



SGP The GEF Small Grants Programme



Biodiversity Conservation

COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM AN ENDEAVOR FOR CONSERVATION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH





use of participatory methodologies, village meetings and using participatory rural appraisals (PRAs). In the project the village meetings led to formation of informal, kinship based village self help groups (SHGs). The women SHGs regularly save monthly. The last part of the project strategy was to select local women and men of the villages to be trained in the management of resources for better livelihoods and conservation practices. The locals have been key to success in the program. SFCID established 2 Mother Herbal Gardens in the BTPs which have now been converted into community managed nurseries. A Bio-Tourism Park (BTP) at village Pipalkoti at Dasholi block have been established.

Mother Herbal Gardens in the project are 'centers' for conservation and cultivation of rare/threatened and extinct herbal plants. They provide gainful employment to rural women and youth from the nearby villages. In-situ and ex-situ conservation of extinct medicinal species i.e. *Dactylorhiza hatagirea* (Salam Panja), *Aconitum heterophyllum* (Atis), *Nardostachys jatamansi* (Spikenard), *Saussurea lappa* (Kuth) and *Picrorhiza kurroa* (Kukti) in the peripheral zone of NDBR, VOF & KWLS.



Project Activities:

1. Establishment of a Bio Tourism Park: At the Bio tourism park (BTP) adventure tourism, Pipalkoti conservation practices and pilgrimage based activities are promoted. This is fully community managed and NGO facilitated. Sustainable rural adventure tours are promoted for income generation by using local resources. Indigenous culture/cuisines/traditional knowledge are linked with tourism. Local handicrafts and lesser known treks & destination around Bio Tourism Parks also promoted.

Lesser known treks:

- Pipalkoti - Panchula - 40 kms - 7 days.
- Pipalkoti - Rudranath - 72 kms - 10 days.
- Pipalkoti - Lord Curzon Pass -90 kms-12 days.
- Pipalkoti-Saat Tal and Roopkund Trek-160 Km-15Days.
- Pipalkoti – Roop Kund- Bedani Bugyal Trek – 123 Km- 12 days
- Pipalkoti – Bansi Narayan – Kalpnath Trek – 70 Km. - 10 days

2. Awareness generation and community participation: Communities are mobilized to ensure proper and cleaner environment, waste management in trekking routes. Participation in village development plan, RTI, MNREGA and ownership in mountain tourism activities. Local guides, porters and cooks are trained to accompany the adventurers.

3. Establishment of mother herbal gardens: The nurseries in the mother herbal gardens are regularly supplying planting material, seeds and rhizomes of high value medicinal, aromatic plants, bamboo, Ringal (*Arundinaria* spp.) saplings, fruit, fodder and fibre plant species as well as quality vegetable saplings and seeds. This is also promoting the local ownership of resources and a new inspiration for locals in project areas. These nurseries are also registered with Horticulture department, Govt. of Uttarakhand

4. Bio Tourism and craft promotion: SFCID formed Alaknanda Ghaati Shilpi Federation (AAGAAS Federation). This started with 78 SHGs members, all women, including crafts persons from 26 villages. The key focus of training has been skills upgradation and development of products. A range of low cost, Eco friendly, high demand, well designed craft products have been developed. Organisation is Organising annual Pipalkoti Dev Ringal Mahotsav, since 2006. Many products like lamp shades, basketery, and dust bins etc are locally produced by groups and are selling very well in local and niche markets in urban centres. The UBFDB has supported setting up of a small shop AAJIVIKA VATIKA (AV) for bamboo ringaal conservation and craft promotion for sustainable livelihood.



Project Background

The project was developed with the ideas to promote community based tourism, bio-diversity conservation, promotion of lesser and unknown trekking routes around the NDBR, Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary and Valley of Flower, National Park, Kedarnath Wild life Sanctuary and Pipalkoti Town. The locals were keen to develop and enhance their skills knowledge and capacities in conservation of the local medicinal plants. Create local institutions for inclusive growth for the poor tribal's and weaker sections of the society through timely access to credit and links to markets. SFCID and AAGAAS federation the NGO approached the GEF/UNDP Small Grant Program (SGP) for addressing these issues. The community involved in proactive action based project for local bio-diversity conservation, promotion of ecotourism, dissemination of rural technologies, and creating employment opportunities for women and the local community.

One of the thrusts in the project was on conservation of the lesser and unknown low altitude and high altitude trek around Pipalkoti (Chamoli). Centre for Environment Education (CEE) facilitated the capacity building of diverse stakeholders in the projects.

Project Strategy

AAGAAS FEDERATION/SFCID, has addressed in the project community needs, prioritized them through the

Name of Organisation:

Society For Community Involvement in Development (SFCID) and community institution Alaknanda Ghaati Shilipi Federation (AAGAAS Federation)

No. of Beneficiaries:

160 youths and 810 women (45 Villages, 2 Blocks, 1 District)

SGP Grant :

(9,00,000 INR) 22,500 USD\$

Co-Financing :

(18,32,000 INR) 40,800 USD\$

Project Area :

Pipalkoti, Chamoli, Garhwal around Nandadevi Biosphere reserve and valley of Flower National Park in Uttarakhand.

