



Practical Innovations

...for Inclusive Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods

Benefit Sharing Component

Internal Evaluation 2008



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

Few words

Internal evaluation of field projects is a regular feature in IUCN Nepal. It is not only carried out for accountability maintaining transparency, but the process has also been internalized for the purpose of project improvement (formative evaluation) and self-learning.

Internal evaluation is done jointly with the project staff. Besides this, a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries are also consulted. The evaluation process provides both project and programme staff to identify progress, challenges of and learning from the project so that those issues can be rectified on time to ensure quality outputs.

An internal evaluation exercise of the Benefit Sharing Component (within Practical Innovations project) was carried out jointly with the project staff. Project staff members, who are also the Union's local level ambassadors, have been working hard for "a just Nepal that values and conserves nature" thereby contributing to the Union's global vision. I received an outstanding support from the project staff without which this assignment would have not been possible.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the project staff and project beneficiaries for their kind support while conducting this evaluation.

Ram Chandra Khanal
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INTRODUCTION

IUCN Nepal has been implementing various projects and programmes with the objective “to promote biodiversity conservation, environmental justice and sustainable livelihoods in Nepal.” The Practical Innovations for Inclusive Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods (PIICSL) - Benefit Sharing Component" is one among them. Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC), the project aims to contribute to biodiversity

Project fact sheet

Project supported by: SDC, Bern
Project duration: 2007 -2009
Funding: 172,746 USD (activity cost only)
Project site: Doti District, Far Western Nepal
Component objective: Poor and marginalized natural resource dependent households have increased economic incentives to manage Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and equitably and sustainably.

conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing from Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) in Doti District of Nepal. In this project phase (2007-09), the project focuses on increasing economic incentives to the poor and marginalized natural resource dependent households by managing NTFPs and MAPs in sustainable manner. The component strives to improving equitable access and benefit sharing of the Poor, Socially Excluded and Women headed (PSE/W) households in forest resources with a focus on policy promotion and application, community forestry governance, NTFPs/ MAPs management and marketing, and conservation education and awareness measures.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this internal evaluation is to assess the performance of the project as per the logical framework and to document current challenges and major learning that can be attributed to the improvement of this project as well as to use in other projects that IUCN Nepal is implementing in other parts of the country.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment was mainly a formative evaluation and is a result of a consultative meeting with the project staff, interactive meetings with project beneficiaries, project area visit and personal observation during second quarter of 2008. Details of beneficiaries consulted are listed in annex 1.

Based on the project log frame (annex 2) and IUCN evaluation policy document, some broader evaluation questions were developed which include: efficiency, effectiveness, relevancy, impact and sustainability. Besides these, some specific project related issues were also considered.

Some major evaluation questions were:

1. How efficiently the resources (financial and human) are being used to implement the project activities and are there any other efficient alternative options available to implement the project activities?
2. To what extent the project has achieved its set objectives by this time or whether the project is in line to achieve the objectives within 2009 as per the project log frame?
3. To what extent the project work is relevant to local communities and also serves the national priority?
4. Is there any positive impact from the project on people's livelihoods and on ecosystems health?
5. To what extent it is likely that community themselves or other agencies are going to continue this initiative after completion of this project?
6. To what extent is the issue of gender mainstreamed on conservation and livelihood activities?
7. To what extent poverty and other social inclusion issues are integrated in the project?

BRIEF PROGRESS

The project has demonstrated the technical aspect of *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation of NTFPs and MAPs in Doti District and enhanced the capacity of Community Forestry Users' Groups (CFUGs) and Conservation Groups¹ (CGs) in NTFPs and MAPs plantation under 'contractual conservation' modality. The project has also contributed to addressing the access and benefit sharing issues of CFs at the local level by providing training to PSE/W members of CFUGs and through incorporating access to benefit sharing (ABS) issues during the revision of their operational plans.

The project has also demonstrated different options for the sustainable harvesting of NTFPs and MAPs, trained producers, processors and traders in maintaining market-oriented quality standards, quality, and a standard guidebook of NTFPs and MAPs has been prepared. A Code of Conduct has been developed to maintain quality and a standard of NTFPs and MAPs for quality control and trade. A multipurpose cooperative has been established to support group marketing by involving a number of shareholders with significant representation of poor, *Dalit* and women. Out of 1765 no. of households targeted as lead beneficiaries, the project has been successful in involving 1505 households.

