate was limited to the international level in conceptualising REDD+ and crafting suitable governance mechanisms. As Nepal engaged more deeply in the REDD+ readiness process, various organisations started local-level awareness-raising and capacity-development activities. For example, FECOFUN, in collaboration with RECOFTC, is implementing grassroots-capacity development activities. Similarly, NEFIN has been implementing local-level awareness and capacity-development activities specially targeting indigenous people.

#### 5.4 REDD+ media frames: Little interest in diagnostics

As explained in Section 4.3, level 2 coding of newspaper articles involved identifying media frames. The analysis of each frame includes the way in which the article frames the REDD+ debate (i.e. diagnostic, prognostic, symptomatic, motivational).

The analysis shows that the authors (journalists and experts) applied different frames when writing on REDD+. As Figure 4 illustrates, 12 (34%) of the articles adopted a prognostic approach, that is, articulating a proposed solution to the problem or at



**Figure 4. Types and frequency of media frames used in reporting on REDD+**

least a plan or strategy to address the problem. Nine articles (26%) adopted a motivational approach, in which the frame goes beyond the mere existence of an issue and its causes and consequences, and suggests moral reasons or motivations to take action or not. Eight (23%) articles adopted a symptomatic approach, establishing why an issue is a problem, whereas only three (9%) articles adopted a diagnostic approach, identifying who or what is to blame for the problem (related to REDD+), including dismissing the problem altogether.

For example, Janak Pathak, a lecturer in environmental science (Tribhuvan University), wrote in an article published in *The Himalayan Times* in December 2007 that 'plants are the only regulators of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Forests have been converted to agriculture fields and settlements day by day. This should be stopped immediately and greenery should be promoted in denuded areas for controlling global warming'. This is an example of an author using a motivational approach to try to persuade the public of the need to protect forests.

Likewise, a government official from the MoFSC wrote: 'Selling the hard-earned carbon credits, the ultimate thing in the REDD+ business, may be even trickier than the preceding actions. The credit buyers would favor more extensive, cheaper and predictable carbon than the small, costly and less predictable

ones. Though Nepal's community forestry has proven itself as a successful case of carbon sequestration, their small and dispersed location and lack of predictability may deter aspiring buyers'. Here, the author used the symptomatic approach, illustrating the main obstacles to REDD+ implementation in Nepal.

Overall, the analysis of the type of approach for framing REDD+ issues shows that the prognostic, motivational, and symptomatic approaches prevail, whereas the diagnostic approach was used in only a few articles. This suggests that REDD issues are typically not framed as problems to be blamed on specific actors.

### 5.5 Media topics: Politics and policymaking receive little attention

Level 2 coding also involved analysing the key issues in the media coverage of REDD+ (e.g. political, economic, ecological). The analysis of the media topics (Figure 5) shows that the most common topics in articles are 'ecology' (9 articles), 'economics and markets' (8 articles), 'politics and policymaking' (6 articles), 'civil society' (4 articles) and 'governance context' (4 articles). The topics 'science', 'culture' and 'other' featured in a total of four articles.

Most of the articles were related to the conservation of forest as a means of earning foreign currency. This is reflected in the prevalence of the topics of

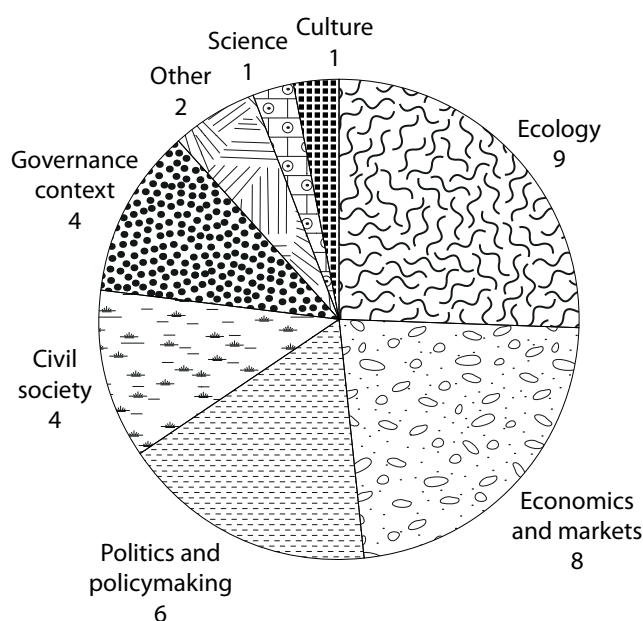


Figure 5. Meta-topics covered in articles

'ecology' and 'economics and markets' in Figure 5. For example, many articles, such as that written by Bikas Thapa (see Section 5.3), stressed that Nepal could earn dollars through forest management. We also found that topics related to 'politics and policymaking' often appeared alongside topics related to 'economics and markets'. For example, in an article published in Kantipur on 14 December 2009 titled 'Politics in climate change', civil society conservation activist Somat Ghimire wrote: 'Developed countries are going to pay for REDD+, which clearly means that they want to impose all the burden of carbon dioxide reduction on us by [simply] paying [us] some money'. The article went on, 'Our high-level bureaucrats and politicians are struggling to get the money, but they should know that it is our right, not a [voluntary] grant that developed nations are providing us'. Indeed, many of the journalists that we spoke with agreed that the debate and discourses on REDD+ tend to focus on the potential money that could be earned from selling carbon.

