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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN NEPAL

Community forestry in Nepal is a fairly successful conservation strategy, largely because of restricted resource extraction rather than active forest management, but has so far proven less successful as a poverty-alleviation strategy. Community forestry exacerbates inequities in access to, control of, and decision-making about forest resources. Women often play only token roles, and few user-group governing committees include members from dalit or occupational castes. When such members of traditionally disadvantaged groups do serve on user group committees, their participation tends to be marginal. In this paper I argue that an institution specifically meant to increase people's participation on a large scale actually presents opportunities to limit certain people's participation. As a remedy, I argue that new legal instruments and institutional arrangements must ensure fair distribution of forest benefits and participation in community forest decision-making. Towards that end, I consider a strategy of democratization for community forestry, and suggest ways that community forest user groups could be organized so that all interests are represented on forest user group committees and engaged in decision-making.

Community forestry in Nepal is often touted as a successful model for participatory, community-based forest management in developing countries. The evidence clearly indicates that community forestry is indeed improving forest protection and regeneration. Intuitively, improvements in forest resource availability should lead to improvements in the flow of those resources to meet the community's subsistence needs: if community forestry is improving forest conditions in Nepal, then it should be improving the livelihoods of those who are dependent on forest resources. However, while community forestry has the potential for improving rural livelihoods, its actual contributions to the poorest have been limited. In this paper I argue that community forestry is more successful at conserving forest than improving livelihood. The livelihood-enhancing potential of community forestry is constrained by unequal power relations at the local level. Local power disparities may even be reinforced by the ways community forestry is implemented and government relates to community forest user groups. As a potential solution for part of the problem, I explore the possibility of democratizing community forest decision making, suggesting one scenario in

which executive committees would be comprised of representatives elected at the *tol* level within a community forest user group.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data for this paper were collected from multiple sources using a variety of methods during six months of field research between October 2002 and April 2003. Micro-level data about user groups and livelihoods are from a household survey conducted by the UK-based community forestry project, the Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP). At the meso-level, I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from LFP staff, Nepal government forest officials and technicians, and local NGOs contracted by LFP. I interviewed all district-level LFP staff employed in Nepal at the time of my fieldwork. At the macro-level, I used semi-structured interviews with all of LFP's program/managing staff, as well as three officials each from the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and the Department of Forests, all of whom were highly placed and had some responsibility for community forestry.

COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN NEPAL

Community forests in Nepal are nationally owned forest areas handed over to local user groups for community-based protection and utilization. Each group of users develops its own constitution and forest plan when applying for its community forest. This process involves identifying users and creating a formal forest association called a Community Forest User Group (CFUG), which is responsible for protecting the forest, (subject to the District Forest Officer's oversight) and permitted to generate income from forest products and small, forest-based industries. According to government policy, all actual users of a given forest should be included in the user group.

A typical community forest formation process proceeds as follows (see DoF 1995, 1995, 2001). Traditional users notify staff of the District Forest Office (DFO) that they want forestland formally handed over to them. Local DFO staff are then sent to identify all forest users, an often truncated and cursory process (Pokharel 1997; Springate-Baginski et al. 2001). After the initial request, DFO staff conduct meetings within a community to collect a variety of opinions about forest use and to generate consensus among users, which is in effect a negotiation between the potential user group and the DFO.

When the forest is 'opened' for use, there are rules and sanctions in place to control harvesting activities for most forest products. Generally, each member household of the user group is allowed to harvest an equal amount of a given forest product regardless of household size or income. Those members who do not need the product often sell their surplus to other users or nearby communities. Most CFUGs collect dues from their members and some sell minor forest products collectively. Collective funds are kept in a bank account used for forest management activities (at least 25%) or community development activities.

Legally, user groups have access, use, management, and exclusion rights to community forestland, though ownership remains with the government. CFUGs may select or elect the membership of the Forest User Group Committee, set prices for and sell forest products, and enforce rules.

