

Rufford Small Grant Project
(RSG Ref 27.12.06)

Capacity building for biodiversity conservation in community forest
management in Himalayas (in block Joshimath, district Chamoli,
Uttarakhand, India)

Final Report by
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Project

Capacity building for biodiversity conservation in community forest management in Himalayas (in block Joshimath, district Chamoli, Uttarakhand, India).

Background

Uttarakhand is a young Himalayan State created in 2000. The State has 34661.52 sq km of forests which is 64.81 per cent of its geographical area. Around 70 per cent of the forests are managed by the State Forest Department, 15 per cent of the forests are Community Forests and another 15 per cent are somewhat semi-degraded and degraded forests (called Civil and Soyam forests) managed by Revenue Department of the Government, according to Forest Statistics – 2001 released by the State Government. All the wildlife protected areas, national parks and sanctuaries, are in 70 per cent forests managed by forest department while in the remaining 30 per cent forests virtually there is no focus on biodiversity conservation!

There are more than 12000 Community Forests in Uttarakhand and the State Government has made a policy that every village should have a Community Forest, which would be achieved by converting the semi-degraded and degraded forests (Civil and Soyam forests) to Community Forests and if need be even Reserved Forests too would be handed over to the communities. Thus, there would be at least 30 per cent of the State's forest being managed by communities!

Community Forests are important wildlife habitats. Over the period of time, the management of forests by communities has weakened due to bureaucratic interference, indifference on the part of communities and lack of proper management planning. Unsustainable utilisation has resulted in loss and degradation of habitat and biodiversity and at times, cause animal-man conflicts.

As a pilot initiative, Rufford supported a project (first RSG), "Strengthening Traditional Forest Management Institutions of the Communities (Van Panchayats) for Biodiversity Conservation in the Himalayas". The implementation of the project further confirmed the need of strengthening the management of Community Forests.

The project was implemented at Reethia Van Panchayat, Gairsain, District Chamoli, Uttarakhand, India. It generated lot of excitement among the community. The first reaction was that at least something is being done. Several important stakeholders including the State Forest Department and the Centre for Forestry and Natural Resource Development, Forest Training Academy, Government of Uttarakhand, collaborated in the implementation of the project. This indicated the realisation of usefulness of the project even among the Government agencies. The agencies facilitated preparation of management plan for the Community Forest.

Rufford's Guide to Management of Community Forests (Van Panchayats) of Uttaranchal (now named Uttarakhand) State of India, developed under the project was well received.

A landmark achievement of the project was, the people associated with the Community Forest agreed and passed a resolution about setting aside 212 ha of the Community Forest (20 per cent) as a voluntary community conservation reserve.

Implementation of pilot first phase, and the results there-of clearly indicate strengthening the management of the community forests by capacity building can have long term impact of conservation of natural resources.

Thus, Rufford made a 2nd RSG for this project 'Capacity building for biodiversity conservation in community forest management in Himalayas (in block Joshimath, district Chamoli, Uttarakhand, India)'.

Implementation

1. Institutional Tie-up with Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development, Forestry Training Academy, Government of Uttarakhand, Haldwani, District Nainital, Uttarakhand, India was confirmed by the director of the Academy vide your letter 708/40-4/dated Oct 30, 2007. Institutional tie-up fee was paid to the Centre.
2. Rufford's Guide to Management of Community Forests of Uttarakhand State of India has been reprinted (in local, Hindi, language) and distributed among trainees from Van Panchayats (Community Forests) and relevant stakeholders. Remaining copies has been provided to the Centre for distribution in the Chamoli district and trainees at the Centre.
3. Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development, Forestry Training Academy, Government of Uttarakhand, Haldwani and, Nature & People and Research and Support Group, Delhi with the Support of Rufford Foundation, London organized two training programmes : Training for Capacity building on management of the forest for wildlife conservation along with sustainable utilisation of NTFP of the Joshimath Block Van Panchayat executives on 17-19 December 2007 and 26-28 December 2007 at the Academy, Haldwani.

Achievement

Well organized and attended trainings supplemented with Rufford literature are expected to build capacity of the executives of community forests and result in conservation of wildlife in long term.

Discussion

Institutional Tie-up adds to credibility and acceptability

Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development is part of Forestry Training Academy, a Government of Uttarakhand institution. Institutional tie-up with the Centre results in government departments recognizing the project and extending cooperation. This also adds to the credibility of training among the trainees.

Furthermore, the Academy has a sprawling complex of auditoriums, hostels, classrooms, equipment to manage and conduct trainings in an organized manner. There are expert resource persons available on the panel of the Academy to deliver lectures to participants.

Trainings Highlights

The Centre conducts trainings for van panchayat sarpanchs once in a while. The routine invitation draws about 10-15 participants in each batch. In the Rufford's and Centre's joint "Training for Capacity Building" conducted under the project on 17-19 December 2007 and 26-28 December 2007, 46 and 49 trainees participated respectively! This was the result of the efforts by Mr S. K. Dutta, Director, Forestry Training Academy, Mr Sarwan Kumar, DFO, Joshimath and Mr Pushp Jain, CEO, Nature & People Research and Support Group, Delhi.

It was interesting to note that about one-fourth of the participants were women. This was encouraging as the participants came from the interior Himalayan region.

The first training was a five-day schedule with participants arriving on 16 December and leaving on 20 December 2007. There were three clear days for training. Similarly the second training programme too was of five days with participants arriving on 25 December and leaving on 29 December 2007.

The training agenda had a special focus on wild animal protection and conservation. There were three lectures on wildlife – 1. Legislation (Wildlife (Protect) Act, 1972 & Tree (Conservation) Act, 1976), 2. Biodiversity and 3. Wildlife Management.