As seen above, Nepali journalists have given little attention to the science related to REDD+. This can be partly attributed to the limited understanding among journalists about the mechanism's technical and scientific aspects. In the words of Kulchandra Aryal of the Ujyaalo 90 Network: 'Actually, very few journalists have knowledge about carbon storage or calculation, which is a complex scientific issue. So multidimensional reporting on REDD+ and the issues surrounding it is rare'. The journalists who participated in the consultation meeting noted that reporting on REDD+ has primarily focused on ecological, economic and social issues, while leaving the technical issues aside. They attributed this in part to the fact that the public has less interest in technical issues than in political issues.

As emerged during the consultation meeting, the dominant discourse in the Nepali media concerned the idea that REDD+ can generate money through forest conservation and management. For example, in 2008, Kantipur published a front-page article about REDD+ with the headline, 'Nepal's forests listed on carbon trading'. The article noted that Nepal could earn 4 billion Nepalese Rupees annually. Such examples confirm that REDD+ tends to be seen from the perspective of the money that developed countries will provide. Most of the articles link forest conservation with the earning of foreign currency.

## 5.6 REDD+ policy and politics: Experts control the discourse

Level 3 coding considers the actors associated with REDD+ and their perspectives on this policy mechanism. This subsection presents an analysis of the policy and politics surrounding REDD+ by examining the actors and their perceptions of associated issues, as portrayed in the media.

This study reveals that diverse actors are associated with the REDD+ process in Nepal, including government agencies, INGOs and NGOs, community networks, indigenous communities and individual experts. A small number of experts within those organisations emerged as shaping REDD+ discourses and policies (Bushley and Khatri 2011). Most of these organisations and individuals are based in Kathmandu. Figure 6 shows that the farmers' federation is the most prevalent voice in the newspapers, followed by government organisations and others.

As shown in Figure 6, 11 (32%) of the advocates identified are individuals, comprising five journalists and six for whom no organisational affiliation was identified. The farmers' federation and farmers' groups had the second highest number of citations (21%). High-level bureaucrats who seek to establish REDD+ as a viable option for conservation either published articles or were interviewed in the media. However, journalists often accused officials of failing to share information with the media. Other advocates were found among national NGOs, research institutions/think-tanks, INGOs, indigenous communities and the private sector.

Within the prevalent organisations, a small number of individuals tend to play an active role in shaping the REDD+ discourse. These experts articulate their own interests, or the interests of the organisation they represent. The fact that very few adversaries were identified in the media reporting frames suggests that REDD+ is not a controversial issue in Nepal. As discussed by Bushley and Khatri (2011), opposition to the REDD+ policy process is very weak because the major actors, including government agencies and leaders from CSOs such as FECOFUN and NEFIN, are engaged in REDD+ pilot projects.

## 5.7 Prospects for REDD+ in Nepal: Optimistic experts, pessimistic journalists

Regarding the prospects for REDD+ in Nepal, most advocates identified in the media articles were found to be optimistic about REDD+ (see Figure 7). As shown in Figure 8, most of the government agencies, INGOs and international research organisations seem optimistic about the benefits that REDD+ can bring to Nepal. About 68% (25 out of 37) of advocates, particularly government officials, said that they view REDD+ both as a solution for mitigating climate change and as a means of earning foreign exchange. For example, Dr Jagadish Chandra Baral, an MoFSC official, wrote the following in *The Himalayan Times*, published 1 April 2010:

First, the country can benefit from checking or retarding its deforestation trend, which currently stands at 1.7 per cent annually. Alongside this, it might benefit from checking the forest degradation whose rate, though not yet known, is believed to be even higher. The second range

