

**Field Research Report  
on**

**Food and Nutrition Security of the Forest Dependent  
Households from the Forests of Nepal**

**Submitted To:**



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**Date: 10 May 2013**

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The Program Coordinator  
Renaissance Society Nepal (RSN)  
Balkot-2, Bhaktapur  
Nepal

**Subject:** Submission of Report on "**Food and Nutrition Security of the Forest Dependent Households from the Forests of Nepal.**"

Dear Sir,

The field research report entitled "**Food and Nutrition Security of the Forest Dependent Households from the Forests of Nepal**" is prepared by intensive field visit conducted from April 5 to April 28, 2013 in Chitwan, Makawanpur and Surkhet districts of Nepal. Different communities of Chepang, Bankariya and Raji people are visited and consulted.

This report contains detail inventory of forest food items found in target area and socio-economic status of marginalized people found in target areas. This will be a primary reference to design innovative social development project regarding to marginalized communities of Nepal.

I would like to request to approve this document as a field research report and official document.

Sincerely Yours'

.....  
**Submitted by**  
Mr. Resham Bdr. Thapa  
Social Research Officer, RSN

.....  
**Approved by**  
Mr. Madan Bahadur Thapa  
Program Coordinator, RSN

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CBO	Community Based organization
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistic
CEP	Chepang Empowerment Programme
CFUGs	Community Forest User Groups
LFUGs	Leasehold Forest User Groups
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal
DADO	District Agriculture Development Office/ Officer
DDC	District Development Committee
DFO	District Forest Office\Officer
MSFP	Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme
GoN	Government of Nepal
HDI	Human Development Index
HRD	Human Resource Development
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MoV	Means of Verification
NCA	Nepal Chepang Association
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
VDC	Village Development Committee
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund
SSU	Services Support Unit
RSN	Renaissance Society Nepal
UN	United Nation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
US	United States
NTFPs	Non Timber Forest Products
NFC	Nepal Food Corporation
WFS	World Food Summit
FCG	Food Coordination Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAP	National Agricultural Policy
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
NARC	Nepal Agriculture Research Council

## **Food and Nutrition Security of the Forest Dependent Households From the Forests**

### **1. Context of the Study**

Food security is generally understood as a state of unreliable entitlement and access to insufficient food either through own production or through exchange entitlements to meet the needs of an individual, a family or a community. The definition of food security for the first time emerged from the first World Food Conference of 1975 and focused on **“the availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption”** (Maxwell & Watkins 2003, quoted by SCF, 2008). This definition mainly focused on the availability and ample supply of food to the needy people. This did not explain about seasonality, location and variation among needy people. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has defined food security as **assuring to all human beings the physical and economic access to the basic foods they need. This implies three different aspects namely – availability, stability and access** (FAO, 1999).

The Human Development Report (2013) ranks Nepal at 157<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries listed on the Human Development Index (HDI), where the poverty, malnourishment, epidemics and death from preventable diseases, famine and hunger are common phenomena. Especially the problem is severe among 125 ethnic and marginalized caste groups of the total population of 26 million (CBS, 2011). Some of the reasons for these are harsh geographical terrain, unequal access and distribution of resources, socio-political exclusion. The country's mountain terrain lacks infrastructure networks. It has only about 17% of cultivable land, mostly unproductive. The population growth is 1.35%, leaving 83% of the people in villages that lack basic facilities - health, education, communication and transport, and market services. About 80% of the total population is dependent on agriculture and 34.1% are illiterate. The average healthy life expectancy at birth is 68.7 years (World Bank 2011) with per capita annual income of approximately US \$ 742 (The Economic Survey, Nepal, 2011-12). The people below poverty line are 25.12% by Nepal living Standard Survey III conducted by CBS and World Bank in 2010. Among Chepangs, 77% are illiterate and 71% of the children are malnourished (NCA, 2004).

