BIODIVERSITY ACTION DAY EVENT IN SIKKIM

Eco-trek and workshop on Biodiversity and Climate Change

10- 13th May 2010

INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR BIODIVERSITY 2010

gtz kfw ENTWICKLUNGSBANK BfN Federal Agency for Nature Conservation Convention on Biological Diversity UNEP

invent Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH GEO SIKKIM STATE COUNCIL OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

Introduction

The year 2010 has been declaired as the International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. Nations all of the world obeserved the Biodiversity year and the Action days through different activities and invlovement.

The year 2010 provides excellent opportunities to scale up this approach and create a global mosaic of the value and meaning of ecosystems to humankind. Simultaneous Biodiversity Action Days was expected to create wider public awareness of the CBD and its objectives, and stimulated more debate for its preservation and sustainable use.

International Biodiversity Day is a public event that serves to highlight the importance of ecosystems for human wellbeing. For 2 to 4 weeks around 22 May, a broad range of people in the participating countries explores and analyze a local ecosystem. The idea is to evaluate and demonstrate the value of this ecosystem and its biodiversity in a way that is easily understood by everybody.

Governments, foundations, companies, non-governmental organizations, the media and other partners shall join and contribute to this local event. With joint efforts from all individual partners a global picture of what biodiversity provides for human beings will be drawn.

Biodiversity Action Days in Sikkim

A two-day eco-trek and one day workshop on Biodiversity and Climate Change marked the Biodiversity action day in Sikkim. The basic idea of the action day was to explore an ecosystem of Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) from an “biodiversity and development” viewpoint with the theme ecotourism, as ecotourism provides an opportunities of conservation and sustainable development.

Objectives:

1. to document eco-tourism potential of Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) and threats to biodiversity.

2. to document local communities involvement in eco-tourism- services, its benefits and the potential in future.

3. to understand the overview of the Value of KNP to Sikkim for its eco-tourism potential.

4. to understand the overview of the strategies for Biodiversity conservation in KNP with enhanced eco-tourism potential.

5. to share the learning of the importance of Biodiversity and its conservation in Sikkim with the larger audience of key stakeholders from the State.

6. to facilitate interaction amongst key stakeholders on Biodiversity, Climate Change and also provide inputs to the 2 day brainstorming session for State Action Plan for Climate Change

Village Eco-trek

A two day eco-trek was organized on 11 & 12 May, 2010 to explore an ecosystem in the buffer village of Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) in West Sikkim from an "biodiversity and development" viewpoint with special focus on "Ecotourism" as an opportunities for Biodiversity conservation.

The two days trek was coordinated by Mr. Nima Tashi Bhutia from TMI-India and Sonam Rinchen Lepcha from State Council of Scienece & Technology. The participants included the officials from GTZ, Inwent, GEO, BMZ, nature guide, social worker, eco-tourism expert from Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC), taxanomist from (SCST) and research scholar from ATREE.

Khechupalri Lake to Yuksam village ; 11th May 2010

On 11th May, 2010 the team visited the holy lake at Khechupalri in West Sikkim and interacted with the Panchayat and the local community on the value for lake.

Khechupalri is a holy lake situated in the western district of Sikkim. It is believed as a wish full filling lake and is one of the mass tourist destination of the state which receives more than 60,000 visitors every year. Legends has many stories to say about the formation ans shape of the lake. The water is believe holy and is used for offering, rites and rituals.

The team interacted with Mr. Sonam Yongda, Ward Panchayat on various initiatives being take for lake conservation and the value for the lake. It was observed from the discussion that a very less number of household living adjecent to the lake benefits from tourist. The Panchayat and the local eco-tourism expertse said most tourist come on a day visit and return back to Pelling the same day. Pelling is a fast growing destination about 20 km away from the lake. With more and more hotels and tourist amenities, most visitor land up at pelling and very few come over for a stay at Khechupalri.

Few home stay and tourist lodges have come up near the lake which caters to the need to the current tourist flow. The team also visit the view point above the lake to take a glance of the entire catchment. The local experts suggested that the lake has reduced in size because of siltation and other natural factors.

The team trek down to leythang via chodzo village. The team also documented the farming practices of the villagers during the trek. The team documented the farmers view on the change in climate, change in agricultural system and the change in biodiversity in general. On the trek the team also sighted a barking deer in the cardamom forest.

The team also interacted with the communities at Leythang. A lepcha settlement village inbetween Khechupalri and Yuksam. The village located at the lap of the rocky cliff depends mostly on agriculture and labour works. The youth suggested that the village could be a potential stop over for trekkers from Khechupalri to Yuksam. Most trekkers passes leythang on their trek from Yuksam to Khechupalri and vice versa but does not have a stop over in between.