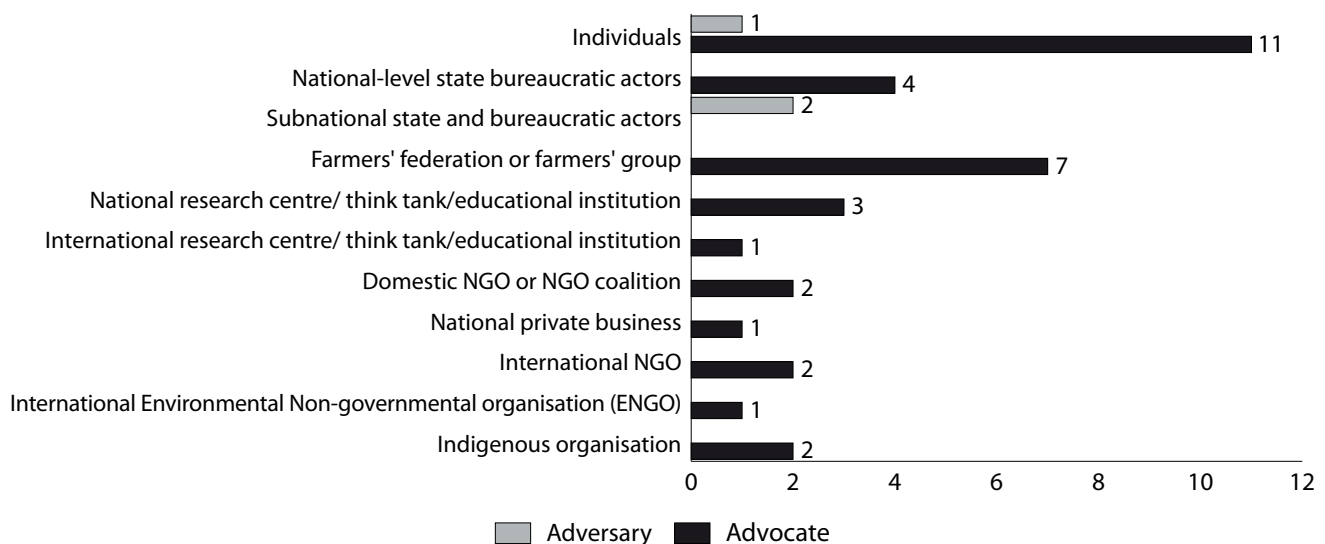
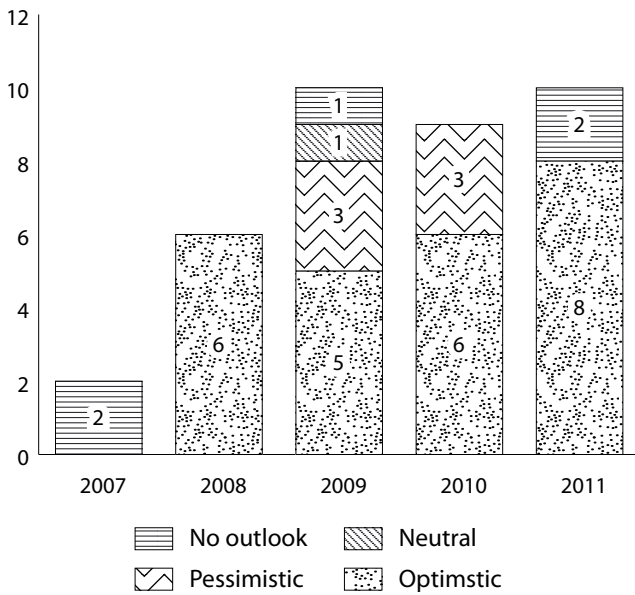
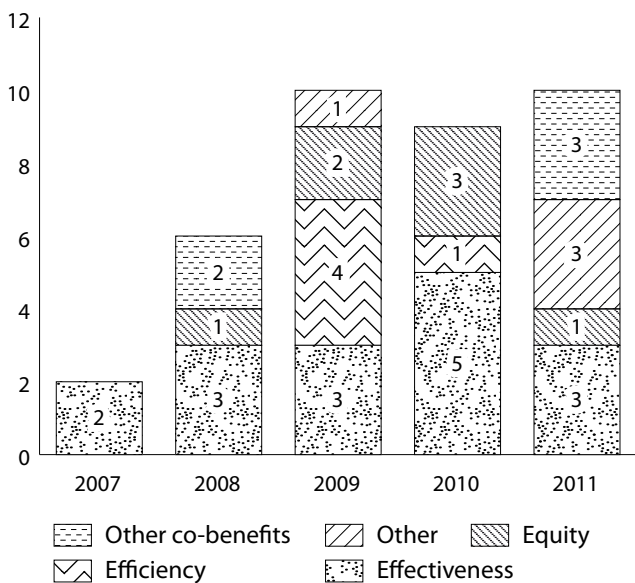


Figure 6. Numbers and origins of advocates and adversaries in the media frames



**Figure 7. Advocates' and adversaries' assessments of the future of REDD+**



**Figure 8. Assessment of future of REDD+ by advocates and adversaries, by type, for all frames**

of benefits might come from community forests, which are found to sequester 1.8 tons per ha/year. Likewise, increasing forest carbon through new plantations might have some scope all over the country.

However, a few CSOs, research institutions and indigenous people expressed some scepticism about whether REDD+ benefits would trickle down to the local level, particularly to forest-dependent communities and marginalised groups. For example,

in an article published in Gorkhapatra on 13 March 2011, a NEFIN representative was quoted as saying: ‘...we do not know whether REDD+ benefits really benefit Indigenous people who live close to the forest and not only depend on it for forest products but [are] also culturally associated with the forest. Thus, there is a need to include Indigenous people in the REDD+ process’.

The journalists at the consultation workshop were found to be dissatisfied and pessimistic about REDD+ readiness activities, although this was not reflected in the media content analysis. They argued that the issue of local rights and the improvement of the livelihoods of the forest-dependent poor have not garnered adequate space in the national REDD+ debate. The journalists frequently complained that the key actors are advocating REDD+ for the sake of income-earning projects. For example, Deepak Aryal, programme producer for Radio Sagarmatha, said, ‘In my opinion, REDD+ is nothing more than elites’ discussions in the capital city and district headquarters’. Abdullah Miya from Kantipur concurred, adding, ‘REDD+ is no more than workshops and seminars’. The root cause of the journalists’ frustration is that many stakeholders appear to be motivated more by the prospect of deriving monetary benefits through REDD+ project funding than by the thought of promoting equity and local benefits.

### 5.8 Actors’ concerns regarding 3E: Effectiveness beats efficiency and equity

With respect to effectiveness, efficiency and equity (3E+) in REDD+, the major actors were most concerned about the effective implementation of REDD+. In total, 16 advocates (44%) expressed opinions about the effectiveness of REDD+, compared with only 7 (19%) on equity and 5 (14%) on efficiency (see Figure 9).