There were several lectures on community forest management as per the rules and regulations; joint forest management (government and people), Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and its scientific and sustainable harvest as well as management of medicinal plants (complete programme is given in the annexure 1).

The capacity building book, the Rufford's Guide to Management of Community Forests (Van Panchayats) of Uttaranchal State of India, created in the first RSG project and reprinted now in 2nd RSG was distributed to the participants. Besides the Rufford Guide, Centre too provided literature on Joint Forest Management, Sustainable Harvest of NTFP and Medicinal Plants etc to the participants along with conference bag.

An evaluation of training with a questionnaire filled by participants revealed that in 17-19 December 2007 training out of 46 trainees, 37 and 38 were 100 per cent satisfied with lectures and training literature respectively. Similarly, In 26-28 December 2007 training out of 49 trainees, 45 and 44 were 100 per cent satisfied with lectures and training literature respectively (A hard copy of the report on training programmes prepared by Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development, Forestry Training Academy, Government of Uttarakhand, Haldwani in Indian language (Hindi) is also annexed) .

Capacity Building Literature

The capacity building book, the Rufford's Guide to Management of Community Forests (Van Panchayats) of Uttaranchal State of India, was found attractive and interesting by the participants at trainings.

The Secretary, Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development, Forestry Training Academy, Government of Uttarakhand, Haldwani suggested that the book would serve a better purpose as accompanying literature for participants at trainings organized by the Centre from time to time. The relevant stakeholders too visit the Centre now and again. Thus the whole consignment of guide books was transferred to the Centre for proper distribution.

Looking Ahead

Focus on Women

During the Course of implementation of RSG-II, The Principle Investigator had one long discussion with the chief of the state forest department regarding the community forests and role of women in their management. He felt that there is need for greater role of women in management of Community Forests. The present rules provides for minimum of 4 female members out of nine members of the executive to manage a community forest. There is no stopping that there can more than 4 female members and a female being elected to be the head of the executive. Furthermore, its women who use the forest for fuel wood, fodder, NTFP etc. They understand the forest best. Ideally they would be better manager. In spite of this situation, why the female members are not on the forefront is a valid question.

One of the reasons is lack of capacity among women in the state for leadership and management. Thus in future, special focus can be on capacity building of women in the management of Community Forests.

Study of Issues in Wildlife Protection

There is lack of wildlife protection in community forests because of lack of focus on protection in the management. Thus poaching and other factors impacting wildlife are overlooked. There is need to have a more detailed analysis of issues in wildlife protection in Community Forests so as to be able to advise the State forest department to develop a strategy and plan for protection of wildlife in community forests as well mould training programmes as per the needs arising from the study. It would be advisable to select three Community forests each in two regions of the state, Garhwal and Kumaon, in high, middle and low altitudes, and conduct studies on wildlife protection issues therein.

Revising Rufford's Guide

The State Government is in the process of amending Community Forest management law/regulation. The chief of the state forest department told me that the draft is ready and may be adopted any time. Thus, there would be need to revise, print and distribute Rufford's Guide to Management of Community Forests (Van Panchayats) of Uttaranchal State of India. The distribution can be State wide.

Developing a Poster

Along with the Rufford's Guide, one can visualize, publish and distribute a poster for capacity building of executives of the management of community forests.

Two Capacity Building Trainings for Women

Equipped with the wildlife protection study, book and poster, there is need to conduct two capacity strengthening trainings targeting women members of management executives of community forests in two regions of the state, Garhwal and Kumaon. These trainings should be state level exercises. This would be scaling up from village level (RSG I) to block level (RSG II) to state level.

Annexure 1

Training program for capacity building on management of forest for wildlife conservation & sustainable utilisation of NTFP for Community Forest Executives

Organized by

Center for Forestry & Natural Resource Management Development, Forestry Training Academy, Haldwani and Nature & People - Research and Support Group, Delhi

With the support of

Rufford Foundation, London, UK

16-20 December and 25-29 December 2007

Day	Time	Subject	Resource Person
1		Arrival and settling of participants	
2	09.00-10.00	Registration	
	10.05-10.30	Introductory Session 1. Introduction of the Course Director 2. Introduction of the Participants 3. Outline and objectives of training	Mr T. S. Bisht
	10.30-11.15	History of Community Forests & introduction of Community Forest Rules, 2005	Dr D. K. Joshi
	11.15-11.30	Tea	
	11.30-13.45	Management of community Forests as per the Community Forest Rules, 2005	“
	13.45-15.00	Lunch	
	15.00-17.15	Harvest of NTFP and maintenance of records and account as per the Community Forest Rules, 2005	“
3	09.00-09.45	Joint Forest Management and its importance	Mr T. S. Bisht
	09.45-10.30	Various kinds of participations in management of forests	“
	10.30-11.15	Biodiversity and management of wildlife	Mr K. C. Joshi
	11.15-11.30	Tea	
	11.30-13.45	Introduction and explanation of important provisions of wildlife	“

		protection legislations	
	13.45-15.00	Lunch	
	15.00-16.30	Biodiversity and management of wildlife	“
	16.30-17.15	NTFP	Mr A. K. Srivastava
4	09.00-10.30	Scientific and sustainable harvest of NTFP	“
	10.30-11.15	Identification and importance of main medicinal plants of Uttarakhand	Mr H. D. Pandey
	11.15-11.30	Tea	
	11.30-13.45	Harvest and marketing of medicinal plants	“
	13.45-15.00	Lunch	
	15.00-17.00	Closing Ceremony	Mr T. S. Bisht & Mr P. C. Lohani
5		Departure of participants	