Multiplicity and diversity of ethnicity, languages, cultures and religions is a distinctive feature of Nepalese society. For the past two hundred and forty years, the state was not able to recognize properly the diversity of the mass population. The Development Process has adversely impacted the socio-cultural aspects of the *Janajati* people and further led to linguistic persecution and discrimination, economic exploitation and marginalization of the *Janajatis*. The Census 2011 has revealed that there are 8.46 million *Janajatis* which comprise 37.2 percent of the total population of the country. The NFDIN Act, 2002 has enlisted 59 ethnic groups as "indigenous people" or "nationalities" such as *Chepang*, *Bankariya*, *Raji*, *Raute* etc. on the basis of their distinctive characteristics such as language, traditional customs, lifestyles, culture and social structure.

The Chepang people, sum 0.23% of the total population, are one of the twelve highly marginalized indigenous nationalities of Nepal. According to the population census 2011, the total *Chepang* population is 52,237. The majority of Chepangs inhabit scattered settlements nearby the forests, in remote, steep terrains, and inaccessible hills in the west of Makawanpur district, northeast of Chitwan district, southeast of Gorkha district, and south of Dhading district. The Chepangs are

believed to have lived by hunting and gathering until the last 150 years as Brain Hodgson described them in his 1857 article 'On the Chepang and Kusunda Tribes of Nepal' as "living entirely upon wild fruit and the produce of the chase". It is supposed that agriculture is comparatively a newer phenomenon for them, and they practiced *khoriya* cultivation in the hills. Currently, they practice sedentary and subsistence rain-fed agriculture on marginal land and farming forms the mainstay of their livelihood. However, only a small percentage of Chepang households are fully self-sufficient. Food self-insufficiency and food insecurity are identified as the most serious issues in the *Chepang*, *Bankariya* and *Raji* livelihoods. They also depend on wage laboring, gathering forest products for self-consumption and for sale, and selling small livestock especially goats, pigs, chicken, selling honey, and agricultural products like black gram, beans, mustard, ginger, and fresh vegetables for cash income. Most of their cash income is spent on procuring food. They also depend on other communities like Bahuns, Chhetris, and Newars for loans, which they pay back either by wage laboring or by selling the above-mentioned products.

Forest plays an important role in the livelihood of *Chepangs*, *Bankariya* and *Raji* communities to provide staple and supplemental foods, timber, firewood, fodder, litter, farm inputs, medicines, and commercial forest products that generate cash incomes. The contribution of forest in their food security is even more significant as they provide not only the staple foods that help to overcome the food shortages but also a number of dietary elements through supplemental food. Collection of forest products is important for these communities as they are unable to obtain sufficient income from farming alone, and other non-farm income opportunities for earning are absent or very limited in their settlements. Furthermore, agriculture and livestock, which form the mainstay of their livelihood is also largely dependent upon forest resources. However, forest products often fail to receive significant monetary values as most of the products are used for self-consumption (e.g. wild tubers), or for the consumption of livestock (fodder, litter), and their economic valuation is often ignored (Maharjan and Chhetri, 2006). Marginalized community people mainly dependent on the NTFPs from community and leasehold forest areas. Commonly collected and used edible plants from forest are provided in Table 2.1 below.

## 2. Objectives

The main objective of this field research is to **identify the forest food items available in marginalized communities for their livelihood.**

The specific objectives are:

1. To make the inventory of forest food items from forest resources.
2. To know the livelihood status of marginalized communities of Chepang, Bankariya and Raji people.
3. To provide recommendation for design of project concept.

## 4. Relevance

### ***4.1 Relevance to the Needs and Constraints***

The food insecurity denotes that there is less supply than the needs at national/regional level, less demand than the needs at households, and less consumption than the needs at individual level. International food security summit defines food insecurity on the basis of availability, access, utilization and distributive provisions to all people in all seasons across the communities. The concept and definition of food insecurity has not changed from the beginning to date as Pottier (1999) criticizes it in failing to identify community socio-political and cultural diversities in achieving food security". It is because indigenous people like Chepang, Bankariya and Raji have their own food niche within their habitat and nature. Many indigenous people (*including Chepangs, Raji and Bankariya*) of Nepal rely on hunting and gathering wild products to meet their daily needs which constitute about 25% of their total dietary requirements.