As originally conceived in Nepal's Forest Sector Master Plan of 1987, community forests were meant to meet the subsistence needs of a community. According to the Forest Act 1993, however, CFUGs are also to benefit financially from their management activities, i.e. they can generate income from their community forest. Because these two policies lead, in some cases, to conflicting recommendations, there is ongoing debate about whether community forests should meet both subsistence and commercial needs. From the perspective

of Nepal's Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and its Department of Forests (DoF), the agencies charged with conserving and maintaining forests, the primary goal of community forestry is protecting forest, not improving livelihoods, which are incidental and of secondary concern. This contrasts with the goals of many bilateral donor project goals, particularly those of the UK's Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP), which seeks to improve livelihoods through community forestry. LFP supports community forestry in Nepal in part by providing financial and technical support to the Department of Forests, especially at the district level. In contrast to Nepal government foresters, I suspect forest users are primarily concerned with how healthy forests contribute to their own livelihoods.

LIVELIHOODS STATUS IN RURAL NEPAL

WEALTH DISPARITIES

The UK's LFP household surveys collected data about both yearly cash incomes and assets owned by a household, including such things as radios, televisions, gas stoves, bicycles, telephones, pressure cookers, etc. As Table 1 shows, household yearly income varies substantially among households, and the total value of a household's assets varies even more substantially than income. These data on income and assets clearly demonstrate the considerable wealth disparities in rural Nepal.

LFP created four wealth groupings based on asset ownership that they use to define relative levels of poverty and to analyze baseline indicators¹. Four categories emerge: very poor households, with a total value of assets equal to or less than 1000 Nepali Rupees (NRs.); poor households between NRs. 1001 and 6790; intermediate households between NRs. 6791 and 14,676; and wealthy households' greater than NRs. 14,677².

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME AND ASSETS

Statistic	Annual Income		Total Asset Value	
	Rupees	Dollars	Rupees	Dollars
Mean	54,983	733	7898	105
Median	35,000	467	2145	29
Mode	30,000	400	1000	13
Minimum	120	1.60	0	0
Maximum	1,669,600	22,261	3,909,000	52,120
25 th Percentile	19,000	253	1000	13
50 th Percentile	35,000	467	2145	29
75 th Percentile	64,000	853	4290	57
Standard Deviation	74,858		92,130	

Vulnerable households often borrow money to meet basic needs, not to invest in productive activities, as may wealthy households. The need to spend money on basic needs limits the capacity of a household to invest in productive activities, schooling children, etc. Poor households rarely have the collateral or social standing to qualify for loans from banks and other 'official' sources. As a result, many households in rural Nepal take loans through local money lenders charging 24% to as much as 36% interest, burdening households with severe debt.

Among the households surveyed, 47% borrowed money some time in the year before the survey. The average loan was NRs. 26,700 at an average interest rate of 28%. Poorer households borrow more frequently than wealthier households ($p < .001$).

supposed to help meet these basic needs. However, large majorities of the surveyed households report deficits between the forest products they need and actually receive from community forests. There are two possible causes for this. Many community forests are too small or unproductive to supply the households in their user groups, regardless of how well they are managed and community forest user groups may also place significant limitations on the use of their forestland, perhaps more than is necessary for sustainable forest management.

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 illustrate demand for and use of forest products in more detail. Households were asked to state the annual amount they needed of each forest product listed and the amount they collected from various sources. Table 2 lists

TABLE 2: FOREST PRODUCTS AND HOUSEHOLDS SUPPLIED BY COMMUNITY FORESTS

Product	HHs needing product	% HHs needing product	HHs getting product from CF	% Total HHs getting product from CF	% Needful HHs getting product from CF
Fuelwood	2848	99.20	1687	58.76	59.23
Grass	2674	93.14	1249	43.50	46.71
Fodder	2426	84.50	682	23.75	28.11
Leaf Litter	1890	65.83	884	30.79	46.77
Poles	546	19.02	160	5.57	29.30
Timber	347	12.09	99	3.45	28.53
Herbs	18	0.63	5	0.17	27.78

Within the four asset categories, 52% of very poor, 45.9% of poor, 38% of intermediate, and 36.4% of wealthy households borrowed money. The most common use of loans (22.4% of borrowers) is for consumption, such as buying food to see a family through lean times.

Only one-third of households that produce food grains produce enough to feed the family for an entire year. Overall, 67% of households have a food deficit, usually two to six months a year. Food deficiency seems to be more common among disadvantaged groups³ (about 79% of Rai, Limbu, and Gurung households, and almost 94% of dalit households). There is a significant association ($p < .001$) between asset category and percent of total household expenditures spent on food. A higher percent of poorer households' expenditures go for food than for wealthier households.

