

PROCEEDING of SYNERGY MEETING
Under
Khangchendzonga Landscape Conservation and
Development Initiative (KLCDI)-India

Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Village (Barsey-Singalila Pilot Site)

15 April 2018



Collaborating Institutions

G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development
Sikkim Regional Centre, Pangthang, Gangtok 737101, Sikkim

Directorate of Forests (DoFs)
Government of West Bengal

The Mountain Institute (TMI)-India
Below Dr.Dhakai's Clinic, Tadong, Gangtok Sikkim 737102

Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation
Saibal Mansion, 16 Hill Cart Road, opp. SBI, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal 734001

Communities of Gorkhey and Samanden Forest Village
Singalila National Park, West Bengal, India



Objectives of the Synergy Meeting

For the effective implementation of KLCDI-India programme and capitalizing the contribution of multi-stakeholders, there was a need to reinforce synergy among the stakeholders. Therefore, a synergy meeting was organized at Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Village (Barsey-Singalila pilot site) on 15 April 2018 for ensuring the active participation of local communities and strengthening the coordination among stakeholders under KLCDI-India programme. The meeting was jointly organized by G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Sikkim Regional Centre in collaboration with the Forest Department, Government of West Bengal and The Mountain Institute (TMI)- India, at the Denver's Gallery homestay in Gorkhey village.

The following were the objectives:

- Discuss local issues and constraints faced by the communities of Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Villages such as man-animal interaction, extraction of resources from the forest, grazing of animals, tourism development, solid waste management etc.
- Discussed the entry point activities carried out under the KLCDI-India (Implementation phase) especially for Gorkhey-Samanden
- Share and discuss long-term strategic plans developed for Gorkhey-Samanden by the collaborating partners

Participation

1. Mr. Ujjal Ghosh, IFS, CCF (WLN), Forest Department, Government of West Bengal
2. Dr. Ghanashyam Sharma, Program Manager, The Mountain Institute (TMI)-India
3. Dr. Kailash S. Gaira, Project Manager: KLCDI-India, G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Sikkim Regional Centre, Gangtok
4. Mr. Animesh Bose and Mr. Soibal Mitra, Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation, Siliguri and other five members of HNAF, Siliguri
5. Mr. Tara Chettri and members of the Gorkhey Ecotourism Committee
6. Members of the Smriti Self Help Group, Samanden
7. Two Forest Beat Officers (Wildlife and Territorial) For Gorkhey and Samanden Forest Villages
8. 40 Community members of Gorkhey and Samanden Forest Villages

Meeting proceedings

Dr. Ghanashyam Sharma Programme Manager, TMI-India moderated the meeting and welcomed the chief guest, Mr. Ujjal Ghosh IFS, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife, North), Government of West Bengal, guests from HNAF Siliguri, and all the community members of Gorkhey and Samanden Forest Villages.

In his introduction to KLCDI project and the activities, he briefly explained about the progress made so far since its inception around three years ago. He informed that the pilot site was initially identified by the collaborating partners due to its proximity to the transboundary area along the Singalila Range of Mountains, cultural affiliation

of the indigenous communities of Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Villages in Singalila National Park and the Ribdi-Bhareng GPU, and the emerging tourist flow along the Ribdi-Bhareng-Gorkhey/Samanden-Phalut-Sandakphu trekking route.

Dr. Sharma also elaborated about the Feasibility Assessment Report, Conservation and Development Strategy and the Participatory Natural Resource Management Plan prepared by the collaborating institutions for the Barsey-Singalila pilot site. Talking about the recent entry point activities under the KLCDI, he elaborated on the participation of locals in the capacity building and training activities such as Ecotourism Management training at Yuksam, West Sikkim, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Management Training at Ribdi, West Sikkim, Polyhouse and off-season vegetable cultivation in Gorkhey-Samanden village. He further informed the CCF and the guests that the collaborating institutions distributed 700 saplings of ground apple and 200 saplings of peaches, constructed three polyhouses, and organized exposure visits for the local community members.



Dr. Kailash S. Gaira, Project Manager KLCDI-India

Dr. Gaira initially about the series of visits and community meeting that were organized since 2014 to identify the issues and prospects under the broad umbrella of KLCDI-India. Based on multiple stakeholders' consultations, critical issues of the Barsey-Singalila pilot sites were identified and prioritized and categorically documented for the future course of action through the KLCDI project, he enlightened. He informed that KLCDI is a long-term project approved by the Government of India through the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MOEF&CC) and is a project implemented simultaneously by institutions of India, Bhutan, and Nepal under the guidance of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu Nepal. The main mission of the project is to establish transboundary cooperation and community development including the conservation of the forests and biodiversity, he added.

Dr. Gaira highlighted the current initiatives and future plans adopted at the landscape level including the efforts of Government of India for prioritizing the long-term vision both for conservation and development. He said that agricultural practices and regulated tourism should flourish for social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits of the indigenous communities in the Barsey-Singalila pilot site. He finally stressed that we have to reduce the dependency of communities on forest resources. He informed that there are upcoming projects with resources

funded by the National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS), a Government of India funded a project to various institutions in the region which will supplement the KLCDI R&D initiative and will offer opportunities for convergence in future.