¹ CG refers, in the project area, to an aggregate of individuals or households from targeted groups directly involved in conservation of NTFPs/MAPs in forest and community land. The basic objective of CGs is to address the second generation issues of community forestry and improve access to and benefits sharing from natural resources to the PSE/W households.

As of August 2008, it has been reported that 10,106 persons (4,939 women and 5,167 men) of the 1,505 HHs (from 34 wards of 10 working VDCs) have been involved in different project activities and have been directly benefited from project interventions.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Project implementation

The project is being implemented in a remote Far Western district of Nepal and covers 10 Village Development Committees. The settlements are dispersed with limited accessibility from one settlement to the other. About 140,000 USD was allocated for this project for 2007 and 2008. There are seven project staff members headed by a Project Manager with an expertise on NTFPs/MAPs. So far, the project has served more than 1500 households and about 10,000 beneficiaries. The project has been supporting 20 CFUGS and 54 CGs in the project area. In terms of investment, the project has invested about 90 and 14 USD per households and per person respectively.

The project has two field offices, one at *Dhangadhi* and the other in the field site at *Budar*. The office in Dhangadhi was established mainly due to the armed conflict that Nepal had undergone for one decade. Even after the conflict is over, the Dhangadhi office has not been moved in its original place. Implementing project from distance may increase the implementation cost and may also affect in the quality of outputs.

The project staff members are very active and dedicated in their assignment, and have a very good rapport with beneficiaries. However, in a couple of cases, (example: Dhangadi office continuation, establishing a processing plant at Budar area), the project team should pay additional attention on appropriate financial planning as well as judicious investment targeting at the final outcome of the project.

Progress towards outputs and outcomes

The project has two thematic issues, i.e. contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of NTFP/MAPs, and integrating PSE (inclusive) issues in conservation (equitable benefit sharing).

The project has clearly demonstrated the *in-situ* and *ex-situ* **conservation** of 10 traded NTFPs/MAPs species by involving local communities. Now, after the project demonstration since 2004, about 11 community and private nurseries have been established and most of them are self-sufficient. Communities are able to conserve those species without taking technical support from outsiders.

The project has also demonstrated a wide range of **sustainable management** practices of NTFPs/MAPs harvesting, storage and processing through demonstration plots, training, mentoring to lead farmers and exposure visits. Beneficiaries claimed that they were now better equipped with these kinds of practices which they did not know before. The project is good at imparting technical know-how and community mobilization.

In the case of **accessing markets**, the project has initiated a buy-back system and a group marketing of NTFPs/MAPs through a farmer-managed cooperative. But, as per the spirit of the project document, the project is still behind in this initiative. Until and unless, access to the market (information and infrastructure) of those products is not facilitated, it would be very difficult to achieve the project objective in a specified time.

The project is proactively engaged in bringing PSE/W households in the conservation issues. In all, 54 Conservation Groups (from PSE/W hhs) have been established (male members: 381 and female members: 996), and are granted land within the CF or outside to plant, conserve, sell and share benefits amongst themselves. This is an innovative approach the project has initiated to increase the access of disadvantaged groups in the conservation. The project has demonstrated this as a good example of 'poverty-environment initiative' which can be scaled up across the country.

Although the project has demonstrated its strength both in conservation/management and integrating economic and social issues in conservation action, documentation of these experiences and learning are, in fact, very less.

Relevancy at local and national levels

The activities being undertaken by the project are highly relevant both at the national and local levels. NTFPs/MAPs are not only national income but they are also a good source of livelihoods of many people in rural Nepal. The government has also emphasized NTFPs related works recently. Hence, activities related to policy-practice have very strong relevance.

The project is working with the government offices, mainly District Forest Office (DFO) and Regional Forest Directorate, but there is still ample opportunity to establish functional and strategic relationships with them and share learning from the project that can be integrated in their respective work plans.

The project has some policy promotion activities and some activities are being implemented for appropriate influence at the national level. But these activities need further attention to incorporate the learning of this project at national level issues.

Contribution on sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem health

Both NTFPs/MAPs need a long gestation period (about 5-6 years) to fruit and to fetch income. So, it is difficult to assess from household income within a short period of time after plantation. However, the project record revealed that in 2007, the participating farmers received about NRs. 1150 per household which was 28% higher compared to 2006. This reflects that the beneficiaries were slowly gaining income, which has helped them to enhance their livelihoods.