Although it is hard to identify clear patterns regarding organisations’ views on 3E+, Figure 10 shows that government organisations, individual experts and international organisations are most concerned about the ‘effectiveness’ of a REDD+ mechanism. In particular, the groups of actors are concerned about whether the Nepali state can really curb deforestation in the Terai, given that there is immense market pressure for valuable timber on the one hand and huge pressure for conversion

of land to agriculture on the other hand. In the 15 years from 1979 to 1994, nearly 1.5 million ha of forestland in Nepal was lost, giving an average annual deforestation rate of about 1.7% (DFRS 1999). Indra Sapkota, a forest officer in the MoFSC, wrote in *The Himalayan Times* (26 September 2010) that ‘the big question ... is whether the state can really save the trees and increase forest cover’ by participating in the REDD+ scheme. Experts and government officials appear to realise that the current rate of deforestation poses a major hurdle to efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation.

Despite actors’ general optimism about deriving carbon benefits from community forestry, which has reportedly been successful in reducing deforestation and forest degradation in the hill areas, there is scepticism too. In particular, actors have expressed concerns about leakage (i.e. that efforts to reduce forest use in community forestry can affect nearby government-managed forests). The Under-Secretary

of the MoFSC wrote in *The Himalayan Times* (20 June 2010) that ‘community forests, which have recently been projected as the major source for carbon credit under the REDD scheme are under many questions, since there is confusion about how to control the carbon leakage due to multiple functions of forests, as well as about how to create a baseline in order to assess the rate of change of carbon sequestration in the community forests’.

CSOs and national research organisations are primarily concerned about the ‘equity’ aspect of REDD+. Their view is that any benefits generated by REDD+ in Nepal should be given to forest management groups and should reach the forest-dependent poor. For instance, in an article published in *Kantipur* (26 September 2010), Bhimarjun Neupane from FECOFUN was quoted by Dipendra Baduwal as saying that ‘the policy that will allow the money that comes due to forest conservation should go directly to community forestry instead of through

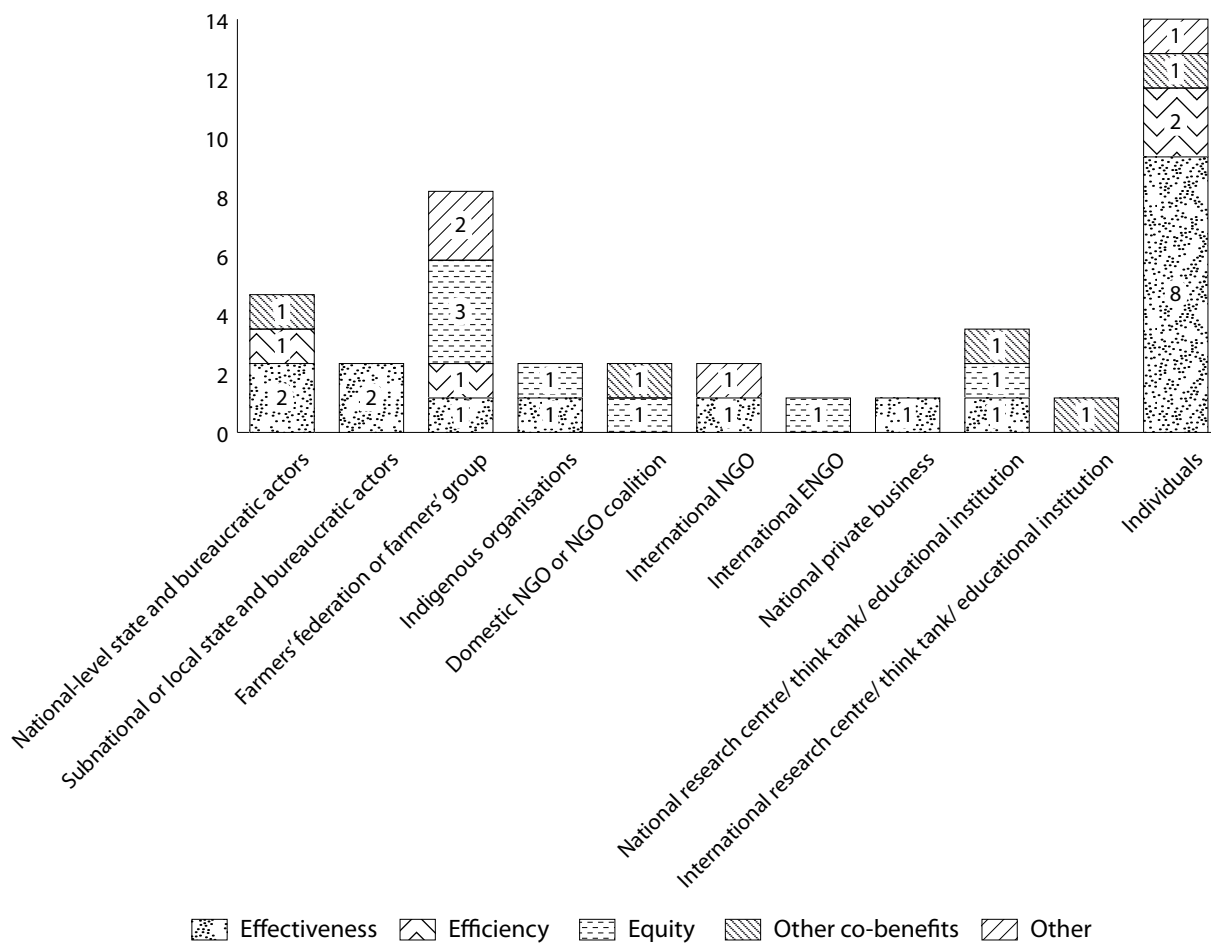


Figure 9. Actors’ primary concerns regarding effectiveness, efficiency and equity in REDD+