Natural Resource Dependency and Access

Most rural households in Nepal require forest products for their livelihoods, and community forests are

the number and percentage of households stating at least some need for forest products, the number and percentage of all households fulfilling at least some of their stated need from community forests, and the percentage of needful households fulfilling at least some of their reported need through community forests. Note that the only forest product for which a majority of households are supplied through community forests is fuelwood. These numbers indicate that community forests are not meeting or even partially fulfilling the forest product needs of a majority of member households (except in the case of fuelwood). Recall that all 2871 households surveyed belong to community forest user groups.

Table 3 shows the total households surveyed reporting a deficit⁴ for each forest product and the percentage of households being supplied by community forests that still have a deficit. This table shows that even for those households getting forest products from community forests most are not getting all that they need. This can put poorer households at a disadvantage if they cannot

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING FOREST PRODUCT DEFICITS

Product	% Total HHs with a deficit	% HHs using CF still having deficit
Fuelwood	97.09	95.08
Grass	99.66	99.28
Fodder	96.91	89.00
Leaf Litter	83.12	63.91
Poles	84.62	47.50
Timber	82.42	38.38
Herbs	72.22	00.00

TABLE 4: FULFILLING FUELWOOD NEEDS THROUGH VARIOUS SOURCES, BY ASSET CATEGORY

Asset Category	% From CF	% From PF	% From NF	% Use AgRes	% Purchase
Very Poor	58.63	52.18	13.84	81.80	9.10
Poor	61.86	48.20	13.83	81.62	18.04
Intermediate	55.94	60.15	6.13	74.71	23.37
Wealthy	48.91	51.82	3.65	61.31	18.98
Total	59.23	51.26	12.64	80.09	14.54

afford alternatives, such as private land to grow trees. Exploring fuelwood in more detail illustrates this point.

Table 4 shows the percentage of households expressing a need for fuelwood that are fulfilling at least part of that need from various sources. The distributions are fairly even for community and private forestry, but not for other sources. Note that poorer households are slightly more likely to access government-managed forests (which is generally illegal) and to use agricultural residues in lieu of fuelwood than are wealthier households. The use of agricultural residues for fuel may translate into lost soil fertility, as such residue would otherwise be returned to the soil in some form. Not surprisingly, the poorest households are the least likely to purchase fuelwood.

Power Disparities

Those households belonging to various community self-help groups have more social assets to call upon in crafting their livelihood strategies. Householder interests are better represented when they are involved in making important community decisions about resource use, development, and finances. For example, having a household member serve on the executive committee of a community forest user group is a distinct advantage. Decision-makers tend to favor their own interests and those of others in their status group. Having a role in important decision-making is empowering, a good in and of itself.

Only 24% of households surveyed have at least one person who is a member of a user group or organization, such as livestock groups, savings groups, agricultural groups, irrigation groups, etc. There is a significant interaction ($p < .001$) between membership in such groups and asset category. Fewer poorer households than intermediate and wealthy households are members of these groups. Nineteen percent of very poor households, 25% of poor households, 37% of intermediate households, and 33% of wealthy households belong to at least one group other than their community forest user's group. Participation in such groups is dominated by male members.

Most households (61%) are members of only one community forest user group, but 29% are members of two forest user groups, and 10% are members of three or more forest user groups. A significantly higher proportion ($p = .005$) of

intermediate and wealthy households are members of multiple forest user groups. To the extent that belonging to multiple forest user groups yields more benefits to the household, this pattern of membership indicates an advantage for richer households. A disadvantage for poorer households, wealthier households are significantly ($p < .001$) better represented on community forest user group committees than poorer households, as Figure 1 illustrates.

Most households in rural Nepal are quite poor, own little land or other assets, and are heavily dependent on forest resources. Yet there are huge disparities among households in terms of income and assets that translate into power disparities influencing who can access what resources and

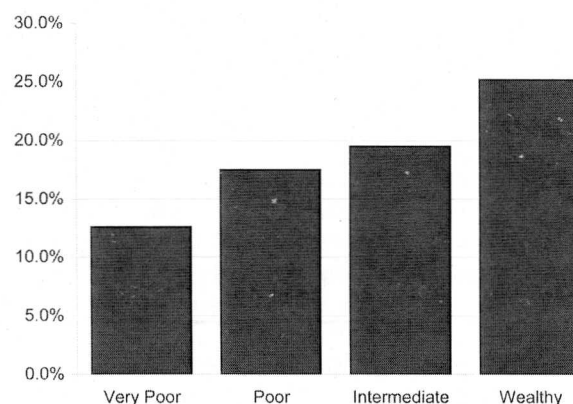


FIGURE 1:
MEMBERSHIP IN FUG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BY ASSET CATEGORY

under what conditions. Central to improving livelihoods is challenging such disparities in wealth and power, which can become institutionalized through social norms and policy.

