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Economic equity in the Annapurna Conservation Area: Effects of government and community-based organizations

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Economic equity in the Annapurna Conservation Area:
Effects of government and community-based organizations

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Abstract

This research addresses the impact of community-based and government organizations on rural livelihoods in protected areas (PAs) by investigating whether benefits of such organizations involved in conservation and community development reach more marginalized members of communities in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) of Nepal. I conduct a case study focusing on two villages within ACA, Kagbeni and Phalyek, examining how local groups interact with each other and with the government in trying to promote equity through the ACA Project primarily through in-depth, unstructured interviews. Locally-created and locally-based groups in these communities appear to be successful in managing local resources and creating a support network for community members, filling in the role of more formal government institutions.

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I. Introduction

In the last several decades, grassroots-level institutions have been becoming increasingly acknowledged for their ability to support broad-based sustainable development in comparison to top-down development approaches. In Nepal, many studies have shown that organizations such as conservation area management committees (CAMCs) and community forestry user groups (CFUGs) have created community institutional platforms that promote collective decision making and bargaining power at a local level (Bennett 2006; Adhikari 2011).

This research seeks to expand understanding of how the presence of community-based and government organizations in a protected area (PA) affects rural livelihoods by investigating whether benefits of such organizations involved in conservation and community development reach more marginalized members of Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) communities. To meet these goals, this project took the form of a case study focusing on Kagbeni and Phalyek, two villages within the upper ACA belt that have similar ethnic and geographical characteristics, but have differing degrees of tourism and government presence. This research specifically tried to address the questions: (1) How do different local and government organizations interact with each other? (2) In what ways does the government attempt to promote equity through the ACA Project? (3) Do recent migrants to the area enjoy equity in distribution of benefits from tourism, or is there an insider-outsider dynamic?

II. Literature Review

II.a. Community-based organizations

Those in favor of decentralization through proliferation of CBOs argue that transferring decision-making power to local communities builds social capital and strengthens civil society (Thoms 2008, Bennet 2006). The concept of shared governance may appear messy in comparison to top-down management approaches; because power is shared among various stakeholders, it may not be especially efficient for decision-making. However, the very act of power-sharing can distribute risks and help in absorbing disturbances (Baral 2009). Nevertheless, romanticizing the ‘local’ and envisioning it as a place that hosts relatively homogenous communities, as has been done in some Post-Development discourse, is often problematic (Hart 2001). Local participation can be used to gloss over local inequalities and power relations, as well as national inequities.

In Nepal, most of the research on this topic has investigated CFUGs, especially in the Terai Region. Groups studied by Chakraborty (2001) perpetuated existing inequalities such as discrimination toward female, landless, and low-caste user group members. Traditional class and gender hierarchies are seen as legitimate institutions in the villages—the poor depend on the non-poor for things such as employment during the harvest season, which inhibits them from expressing demands in the CFUG meetings too strongly, so they are marginalized from the decision-making process (Chakraborty 2001; Springate-Baginski et al. 2003; Adhikari et al. 2004; Thorns 2008). Such studies often find that when female and lower caste households are represented in CBO

committees, they are usually not equally listened to (Adhikari et al. 2004; Springate-Baginski et al. 2003).

II.b. Government institutions in Annapurna

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) is an autonomous non-profit organization established by the government with a mandate to work in the field of nature conservation in Nepal. It receives no regular government funding for the operation of ACAP, but has been granted the right to collect entry fees from visiting trekkers. According to the NTNC website, “One hundred percent of the revenue is ploughed back to implement conservation and development activities in ACA.” Additional funds are raised from national and international donors (NTNC 2014; Spiteri and Nepal 2008).

In 1986, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) became the largest protected area in Nepal, and the first in Nepal that allowed local residents to live within the conservation area boundaries while maintaining use of natural resources, reportedly becoming “a new model for protected areas throughout the world” (Spiteri and Nepal 2008, 392; NTNC 2014). A 1996 act legally recognized CAMCs as local and locally elected managers of ACA and secured the participation of local communities in conservation and development activities, resulting in 56 CAMCs that manage the conservation area (Baral et al. 2010). The “different layers of organization are autonomous to a large degree and form a hierarchy through nested governance structures” (Baral et al. 2010, 8); VDCs are required to make their own management action plan with the goal of fulfilling local demand for resources and integrating traditional resource

management into protected area management, and ACAP approves this plan (Baral 2012). The government holds the title to non-private lands within ACA, while the local communities have management rights to these lands through the CAMCs (exactly as with CFUGs). Baral et al. (2010) claim that within ACA, “The secured property rights and active local management were critical to averting a ‘tragedy of the commons’” (9).