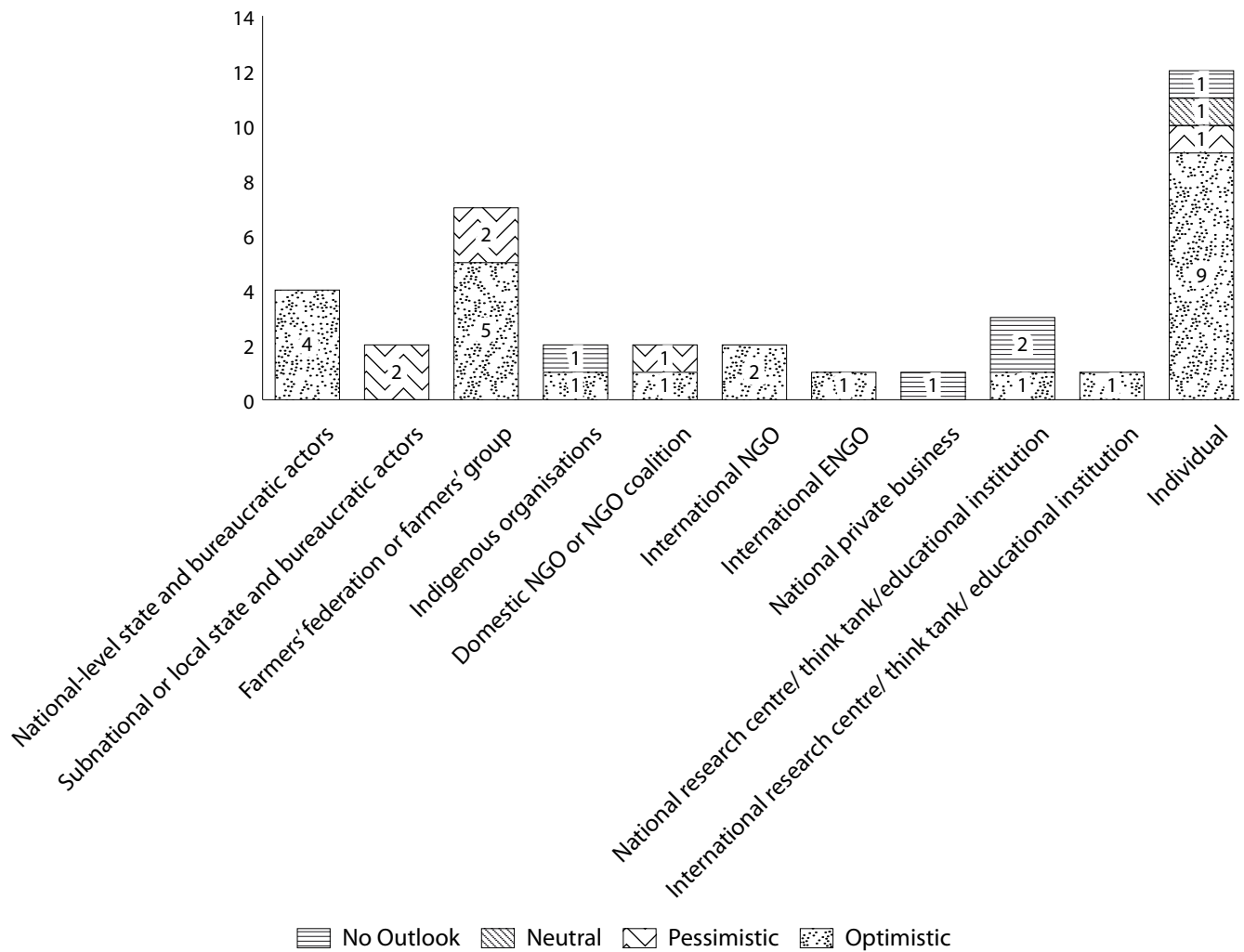


Figure 10. Actors' primary concerns regarding effectiveness, efficiency and equity, by organisation type

the government – this will encourage people towards more conservation'. However, the voice in favour of equity is relatively muted in the media.

We also identified some actors raising concerns about efficiency. Concerns about efficiency are related to the transaction costs that will be incurred in demonstrating sequestration of carbon in the scattered patches of forest managed under a range of forest management regimes. For example, Jagdish Chandra Baral, Joint Secretary of the MoFSC, wrote the following in an article published in *The Himalayan Times* (1 April 2010): 'Though Nepal's community forestry has proven itself [to be] a successful case of carbon sequestration, their small

and dispersed location and lack of predictability may deter aspiring [carbon] buyers. Those [buyers] may instead be attracted to countries with extensive and contiguous tropical forests like Brazil and Indonesia, owing to a host of reasons including economy of scale, compliance ease and better visibility'.

The limited attention given to equity and efficiency is attributable to the lack of opposition to REDD+ in Nepal. Most of the actors identified as voicing concerns about equity and other critical issues of REDD+, particularly CSOs such as FECOFUN and NEFIN, are themselves engaged in REDD+ projects (Bushley and Khatri 2011).

