

Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives through Grassroots Participation.

Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives through Grassroots Participation (BCIGP) project is implementing in Ilam district, eastern region of Nepal. Funded by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. The project was started on 1st April 2007 and will end on 31st March, 2009. The main focus of the project is to build partnerships among different stakeholders to incorporate biodiversity conservation perspectives in managing forests outside protected areas within the Kangchenjunga-Singhalila Complex. This would include advocacy with the government at the local and national level, raising awareness, building capacity at the local level to plan and monitor biodiversity in key project sites.

Project Area: *The project covers 5 Village Development Committee (VDCs) of Ilam district including existing 11 Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and more 5 new CFUGs. The VDC and existing CFUGs are as follows*

| <i>VDC</i> | <i>Name of existing CFUG</i> | <i>Newly formed CFUG</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Pyang</i> | <i>Pyang Patal</i> | - |
| <i>Sulubung</i> | <i>Tappu Jaruwa and Bhalukateri</i> | - |
| <i>Maipokhari</i> | <i>Bhedichowk, Tappupate Jimi, Jarbute Bhalupani</i> | <i>Sansaaridhap Mahila, Panitar Mahila Thamkahrka Birkhe and Jaule danda Mahila</i> |
| <i>Gorkhe</i> | <i>Singadevi Thumke, and Chtirehile</i> | <i>Deurali Mahuwatar</i> |
| <i>Nayabazar</i> | <i>Uttare, Charkane and Malinge Gaheri Masane(Kharkhare)</i> | - |

Goal: *Strengthen capacity of key stakeholders to be involved in the Biodiversity Conservation of key sites outside protected areas of the Kanchenjunga-Singalila Complex*

Purpose: *Biodiversity conservation initiatives (BCI) incorporated in the management of corridor forests thus conserving key floral and faunal species in the Kanchenjunga-Singalila Complex*

Conservation Outcomes:

- 1. Increased the capacity of key stakeholders - District Forest Office (DFO) personnel and Community Forest Users' Group (CFUG) members in Biodiversity Conservation.*
- 2. Incorporate Biodiversity Conservation elements in the operation plans of CFUGs for the management of the corridor forest and initiation to implement the prescriptions in to the community forest (CF)*
- 3. Increase the ability of large number of CFUGs members in monitoring and maintaining the status of key species present in the area like*

- i. *Red panda(Ailurus fulgens) , Wood snipe(Gallinago nemoricola) and other species for fauna*
 - ii. *Champ (Michelia doltsopa), Tree fern (Cyathea spinulosa), Galaiche Jhiau (Sphagnum nepalense) etc.*
4. *Develop Local Resource Person (LRP) to provide necessary technical (to some extent) and social facilitates in conserving Biodiversity in the area*

Major Accomplishment:

During the two years project period the following major activities has been accomplished according to their outputs.

Output 1: Increased Capacity of key stakeholders for inclusion of Biodiversity conservation priorities in the management plan

- *One day district level inception workshop with all grantees and district level agencies was conducted on 18th March 2007 at District Head Quarter, Ilam.It was focused on the programme and budget allocation for the project Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives through Grassroots Participation (BCIGP)*
- *5 orientation and initiation workshop was conducted in each Village development committee (VDC) on Biodiversity conservation organized in close collaboration with District Forest Office personnel, school teachers, local CBOs, political leaders , local NGO(like red Cross, Uccha Pahadi Jaributi Uttpadak Samuha) and CFUGs members. A total 98 participants were in the orientation workshop. The workshop was focused on Biodiversity and the activities to be implemented in the project area during the project period.*
- *Three days training on Biodiversity Resource Inventory was conducted on16-20th August 2007. Total 15 participants (10 district forest personnel Ranger, Forest guards and 5 local resource persons) were trained on Biodiversity Resource inventory. An external resource person was hired for the training. The objective of the training was to make DFO personnel and local resource person capable in Biodiversity resource inventory which will ultimately help in incorporating Biodiversity conservation elements in the revised and newly prepared operation plans.*
- *Meeting cum workshop with Regional Directorate (RD) of Forest, Eastern region, DFO personnel and grantees of CEPF and ECCA staffs was conducted at Ilam on*

12th December 2007 to initiate inclusion of biodiversity conservation elements in the National Community Forest Guideline as a mandatory. RD has raised the issue during the last regional planning workshop at Biratnagar and was also forwarded to higher authority for further consideration.