Studies have come to mixed conclusions on the distributive equity of ACAP. There are complaints in some ACAP areas that the promised return of a certain percent of tourist fees to local areas has not happened, and some villagers reportedly do not like ACAP restrictions on resource use (Basnyat 2003). Baral et al. (2010) found that in the jurisdictions of some CAMCs, low castes did not have access to resources, and only some, usually the wealthier people, benefitted from tourism. Similarly, Bajracharya et al. (2007) concluded that the presence of local people, especially, the poor, women, and marginalized groups, is still lacking in the “decision making-process and benefit-distribution mechanisms” within ACAP (63). Additionally, although agriculture and livestock farming are the major economic activities in the ACA, support for these is still a weak aspect of the ACA program (Bajracharya et al. 2006).

On the other hand, it has been found that the community-based approach to protected area management used in ACA has been successful in delivering many benefits to local communities, including increased economic opportunities, consumptive use benefits, and benefits from social services, and that these improvements are associated with more effective conservation practices (Bajracharya et al. 2006). Although tourism has generated some negative social

and environmental impacts, the revenue from tourism provides financial sustainability for conservation and development activities (Bajracharya et al. 2007). Looking at data collected in 2004, Spiteri and Nepal (2008) found that benefits from ACAP have been dispersed equally to households in villages on and off the main tourist route, regardless of a household's participation in tourism, although the benefits were not effectively targeted to poorer residents. Although the majority of residents within the ACA have not received direct monetary benefits from conservation, economic opportunities such as horticulture, poultry, bakery, and other skilled labor employment have increased within the ACA villages (Bajracharya et al. 2006).

III. Methods

This research was conducted as a case study; two villages were selected to focus on in the upper belt of the Annapurna Conservation Area: Kagbeni and Phalyek. I spent November 6th-18th in a guesthouse in Kagbeni (12 days) and the 18th-26th staying with a family in Phalyek (8 days), the rest of the research period being spent in transit. In relatively tourism-heavy villages such as Kagbeni, close to conservation agency headquarters and busy hiking trails, government presence in the form of ACAP is “tangibly more active,” compared to more distance villages such as Phalyek where “the project’s presence is sporadic” (Khadka and Nepal 2010, 357). These sites were chosen because they share many characteristics such as ethnic composition and climactic factors, but have varying amounts of government involvement and economic activity. Additionally, these villages were chosen because their small size made it easier to talk to larger

proportions of the population, and to become a familiar presence in the village as a whole.

The focus of this study in terms of interviews was quality over quantity in order to get opinions that better reflected the true opinions of participants. As expected, I was unable to obtain detailed or genuine opinions by asking pure strangers about topics that probed at village hierarchies, or the negative effects of tourism or government—first a relationship of trust had to be established. In order to best understand individual perceptions and incentives, I used primarily unstructured interviews, in order to allow subjects to express the relevant issues most important to them, focusing on interviews with members of often-underrepresented groups such as women and recent migrants. Every morning I would write a list of questions I wanted to focus on that day and revisit old questions to find which were irrelevant and which still needed to be addressed. I would keep these questions in mind while interviewing people that day, although I did not bring the questions along or strictly stick to them if the interviewee brought the conversation elsewhere. I never kept a notebook or recorder during interviews in order to minimize interruptions in the flow of conversation. Instead I recorded notes from the interviews immediately afterwards, before I could forget the details, which seemed to work effectively.

Upon meeting people in Kagbeni and Phalyek I would explain the purpose of my stay in Mustang and what my project was about. I would usually meet and interview people 2-6 times, spending a total of 1.5-6 hours (and in a few cases much more) with each person, also talking about topics seemingly unrelated to my project as part of the interview, which both helped people feel

comfortable with me as well as providing me with background into how these communities functioned. As such, interviews were often conducted over many meetings. In this manner, results of this project are drawn from 25 participants in Kagbeni and 12 in Phalyek.

The biggest challenges this project faced were a less-than-fluent Nepali on the part of the researcher, and more importantly, a time constraint of three weeks (travel time took three full days both ways), which made it difficult to gather data from a large quantity of people using this in-depth, trust-building approach.