On arrival at Yuksam, Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) coordinated a interactive session in the evening. Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee is a community-based organization comprising of energetic, active and dedicated members who strive to mitigate negative tourism impacts on biodiversity.

The committee mostly works in the four broad thrust area as follows

1. **Conservation Education**: Generating awareness among the rural masses through workshops, fairs and other village activities. Involving students actively in conservation activities. Conducting seminars and quizzes in schools and also training school teachers on how to impart conservation education to school children.
2. **Training**: Skill development training at for porters, farmers, cooks , nature guide, Institutions and pack animal operators.
3. **Advocacy with Government agencies**: Advocating and lobbying with the government for appropriate policy which would benefit the local people of our community and conserve the resources on which tourism depends.
4. **Monitoring**: Monitoring the use of resources in and around the Khangchendzonga National Park and around Yuksam area. Monitoring the trekkers going up into the mountains and checking illegal extraction of herbs, incense and other medicinal plants.

The committee updated on the biodiversity values of KNP along with the cultural values. Mr. Pema explained that the tourism first started in Yuksam in sikkim and it is still one of the famous trekking corridor in the state. Most

communities living in Yuksam and adjoining village depend on the seasonal trekkers to suppliment thier living. Agriculture as such has become limited with dying of large cardamom in Sikkim.

Mr. Pema through his illustrative slide show all activities of KCC in biodiveristy consrvation, capacity building and waste manage. The out reach program in north east have also been successful apart from the one in Sikkim said Mr. Pema. KCC has been providing technical support and training to tourism service providers in Arunachal and Lhadak. KCC today feels proud to see the service providers from yuksam rendering service in most of the himalayan states.

KCC has also supported in promotion of village home stay in Yuksam and other village in Sikkim. KCC runs 10 community managed home stay at Yuksam, unlike hotels and lodges, home stay are managed by the host families in traditional sytle.

This was followed by a presentation on zero waste initiative by Mr. Kinzong Sherpa Bhutia of KCC. Speaking to the geathering he said with the increase in trekking tourism, there has also been an increase in the solid waste accumulation all along the trail and campsite. Proper waste monitoring and management has been a growing challenge. Many initiatives like garbage cleanup, awareness have been carried out by different organization in the past but the problem still remains the same. Now with the growing number of tourist more and more waste are entering the National Park.

This year on a joint venture between KCC, TMI-India and the KNP division of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department. A step towards zero waste trail has been initiated in Yuksam. This initiatives is a new in the state specially in the trekking destination. The initiatives started with severial meetings, conference and workshop with the stakeholders. A standard garbage monitoring format has been designed and approved. The garbage are now strictly monitored IN and OUT of the Natinal Park using

this standard format. Once the garbages are brought back, they are segregation at the segregation centre which further shall be sent for recycling.

This was followed by a local cultral show by a cultural group from Kyongtey village.

12th May 2010

The team visited Norbu gang coronation throne, Kathok lake and also visited the KNP checkpost and garbage segregation centre before their departure to Gangotk

Biodiversity and Climate Change workshop ;13th May 2010

On the third day (13th May, 2010) a state level workshop was organized on Biodiveristy and Climate Change at the Forest Conference Hall jointly with Sikkim State Biodiveristy Board of Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management Department (FEWMD), Government of Sikkim.

The workshop was chaired by Secretary, Department of Science & Technology along with Member Secretary, State Pollution Control Board, Member Secretary, State Biodiveristy Board, Project Coordinator - GTZ along with other dignitiaries. The workshop started with the inagural address by Secretary, Mr. M . L . Arrawatia, IFS who spoke on the importance of the Biodiveristy and Climate Change. He also gave a brief background on the proposed colloborative worked with GTZ to develop the State Action Plan for Climate Change (SAPCC).

This was followed by a technical session chaired by Dr. Jyoti Prakasha Tamang, Senior Reader & Head, Botany Dept. Sikkim Government College. The presentation during the technical session included a presentation on Biodiveristy and its importance in Sikkim by Mrs. Usha Lachungpa, Senior

Research Officer, FEWMD, Enhancing rural water (Dhara Vikash) and adaptation to climate change by Dr. Sandeep Tambe, IFS, Additional Secretary, RM &DD, Government of Sikkim Biodiveristy and Traditional documentation by Dr. Ghanashyam Sharma, Program Manager TMI-India, Experience sharing and background on Biodiversity action day by Vera Scholz, Program Coordinator, GTZ, Phenological variation of Rhododendron in relation to climate change by L.K. Rai from GBPHIED Instiute.

