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Climate Change: Community forestry feted for carbon reduction role

PRAGATI SHAHI

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Community forestry has been rewarded with US\$ 95,000 (approximately Rs 6.8 million) for reducing emissions in the atmosphere causing climate change through enhancement of carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests.

Representatives of three community forest users' groups of three districts—Dolakha Gorkha and Chitwan—received a cheque of US\$ 45,535, 27,560 and 21,905 respectively on Wednesday from the world's first carbon offset project involving local communities in monitoring carbon in their forests.

Director general of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (Icimod) Andreas Schild handed over the cheques to the local representatives as part of the country's first pilot project under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+). The four-year project was launched in 2009 and is financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

“We have been managing the forests on our own for years for firewood, fodder and other purposes. However, for the first time, we are working for environment under the REDD mechanism,” Man Bahadur Khadka, the local CFUG representative from Chitwan, said after the award presentation ceremony .

The project being implemented by Icimod and its partners—the Federation of Community Forests Users Nepal and the Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture Bioresources—found an increase of carbon sequestration of 8.6, 19.4 and 5.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare in the community forests of Dolakha, Gorkha and Chitwan respectively between 2010 and 2011.

The payment is the first in the country and is expected to guide the national level framework under the REDD+ incentive mechanism under the UN's Climate Change framework that is still under consideration. REDD+ is an effort of developing countries to reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide (green house gas) in the atmosphere through sustainable management of forests and financial incentives.

“It is a very important moment for us. The payments to the local communities reflect the contribution of the people of the Himalayan region in solving global problems of climate change through their own efforts and direct interventions,” Schild said.