An additional problem to my own language nonfluency was that Nepali was only a second language for the locals—speaking with older people especially was nearly impossible without the help of someone to translate into Nepali, as they really only spoke the local language, Baragaonli. I did enlist the help of some younger locals who spoke both languages to translate so I could interview some of these older Baragaonlis, but it still limited the number and type of interaction with such people. This problem was particularly strong in Phalyek, where even many middle-aged residents, especially women who had not travelled outside Mustang for work, spoke little Nepali.

Another major hurdle was that the project had to maintain a low profile. After a run-in with an ACAP officer that resulted in a call to the main office in Jomsom (I was clear that I was only writing a small school assignment, but he told me I was not allowed to ask questions to any residents of ACA because it is a protected area), I felt I needed to take extreme caution to not gain the attention of ACAP officials again. On the streets of Kagbeni, especially near the bridge that

was a major gathering spot for people, especially older people, very frequently there was a policeman or official standing around. This meant that I was rarely able to talk to people sitting out on the street about my project for fear of gaining the attention of a nearby policeman. This problem was not as strong in Phalyek where there was no ACAP office or police.

Another challenge was that for both Kagbeni and Phalyek, the time in November I was allotted for research is precisely one of the busiest times of year, partly because it is still tourist season, but mostly because it is the final stretch of the harvest season, where yaks must be butchered, *uwa* must be planted, and house repairs must be made in a hurry before winter comes and before many of the residents leave for Kathmandu in the first week of December. As such, not only was it difficult to schedule interviews at this busy time (particularly in Phalyek, where everyone was busy with such work all the time), but activities and meetings of local groups are suspended during this time because everyone is too busy to meet. As a result, I was unable to observe first-hand meetings or activities of the Mothers Groups, CAMCs, or other local groups.

IV. Results

IV.a. Livelihoods in Kagbeni and Phalyek

Kagbeni is a town of a little over a thousand people on the main road that goes to Muktinath, a heavy attraction for pilgrims, trekkers, and all sorts of tourists. This means that most of Kagbeni's tourism is passing through, stopping for lunch or for the night, going up or down. There are nine hotels currently operating in Kagbeni, and two more being currently built. During Dashain,

thousands of Nepalis come to Kagbeni to bathe in the holy waters of the Kali Gandhaki Khola. During this time, all the guest houses in Kagbeni become incredibly over-packed. As such, tourism in Kagbeni is highly seasonal, and overall less important for Kagbeni's economy than agriculture.

Kagbeni has very good agricultural land, suitable for the profitable apple and potato business, as well as for growing buckwheat, wheat, oats, greens, squash, beans, and a number of other crops. As a result, most people in Kagbeni are, by the Nepali standard, somewhat wealthy—this perception is especially strong in migrants who have come to Kagbeni for work. Almost without exception, everyone living in Kagbeni participates in agricultural work. Even most of Kagbeni's residents who work in guest houses, sell souvenirs, or work in other aspects of the tourist business only do this during the high tourist seasons—most of them spend the rest of the year engaging in farm work. Among the five hotel owners I interviewed in Kagbeni, all of them had a farm that provided most of the fresh produce that they served in the hotel, as well as other food products that they served in their hotels such as milk, flour from barley, wheat, and buckwheat, as well as roksi.

Winter is a hard time for many people here, when there is neither tourism nor farm work here because the ground freezes over—about half the town leaves. Many of the younger people go to India to work, to sell fabric and send some money back to Kagbeni.

Questions concerning the effect of tourism on the population of Kagbeni received very mixed responses. Some people said (both guest house owners and people who are less directly involved in tourism) that tourism is good for

everyone in Kagbeni because although only some people work in tourism, the rest who works mostly in farming also benefit because they sell crops to the hotels, and this demand comes from the tourists. Others replied (also coming from both guest house owners and farmers) that tourism benefits some people in Kagbeni, and has close to no effect on many people such as farmers. This second response fits more closely with my observations, because most of the hotels seem to grow all their own local food on their own farms, and this farm work is done mostly by the hotel owners' family and by hotel's own hired staff, so that tourism within Kagbeni does not directly affect the demand for crops for non-guesthouse-working farmers in Kagbeni. While some individuals expressed that tourism was unanimously good for everyone and some said it was good for some people, no one vocalized any negative effects of tourism.

According to interviews, Phalyek is a more representative Baragaon town—while Kagbeni is seen as a major tourist center and a place where their children are sent to school, Phalyek is more completely dependent on agriculture and dependent on locals migrating elsewhere as immigrant labor. There are around 50 households in Phalyek, and normally 200-300 residents, although most of the year the majority of these are away, working in India, Kathmandu, or Pokhara. Phalyek sees a small amount of tourism during the high season, but, as it is a 1-2 hour walk off the main road that stretches from Jomsom to Muktinath, tourism is, economically speaking, nearly negligible—no businesses operate here primarily for tourists, and there are not even any signs in English. For everyone here apart from some temporary migrant workers, farming or animal herding is the main livelihood.