- *Instead of 4, 5 new CFUGs (4 in Maipokhari and 1 in Gorkhe VDC) were formed covering an area 359 hectare of forest land benefiting 1436 people by getting national forest as a community forest. Out of total population 49 % are female.*
- *11 operation plans were revised and 5 operation plans for the newly formed CFUG were also prepared with incorporation of biodiversity conservation elements during the period. Out of these 6 revised (Bhedichowk, Tappu jaruwa, Bhalukateri, Charkane, Uttare , Chitrehile and 1 newly formed (Deuarli Mahuwatar) CFUG's operation plans are approved by DFO and handed over to concern CFUGs.*
- *2 CFUG meeting / workshop was conducted at Maipokhari and Nayabazar on sharing of experiences among participants on various aspects of CF including inclusion of Biodiversity conservation elements into their operation plans and their implications to the sustainability of the forest. The meeting benefited to 44 members from 11 different CFUGs.*
- *A 7 days experience sharing excursion visit of CFUGs members on Biodiversity and Livelihood improvement was conducted for 22 participants from different CFUGs to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Chitwan National Park. The objective of the visit was to share experience among the users of BZ and protected area personnel that how Biodiversity has been managed through improving their livelihood of the local people in BZ area with support provided from park authority.*
- *Technical and financial support was provided to 13 different CFUGs for institutional strengthen and implementation of BC activities prescribed in the Operation plans*
- *District Forest Office (DFO)was supported with 2 set of GPS equipment, 2 diameter tapes and 2 linear tape; which have made district line agency able to assist CFUG in conducting various forest inventory and boundary survey.*

Output 2: Established network and forum of users and its key stakeholders for resource mobilization and partnership building

- *During the period 11 CFUGs, DFO, and other local institution / organization were identified as key stakeholders for mutual resource mobilization and partnering while implementing of biodiversity conservation elements as and when needed.*
- *16 advocacy forums were formed for 16 CFUGs which were affiliated with 2 concerned CFUG Advocacy Forum Network established in Maipokhari and Nayabazar area.*
- *1 ad hoc District Advisory Committee (DAC) was formed on 31st August 2007 with seven members from DFO, DDC, NCDC, ICC, FNJ Ilam, FECOFUN and representation from civil society Ilam. The terms of reference committee are to provide feedback on implementation, suggestion for coordination and cooperation, build linkage with other programme and projects for leveraging resources, suggestions for filling the gaps in Biodiversity conservation along with providing expert suggestions for policy issues, This year ECCA has conducted two meeting of DAC where a brief sharing on the progress of the programme by grantee was made.*
- *Orientation training on sustainable biodiversity conservation and its improvement along with participatory monitoring and Evaluation was conducted from 14- 16th December 2008 to 20 CFUG members from 11 CFUGs. It was focus on biodiversity conservation and its importance, threat, challenges, opportunity, government policy towards biodiversity conservation, participatory monitoring and evaluation of Biodiversity in the community forest and sustainable use forest products.*
- *Training on Sustainable Management, Monitoring of biodiversity and implementation of operation plan to CFUGs members was conducted on 23rd to 25 June 2008 where 32 participants from 16 CFUGs attended. The training was organized - to make them aware of activities planned in revised and newly prepared operation plan, to implement the activity, to make familiar with participatory monitoring of the key species and hot spots.*
- *3 CFUGs Advocacy Forum Network meeting cum workshop was conducted at Maipokahari and Nayabazar area with an objective to finalize the operating guideline of Network, role and responsibility of each member in Biodiversity Conservation. The operating guideline, role and responsibility of the network members were developed for the sustainability of the Network and role of the network members in advocating for*

Biodiversity conservation and resource mobilization from other institution both local and district level.

Output 3 Developed local resource Person (LRP) for sustainable Biodiversity – friendly management/ harvesting and monitoring of species composition in identified sites and corridor.

- *CFUGs the stakeholders; Initially 11 CFUGs were ranked base on their available resources and among them 3 were ranked as good, 7 were ranked as moderate and 1 was ranked need for improvement during the project initiation phase but now the CFUG which was ranked needs improvement has come up and is ranked moderate ..*
- *Screening of Social Mobilisor (SM) and Local Resource Person (LRP) was completed on the basis of recommendation provided by each respective CFUG. A criteria was set for the potential candidates for SM and LRP. On the basis of set criteria each users group provided the recommendation to select the SM and LRP.*
- *Field base training on Sustainable Management/Harvesting and Monitoring of species composition was conducted for 9 LRP and 2 SM from 6 different CFUGs at Maipokhari from 28th – 30th Novembers 2007. The main objective was to make them aware of Biodiversity and its conservation, identify area important for the biodiversity; and prioritize the species accordingly along with their inclusion into the operation plans besides making CUFG capable of monitoring biodiversity.*
- *5 SM and 5 LRP were trained on Biodiversity Conservation through applying the Social Mobilization skill on 8-12 August 2007 at Maipokhari. The objective was to familiarize them on Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness(ECCA) and it works and objectives, social mobilization skills along with their role and responsibility towards biodiversity conservation in the development of community forest users group.*
- *Refresher training for SM and LRP was also conducted on sustainable Management, Biodiversity Monitoring and operation plan implementation from 27th - 29th June 2008 at Maipokhari. 11 participants attended the training. It was focused on the management, harvesting and monitoring of the biodiversity, along with providing know up on how to make transect and its implication in the monitoring of key species - Red panda.*