It is well known fact that *Chepangs, Raji and Bankariya* live in a chronic state of hunger. National media of Nepal every year widely report that Chepangs live in a state of chronic food deficiency and have been facing severe starvation. While reviewing the reports of three major newspapers in Nepal, most of the famine cases and death were reported due to either disrupted food supply or weak distributive provisions (Rai, 2004). These stories are some of the reported events of famine that we read regularly. Many cases of famine and hunger go unreported due to inaccessibility of media persons in remote places where the food scarcity takes place every year and season. Although land use and accessing food are the basic rights of the people, thousands in Nepal are deprived two meals a day. Among Chepangs, only one percent of them have food surplus and about 60% of the families have food that does not last more than six months (NCA, 2004). For rest of the time, they eat the wild food items – namely hunting and gathering wild animals, birds, fruits, yams, nettles and tubers.

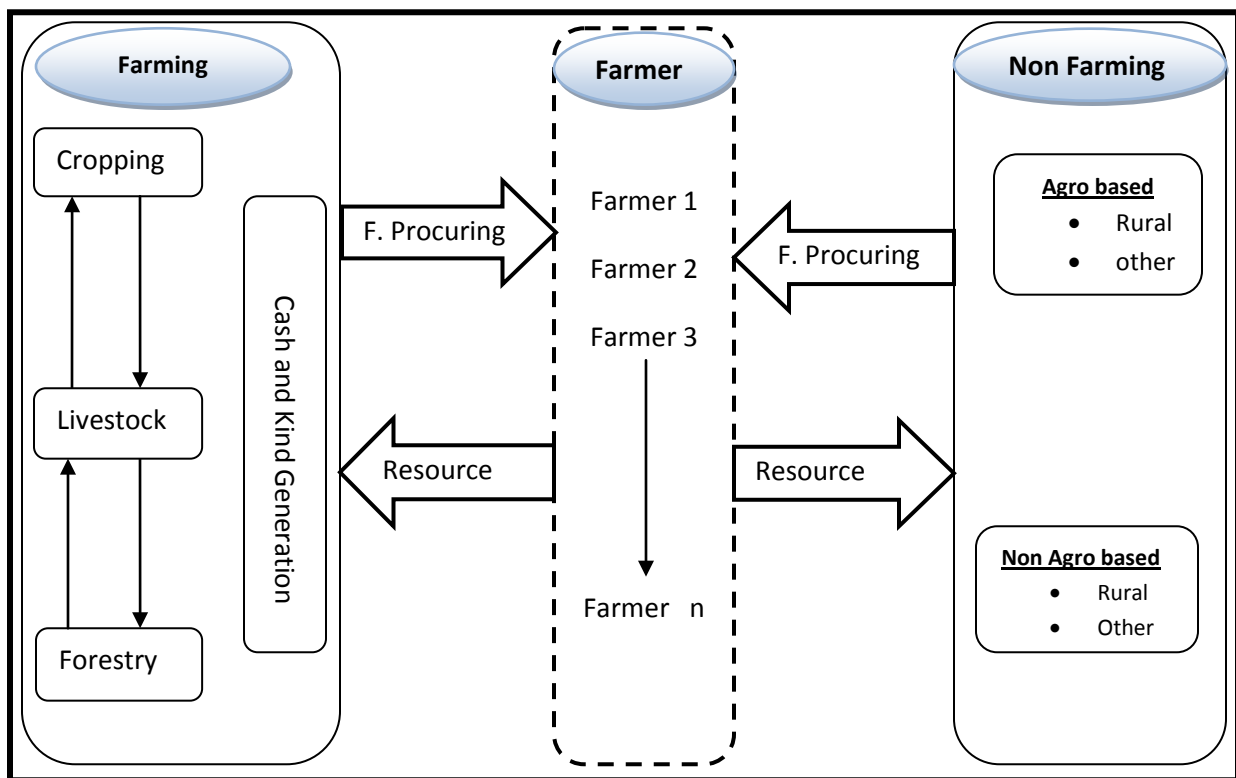
Generally food shortage is found every year in rural Nepal in particular season and places but it is severe in some indigenous and marginalized communities including Chepangs. This is acute in post-harvest period i.e. February to May. Food scarcity is also severe in post-plantation period i.e. August-September. For precaution, it is a general tendency that people hoard or save surplus food for plantation season because new crop cultivation requires more supplies and energy. As the food security measure are expected, and from the government side, direct food supplies through Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) with transport subsidies are provided in the selected 30 remote hill districts, that hardly meet the needs of the people (NFC, 2009). Food scarcity is also common in the non-provisioned districts and people in such districts suffer the most. Due to corruption, low quality food