Community Forestry Success and Failure

In theory, community forestry can open up new livelihood opportunities for members, but the distribution of benefits, as mediated by institutions, is critical. In practice, community forest organizations and institutional arrangements are having both positive and negative impacts. In almost all the LFP qualitative baseline study sites, informants report that forest conditions are improving, and 82% of household survey respondents stated that the quality of their community forest is improving (LFP et al. 2003). However, almost none of the LFP baseline case study user groups were actively managing and improving their forests. As a result, community forests are likely producing under their potential and are not contributing to improving rural livelihoods to the extent that they could.

In many cases user groups are generating revenue that is

used for community development and/or for micro-credit. Such micro-credit is a sword that cuts both ways for poor households. Loans can be important in times of crisis and as seed money to start an income-generating activity, but user groups tend to charge interest at a rate of 24% annually, which can quickly bury a poor household in debt.

Although some user groups are generating revenue, at least two-thirds are not. Almost all of the user groups in the study have good stocks of marketable non-timber forest products such as medicinal or aromatic herbs, resin, and cloth-grade fibers. However, very few CFUGs in the study area are exploiting the commercial potential of these resources, which means most are missing opportunities to generate income that could be used for community development and livelihoods improvement.

Finally, there is a mixed impact on empowerment of traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women, landless households, and members of occupational castes. In some cases these groups are participating in CFUG discussions but they rarely have a role in decision-making. In at least two-thirds of the cases in the LFP qualitative baseline study, CFUGs have low participation by women and lower caste groups or poor households, and there is poor or very poor levels of awareness about user group rules, committee formation, decision-making, CFUG funds, or the rules, rights, and responsibilities of CFUGs generally.

As noted, many CFUGs strictly protect and 'close' their forests during the first five years of operation (Springate-Baginski et al. 2001; Edmonds 2002). Such an approach is encouraged by government foresters, who often appear to be heavily involved in crafting user groups' constitutions and operational plans (see Springate-Baginski et al. 2003). The forest bureaucracy in Nepal views forests as a resource to be policed and protected. Such traditions, dating to the beginning of Nepal's forest agencies (Pokharel 1997), encourage conservative ideals for forest use on the part of foresters, whose values shape a user group's forest management plan. As a result of early closure, forest conditions improve visibly.

Although there are problems with boundary disputes in many community forests (see Springate-Baginski et al. 2003; see Yadav et al. 2003), the suite of rights and responsibilities given during hand-over enables most user groups to exclude other potential rival users effectively. Such exclusion coupled with internal rule enforcement and sanctions translates into effective forest protection and improvement in forest conditions.

Although strict protection is effective in regenerating forests, it often comes at the cost of the poorest households losing their primary source of vital forest resources (see also Dev et al. 2003; see also Malla et al. 2003; Adhikari et al. 2004). Poor households in rural Nepal depend on "free" access to forests more so than other households because they cannot afford the substitutes to these forest resources available on the market. For example, when a CFUG restricts grazing,

poorer households may find that they can no longer keep livestock because they can't afford to purchase the fodder needed for stall-feeding. Along with its livestock, the household loses a source of food and income, possibly deepening its level of poverty. Some user groups do make special provisions for the poorest households, but such arrangements are not universal.

The irony is that many community forests have sufficient resources to meet at least the poorest households' subsistence needs, and many even contain sufficient resources to be exploited commercially. However, anecdotal evidence combined with hard data suggests that the vast majority of CFUGs in Nepal practice only 'passive' management, rather than active, production-oriented management (for examples see Larsen et al. 2000; Edmonds 2002; Malla et al. 2003; for examples see Yadav et al. 2003; Pandit and Thapa 2004). That is, CFUGs focus on conserving and protecting forest resources rather than developing forest-based industries or manipulating forest conditions to improve the availability of especially useful or valuable products. Thus, meeting subsistence needs through community forestry is less a supply problem than a management problem.