IV.b. Migrant workers

Because there is a lot of money in Kagbeni due its tourism and good farmland and irrigation, the town attracts a significant number of migrant workers, some who stay for several years at a time, and some who come for only the high tourist seasons for three months in fall and three months in spring. Kagbeni attracts migrant workers in the tourist business, such as hotel management and souvenir selling, because there is less competition here than in other tourist hubs, such as Thamel or Pokhara. Most of Kagbeni's migrant workers come for farm work, construction work, and other odd jobs. These are usually young families who come for several years at a time—Kagbeni is also an attractive job location for these families because they can send their children to the secondary school here. These farm-working migrants constitute the majority of Kagbeni's poorest residents. All of Kagbeni's permanent residents have land and a home; it is only the migrant workers who do not.

According everyone I interviewed, all of Kagbeni and Phaylek's permanent residents are Baragaonli (Baragaon meaning "twelve villages"). Baragaonlis are a subgroup within the Gurung ethnic group that have their own language, Baragaonli, which is related to Tibetan but still quite distinct. They all belong to the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Meanwhile, the migrant workers come from all over Nepal, and are nearly all from different ethnic groups, meaning they also don't speak the local language and rarely practice the same sect of Buddhism. In Kagbeni only one migrant worker I interviewed was also Baragaonli—this was because her family was

originally from near Muktinath, and she moved here to work in a relative's guesthouse.

Migrant workers were also present in Phalyek, but had very different characteristics than those coming to Kagbeni. In Phalyek these were nearly all young men coming from elsewhere in Nepal who travel from town to town in Mustang mostly on a short-term contract basis for construction work and other odd jobs. In small towns such as Phalyek where nearly all of the young men leave to work elsewhere for most of the year, the sporadic presence of these migrant workers appears to fill a gap in workers able to do heavy labor. Given their extremely temporary nature, it is not surprising that these workers have nothing to do with local groups. These workers are generally housed by whoever is hiring them. Because of their ability to leave to the next town if there is no work, these workers are less financially vulnerable than the migrant worker families who have come to settle in Kagbeni for long periods of time.

IV. c. ACAP in Kagbeni and Phalyek

Most residents of Kagbeni is not aware of anything ACAP does except check tourist passes. Some older individuals who have lived in Kagbeni for a long time said that about a decade ago ACAP did a lot for Kagbeni, bringing drinkable water, irrigation, and other infrastructural help, but that in recent years they have not observed any help from ACAP. In an interview with one woman, her 20-year old son butted in when I was asking about ACAP, saying the government does not do anything for Kagbeni, the Mothers Group does everything. When I ask about what ACAP does in Kagbeni, many people only

mention CARE Nepal. It is ironic that CARE Nepal is often the most fondly remembered ACAP activity, because it is in fact an international NGO. From interviewing people it was unclear what actually ACAP did and what CARE Nepal did—some people said that CARE Nepal implemented irrigation projects, drinking water projects, and planted trees, and some people said ACAP did these activities.

In Phalyek, being more remote and much less of a tourist center, ACAP's present was mostly nonexistent. As in Kagbeni, whenever ACAP was asked about, interviewees brought up CARE Nepal. They said that CARE Nepal brought infrastructural improvements to Phalyek, such as potable water, a while back, perhaps a decade ago, although it has not been a presence in Phalyek for quite a while. No one could mention anything ACAP has done for Phalyek.

In both Kagbeni and Phalyek, opinions on ACAP were either neutral or negative—interviewees who I was personally closest with expressed the most negative opinions about ACAP, namely that it is good for nothing. The two exceptions to this were a woman who was a member of the CAMC in Kagbeni, and a hotel owner who was her close friend and active in the village development committee (VDC) in Kagbeni. They said that ACAP's presence was positive because they created rules that prevented environmental deterioration, and that the preservation of nature was important in this area because it drew tourism. It would have been easy to conclude from this that ACAP's presence only benefits those who work in tourism, except that the woman who was a member of the CAMC worked primarily in agriculture, not tourism. The primary common link

between these two people that could explain this perception of ACAP is that they were both heavily involved in local governance institutions.