Mr. Tara Thapa, President of Gorkhey Ecotourism Committee (GEC)

Mr. Thapa expressed his gratitude to the chief guest Mr. Ujjal Ghosh and shared constraints and difficulties the local people have been facing. Initially, he elaborated the support and technical assistance G. B. Pant Institute (GBPNIHESD) and TMI India have been providing to them since last two years.

He briefly discussed the crop raids by wild animals such as wild boar, deer, and monkeys, and demanded fencing along the farm edges so as to protect the farms to ensure crop cultivation. He raised the issue of weak dwelling houses which requires immediate repairs and demanded support from the government.

He then informed that there was functional mini-hydel project catering the needs of the electricity demand for Gorkhey and Samanden Forest Villages which eventually could not continue due to some reasons. He demanded that they want to revive it through the support of the Forest Department. The estimate and DPR has been submitted to the higher authorities, he informed.

He also informed that the village does not have a common community hall for meetings, or for organizing cultural/social functions and until now they have been doing it in an open field. He requested the Forest Department to kindly support them for repair and extension of the existing community hall.

Finally, he requested the chief guest to look into the possibilities of making arrangement for tourist flow from Gorkhey-Samanden to Ribdi-Bhareng in Sikkim and vice versa for easy tourist flow. At the end, he submitted a memorandum of the

indigenous community members of the Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Villages for support from the Forest Department.

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The Chief Commissioner of Public Health
Louisiana
New Orleans, La. 70112

Subject: Request for fulfilling our demands
towards you.

We the local community members and
business owners would like you before
your kind decision take support that

We are facing problems in finding
a room for our administrative work
and to expand the size of the
building to the size being along
along the given condition.

We have contacted a building
construction firm to purchase a completely
new building as a need of an office room
for the construction and also to expand
the size of the building. We are now
in the process of buying the land, you
may help with it. We are now
for your official use.

We are however well informed that getting
a building is not an isolated case.
There is a need for a building for electricity
and many other things. We are now
in the process of buying the land, you
may help with it. We are now
for your official use.

1. What is a good reason why you
like a job? 1. I like the
 2. I like the responsibility of the
 3. I like the challenge of the
 4. I like the variety of the
 5. I like the pace of the
 6. I like the team of the
 7. I like the location of the
 8. I like the hours of the
 9. I like the benefits of the
 10. I like the growth of the



Mr. Animesh Bose, President, HNAF Siliguri

Mr. Bose initially elaborated on the need to protect the nature for any kind of development citing examples from Bandapani pilot sites of the KLCDI project in West Bengal. He said that development and conservation should go together without disturbing one for the another and thus both are utterly important, he stressed.

He informed that unlike Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Villages, Bandapani faces acute water shortages, Elephant raids on crops and human casualties, dolomite pollution from Bhutan, constraints in tourism development due to the scarcity of water and

poverty among the local communities'. He said that such constraints are missing here, and there are a large number of opportunities which can be explored through multi-stakeholder engagements under KLCDI project.

Interestingly, he reiterated that Samanden is a clean Forest Village, and asked the local participants whether Gorkhey can also be a clean Forest Village. These two villages need *sundarikaran* (beautification), which can be done through proper solid waste management, development of a Handicraft Centre, reviving the cultural and customary rituals, local music and dance using Madal and traditional musical instruments, establishing a Cultural Centre. Such activities will attract tourists and they would like to stay here for a few days.

In addition to this, he encouraged the community for conserving the natural assets for sustainable livelihood of the villagers.



Mr. Ujjal Ghosh, IFS, Chief Conservation of Forests (WL), West Bengal

Mr. Ghosh initially expressed his concern about the plastic litter thrown everywhere in Gorkhey Village unlike Samanden Village and said that Gorkhey has to improve now. Cleanliness will automatically bring tourists, he added. He also informed that community households in Samanden have been practicing stall feeding of their cattle, why can't Gorkhey village learn from there, he stressed. He assured the villagers that if they start stall feeding, Forest Department can support for fencing along the farmlands.

He said that reviving mini-hydel project is a valid demand, since the estimate has gone to the government and he is well informed about it, it will be materialised within 4-5 months, he promised.

Regarding the demand of the community hall, he assured that the community hall will be extended to a considerable size based on the availability of land. He also

informed that Forest Department in collaboration with the HNAF Siliguri, health check-up camps will be organized for Gorkhey and Samanden Village every year.

He further discussed that the collaborating agencies such as GBPNIHESD, TMI India, and ICIMOD Kathmandu should also support Gorkhey-Samanden on organic farming, the establishment of biogas, cultivation of orchids, promotion of floriculture cultivation of high-value cash crops such as dally chilies, and link villages with the markets for economic benefits from their produces.

Finally, he cited the example of Mawlynnong village of Meghalaya, the cleanest village of Asia and said that Gorkhey-Samanden Forest Villages has prospects to be declared, as the cleanest Village in the entire Himalayas, for this proactive participation of the public is important, he stressed.

