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The XXI International Grassland Congress / VIII International Rangeland Congress took place in Hohhot, China from June 29 through July 5, 2008.

Proceedings edited by Organizing Committee of 2008 IGC/IRC Conference

Published by Guangdong People's Publishing House

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Presenter Information

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Strengthening pastoral organization and indigenous knowledge for sustainable rangeland management in Nepal

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Key words : Pastoral organization, indigenous rangeland management, northern Nepal

Introduction Rangeland ecosystems and their biological resources play a critical role in the region's overall economic development and in people's well being in mountainous areas of Northern Nepal. However, sociological studies are scarce, and the lack of understanding of social dimensions of rangeland resource use has limited the proper management and sustainable development of rangeland ecosystems (Chetri and Gurung, 2004). This case study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of indigenous rangeland management systems in mountainous areas of Nepal and to provide insights into the social dimensions of sustainable rangeland resource and ecosystem management that may be useful elsewhere in Nepal and neighboring areas across the HKH region.

Materials and methods This paper summarizes and documents the pastoral institutions and indigenous rangeland management systems in high altitude mountainous areas of Nepal through on-the-spot surveys on the farmers from three villages of the case study site, Rasuwa District (latitude 27°57'30" to 28°23'30"N, longitude 85°7'00" to 85°48'15"). People from 35 households were surveyed with open-ended and pre-tested questionnaires, 20 keypersons were interviewed with face-to-face conversation, and 47 participants were involved in participatory rural assessment (PRA).

Results There are basically two sets of local organizations involved in rangeland management, community committees at the community level and civil associations at the group level. A community committee is normally made of 11 or 12 elected people and acts as the leader, decision-maker and representative for the whole community. Civil associations (having a 5-6 person sub-committee) are self-identified groups of households with common interests or having the same resource pools. Together with indigenous knowledge, the local institution plays a very important role in sustainable rangeland resource and ecosystem management: controlling and regulating access to pasturelands and fodder resources through enforcement of well defined and mutually agreed upon rights and rules; enforcing primary rules and regulations concerning rangeland resource use and mitigating conflicts arising over rangeland use; ensuring the integrated use of different resources related to rangeland management; transferring public services (i.e. technical interventions) and national planning and state policies to local herders.

Conclusion It can be concluded that pastoral organization and indigenous knowledge need to be strengthened to promote the sustainable rangeland development.

Reference

Chetri M. and Gurung C. R. 2004. Vegetation composition, species performance and its relationship among the livestock and wildlife in the grassland of upper Mustang, Nepal. Yak Production in Central Asian Highlands. Proceeding of 4th International Yak Congress, Chengdu, China.