This technical session was followed by a Group discussion on Biodiveristy and Climate Change. The participants were equally divided into three group where each group came out with a innovative idea and inputs for the State Action Plan for Climate Change. All three participants discussed on various issues related to Climate change adaptation and Biodiveristy conservation. The detailed summarized points were presented before the house by each group for further suggestion and inputs. The output of the group discussion is expected to contribute in drafting and brainstorming session for State Action Plan for Climate Change proposed on 14th and 15th of May 2010.

The workshop witnessed more than 60 participants from diverse group. The participants include the senior officials of Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management, Horticulture, Agriculture, Science & Technology, Sikkim University, Tadong Government College, ELIIM University, NGOs from all four districts, Biodiversity Management Committee (BMCs) and other civil society organizations.

Annexure - I

GROUP DISCUSSION

INPUTS TO THE BRIANSTORMING SESSION ON STATE ACTION PLAN ON CLIMATE CHANGE

BIODIVERSITY GROUP - I

1. Provide a separate cell or department for CC which should be multi-disciplinarily
2. 11% of land cover only under agricultural 70% population is dependent on it
3. The total cultivable land in Sikkim is constantly declining because of various developmental activities
4. Argi - Horti should be given due priority and be included as key stakeholder in CC related works
5. Develop niche market linkage and capacity enhancement in the marketing sector
6. Climate change has become a subject of debate in most forums but has not been able to reach out to the ground on action
7. Man made forest fire due to lack of awareness
8. Seed bank for preservation of traditional varieties of seed
9. Most developmental activities are effecting the waster source in most places (water dam, roads)
10. Rain water harvesting can supplement the lack of water
11. Alternative efficient energy need to replace the fuel wood conservation
12. Garbage need to be addressed at the source in a proper manner and has to be commercialized or made incentive based
13. Health can be a major problem from Climate change and eco-friendly ways of health treatment needs to be encouraged
14. Development is a need but a rapid development at the current stage seems to be a major impact to environment degradation
15. Water shed management and spring catchments area treatment should be taken up in war footing
16. Major impact due to the developing project need to be properly studied

17. Tourism needs to be integrated with farm practices and should not be against agricultural
18. Organic products need to be given priority and more urban hubs to sell rural organic products
19. Mass tourism need to be replaces with quality tourism and the increased traffic need to be checked
20. Disseminate information / research works by Climate change division far and wider through all means of communication / media etc
21. Mass transportation system of gangtok to be reduced by ways policy changes and necessary intervention
22. Family planning need to included at the ration of 1 child to minimize the growth of human population
23. Establish various weather monitoring station in every block
24. GIS / GPS and remote sensing to be utilized immensely for climate change and Biodiversity
25. Gender is a importance issue in CC
26. Climate change registers to be introduced in all blocks

BIODIVERSITY GROUP - II

1. Eco-tourism- Stress should be given to grassroot level.
2. Biodiversity conservation-Benefit should flow directly to people.
3. Traditional Knowledge preservation through documentation.
4. Promote Seed preservation, medicinal plants cultivation, indigenous varieties of crops, and traditional healers
5. Monoculture should be discouraged
6. Garbage management
7. Revival of Damthang Biodiversity Park.
8. Awareness about National Biodiversity Act.

9. Research and documentation
10. Capacity building- both technical and financial to preserve genetic biodiversity (Agriculture mission)
11. Areas favorable medicinal plant to be identified.
12. Consulting local people before implementing any programmme on biodiversity.
13. Road and other infrastructure projects create further stress on agriculture and livelihood opportunities.
14. SHGs can be trained on Eco-tourism activities.
15. Looking too much on alternate livelihood sources should not compromise food security.
16. Planting wild fruits to avoid animals coming out to villages.
17. Water conservation
18. Microbial biodiversity also to be conserved for utilization in agriculture.
19. JICA carried out a rapid Biodiversity survey in 1000 spots in Sikkim. It needs research and documentation.
20. Enhancing the knowledge of local people on Biodiversity and Ecotourism services.

CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP - III

1. Setting up of State Climate Change Board/Council.
2. Formulation of State Action Plan on Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation.
3. Trans-border policy on Climate Change.
4. Awareness and Capacity building of the general mass on Climate Change adaptation and mitigation.
5. Activate the State Biodiversity Board.
6. Collaborative research work with Academic Institutions and Voluntary organizations.
7. Scientific management of meteorological data.
8. Accessibility of the climate data to the researchers and general mass .
9. Generation of climate change resource persons in the state.
10. Scientific management of environmental resources including land, water, forest etc.
11. Watershed plus Development Programmes .
12. Encourage Participatory planning.