

# Forest Dependency and Livelihood Status: A Case Study of the Three Villages in Indo-Bhutan Transboundary Region of the Khangchendzonga Landscape

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**Abstract**—The study examines the forest dependency and the livelihood of the three villages in the transboundary region of India (West Bengal) and Bhutan, based on the household survey and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The livelihood is dependent on the forest products, apart from the non-farm works in the cement factory of Bhutan or to migrate to the metropolitan cities for employment. The change in land use pattern, resource degradation, and change in forest structure and composition and teak (*Tectona grandis*) monoculture in the forest, have evoked a concern for local livelihood and the sustainability of existing resources. It is found through the survey in the three adjoining villages that 24 fodder species, 22 fuelwood species, 21 medicinal plants and 7 wild edibles are collected for either household use or for selling in the nearby markets. Agriculture is almost nil because of the severe human-wildlife conflict, water shortage and poor soil quality due to dolomite dust deposition from the Bhutanese foothills. The collection and selling of forest products have become the sole and the only livelihood earning medium for the people after the closure of the tea gardens. They even travel up to 5kms inside the forest for fodder and fuelwood. People develop some earnings by selling fuel wood to the nearby market and by rearing few cattle mainly goats. The leaf litter, wild edibles like mushroom and edible ferns is collected from barren agricultural fields or nearby jungles. Realizing the situation, needful steps are needed to be taken to develop and revive the livelihood of the people in the region, and to consider the transboundary issues regarding water source sharing, dolomite siltation, etc. which will divert the livelihood pressure from the forest resources to some other means.

**Keyword:** Forest resources, livelihood, transboundary, PRA, Khangchendzonga Landscape.

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