items are supplied and false scarcity is also created. It is a common observation that food acquisition from the NFC outlets is possible only to those who have access to power and can exchange or reciprocate for mutual benefits with the suppliers. The supply from the outlets is preferentially provided to the government officials, cadres of political parties, local merchants and elites. The marginalized, powerless people are excluded.

Nepal has 5.5 million hectare forest area which is about double the area compared to agriculture lands. Both are land-based programmes. The forestry sector has great potentiality and is already contributing to food and nutrition security of Nepal but is not accounted separately. This sector is not given its due importance in terms of food and nutrition security. Contribution of community forestry and leasehold forestry and Non-Timber Forest Products and/or Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (NTFPs/MAPs) are visible in food and nutrition security, but there are pieces of information from different forestry projects on livelihoods of people rather than specific contributions on food and nutrition security. However, many studies suggest that significant potential exists for the forestry sector to contribute to food and nutrition security of some of the most resource-poor households in the country.

Food self-insufficiency and food insecurity is the most prominent issue in the livelihoods of Chepang community. Only a small percentage of Chepang households are fully self-sufficient. Thus they adopt multi-pronged livelihood strategies like wage labor, collection of forest products, rearing small livestock, selling bamboo handicrafts, and selling agricultural and forest products. Insecure land tenure and lack of possession of citizenship certificates is important issue for most of the Cepang. Furthermore, unfavorable forest policies that restrict their access to forest resources have further threatened their livelihoods (Limbu, 2005; Uprety and Adhikari, 2006).

**Fig 4.1: Food Securing Mechanism in Rural Households**





Review of some relevant forest policies in Nepal that have restricted the access of indigenous peoples to forests have been food security, conceptually, includes production, distribution, and access. Focused areas of food production in forestry sector are: wild food products in allocated lands of community forests to the poor households, leasehold forests for poor, public land allocation/utilization (lease and or contract) to poor households, income generating activities forestry sector for food security, forest product-based enterprises, green job creation in forestry sector. However, there is accounting problem of wild food products in national economy or food security calculations which does not provide revenue to the government but important for poor households who are dependent on forest for their livelihoods such as Chepang, Raute, Bankariya, Raji etc. Wild food products i.e. Katahar, Bahahar, Chiuri, Lapsi, Okhar, Tejpat, wild foods (Dioscorea), wild fruits (*Jamun*, *Aisulu*), wild vegetables, wild honey, drum sticks, NTFPs/MAPs, *Bel* Juice, Jam Jelly of *Dale chuk*, bamboo and *nigalo* shoots *Koiralo* flowers, *Amla*, pineapple, wild banana. However, there is an urgent need or potentiality to make commercial exploration for cultivation of the forest-based food products for the poor households and their food and nutrition security and additional income. Furthermore, there is also needs to include food and nutrition security indicators in the forestry sector indicators. This project is applicable for the forest-based indigenous peoples such as *Chepang*, *Bankarya* and *Raji* and others who are largely dependent on forest for their livelihoods.

## **4.2 Innovativeness**

The targeted indigenous peoples are frequently suffering from food deficit during dry season. The project is innovative to intensify support for producing food products in the community and leasehold forests with interventions rather than to simply collect from wild condition. It will also diversify the food products for supply nutrition from natural products. Such support and selection of species will be in line with forestry sector guidelines and suitable to the environmental condition. For example, Drum Sticks, Dioscorea (*Githa*, *Vyakur*), Pineapple, Banana, wild vegetables, honey, bamboo, *Nigalo* are short-term species that will provide food products on annual or seasonal basis to the forest dependent people. Similarly, Katahar (Jackfruit), Badahar (*Artocarpus lakoocha*), Lapsi (*Choerospondias axillaris*), Imli (*Tamarindus indica*), Chiuri (*Bassia butyraceae*), *Amla* (*Phyllanthus embica*), *Jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*), *Koiralo* (*Bauhinia purpurea*), *Kafal* (*Myrica esculenta*), *Timur* (*Zanthoxylum armatum*), *Tejpat* (*Cinnamomum tamala*) will be species that will supply food products to them from 5<sup>th</sup> year but supply them diverse seasonal food items for long-term period. This project will conduct study/research on food quality (nutrition content) and quantity of indigenous people who are dependent on forests.