There are several causes of this management situation. Heavy involvement of government foresters biased toward traditional timber production and protection forestry lead CFUGs to believe that they can make only limited use of their forests. There is limited technical forest management knowledge and capacity even among government foresters, let alone villagers. The same is true regarding forest-based industry development and marketing. Another cause of the management problem is that those most dependent on community forest resources and therefore most interested in their active utilization are the very same groups who tend to be excluded from decision-making.

My analysis corroborates the findings in other research on community forestry in Nepal. For example, as Yadav et al. report (2003), community forestry is improving the quality of forests to varying degrees, which in turn can and does lead to increased benefit flows. However, improved forest resources may not benefit all members of a user group (Dougill et al. 2001). The results presented above also confirm that CFUG committees and user group decision-making are dominated by elites (Dougill et al. 2001; Malla et al. 2003; Timsina 2003), and that "[g]enuinely inclusive decision-making exists only in a minority of . . . FUGs" (Dev et al. 2003, p. 75). The data also confirm Malla et al.'s (2003) assertion that awareness levels about a range of community forestry institutional issues is low, particularly among the

poorest households.

It would seem that community forestry in Nepal is not an unmitigated success. From the government's perspective, community forestry is successful because it is achieving the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation's primary goal of protecting and even improving forests at low cost. To international donors it is a successful program because it is conserving forests and, on paper at least, it is increasing people's participation. Finally, to local elites community forestry is a great success because it is helping them maintain their position and, in many cases, making them money. However, in the eyes of the poorest and traditionally disadvantaged groups, community forestry is not a complete success, and may even cause problems.

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Decision-making within CFUGs is clearly dominated by local elites, especially men. Local elites are usually educated and have time available for activities other than farming. The structure of community forestry reinforces the inherent marginalization of poorer households in three ways. First, elites tend to make decisions that benefit themselves, and they often place restrictions on forest use that actually harm the poorest. Those who are being excluded from CFUG decision-making, whether intentionally or not, are also those who are most dependent on forests for multiple needs including fuelwood, fodder, livestock grazing, leaf litter for compost, and construction wood. In such a situation, poorer, marginalized households may become more desperate and deeper in debt, which can lead to even less time and resources to devote to the CFUG and thus give elites even more power over them.

Second, government foresters reinforce these power relations because they tend to consult local elites first and most often when conducting the fieldwork phase of CFUG formation and later when providing services to a user group. The role played by government foresters in maintaining unequal power relations locally is a function of the hierarchical structure and traditional forest protection orientation of the forest bureaucracy in Nepal. Furthermore, the financial and technical support provided to the government by foreign donors may be reinforcing rather than reorienting traditions of the forest bureaucracy.

The evidence indicates that tree density and, to some extent, species richness are improving in most community forests. Given the effectiveness of CFUGs in protecting forests, it may be that elite domination and exclusion of marginalized groups is good for the environment, but it is important to remember that most community forests are improving because of limitations on resource extraction rather than active management. In other words, there may be potential for even greater forest quality in terms of tree density, species composition, soil fertility, and under story plant diversity through more active management. Such improvements could also translate into yet greater forest product availability.

Decisions to practice more active management are more likely to emerge from decision-making bodies that represent those who have a greater interest in improving resource availability through active management, that is, poor households, occupational castes, and women.

In terms of contributions of community forestry to improving rural livelihoods, these too are limited by conditions of unequal power. With forest handover, new institutions are created that can serve as new social fora for local development planning, social support services, and social cohesion. However, in many cases the CFUG as social forum is not accessible, or not as accessible, to marginalized groups. Inequities in decision-making participation, power, and associated elite domination are thus constraining the potential for community forestry to improve livelihoods.

That community forests tend to be elite dominated has its roots in structural biases upheld and even in part created by the forest bureaucracy. Because the DoF is oriented towards traditional forestry, where it sees forest protection it sees success. The fact that forests are not being utilized to their full potential to improve livelihoods of the poorest and the fact that community forestry is dominated by local elites is incidental to the forest bureaucracy, because it is institutionally blind (or at least myopic) to goals other than forest protection.

Government foresters are heavily involved in shaping how community forests are utilized and governed during the process of community forest formation and handover. Government foresters rarely emphasize or otherwise authentically encourage consideration of livelihood issues within the community forestry context. Their protectionist biases thus directly inform the perceptions of CFUG members regarding how community forests may be used.