## 6. Discussion

The content analysis of selected newspapers in Nepal revealed that REDD+ received relatively little attention in the Nepali media compared with, for example, the attention given to the topic in Brazil and Indonesia (Cronin and Santoso 2010, May *et al.* 2011). It is evident that REDD+ has not yet found a place on the political agenda in Nepal. Climate change in general, and REDD+ in particular, is quite a new subject for journalists, and they find it difficult to understand and report on. This is largely the case globally (Painter 2010). The general trend is that, instead of engaging in such complex topics and investigating them, journalists tend to avoid them.

Our findings suggest that, within the climate change discourse in Nepal, issues related to the Himalayas have dominated, for several reasons. First, there is global concern about the impact of climate change on mountains and the melting of the ice-caps. Second, Nepal is a mountainous country with 8 of the world's 10 tallest mountains, and the Himalayan region is considered the 'water tower' of the Indian subcontinent, providing valuable water resources to countries throughout the region, particularly Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan (ICIMOD 2009). Third, the IPCC published a controversial report claiming an alarming rate of glacial melt in the Himalayan region. This attracted the attention of scientists and policymakers throughout the world, generating scientific and political debate and attracting global media attention. Finally, the government of Nepal organised a Cabinet meeting at Kalapatthar (elevation 5400 m), close to the Mt Everest base camp, to draw the attention of the international community to the high rate of glacial melt in the Himalayan region, successfully gaining coverage in both the Nepali and international media.

The reporting on REDD+ in Nepal has concentrated on major national and international events, such as UNFCCC processes and the national Cabinet meeting. Most of the coverage appeared to have had the aim of informing a Nepali audience about the international process, with the implicit message that everyone should be prepared to receive the money that is about to be distributed.

In terms of scale, the focus of reporting on REDD+ gradually shifted during the study period from

the international to the national and local levels. This shift can be attributed to the efforts of various REDD+-related initiatives, frequent interactions among relevant professionals and activists (particularly within the forestry sector), and public meetings at the local level. However, although the media coverage has gradually picked up a domestic agenda, coverage is largely Kathmandu-centric. The REDD+ debate is being shaped by a small number of actors (Bushley and Khatri 2011), who are using the information mainly to articulate their own narrow private/institutional interests, usually with the aim of accessing REDD+ funds. This has limited the space for meaningful debate and discussion at the grassroots level.

Through the analysis, three main frames were identified in the articles on REDD+: motivational, prognostic and symptomatic. We found very few articles adopting a diagnostic frame, and hardly any articles using multiple frames or offering contrasting views. As mentioned earlier, most of the relevant media articles were news stories (reporting of events and facts), with very few opinion or editorial pieces. The consulted journalists attributed these aspects to Nepali journalists' limited knowledge of and capacity for understanding the science behind the concept of REDD+. Experts were also found to be avoiding in-depth analysis of the issues associated with REDD+; they mainly conveyed simple messages such as 'REDD+ will bring money for the conservation of forests'. A stark knowledge gap on the basics of the concept was also observed among the stakeholders, which may have encouraged journalists to convey basic introductory messages rather than argumentative ones.

In contrast to Brazil (May *et al.* 2011), Indonesia (Cronin and Santoso 2010) and Cameroon (Kengoum 2011), topics related to 'politics and policymaking' in REDD+ received relatively little attention in the Nepali media, which tended to focus on topics related to forest conservation and the benefits from carbon trading. In fact, as discussed above, in Nepal, REDD+ is still perceived as part of the development agenda, which is usually poorly linked with the domestic political agenda. REDD+ tends to be narrowly perceived as a means of earning cash for making a demonstrated contribution to

carbon sequestration through forest conservation and management.

The findings reveal that the REDD+ discourse is being shaped in the media by a small number of players, primarily experts in different institutions. Similarly, only a small number of actors are shaping REDD+ policy processes and discourses, particularly officials from the MoFSC, representatives of development agencies/NGOs and independent consultants (Bushley and Khatri 2011). The fact that a substantial number of REDD+ articles were written by experts indicates their dominant role in shaping the overall REDD+ discourse in Nepal. This also supports the idea that journalists perceive the agenda as technical, and therefore have less confidence in writing about it. This has led to the marginalisation of other actors, including CSOs, the private sector and local communities. Although farmers' organisations prevailed in media, the voices of local communities are not strong. Key people working in such organisations appeared in the media as experts rather than as civic activists. This is in some ways reflected in the media analysis, in which a small number of actors was found to dominate the media coverage to influence the discourses and policies.

Those promoting REDD+ were found to be optimistic; they argued that REDD+ would ensure forest conservation and support livelihoods of forest-dependent poor people. These actors were usually project employees or consultants, and they anticipate that such benefits will continue in the future. As argued by Bushley and Khatri (2011), many CSO leaders have been co-opted through REDD+ projects and consultancies. CSOs and researchers are cautiously observing the REDD+ processes and have raised serious concerns about whether REDD+ benefits will be channelled to local communities. Journalists present in the consultation meeting were more pessimistic, suggesting that REDD+ was more likely to feed consultants than provide benefits to the forest-dependent poor.

The design and implementation of REDD+ institutions and policies in Nepal should be considered in the context of diverse forest management regimes, particularly community-based forest management. Many see community forestry and other forms of community-based forest management as providing fertile ground for REDD+ implementation in Nepal. However, others express scepticism that a country such as Nepal will benefit

much from REDD+ for two main reasons. First, Nepal has fragmented patches of forest managed under diverse forest management regimes; therefore, setting reference scenarios and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of emission reductions will be difficult and costly. Second, the state has very limited capacity for the MRV of carbon stocks (Shearman 2009, Government of Nepal 2010).