Project Time Period : 2004-07



Code of Conduct for Community Based Tourism

- Don't wear bright-coloured clothes.
- Keep your eyes and ears open and be alert. Try to observe animals and birds and their behavior in natural habitat.
- Read and observe the panels carefully.
- Listen to the sounds of the wild. Do not play music or talk loudly.
- You are a **guest of the forest** and its denizens. Keep their home clean. Please do not litter.
- Herbivores can eat plastic items. Please do not throw plastic in the forest.
- Patient observation of wildlife may reveal many secrets. **Do not light fire or smoke.**
- A small negligence could result in a serious fire that could cause irreparable damage to plants and animals.
- Do not go off the trail-that is dangerous!
- Always carry drinking water.
- Report illicit felling and any other offence immediately to forest personnel.

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- Linkages:** AAGAAS Federation has developed links with Banks, Uttarakhand Bamboo Forest Development Board (UBFDB); Sir Rattan Tata Trust (SRTT), Himmotthan Society, DRDA, KVIC, Earth Charter International (ECI), ECYG, National Instt. Of Animal Welfare, Deptt. Of Animal Health, ULDB, UTDC, HAPPRC, HRDI, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Schools and Colleges to leverage resources and create synergy in terms of knowledge, skills and technologies.

Project Achievements

- Bio-Tourism Park (BTP) developed at Pipalkoti tourist town in district Chamoli on the national highway **with 5 tourist huts**. Adjoining to the nursery and herbal garden, fish pond, composting techniques, smoking chamber, choupal and a natural fiber carding unit have been established. The local communities have joined together and given the land on lease to form the BTP. This 'institutional approach' has encouraged community ownerships at local level. Nearly Rs. 75,000 is the income to the local people every year.
- Training imparted to **720 persons on Ringal bamboo handicrafts (till 2009), Carpet and natural fibre based Craft** of the project area arts of the project area. **This has been also linked to the UBFDB, NRTT, Himmotthan society and ULIPH/IFAD.**
- 114 SHGs** with more than 1100 women and youth, tribal communities, BPL families, artisans, hill farmers and artisans formed in project villages. They are a great source for timely and cheap credit for the local women. A total of more than Rs. 5 lacs accumulated as savings in SHGs.
- For Community based Tourism, facilities** e.g. Tents, Sleeping bags, Rucksacks, Carry mats, Rock climbing kt, First Aid, Qualified Instructors and Organic food and fresh fruit juices etc made through SHGs are available. Main focus is on School Adventure Camps for Green & Clean Himalaya (SAC-Himalaya).
- More **than 126000** plantation of Ringaal (*Arundinaria*



spp.), Bamboo, broad leaf fodder plant and temperate grasses transplanted & managed by school children, village panchayats, van panchayats, Mahila Mangal Dals, social army group and rural artisan community.

- Rs. 3,35,000 (USD 4500\$)** as project revenue generated through Ecotourism, and trainings at BTP for the local youth departments and communities in last 3 years. Also incomes accrue to locals from a range of community initiatives. An amount of **US\$35,800** generated through co-financing from the World Bank-development market place award; SRTT, Mumbai; Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of India (GOI).
- The project Benefited more than 3240 Families in 3 Blocks and 54 Villages (Till December 2009)

Lessons from the Project

- Faced with the **complexity, diversity and dynamism** of people (local communities mostly women) learned that mistakes do take place. The **NGO, SFCID /AAGAAS FEDERATION** never felt like giving up but challenged the problems, conditions, limited institutional support and strengthened the planning at community level through women SHGs and local community groups. **This 'learning by doing'** approach has been the cornerstone in the project.
- The project has worked with the tribal Bhutia community and weaker section of the area and the access to timely credit has empowered the women to micro enterprise development. Their has been marked growth in local capacities by adopting simple **book-keeping practices, Fruit processing, organic product marketing, Craft development, Dairy at SHG level.**
- Locals have recognized project's tourism activity as a source of inclusive growth, because of livelihoods benefits to community at local levels.
- The NGO has with the support of **GEF SGP addressed** the issue of banning the use of plastic carry bags in the Sri Badrinath temple and other tourist spots. The NGO negotiated and entered an agreement with temple committees for supply of small ringal bamboo based baskets. This led to the opening of the shop at **Pipalkoti by SFCID** and later it has registered SHG Federation known as **Alaknanda Ghaati Shilpi Federation (AAGAAS Federation)**. Now the federation is organizing marketing through **Alaknanda self reliant Cooperative and Himalayee Self Reliant cooperative in many states of India and abroad.**
- Nature trail routes have got recognized through the **Uttarakhand Forest Department and Uttarakhand Tourism Department.**

Way Forward

- Develop the **interpretation centre**, library, kitchen, store & workshop at Pipalkoti.
- Provisions for audio-visual instruments, infrastructure at tourist huts of BTP through the departments and tourism sponsors.
- Awareness materials-CDs, Brochures, Documentaries & local cultural events, historical and cultural tales, melas and folk festival.
- Publication of tourist guide maps and **documentation of folk culture and folk art** of the surroundings of BTP. Promoting people friendly conservation practices with locals.
- Training programmes for youth for tour operations, guides, basic hospitality & amenities in the villages linked to trekking routes including rock climbing and mountaineering.
- Explore unexplored destinations, organizing familiarization tours to promote the conservation practices at destination & linkages with state tourism department.

Recognition

- Affiliated to Earth Charter International.
- Affiliated to Earth Charter youth Group.
- DRDA Chamoli as Nodal Center for Hill Bamboo Craft training.
- Affiliated to SAYEN network India.

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