Because local elites tend to be better educated and are more flexible with their time, government foresters find it easier to work with local elites (Pokharel 1997). Foresters tend to seek out the opinions of local elites first, and local elites are more likely than disadvantaged groups to seek out foresters for advice or assistance. Thus, the process government foresters use to form CFUGs and to support them after formation sees foresters interacting mostly with local elites, and thereby reinforcing the position of local elites as gate-keepers in their communities.

Nepal's Ministry and Department of Forests receives much of its budget from international aid through bilateral donor projects. For example, the UK's Livelihoods and Forestry Programme provides direct financial support to government forest offices in its operating districts, trains government foresters, and supports them in numerous small ways such as providing DFO staff places to hold meetings, stationary, use of photo copiers, computers, and so on. The support that donor projects provide district forest offices enables the DoF to exert control over forests, promote its traditional forestry agenda, and interact with CFUGs in a manner that maintains

domination by local elites, which in turn limits the livelihoods improving potential of community forestry. Overall, there are at least three obstacles standing in the way of achieving the livelihoods potential of community forestry in Nepal. These three obstacles are elite domination locally, structural biases within the Department of Forests, and culpability on the part of bilateral donors.

A RECOMMENDATION FOR DEMOCRATIZING CFUG DECISION-MAKING

New legal instruments and institutional arrangements must ensure fair participation in community forest decision-making and benefit distribution for marginalized groups. That is, community forest user groups should be organized so that all interests within a user group are represented on the Forest User Group Committee (FUGC). Interest group representatives must be encouraged, perhaps even trained, to actively participate in decision-making. This means that traditionally marginalized interest groups within community forest user groups such as women, dalit, the poorest, ethnic groups, etc., should be guaranteed positions on executive committees. Attention to issues of fairness and participation by diverse groups within communities would also help unpack communities as black-boxes.

Simply requiring low caste representation on executive committees would likely result in token membership with no or little say in decision-making. Rather, in the process of handing over community forestland, the government should require that CFUG executive committees be representative bodies for which every hamlet within a user group would choose its own representative by whatever means they prefer. Homogenous hamlets of low caste or particularly poor groups would send a person to represent them who would have the legitimacy of being popularly chosen and who would hopefully feel a strong, motivating sense of responsibility to represent her/his hamlet. Any low caste representative might still be intimidated while serving on a FUGC. However, with the proposed system, many user group committees would have low-caste majorities, which might strengthen the confidence of low caste committee members. To empower women, it might be necessary to require that a certain number of women be representatives, require hamlets to simultaneously choose both male and female representatives, or alternate tenures so that for a certain period a hamlet has a female representative and in the next period has a male representative. Improving the representative-ness of FUGCs may be empowering for marginalized groups, a good in itself, and hopefully would lead to community forest use decisions that benefit more than just the elite.

New laws or rules are not actually required to make FUGCs more representative of the interests of all groups within a CFUG, although such legal instruments may be necessary to ensure greater, but not necessarily equal, participation. Even without new legal requirements, CFUGs could be encouraged to adopt provisions for representative participation on FUGCs

through the constitutional amendment process when their current constitutions expire. Of course, the problem with this approach is that it might meet resistance from those currently holding power in CFUGs who likely would be the ones amending the constitutions. This is why external involvement is necessary.

The current practice in LFP districts of organizing hamlet level groups could serve as an initial model. Because hamlets tend to be fairly homogeneous they may be natural units for sending representatives to FUGCs. The current LFP practice should be made systematic by organizing all hamlets within a CFUG, and making the newly formed hamlet groups the unit of representation on FUGCs. Hamlet organizing should then be scaled up and eventually adopted in all districts.

ENDNOTES

¹Simply using quartiles to define wealth status is not meaningful given the large variation in wealth and the skewed nature of the asset value data. Rural Nepali households are quite asset-poor, so using quartiles would suggest that one-quarter of households are 'wealthy' (see LFP et al. 2003).

²In US dollars, total asset values are as follows: Very Poor < \$13.33; Poor = between \$13.34 and \$90.53; Intermediate = between \$90.54 and \$195.68; and Wealthy > \$195.68.