Although the community forestry programme has been successful in conserving forests in the hills of Nepal, it has faced significant challenges in halting deforestation and addressing a range of social conflicts, especially in the Terai and Churia Hills regions (Churia Hills are foothills of a mountain range which extends from the east to the west of the country). Consequently, only small areas of forests in the Terai and Churia have been transferred for community forestry. The forest under government management is largely under open access (Paudel *et al.* 2012). In this context, reducing emissions is a real challenge. Another challenge, as pointed out by stakeholders, is related to additionality. Nepal has long been conserving and managing the forest through a range of community-based regimes, and therefore may not be able to demonstrate much additionality in participating in REDD+. Some have recommended, therefore, that such forests be included in the REDD+ scheme with the 'plus' elements and co-benefits – enhancement of carbon through sustainable forest management, and improvements in forest governance, biodiversity conservation and support for local livelihoods.

In the REDD+ discourse in Nepal, voices regarding local rights to forest carbon and equity in the distribution of benefits from carbon trading have been quite loud. In particular, numerous CSOs have raised the issue of community rights to forest carbon, including FECOFUN, a network of more than 17 000 community forest user groups. There are contrasting claims about carbon rights, especially in relation to community-managed forests. The government wants to hold these rights on the basis of its ownership over the land; accordingly, the parliamentary committee on natural resources proposed that carbon rights should remain with the central government. However, local communities and CSOs have been loudly proclaiming that the carbon rights in community-managed forests should lie with local communities because they are the real managers of the forest resources. Such concerns emerged in a few of the articles analysed in this research.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper analysed media reporting on REDD+ in Nepal and identified some interesting patterns that could help clarify the nature, scope, expectations and potential of REDD+ implementation. The findings reveal that media reporting is influenced by a number of factors including the public significance of the issue, state of knowledge on the subject and the political profile of the promoters. Three key conclusions can be made from the report.

First, the media coverage is predominantly occupied by news and views on the climate change debate, with only a small part of that dedicated to REDD+. The media has prioritised Himalayan glacial melt and its impact on the regional water crisis and agricultural productivity. Given the related biophysical fragility, extreme poverty and vulnerability, and initial effects of glacial melt on agriculture, it is understandable that the impacts of climate change on the Himalayas have dominated the media reporting. This is reinforced by the widespread perception among professionals, politicians and ordinary citizens that Nepal, a poor and vulnerable country with nominal emissions, should be focusing on adaptation rather than on mitigation.

Second, the media coverage on REDD+ is largely initiated, guided and supported by professional experts in the field of forestry and REDD+. REDD+ is often described from a very scientific and technocratic angle, with the result that journalists do not feel confident about the subject and largely rely on professionals for their views and analysis. The sources offer techno-bureaucratic views that tend to favour scientific and methodological solutions and usually ignore or undermine potential trade-offs, conflicts and contestations around resource

management. Therefore, the politics of policymaking on forests and REDD+ are not very visible in the media.

Third, media reporting on REDD+ is dominated by the global debate, mainly with regard to the UNFCCC, financing, potential support to least developed countries, and other associated aid arrangements. REDD+ is generally understood and communicated as a win–win game operating within the current development aid framework. Media coverage tends to highlight the amount of money that will potentially come from the developed world and implies that there is no catch as long as the forests are conserved. Global events and processes continue to dominate the news, although more recently, attention to national and local issues has been growing. Consequently, all eyes are still on the international debate, rather than on domestic issues.

Most stakeholders in Nepal, particularly experts, are optimistic about REDD+ outcomes in addressing climate change mitigation and supporting local livelihoods, but journalists and CSOs are often sceptical because they doubt whether forest-dependent communities and marginalised groups will actually benefit from REDD+. With respect to effective, efficient and equitable outcomes (3E+) of REDD+, effectiveness received the most attention from government organisations, individual experts and international organisations, whereas equity was the main concern of CSOs and national research organisations. These two groups also share a concern about efficiency, because of Nepal's diverse range of forest management regimes and fragmentation of forestland.

## 8. References

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# Annex 1. Timeline of key REDD+ policy events in Nepal