Beneficiaries, who participated in an interaction, mentioned that they were aware about the conservation/environment and how the conservation of their natural resources would contribute to maintaining their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. The conservation education on environment in general and NTFPs/MAPs in particular has remained a great contribution.

Through 20 CFUGs and 54 CGs, the project has helped many people to enhance their technical and management related capacities through wide range of training, education and exposure visits. The capacity of the local community in the management of NTFPs/MAPs is very encouraging.

Demonstration of impact of any initiative on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health is a complicated task. The project has been working only in the area of NTFPs/MAPs, so it was very hard to find out the visible contribution of this project on ecosystems health. The project has, however, demonstrated its strength on the conservation and sustainable use of commercially threatened species, and has supported in creating general conservation awareness (besides NTFPs and MAPs) help to improve the ecosystem health at the project areas.

Possibility of continuation after the project period

The project is going to be completed in 2009. Hence, a special consideration for the sustainability of this project is vital. The project has supported the local communities to develop their own social groups and networks. The communities are also working in the same spirit, but due to conflict that continued for over a decade, most of the social infrastructure has been destroyed. The presence of government is very weak in the project area. Besides these, working proactively for the people by empowering them may not be viable with the traditional type of services that government is providing to the people. In addition, the project itself is also weak in sharing its learning and findings.

There are 20 CFUGs and 54 CGs. These community-based organizations (CBOs) have been actively involved in the management of forest and

NTFPs/MAPs. But, in this condition of weak institutional capacity and limited financial resources among the CBOs, there is a feeble chance on the part of the CBOs to independently carry out these activities after 2009.

Contribution on poverty, gender and social inclusion

One of the focuses of this project in this phase is to mainstream poverty, gender and social inclusion issues. Hence, the project has emphasized to integrate PSE/W HHs in project activities. For this, the project supported community people to establish CGs in which only the PSE households can join. Now, there are 1362 HHs in the CGs, and 73% of them are women.

The assessment revealed that CGs are better in integrating the PSE households in accessing natural resources and sharing the benefits. But how these are institutionalized in the current natural resource management systems, has not been clearly visualized in the project.

Results-based Management

Outcome level planning and monitoring are also important component of project/programme management in IUCN Nepal. Although the project has initiated this, there is, however, a scope to internalize outcome level planning and reporting mechanisms. Despite its strategic work and contribution on impacts (both ecosystem health and sustainable livelihoods), the project is not able to document them and share with other stakeholders. There is a need for the project management to provide orientation on results-based management (RBM) and better 'communication'.

IUCN Nepal has taken a programmatic approach in its project management. In the Country Office, Ecosystem Management Unit (EMU), with the support from other thematic and support (finance and admin) units, has been supervising the project and has been managing issues related to policy promotion. Some internal misunderstanding and confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities exist between the field project and programmatic units at the Country Office.

Summary of performance of the project is as below:

S N	Evaluation criteria	Project specific criteria	Rating	Remarks
1.	Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fund delivery, human resource against project implementation rate, quality, timeliness and quantity - Alternative options explored during implementation - Innovative approaches used 	B	
2.	Effectiveness	Achieving the project objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation (<i>in-situ/ex-situ</i>) - Sustainable management - Equitable benefit sharing - Mainstreaming poverty, social inclusion and gender issues in the project 	B	
3.	Relevancy	Project compliance on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate for local communities - Nationally prioritized agenda - IUCN interest and niche 	B	
4.	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project's current impacts on ecosystem health - Project's current impacts on sustainable livelihoods 	B	

S N	Evaluation criteria	Project specific criteria	Rating	Remarks
		- Project's potential impacts on ecosystem health and sustainable livelihoods		
5.	Sustainability	- Clear and realistic exit strategy - Community marketing - Local groups or institutions able to continue this initiative - Government organizations' willingness to continue this initiative	C	
6.	Inclusion (economic and social)	- Involvement of poor, women and socially excluded communities in the community - Participation of poor, women and socially excluded community member in decision-making processes	B	
7.	Project management	- Results-based planning, monitoring and reporting - Collaboration and coordination	C	

Rating Protocol: A—Very Good; B—Good; C—Satisfactory; and D—Poor

Overall Rating: Good

CONCLUSION

The assessment revealed that the project has demonstrated a replicable model of conservation and sustainable use practices as well as imparting skills at the community level. The project has also taken a very strong step in mainstreaming poor, socially excluded and gender issues in the project area.