³Traditionally disadvantaged groups include groups that have traditionally low social status, often face discrimination, may be minorities within their communities, and therefore tend to be poorer. These groups include ethnic 'caste' groups such as, Magar, Rai, Tamang, and sometimes Gurung, and low or occupation castes (e.g. sarki – shoemakers, damai – clothing makers, kami – blacksmiths) that are dalit (untouchable).

⁴Deficit in this case is the difference between the amount of the product needed and the amount of the product that is supplied from community forests, and does not refer to total deficit

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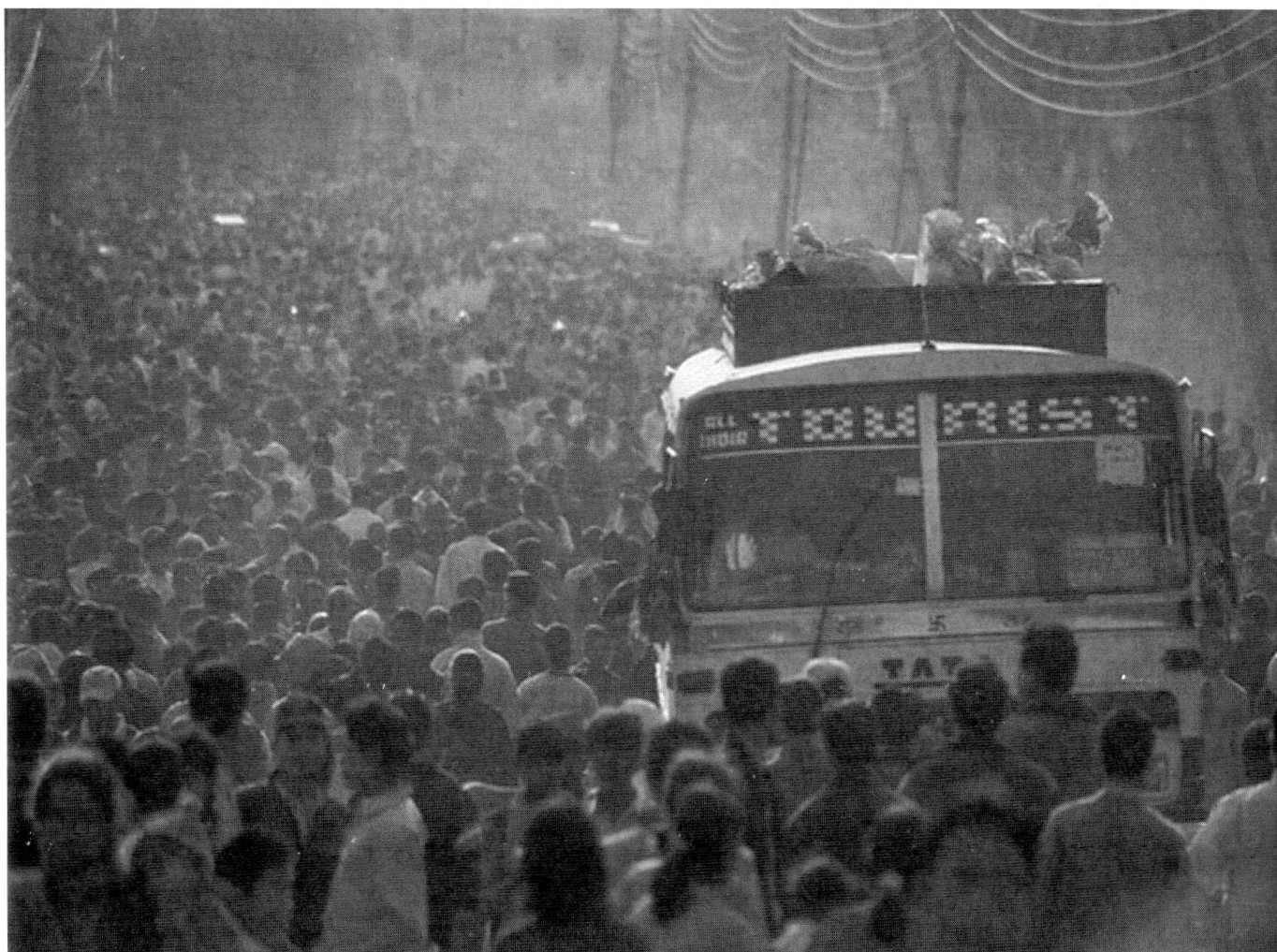
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John Lindsey: Pilgrims on the road to Pashupatinath