IV.d . Local institutions

The Mothers Group in Kagbeni started 12 years ago. It began with just a few mothers who would meet for adult education with CARE Nepal, and grew from there. Some of the village men I interviewed framed this in a slightly negative way: all the people in the village used to meet together, but women felt like they were not getting a say, and with women's rights popularity growing, they split into groups, creating division in the village. The existence of Mothers Groups received support and encouragement from the government, and they received help from the government to build the Mothers Group house. They occasionally apply for the government for help with other things, although the help never comes fast from the government, they say. They also used to receive training from the government—sewing training, cooking training, etc.

Not all the mothers in Kagbeni belong to the Mothers Group, only local people—there are currently 23 women. Although most participants said that all the local mothers are in the Mothers Group, some responded that there are a couple women who are not in the Mothers Group—it was not clear if this is because they were out of the age range (you must be between 18 and 60 as well as being a mother) or if there are eligible mothers who are not part of the group.

The Mothers Group usually meets several times in a month—some women expressed that it was extremely difficult during busy times of the year (particularly this time which was high tourist season and harvest season) to fix a

time when all the mothers can meet, so during these times the group would not meet at all. On the other hand, many women also mentioned that it was fun to meet, and usually all of the mothers in the group attend meetings.

During meetings they talk about problems in the village and discuss the different members of the village community they need to help out; not everyone in Kagbeni is able to make ends meet all the time—the Mothers Group helps such people who are in trouble. If someone does not have enough to eat, or needs extra money to finish building a house, the Mothers Group will contribute money and other help. If someone is sick the Mothers Group will bring them to Jomson for medical care.

According to interviews with members of the Mothers Group and other community members, there are many poor people in Kagbeni, especially among people coming from elsewhere to work here, and old or sick people who cannot work. Although at certain times of year there are plenty of jobs, this is inconsistent; many people—in particular migrant workers—spend one day working for one person, the next couple days working another job, and so on. The Mothers Group helps to provide a buffer for the instability in jobs, supporting people during rough times. Other members of the village community are not involved in such projects, only the mothers. This money primarily comes from a monthly fee taken from each of the members.

The Mothers Group also organizes infrastructure projects such as building bridges, improving roads, and organizing other community projects. In these, the entire village participates; the government once again generally gives no help or money.

Kagbeni's village committee has overlapping roles with the Mothers Group in regards to these infrastructure projects. In the current village committee, all the men between 18 and 60 must serve on a rotating basis as one of the three *mukya* (head members). When the town must meet as a whole (for building projects, meetings, etc.) the *mukyas* have two other members go throughout the town shouting when the time to meet will be. Occasionally there are meetings with members from the *paanch gaau* (Kagbeni and four neighboring villages) to talk about development, which includes topics such as irrigation (Kagbeni has irrigation, but every year it needs repairs), bringing a hospital, and repairing the ambulance that was given to them by India as a donation some years ago. Such meetings are primarily made up of men.

Kagbeni also has both a CFUG and a CAMC. The CFUG, which has 15 members, oversees people when they cut down trees if they need to build a house. The wood for building houses, as well as firewood, has to be brought from a forest that is 4 hours away on foot. According to CAMC rules, firewood can only be collected from dry wood, trees cannot be cut down for firewood, which makes firewood more expensive. The CFUG also plants trees.

The CAMC has been active for 20 years—4 people serve as chair-members, but only 2 are from Kagbeni, because the CAMC also oversees 2 or 3 towns apart from Kagbeni). They do not receive any tourist money directly—this all goes to the head ACAP office. They also do not participate in any tourism-related work directly, only forestry conservation. They do receive training in forestry and conservation practices from ACAP. The CAMC meets independently but must apply to ACAP for approval on every decision.

The CAMC and CFUG do not work together with the Mothers Group at all. However, the CAMC and the CFUG work together, and the Mothers Group works together with the village committee, as each of these pairs have overlapping functions. The Mothers group and the village committee work together on not all projects, but many projects—their functions overlap primarily in terms of infrastructure building projects. However, the Mothers Group's undertakings seems more extensive in terms of helping out individuals and families.

The CFUG and CAMC also sometimes work together, the CAMC acting as a sort of umbrella institution that links the smaller CFUGs. They work together for conservation activities, but the CAMC appears to have some additional duties such as giving vaccines to babies and giving married women birth control to space out children.

