

Project Update: December 2019

Project Description

Nepal is listed as one of the vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. Many indigenous communities depended on natural resources are affected by this environmental catastrophe. Chepang community of Nepal is a highly marginalised indigenous group known for bat hunting. Bats play an important role in pollination of Chiuri (*Diploknema butyracea*) essential plant for the community. In recent years, the community has shifted from a semi-nomadic lifestyle to permanent settlement. However, many are still dependent on natural resources for various economic and traditional purposes. Recently, Chiuri plant and bat species are threatened by several anthropogenic and environmental factors. The inter-relationship between the plant, mammal and the community are in a delicate balance that is increasingly threatened by climate and environmental change. The extent to which this disadvantaged community is aware of this relationship and the impacts of climate change will be assessed and ways to increase their resilience will be explored.

Implementation activities

As per scheduled, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted in Chepang community of Majbang Village, Siddhi. The questionnaire results showed that the Chepang community of that particular village used the butter tree more prominently than the rest of the project site. The FGD discussed the following topics:

- Use of butter tree plant in Chepang community.
- Causes of loss in butter tree plant production in recent years.
- Causes of loss in bat abundance in the forest.
- Changes in weather and climate experienced in the community.
- Alternative livelihood to benefit both Butter tree and the economic status of the community.

Another questionnaire survey result showed that the Chepang community of Shaktikhor village though were informed about conserving bats for butter tree plant, they weren't aware of the relationship the plant and its pollinator had for overall benefit of the nature. Hence, a short awareness program was conducted with 26 Chepang participants from the community to discuss climate change, recent changes they have seen in the climate in the area, impacts they have seen in butter tree plants and the important role bats play in pollination for butter tree plant. The programme used photographic information, general discussions with participants and short social mapping activities to generate information from the participants while providing known information vice versa.

Future Plans

Beekeeping for Chepang community in Majbang was the general answer from the community that will be finalized after a brief discussion with the local authority.