It will also make the laboratory tests of nutrition content of the proposed food products for interventions. In addition, the project will make test simple, low cost and appropriate technology on how surplus food items will be conserved, processed and kept for long-term period so that forest dependent people can use them during food deficit period. The project will also analyze the different parts of the plants (such as root or tuber, bark, leaf, flower, buds, fruits, interior part or the whole plant) used by the forest dependent people in their food items and their traditional knowledge and skills. Similarly, the food secured and food deficit months will be analyzed and model nursery will be established to fulfill the food deficit. The project will come up with the options to supplement the food items from natural conditions for the forest dependent people.

Thus, the whole project is innovative for those forest dependent people to explore supplement the food items in their natural house (conditions) that are facing starving problems each year or periodically.

### **4.3 Relevance to the Policy and Program**

Food insecurity is one of the major issues in contemporary world. Political leaders, government bureaucrats, development workers, civil societies all debate and vow to provide food security to all needy people in their constituency. Several policies and programs are formulated and implemented to the credit of food security. The government, its line agencies, international communities, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) implement programs and activities for food security. The extent and sensitivity varies across the countries and the implications of the policies and programs vary as of place and people.

Nepal in last four decades has changed his status from food exporter to net importer. Food insecurity in remote areas and among marginalized communities is rampant. The reasons of insecurity are many. Among them, inadequate policy provisions by the state are one of the major ones.

The FAO (1997) classifies the types of food insecurity as '**chronic**' if people suffer from food insecurity all the time and '**transitory**' if the households face a temporary decline in access to food. *Transitory* can be divided into 'temporary' and 'cyclical' or 'seasonal'. This classification helps to understand the magnitude and nature of food insecurity across the communities. The definition of the food security is upgraded in every World Food Summit (WFS) led by FAO of the United Nations (UN). The summit is attended by the head of the states and governments of its member countries. The recent upgraded definition of the food security is provided by the World Summit 2009 is "*The food security exists at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization and stability. The nutritional dimension is integral to the concept of food security*".

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has formed the Food Coordination Group (FCG) to monitor the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), focusing on poverty reduction and food security but the programs have not been much of help to the deprived, marginalized and excluded groups. The FCG mostly concentrates on the productive factors (yield, irrigation, fertilizers) in the MDGs outlined policy of the food security, not the differential entitlement and requirements of the excluded minorities including Chepangs. Recently, the WFP and district line agencies have initiated Food Security Network in each district which monitors state of food security and advises possible course of action. The network is a recent initiative by the donors, government line agencies and civil societies, and its maturity and full potential for the cause is yet to be materialized. In addition, there are human rights forums recently initiating advocacy campaigns and awareness programs on food rights.

Policies in Nepal are formulated to address the problems crop up in the course of program formulation and guide the decisions during program and activities implementation. They are devised through wider consultation, research, discussion and participation of the concerns. Once all parties are agreed, the policy document is ultimately approved by the government. Following to the approval, the concern parties implement it and the government monitors its effectiveness. There are number of policies endorsed in various sectors by the government of Nepal (GoN). Among them, a few agriculture related policies have been enacted which address food security and agriculture in general. Following the policy approval, periodic plans are prepared with the projection of work to follow and to address the adopted policies. The plans project the volume of work, targets, outputs, budget with timelines. The GoN has adopted 10 consecutive plans since 1956 and recently adopted an Interim Plan (IP).

