

Implications of Nepal's Armed Conflict on Forestry: Some Observations from the field

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Armed Conflict

- The Maoist armed conflict was started in February 1996 as a small rebellion in the four western hill districts of Nepal. It has now been quickly expanded all over the country and posing a severe threat to human security and stability in the country. The government's effective control is mainly limited to the district headquarters and the immediate areas of the deployment of security forces.



Causes of the conflict

- **Structural causes (poverty, inequalities and discriminations, corrupt governance, denial of access to resources and development mismatch and failure)**
- **Ideological causes**
- **International causes**
- **Triggers and catalysts**

1st February royal takeover and changing political power dynamics

Ambition of the King to rule the country,

- Monopoly and abuse of power
- Regulation or control of civic liberty ,
- Ignoring multi-linguality, multi-ethnicity, multi-cultural and religious identities or wrongly interpreting them,
- human rights violations,
- Creation of new institutions
- Creating and maintaining fear, threat, insecurity



Implications on forests

- **Maoists restriction on Community Forestry, forced to adopt their policy,**
- **Growing smuggling of timbers (smugglers pay bribe to insurgents and forest officials),**
- **Dual tax on NTFP (MoFC is losing 40 billion rupees annually from failing to manage NTFP),**
- **Laws and regulations are not operating**
- **Security forces cleared forests around their camps,**
- **Forest range posts either closed or shifted to secure places,**
- **DANIDA stopped NARMSAP implemented in 38 districts of Nepal.**
- **Many other projects reduced their activities of suspended**



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- FUGs operational plans expired, and they are not allowed to harvest in their forests. Frost staff are confined in district headquarters and its vicinity.
- Military took office buildings of Forest Office
- Disturbance on estimated annual transaction of around 2.5 billion rupees from approximately 166 types of mountain medical herbs,
- Irrational exploitation of the expensive medical herbs e.g., **Yarsagumba** (*Cordyceps sinensis*), **Chiraito** (*Swertia Chiraita*), **Jatamasi** (*Nardostachys grandiflora*), **Kutki** (*Picrorhiza scrophulariiflora*), **Bikhama** (*Aconitum palmatum*), **padamchal** (*Rheum emodi*), **Panchaunle** (*Galearis stracheyi*), **Sunpati** (*Rhododendron anthopogon*), **Sughandhawal** (*Valerina wallichii*), etc. by smugglers by paying tax to the insurgents
- state is not able to regulate and control NTFP, they are controlled by Maoists.



Photo:Knut-Erik Helle

Protected areas

- RNA deployed for Parks mobilized for the counter insurgency operation,
- Activities of smugglers, poachers, hunters increases,
- Insurgents are influential in most protected areas (e.g Khaptad NP, Makalu Barun Conservation Area, etc.) and therefore park authorities are not are able to manage and regulate parks (for example, five Rhinos killed at the time of SoE in 2001 in Bardya National Park and slaughtering of musk deer by poachers in Lantang National Park)



Conclusions

- **Breakdown of community resource management and environmental systems,**
- **The armed conflict has not only caused negative impacts, it has also positively contributed to alter the unequal social relations.**
- **Diverse impacts on**
 - » **Natural resources and environment,**
 - » **Livelihoods and economy,**
 - » **development**