The project has demonstrated a good model on Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) by instituting 'Conservation Groups' within natural resource management groups and has clearly reflected how PSE/W issues can be integrated into conservation initiatives at the community level. The project has provided a good learning of PEI that can be adapted in other natural resource management project across the country.

Despite its success stories, there are some critical issues which need to be carefully considered by the project team and the Country Office. Even as the project is completing its existing phase in 2009, the project has not devised any exit strategy so far. Based on the experiences, the project management needs to provide an appropriate institutional mechanism for consolidation after 2009 so that its lessons and learning are coalesced. The project is also weak in documentation of its learning and sharing of its findings with other stakeholders, including the District and Regional Forest Offices. The Country Office should play a critical role in policy influence and marketing issues by using learning from this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above assessment, the following recommendations are made:

- The project team should immediately initiate documentation of learning and best practices that can be disseminated outside the project.
- The project team should align its planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms for outcome level achievements.
- Clear roles and responsibility to the project manager, his team and different units at country office should be discussed and agreed upon.
- The project and Country Office should work on consolidating the initiative through the exit strategy and also identify the role of CBOs and District Forest Office for continuation of this initiative after 2009.
- The project and Country Office should prioritize some activities for policy influence, trade and marketing opportunities of NTFPs/MAPs for 2009 and beyond.

Annex 1: List of participants of group discussion and Key informants

Group Discussion

SN	Name of CGs	No of participants	Remarks
1	Seti Aatmanirbhar MBTJSS, Chhatiwan-2, Budar	33	
2	Jyoti Aatmanirbhar MBTJSS, Chhatiwan-4, Budar	19	
3	Kailpal BTJSS, Sarashwoti Nagar-7, Rautkatte	9	
4	Dhanghat BTJSS, Sarashwoti Nagar-7, Nakalwada	4	
5	Shidha Nath Nursery Group, Ghanteshwor-1, Goganpani	7	
6	Ghanteshwor MBTJSS, Ghanteshwor-1, Khadena	7	
7	Laliguransh MBTJSS, Chhatiwan-8, Melkhola	11	

Interviews

S.N.	Participants Name	Designation	Remarks
1	Mr.Mr. Saliman Sawat	Local Collector	Joroyal
2	Mr. Rupak Singh	Local Trader	Joroyal
3	Mr. Amar Singh	Local Trader	Joroyal
4	Mr. Dilli Raj Bhatta	Road Head Trader	Phaltude
5	Mr. Deepak Bhatta	Commercial Cultivator	Atariya, Kailali
6	Mr.U.P Tiwari	Trader from India	Raipur, India
7	Mr. Hari Bagale	Associated to Indian trader	Tanahu
8	Mrs. Ganga Devi Malla	Chairman of Seti CG	Chhatiwan
9	Mr. Dambar bahadur Malla	Chairman of Raniban CFUG	Chhatiwan
10	Mr. Bhabana Ojha	Chairman of Joti CG	Chhatiwan

Participants from IUCN Nepal			
1	Giridhar Amatya	Project Manager	Project Office
2	Amar Singh Dhami	Field Supervisor	Project Office
3	Menuka Karki	Community Mobilizer	Project Office
4	Khadga Bdr. Ramtel	Field Supervisor	Project Office
5	Narayan Belbase	Country Representative a.i.	Country Office
6	Mingma Norbu Sherpa	Programme Officer	Country Office