Nepal has undergone through ten **Five-Year Plans** in last five decades. Despite the continuous priority on agricultural productivity and agrarian reform, very little regarding food provisioning to the marginalized communities including the Chepangs was indicated in the planning document. Out of 10 periodic plans, five (1st, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th) have put the highest priority on agricultural productivity. Additional three focused on agricultural reform (3rd), sustainable growth (8th) and poverty alleviation (9th). The periodic plans indicated their achievements positive but during the decade of 5th and 6th plan (1975/76 – 1985/86), Nepal's food export declined from 42% to 3% and ultimately became sole importer (Koirala and Thapa, 1997). At the same decade, Nepal started subsidized rice distribution to needy people in the scarce districts through Nepal Food Corporation. Thus, planned achievements became regressive and people's sufferings perpetuated to date. The Tenth Plan (2003-2007) was still in the insurgency period and its main focus was on the food supply to the security forces and people in the remote hill districts. The recent Interim Plan (2007-2010) for the first time has indicated „food sovereignty“ through „food security“.

As in the past, the Government of Nepal once again formulated **an Interim Plan (2007-2010)** during new constitution making process. It was mainly due to unstable, interim and coalition government. However, The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) has for the first time listed food security as one of the basic elements of human rights. The interim Plan (2007-2010) has recognized food sovereignty as a basic human right and has stated as a long-term goal to be achieved in Nepal. The plan focuses to reform the four main aspects of food security, which are food availability, accessibility of food, proper use of food and food stability (GoN, 2007). Besides these long term plan, GoN has various policies regarding to agriculture and food security. Some policies are:

- National Agricultural Policy (NAP) in 2004, with a vision of upgrading subsistence to a competitive commercial agriculture.
- Commercial Agriculture Promotion Policy 2007 (Krishi Byabasaya Prabardhan Neeti 2064) for Promotion of commercial agriculture
- Agricultural Bio-diversity Policy 2006 (Krishi Jaibik Bibidhta Neeti, 2063)

*In addition, the GoN is preparing a long-term Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) draft 2012 under which National Food and Security Plan of Action is one of important Chapters. This research/study will directly and indirectly contribute to the ADS.*

## **5. Methods of Data Collection**

This field research was carried out in April 2013 to prepare program design. Study is completed by using two types of information: Primary and secondary data. Primary data and information was collected from field visit and consultation with stakeholders from whole month of April 2013. Beneficiary groups of Chepang, Bankariya and Raji communities were consulted from Chetwan, Makawanpur and Surkhet districts. Moreover, district level offices were visited and consulted with district level stakeholders such as District Development Committee (DDC), VDCs, District Forest Office (DFO), District Agriculture Office (DAO) and other related stakeholders and civil society. Information from stakeholder consultation and direct interview with marginalized people were incorporated in this report.

As secondary sources, desk study were conducted and got information from online sources, district profile, progress reports of relevant organizations and programmes conducted in target areas. The field research is totally social research and direct consultation with beneficiary groups.

## 6. Research Area

The study was carried out in three different locations covering higher proportion of the target groups. The major criteria of site selection are high population density, food dependency in forest products, poor livelihood condition, less access to land ownership and weak socioeconomic, health and sanitation level. The target groups by districts and location is provided in Table 5.5.1 below. Similarly, the project areas are shown in Figure 5.2

Table: Target Groups by District

Target Community	District	Location of Intervention (VDCs)	Total Population
Chepang	Chitwan	Lother and Kaule	1,140
	Makawanpur	Handikhola	210
Bankariya	Makawanpur	Handikhola	63
Raji	Surkhet	Taranga and Chinchu	400
	Bardiya	Sanoshree	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 districts</b>	<b>6 VDCs</b>	<b>2,113</b>



Fig : Map of Nepal showing the Project Area in Chitwan, Makawanpur and Surkhet districts