Date	Event	Significance
July 2005	National seminar on preliminary research findings from a carbon monitoring survey in selected community forests of Nepal	Preliminary outcome from Kyoto: 'Think Globally Act Locally' project shared with stakeholders
December 2007	UNFCCC COP 13 in Bali, Indonesia; Bali Action Plan issued	Nepali delegates (from both governmental and non-governmental organisations) attended COP 13 in Bali, Indonesia, where the parties agreed to include REDD as a mechanism to achieve the global target for emission reductions
March 2008	World Bank delegates visited Kathmandu and suggested that the government of Nepal prepare an R-PIN to participate in the FCPF process	Initiation of REDD+ readiness process with the FCPF
April 2008	Formation of task force for preparation of Nepal's R-PIN	A task force consisting of members from government agencies, donor organisations and CSOs was formed to create the R-PIN
April 2008	R-PIN submitted to World Bank/FCPF	MoFSC and 14 other stakeholders, including CSOs, INGOs and donors, contributed to the process
July 2008	Approval of R-PIN	World Bank officials praised Nepal's R-PIN, calling it a comprehensive and impressive document
September 2008	MoU signed between World Bank and MoFSC for the development of the R-PP	Formal process for R-PP preparation started
December 2008	UNFCCC COP 14 held in Poznan, Poland; 28 delegates from Nepal attended	MoFSC officials (Secretary and Under-Secretary) and representatives of I/NGOs attended COP 14
January 2009	Establishment of REDD Cell under MoFSC and formation of 'Apex Body' and 'REDD Working Group'	Aimed to coordinate the REDD+ readiness process and policy formation process respectively
July 2009	Demonstration project launched by ICIMOD, FECOFUN and ANSAB, funded by Norway, started paying communities under REDD+	Pilot of REDD+ benefit sharing in community forestry in Nepal
July 2009	REDD Multi-stakeholders Forum began	Although not an official decision-making body, this forum is an important means of soliciting input from various civil society actors on REDD+ policy-related issues
December 2009	Government of Nepal organised Cabinet meeting at the Mt Everest base camp	Meeting held about a week before the beginning of COP 15 in Copenhagen to draw the world's attention to the impacts of climate change on mountain areas. The meeting established one new national park and two conservation areas.
January 2010	Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) project initiated	Project to run 2010–2014; expected to provide an important source of data for setting REDD+ baselines
March 2009	CSO Alliance on REDD+ formed	To consolidate CSO voices on REDD+
April 2010	R-PP submitted to FCPF	REDD Cell submitted the R-PP, with the endorsement of the REDD Working Group and Apex Body
July 2010	Forest Carbon Measurement Guidelines approved by MoFSC	Guidelines developed by ICIMOD, ANSAB and FECOFUN based on experiences from pilot projects
October 2010	Approval of R-PP with commitment of US\$3.4 million for R-PP implementation	Commitment for R-PP implementation

## Annex 2. Questions for interview with journalists

1. What is the primary focus of news and programmes when you report on climate change?
2. In your experience, which types of news or programmes are reported most often? How many of them are produced with financial support from development agencies?
3. Who are the main actors influencing the news on the environment and climate change?
4. Have you prepared any articles/programmes on REDD+? If yes, what has been the key focus of these articles/programmes?
5. What might be the reasons why REDD+ is not given priority in the news? (Only ask if a negative answer is given to question no 4).
6. Concerning the content of the programme/news, are people generally optimistic or pessimistic?
7. Have you ever produced articles or programmes discussing REDD+ with communities? If yes, could you please elaborate on the key message you delivered?
8. What types of programmes (discussion, news, debate?) have been reported most frequently regarding climate change/REDD+?
9. Are you informed about climate change/REDD+ dialogues and negotiations in national and international platforms? If yes, have they helped you in your reporting on climate change and REDD+?



## Annex 3. Journalists who were interviewed and participated in the consultation workshop

SN	Name of journalist	Associated media outlet
1	Abdullah Miya	Kantipur (daily newspaper)
2	Shyam Bhatta	Nagarik (daily newspaper)
3	Pramod Tandan	Rajdhani (daily newspaper)
4	Pitambar Sigdel	Annapurna Post
5	Ramesh Prasad Bhushal	The Himalayan Times
6	Krishna Murari Bhandary	Annapurna Post (columnist)
7	Kulchandra Aryal	Ujyaalo 90 Network
8	Deepak Aryal	Radio Sagarmatha
9	Soham Subedi	Community Radio Network





**CIFOR Working Papers** contain preliminary or advance research results, significant to tropical forest issues, that need to be published in a timely manner. They are produced to inform and promote discussion. Their content has been internally reviewed but has not undergone the lengthier process of external peer review.

This paper analyses the understandings and actions of a diverse range of actors on REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries) and the current discourse on REDD+, as reflected in the Nepali media. Articles on REDD+ and climate change from three representative newspapers were analysed and in-depth interviews and interactions with nine journalists were conducted. Our analyses show that REDD+ coverage in the Nepali media is limited because the climate change discussion is dominated by concerns over glacial melts, and journalists are reliant on professional experts in the field of forestry and REDD+ to explain the technical language used for REDD reporting.

At present, REDD+ coverage is dominated by the global debate and REDD+ is understood as a win-win game operating within the current development aid framework. Media coverage tends to highlight the amount of money that will potentially come from the developed world for the conservation and management of forests in developing countries. While most stakeholders in Nepal, particularly the experts, are optimistic about REDD+ outcomes in addressing climate change mitigation and supporting local livelihoods, journalists and civil society organisations are sceptical because they doubt whether forest-dependent communities and marginalised groups will actually benefit from REDD+.

Numerous stakeholders are associated with the current REDD process but few individuals within those institutions are engaged in the REDD+ discourse. The fact that the most dominant and vocal actors in the media are individual technical experts and farmer organisations/federations, followed by the state, shows that the REDD+ debate is currently seen predominantly as a complex, technical issue. More importantly, this shows that the REDD+ debate has not yet become a political focus. Vulnerable groups, such as community representatives, women and Dalit, are absent from the debate because of the technical nature of the conversation and limited forums for these groups to have their say. This shows the exclusivity of current decision-making.

This research was carried out by CIFOR as part of the CGIAR Research Programme, 'Forests, Trees and Agroforestry: Livelihoods, Landscapes and Governance'. The Programme aims to enhance management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape from forests to farms. CIFOR leads the collaborative Programme in partnership with Bioversity International, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture and the World Agroforestry Centre.

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