



ICIMOD

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE

Himalica Pilot Project

Barshong, Bhutan

Building the resilience of highland communities
by improving livelihoods



Project funded by the
European Union



Overview of Himalica

The Support to Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas (Himalica) initiative is a demand-driven programme financed by the European Union (EU) and managed by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The programme supports vulnerable mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH) in mitigating and adapting to climate and socioeconomic changes.

The expected results of Himalica are:

- Enhancement of the capacities of national and regional stakeholders in dealing with livelihood development, more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources and the protection of the environment in the HKH.
- Reduction of poverty among mountain people through increased resilience, the unlocking of new livelihood opportunities, and the promotion of more equitable approaches.

Pilot projects in vulnerable areas are a key component of Himalica. Under these pilots, community-specific interventions are designed in collaboration with local partners and communities to improve the resilience of mountain women and men.

Himalica pilot project site

The Himalica pilot site in Bhutan is the Barshong gewog (which comprises a group of villages), located in the Tsirang dzongkhag (administrative and judicial district) in the south central region of the country. A gewog consists of five chiwogs (communities) – Barshong Toed, Barshong Maed, Gangtokha, Chunyikhang, and Toedsang – comprising 249 households (or 2,383 people), spread over an area of 21.2 sq km, of which approximately 53% is under forest cover. The Tsirang district has a lower general literacy rate, lower mean annual household income, and higher unemployment rate than the national average (GNH, 2013). In 2012, the district recorded a poverty incidence rate of 14.8%, an increase of 0.9% from 2007.

What we are doing

Himalica in Bhutan is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) at the central level and implemented by the Tsirang District



Administration in Barshong gewog. The pilot project plans and activities are deliberated upon and endorsed by the Project Steering Committee and accorded financial and administrative approval by the Dzongdag (district administrator). The local coordinator coordinates the implementation of activities with the livestock, forestry, and agriculture sectors in close consultation with the local government (gewog) administration. Some planned activities are implemented by engaging with progressive farmers to achieve project results.

What we have done so far

The pilot interventions have been designed in line with national priorities focusing on import substitution through the promotion of climate resilient agricultural practices. Through a consultative process, two value chains – goat and vegetables (beans, cabbage, onion, and ginger) – have been selected as promising options for improving the livelihoods of target beneficiaries as well as contributing to reducing food trade deficit. As Bhutan aspires to go organic and achieve self-sufficiency in vegetable production, much of the effort made by the pilot project will contribute to achieving the goal of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Similarly, livestock products form an integral part of the Bhutanese diet, and demand for such products has steadily increased over the last few years. With the objective of increasing the incomes of target households through the promotion of sustainable management practices in goat value chains, interventions focus on breed, shed improvement, animal health and nutrition management, and the strengthening of value chain linkages, both horizontal as well as vertical.

The key interventions made so far include:

- Identified farmers to be involved in the goat and vegetable value chains in Barshong gewog.
- Formed a 45-member goat farmers group, and had it registered at the district level.
- Conducted demonstrations of sustainable land management practices (SLMP).
- Constructed bio-digesters in each community in the gewong as demonstration.
- Conducted the demonstration, preparation, and formulation of bio-pesticides.
- Prepared micro-plans in five chiwogs in Barshong gewog.



- Supplied 45 goats of the Beetal breed (24 female and 21 male) to 21 households on a cost sharing basis.
- Constructed 23 improved goat sheds in Bashong.
- Supplied grass slips and tree saplings for sustainable land management practices.
- Supported rural market access improvement.
- Purchased vaccines for goats.

In addition, the project has also benefited from the support provided by ICIMOD. This includes exposure trips/study tours related to goat farming and vegetable production for farmers, training of trainers (ToT) on micro-planning, ToT on value chain analysis, implementation of sustainable land management practices in six demonstration sites, training of farmers on beekeeping, ToT on rural enterprise development, training on spring water protection, and visits by specialists to facilitate developing package of practices (POP). Further, the project team has also facilitated baseline household surveys, vulnerability assessments, and value chain analyses undertaken by the College of Natural Resources.

Potential for outscaling/upscaling

The project implementation unit hopes to replicate many of the activities implemented in Barshong. For example, micro-plans for other villages, prepared with varied participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools and peoples' involvement, would be beneficial and timely for the preparation of the 12th five year plan, which will start from the second half of 2016. Similarly, the local coordination office has initiated field level sustainable land management practices in project sites involving field agricultural extension officers from 12 different gewogs for replication. The adoption and replication of rooftop rainwater harvesting techniques from current pilot sites has also been planned. Since the technologies being promoted are simple, low cost, and built on indigenous knowledge, there is high level of interest and active participation from communities in the implementation of the project. This presents a viable opportunity for showing the links between ground level activities and the national strategy of making Bhutan 100% organic by 2020.



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