## 6. Study Findings

### 6.1 Common Forest Food Items

Table: Common Forest based Food Items

SN	Common Name	Scientific Name	Parts Collected	Purpose	Month of Collection
1.	Gittha	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>	Tuber	Staple Diet	Falgun-Jestha
2.	Vyakur	<i>Dioscorea pentaphylla</i>	Tuber	Staple Diet	Falgun-Jestha
3.	Tarul	<i>Dioscorea alata</i>	Tuber	Staple Diet/ Vegetable	Magh-Jestha
4.	Chiuri	<i>Bassia butyracea</i>	Fruit Seed	Eaten raw ghee	Jesth-Bhadra
5.	Sisnu	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Young shoot/flower	Green Vegetable	Bhadra-Baisak
6.	Neuro	<i>Dryopteris cochleata</i>	Young Shoot	Green Vegetable	Falgun-Shrawon
7.	Tanki	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>	Young shoot/ Flower	Green vegetable Roasted pickle	Fagun-Ashad
8.	Jaluko	<i>Remusatia vivipora</i>	Young shoot	Green vegetable	Falgun-Baisak
9.	Bamboo Shoot	<i>Bambusa spp</i>	Young shoot	Vegetable	Ashad-Bhadra
10.	Mushroom		Whole plant	Vegetable	Ashad-Bhadra

### 6.2 Introduction, Demography and Socioeconomic Status

#### I. Chepangs/ Praja

There are 59 groups of indigenous ethnic nationalities (*Adivashi Janajati*) that have been recognized in Nepal. The Chepang people, some 0.23 percent of the total population, are one of the twelve highly marginalized indigenous nationalities of Nepal. According to the population census 2011, the total *Chepang* population is 52,237. The majority of Chepangs inhabit scattered settlements nearby the forests, in remote, steep terrains, and inaccessible hills of Chitwan, Makawanpur, Dhading and Gorkha districts. Maximum population of Chepang is in Chitwan (Total population 21,223) and largest communities are in Lothar VDC (3,258), Kaule (3,155), Korak (2,634), Shaktikhor (2,575) and Siddhi (2,827) and Handikhola VDC (1,035) of Makawanpur. Similarly, total 10,868 Chepangs are living in Dhading district and major population is found in Gajuri 1,050, Jogimara 2,326, Thakre 298, Dhusa 2,517, Pida 2,109 and Mahadevsthan 1,857. The Chepangs are believed to have lived by hunting and gathering until the last 150 years. It is supposed that agriculture is comparatively a newer phenomenon for them, and they practiced *khoriya* cultivation in the hills. Currently, they practice sedentary and subsistence rain-fed agriculture on marginal land and farming forms the mainstay of their livelihood. However, only a small percentage of Chepang households are fully self-sufficient.

Food self-insufficiency and food insecurity are identified as the most serious issues in the *Chepang*. They also depend on wage laboring, gathering forest products for self-consumption and for sale, and selling small livestock especially goats, pigs, chicken, selling honey, and agricultural products like black gram, beans, mustard, ginger, and fresh vegetables for cash income.

## **II. Bankariya**

According to latest research work carried out by Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) on 2005, the total population of *Bankariya* is 69. Out of them, 63 belong to 13 families are live in Twangra Dada village and Musedhap of Handikhola VDC.

*Bankariya* is one of the highly marginalized indigenous nationalities of Nepal. Some people believe Bankariyas are the offshoots of Chepang who share the same language, tradition and culture. However Bankariyas think otherwise and insists they are different ethnic community (although culturally and socially they are very close to Chepangs). Nevertheless, the government had included Bankariya in the list of fifty-nine indigenous nationalities of Nepal, recognizing them as an ethnic community with its own identity.

They speak own language viz. Bankariya. Bankariyas are animists who worship nature and their ancestors. Due to growing influence of Hindus, they also celebrate festivals like Dashain and Tihar. They collect seasonal roots and fruits as food from the forest and work as labors in surrounding villages. They live in extreme poverty without any regular source of income. They are facing acute food shortage throughout the year. They make bamboo baskets, mattresses and wooden containers and barter these items with grains in the surrounding villages. Another source of their cash income is medicinal herbs, which they collect in the forest and sale in surrounding villages and towns. The government of Nepal provided them six hectares of land at Mushedhap on 2061. But, it is not enough for their subsistence as there are 63 peoples residing belonging to 13 families at present. Most of the *Bankariyas* are uneducated. The children are going to the school at present. They were fully depended on wild foods. They fully use their indigenous knowledge for their subsistence. Wild mushrooms, roots, tubers, fruits, buds and wild animals and birds were their major foods. Specific food items are Badar (The bark of the tuber Bader is separated and it is eaten after boiling), *Kurilo*, *Niuro*, *Bantarul*, *Bhyakur*, *Traguna*, *Chuiya*, *Bankera*, *Chiuri*, *Katus*, *Banmasala*, *Pipala*, *Mint* and *Jogilahara*.