Annex 2: Project log frame

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Project Goal: Biodiversity conservation, environmental justice and sustainable livelihoods promoted in Nepal			
Outcome: Equitable management of NTFPs and MAPs improves access and benefit sharing for poor and socially excluded households and women in selected CFUGs of Doti District and through related national policies on other CFUGs in Nepal	<p>At the end of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of new or amended national legislation and policies related to NTFP/MAPs management and marketing address the interests of poor and socially excluded households and women of natural resource dependent HHs • Equity in access to benefits from NTFP/MAP resources in CFs regardless of gender, ethnicity or economic status increased by 35% • Appropriate and sustainable NTFP/MAP management practices adopted by 45% of PSE HHs • Financial benefits from NTFP/MAPs (produced and collected according to social and ecological standards) to PSE CF members increased by 15% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory final review • Project reports • Community self evaluations • Progress report • CF or conservation groups NTFP/MAPs sales records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and social security stable in project sites • Good access to target beneficiaries • No major health epidemic outbreaks • No major climatic impacts (e.g. droughts, floods) • No major market fluctuations or economic crisis for NTFPs/MAPs
Output: 0.1.1. Policy Promotion & Application Advocacy of MAP and NTFP related policy and legislation for equitable access and benefits for forest resource dependent poor and socially excluded households and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on gaps in policies and legislation addressing interests poor and socially excluded households and women are available to 80% of national, 60% of district and 30% of local stakeholders • Potential provisions to address issues of poor and socially excluded households and women advocated for in 1 NTFP/MAP relevant policies/legislation • Information logically linking NTFPs/MAPs management, CBD and MDG is accessible to 70% of national stakeholder for policy refinement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study report, recipients list • Policy briefs/ new or adapted policies • Policy analysis for CBD and MDGs, recipient's list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GoN open to advocated policy changes • Sufficient number of local and national NGOs interested to advocate for policy changes
Output: 0.1.2. Community Forestry Governance Community forestry governance in targeted CFUGs in the Doti District strengthened to help ensure equitable access and benefits to forest resource dependent poor and socially excluded households and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All guidelines, resource materials, training curricula for DFOs staff and CFUGs members strongly focuses on addressing issues related to equitable access to benefits from MAPs and NTFPs for poor and socially excluded households and women • 70 % of CF Statutes and OPs revised with the support of IUCN ensure equitable access to benefits from MAPs and NTFPs for forest resource dependent poor and socially excluded households and women • Information on women and PSE HH accessing to benefits of sustainable MAPs and NTFPs management practiced through Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach is available to all interested global, national, district and local stakeholders • GPSE status trend of 20 CFUGs with respect to GPSE indicators is available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines, resource materials, training curricula, training report • Assessment report of CFUGs' statute and OPs • Case studies, assessment report, progress report • PLA records • GPSE monitoring report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good access to project sites and beneficiaries

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Output: 0.1.3. MAP/NTFP Management</p> <p>Equitable sharing of benefits from sustainable production and collection of MAPs and NTFPs in Doti District promoted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for equitable and integrated approach to sustainable NTFP/MAPs production and collection agreeable to 60% national as well as district; and 70% of the local stakeholders available • 50 MAPs and NTFPs CGs of 20 CFUGs with improved practices for sustainable management and collection of MAPs and NTFPs • 5 CFUGs adopted at least 70% of FSC principles in managing MAPs and NTFPs • Equity in access to benefits from NTFP/MAP resources in CFs regardless of gender, ethnicity or economic status increased by 35% • Information on what the capacities of different CFUG MAPs/NTFPs groups are at different stages of the value chain • One NTFPs/MAPs promotion process model agreed by stakeholders available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options analysis report/ briefs, recipient's list • Progress report and field observation • Assessment report/ case study/ progress report • Assessment report/case study/ progress report • Progress report • Process model 	
<p>Output: 0.1.4. NTFP/MAP Marketing</p> <p>Poor and socially excluded households and women dependent on MAPs and NTFPs have better access to market benefits in Doti District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing information (price, quality standard, certification requirement, possible contacts) for at least 7 species available to interested stakeholders • 25% of poor and socially excluded households and women of 20 CFUGs dependent on MAPs and NTFPs benefit from post harvest techniques and value addition of economically important MAPs and NTFPs • Five CFUGs involve in FSC certification process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Feasibility report, promotional booklet, news letter, price board • Progress report/ case study • Progress report • Progress report, key-informant interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and global private corporations accessible to marketing of certified NTFPs/MAPs from Nepal
<p>Output: 0.1.5. Conservation Awareness</p> <p>Awareness at local and national level of NTFP conservation issues through suitable new and alternative media promoted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly overview on MAPs and NTFPs related information available to 70% of key stakeholders at local, district and national level • One refined process model available on web-page and in printed form in English and Nepali • 3 NTFP/MAPs conservation outreach products suitable for local and national level awareness disseminated to 2000 beneficiaries • 80% of key policy makers get NTFP/MAPs related information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview report • Information materials list and IUCN Nepal Web-page • Information materials and recipients lists • Recipients lists of different information materials 	



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