Most villagers overall knew very little about what ACAP, the CAMC or CFUG does, and were not involved in the groups' activities. The 12 migrant workers who were interviewed consistently demonstrated almost complete unawareness of what either ACAP or any local group does in Kagbeni, apart from the Mothers Group, which some knew a little about. Recent migrants are institutionally excluded from the Mothers Group because only mothers from Kagbeni can be members. Other than this, it was never suggested that such migrants were being deliberately excluded from involvement in such groups, but it was clear that these individuals had no interest in such local groups.

Phalyek does not have any VDC or other village committee, just a Mothers Group and a Youth Club. The Mothers group has rules about

everything—irrigation, collecting dauraa from the forest. Everything that in other villages is under control of the VDC or CFUG, in Phalyek the Mothers Group makes rules, organizes community projects, and is responsible for regulation and enforcement. The Youth Club started less than a year ago, and no one I interviewed knew any of its current activities—it seemed to just be getting on its feet.

V. Analysis

Kagbeni's success as a tourist site and farming hub has created a relatively large amount of wealth that has helped the financial security of most of Kagbeni's permanent residents through the redistributive function of the local Mothers Group. Because the Mothers Group gets nearly all of its money used to help community members from the Mothers themselves, the ability of local mothers to pay this fee is important, as otherwise they would be financially unable to take care of members of the community. The local mothers who belong to the Group are usually more long-established members in Kagbeni, and wealthier compared to recent migrants. The Nepali government currently appears to be doing close to nothing to distribute the wealth generated by tourism, through ACAP or through other means.

Although the Mothers Group did appear to help all members of the community who needed it, including temporary migrants, the degree to which these migrants were supported was not clear in the limited time allotted for research. Migrant workers' lack of participation or awareness about local groups can be explained because these individuals spend nearly all their time in Kagbeni

and Phalyek working, the sole purpose of their stay here, leaving no spare time to engage in community organization activities. Additionally, because these migrants view their home as outside of Kagbeni or Phalyek, they have little incentive to engage in such local organizational activity because they are only here for a short term. The migrants have fewer connections here as well—compared to the locals who have a tightly knit network through family and friendship ties—making organization more difficult. For them, Kagbeni is simply a place to find work, not to take part in social organization.

In Kagbeni and Phalyek a shared culture, language, and religion (and the absence of the caste system observed so frequently in Nepal) are likely to have a positive effect on the observed lack of landlessness. Additionally, within Kagbeni, Phalyek, and among the surrounding villages, many of the local Baragaonli residents are related to each other by marriage or by blood; from one house to the next there are usually a number of complicated family ties. Past studies have shown that homogeneity among a population make equitable distribution of wealth more likely because it is easier for members of the population to spontaneously organize and create local social safety nets, and because it is easier to overcome incentives to freeride (Vargughese and Ostrom 2001).

In Phalyek, the lack of landlessness may also partially be attributed to the outward migration that serves as a fuse, preventing an overburdening of the land and other local resources. Several Phalyek residents also commented that there was generally enough food and resources for all of its residents because so many people left Phalyek for work or school, so that the remaining reduced population

could be adequately sustained. Other studies have found that landlessness results in overdependence on forest resources, which has a negative impact on forest conditions and makes community resource management more difficult (Agarwal 2009). Thus, community resource management in this area is made easier by the outward migration that prevents overpopulation and overdependence on resources.

VI. Conclusions

As far as this research can judge, locally-created and locally-based groups in Kagbeni and Phalyek appear to be successful in managing local resources and creating a support network for community members, filling in the role of more formal government institutions. Although a greater number of communities would have to be included in this study to make sweeping generalizations, from the areas of study it seems that—at least in ethnically homogenous communities that do not have problems of extreme overpopulation and therefore tight competition over natural resources—such resources can be managed sustainably and efficiently through community organization, even without any systematic support from the government or other outside help.

Lessons from CBOs and community resource management in Nepal as a way to support broad-based economic resilience and common pool resource (CPR) sustainability are most relevant for other developing countries, because the inhabitants of these countries are often immediately reliant upon forests and other natural resources as a source of livelihood (Thoms, 2008). In contrast, most citizens of industrialized nations have little direct dependence upon such

resources, and rarely do they have such intimate knowledge of local ecosystem functions. For this reason, the model for community-managed CPRs would need to be altered to a greater extent in order to be applied to non-subsistence-based countries. Nevertheless, many general principles of community-based organization mechanisms can be extrapolated from the case of local groups in ACA.

To bolster and expand the findings of this study, similar research in other communities in this area, as well as longer research periods, are recommended. Particularly, further investigation of the degree to which migrant workers are supported by local groups is needed.

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