## **III. Raji**

Based on the information from **FGDs conducted with Raji community** by RSN, various information were collected about *Raji* people, their culture, food and other livelihood activities. It was conducted in Sanoshree VDC ward no 1, Bargaun, in Bardiya. The FGD location was selected on the basis of large population, forest river based livelihood, more poverty, rural and remote settlement. Historically *Raji* communities are in semi nomadic in nature. Total population of *Raji* is 2,399 (CBS 2011). The population of *Rajis* is spread in Kailali, Surkhet, Bardiya, Kanchanpur and Banke districts and major population is living in Surkhet and Kailali district where they can be found in traditional habitat. By detailed house hold survey conducted by Oxfam Nepal in 2004, total 811 Raji people are found in Surkhet district and VDC wise individuals are Kaphalkot 140 persons, Kunathari 27, Gumi 5, Ghatgaun 117, Chinch 174, Taranga 184, Tatapani 15, Dahachaur 10, Pokharikanda 42, Babiyachaur 61, Mehelkuna 30, Maintada 11, Latikoili 34, Vidhapur 31 and Hariharpur 24. Similarly in Bardiya, Sanoshree 272 persons, Guleriya 51, Baniyabhar 39, Khairi Chandanpur, Mangragadi 18, Ghaghabar 54, Deudakala 43. Moreover, few households are found in different VDCs of Kailali district (Lalboji, Hailad, Pahalmanpur, Mahanara (Dhangadi), Chaumala, Tikapur municipality and Baiji and



Krishnapur VDCs of Kanchanpur district. They have their own Raji language which is nearest to Tharu language of western Nepal. The major sources of livelihood are from agriculture, collection of forest food and fishing. The Raji are regarded as vulnerable and about to extinct (Loponmukh) ethnic group living in mid and far western region.

As a social security, they are getting Rs. 1,000 per person per month from VDC as an allowance which is not sufficient to sustain their expenses. They do not have easy access to forest due to transformation of forest in to community forest. So access to forest is largely reduced which has blocked them to continue their livelihood support from forest. About 50% of them are displaced due to Bardiya National Park. Due to lack of awareness on importance on land for agriculture the land is still unproductive and getting very low yield which provides 3-5 months of food grain. For remaining time they go for agriculture labour and India. The access to river is reduced due to national park and fish are less available in river. Malnutrition among women and children is high. Very few their children know their language. Awareness on promotion their own right and save their culture values is found less.

In some of the areas, Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) support is going on but selection of appropriate income generation activities is still need improvement. Ghatgaun and Kuta are located in the west of the Karnali and north of the Veri (near veri and Karnali Dobhan. Chinch, Surkhet is located in the bank of Veri. Solta of Kailali is located in north of Chisapani, i.e., west bank of Karnali river, north of east-west high way.

## **7. Summary and Recommendation**

The research concluded that marginalized ethnic communities of Nepal are mainly Chepang, Bankariya and Raji people. They are living in scatter way in Chitwan, Makawanpur, Surkhet, Dhading, Bardiya and other districts as well. They are mainly dependent on forest based food varieties for their livelihood. They have their own unique culture and are not familiar with other communities/caste of people. The major food items used by these people are *Gittha*, *Vyakure*, *Kurilo*, *Bantarul*, *Sisnu* etc. Based on consultation with marginalized people and field visit, special development program is required to uplift marginalized people in national streamed. Some recommendations are made which are as follows.

- Further detailed research about all marginalized communities living in Nepal
- Required literacy education program
- Enhance professional farming in these areas
- Capacity development program
- Establishment of nurseries for mass production of forest based food varieties which are used for food and medicine as well.

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