Output 4 Conducted social mobilization initiatives for corridor forest management by involving local people and concern stakeholders of Trans boundary

- *Coordination and cooperation meeting, both formal and informal, was conducted time to time with all stakeholders District Administration Office (DAO), District Forest Office(DFO) , Regional Director(RD) , CFUGs and other district level line agencies.*
- *5 SM were hired from 1st August 2007 and 2 LRP for each VDC for entire project period. Besides that Team leader, Extension and Capacity Building officer, and Field Coordinator were also hired for the programme implementation in the field.*
- *One type of poster on Biodiversity conservation especially key species conservation was developed and 1000 pcs distributed to concern CFUGs, line agencies, school, teachers, students, local people and local CBOs. The objective of the poster was to disseminate information on key priority species both floral and faunal which needs especial attention for their protection and conservation in the area. The poster created a awareness to local people, teachers, local CBOs, CFUGs members and also to line agencies on Biodiversity conservation.*
- *3 Trans-boundary workshops with local institutions involved in the Biodiversity conservation across the boarder area both in Nepal and India were conducted at Manebhanjyang and Mangalbare of Gorkhe VDC. The major objective was to find out the issues in the trans-boundary area and their potential solution .During the workshop major issues raised by participants were illegal trafficking of wild animals and plants, free grazing in the forest by animals, , lack of proper monitoring system , lack of coordination among the trans boundary institution working for Biodiversity conservation. 50 participants were during the workshop.*
- *1 essay competition on Sustainable Management of Community Forest and Biodiversity conservation for secondary level school students was organised, participating schools were Maipokhari Sanskrit and Sharashwoti Secondary School of Sulubung VDC, Pyang Secondary School of Pyang VDC, Amarkalayan Secondary School of Nayabazar VDC, Himalaya Secondary and Mahendra Lower Secondary School of Gorkhe VDC. The set criteria were given to the students based on the criteria students from different school submitted essays in the ECCA field office. The essays were evaluated with different set indicator by the evaluation team having three members in the team. Each member evaluated the essays separately in the frame of indicators. Among the essays three essays found best and the best three winner (First, second and third) students were awarded*

with education materials plus cash prize of NRs. 1500.00, 1000.00 and 500.00 along with certificate of appreciation.

Additional Activities:

- *5 Nature clubs were formed in five Schools (Balmandal at Maipokhari VDC, Sharashwoti and Maipokhari Sanskrit at Sulubung VDC, Amarkalyan at Nayabazar VDC and Pyang at Pyang VDC).The objective of the clubs were to raise awareness
 - i. *towards conserving environment and cultural heritage*
 - ii. *on child rights and unhealthy social rituals*
 - iii. *to provide support to manage and encourage others to manage community forest on sustainable basis.**

They were supported with some funds to implement environment and Biodiversity Conservation, sanitation,, and awareness raising concerns activities as planned by the Clubs in their area.

- *Federation of Nepalese Journalism (FNJ) Ilam was supported with cash NRs. 6000.00 to conducted training on Basic Journalism and environment conservation. The training was of seven days at Ilam.*
- *Two schools (Amar Kalyan and Pyang Secondary) were supported with water tank having capacity of 500 liters for safe drinking water to school student and teacher. This will help to school keeping their students free from diseases.*
- *10 school students from project area participated for project prosal and report writing training conducted at Letang by ECCA.*
- *Similarly three school students and one social mobilisor participated in the 2nd National Conference on Children clubs conducted on 11- 13th January, 2009 at Kathmandu , Nepal.*

Key lessoned learned:

- *Incorporation of Biodiversity conservation elements as a separate chapter in the operation plan of CFUG and making them capable in implementing conservation oriented activities understood as a mandatory by CFUG although it has not yet been incorporated into the National CF guideline.*

- *Awareness level among CFUG towards conserving flag species like Red panda by segregating a part of CF area as a protected habitat for the species is a good signal of internalizing how important the Biodiversity conservation is.*
- *For the corridor continuation through agro-biodiversity conservation oriented activities in the farmland lying between community forests, (which would have given a continuity to the corridor), could not be initiated.*
- *SM and LRP have been found very useful tools in the whole process of BC.*
- *Experience sharing visit of CFUG members has been found useful in making users realize to have livelihood as a part of such conservation oriented project.*

Successes:

- *Keeping a separate chapter for Biodiversity conservation with practical prescriptions on measures to conserve the species into the operation plans could be well replicated in other area of the country .This has been understood as a mandatory activity by the users once it is formally approved by the concerned district authority.*
- *Production and distribution of biodiversity conservation extension material among local people, concerned stakeholders, students and other local institutions has given a good sense of BC and thus, the poster could again be used for other area.*