Few suggestions like the use of plastic bottles for making walls for floors, the establishment of biodegradable compost pits, judicious management of waste products etc. are a few the communities should look into to improve the villages, he suggested. He finally expressed that he has only one dream for Gorkhey-Samanden, that is to declare these villages as the *cleanest villages in the entire Himalayas*.



Forest Beat Officer (WL), Gorkhey

Beat officer expressed that he is always guided by the CCF WL, and said that he is visiting the villages around 3 to 4 times per month to look into the local issues and to report about them to the higher authorities. He informed that CCF sahib has today given words for support from the Forest Department, so all the households should come forward to bring about change in the village, such as cleanliness, stall feeding of animals, reduction of extraction from the forests etc. He also informed that he was instrumental in the development of mini-hydel power project plan. He finally said that the SHGs, community members, and the Ecotourism committees should work together for a better future.



Forest Beat Officer (T), Samanden

He expressed gratitude to the CCF (WL) for his visit to Samanden and Gorkhey and stressed that participation of the communities is a must for any development activity. He said that solid waste management is an issue we have to tackle looking into the increasing tourist flow in the area, he added. Households can make improved *Chullas* for cooking purposes so that they can minimise the use of fuelwood and reduce their dependency in the forests.

The local forest officers both wildlife and territory division ensured that they will support the community as well as the initiatives of KLCDI-India. The local people appreciated the KLCDI-India team for their positive contribution and consistent effort for development.



Kamala Chettri, Smitri SHG, Samanden

Ms. Chettri expressed that she was highly motivated by the training at Yuksam on ecotourism and another training at Ridbi on dairy management. She also reflected that the SHGs and the community households have been highly benefited by the Yacon cultivation. This year they produced around 10 mounds of Yacon, which was consumed in the village, while in the next year more will be produced. There is a need to establish market linkage for yacon tubers, she noticed.



Open discussion and interaction

At the end, there was an open discussion on various issues discussed in the preceding sessions and those not discussed during the proceedings. Mr. Animesh Bose, during the interactive session, enquired about the list of birds, butterflies, and the wild animals. It was reported that such list is lacking. Dr. Gaira informed that the collaborating institutions will develop such lists in near future and will be made available for everybody.

The meeting finally ended after the vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Tara Thapa President of the Gorkhey Ecotourism committee.

List of participants

S. No.	Name	S. No.	Name
1	Mr. Ujjal Ghosh CCF/WLN, Directorate of Forests, North West Bengal, Govt. of West Bengal	2	Dr. Ghanashyam Sharma Programme Manager, The Mountain Institute (TMI), India, Tadong, Gangtok, Sikkim
3	Dr. Kailash S. Gaira Project Manager KLCDI-India, GBPNIHESD, SRC, Pangthang, Gangtok, Sikkim	4	Mr. Animesh Bose Programme Coordinator, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal
5	Dr. Amol Basak President, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal	6	Mr. Saibal Mitra Vice President, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal
7	Ms. Debjani Mitra ECM, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal	8	Mr. Asis Kundu Member, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal
9	Mr. Debjyoti Dey ECM, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal	10	Mr. Sudep Roy Member, HNAF, Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Darjeeling, West Bengal
11	Mr. Bijoy Tamang, Beat Officer Wildlife, Gorkhey Govt of West Bengal	12	Mr. Dipen Tamang Beat Officer Territorial, Samanden Govt of West Bengal
Participants from Gorkhey-Samanden village			
13	Mr. Tara Thapa President Gorkhey Ecotourism Committee, Gorkhey	14	Ms. Dikki Tamang Treasurer Gorkhey Ecotourism Committee, Gorkhey
15	Mr. Ram Prashad Thapa	16	Mr. Kamal Rai
17	Mr. Passang Sherpa	18	Mr. P. Sherpa
19	Mr. Biren Rai	20	Mr. Binod Subba
21	Mr. Som Kumar Rai	22	Mr. Lal Bahadur Rai
23	Mr. B.B. Rai	24	Mr. Norbu Sherpa

25	Mr. Nima Ringing Sherpa	26	Mr. Lakpa Sangay Sherpa
27	Ms. Dawa Sherpa	28	Ms. Laxmi Rai
29	Mr. Sukroj Rai	30	Mr. Rupesh Chhetri
31	Mr. Namrata Chhetri	32	Ms. Renuka Chettri
33	Ms. Nimphute Sherpa	34	Ms. Sarita Sherpa
35	Ms. Anita Sinha	36	Mr. Prabhat Sherpa
37	Ms. Ashan Rai	38	Mr. Prem Lal Tamang
39	Mr. Birmal Rai	40	Mr. Passang Sherpa
41	Ms. Aruna Chettri	42	Mr. Bishnu Chettri
43	Mr. Madhan Kr Rai	44	Mr. Bal Bahadur Chhetri
45	Mr. Pen Dorjee Sherpa	46	Ms. Pemba Tamang
47	Ms. Datemba Thami	48	Ms. Pem Sangay Sherpa
49	Mr. Kazi Tamang	50	Mr. Bikash Rai