



Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative



AUSTRIAN
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
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Background

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) advocates using landscape and ecosystem approaches to manage biodiversity, a position that was endorsed at the seventh Conference of the Parties (CoP) meeting in 2004. Such approaches prioritize conservation and human wellbeing and require coordination and cooperation among those responsible for an area, regardless of administrative jurisdiction, to develop a common management framework and principles.

The Kangchenjunga Landscape (KL), shared by three of ICIMOD's member countries – Bhutan, India, and Nepal – encompasses a part of eastern Nepal, Sikkim and a part of West Bengal in India, and western and southwestern parts of Bhutan. A three-year preparatory phase of the Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KLCDI), begun in August 2012, led to national- and regional-level documents on the feasibility of transboundary initiatives, conservation and development strategies, and a regional cooperation framework.

ICIMOD, guided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, the Royal Government of Bhutan, has been working in Tashicholing (Samtse), Dungna (Chhukha), and Bji (Haa). The implementation phase, begun in 2016, has focused on common issues and opportunities

such as community-based tourism; value chain developments for yak and livestock, ginger, large cardamom, and cane; regional cooperation to minimize human wildlife conflict and illegal trade; and working with common research protocols and methodologies to promote science, policy, and practice interface.

Major achievements

Redefining participatory planning in transboundary landscape management

KLCDI's preparatory phase (2012–2015) encompassed participatory planning to understand the rationale for an ecosystem approach and the need for transboundary cooperation. The three-tier planning process – at the i) local community level, ii) technical level among technical groups with expertise on socio-ecological thematic areas, and iii) policy level among policymakers – created a common vision of the KL.

Creating synergy in pilot areas

KLCDI has emphasized the need for an integrated approach to create a realistic operational mechanism by engaging local governments and line agencies to strengthen multi-disciplinarity and socio-ecological systems thinking. To ensure such ownership, synergy, and mainstreaming processes, the initiative organized extensive field-level discussions, planning, and a progress review meeting with high level officials.

Operationalization of a five-year implementation cycle

The pilot area implementation plans focused on four broad strategic outputs:

- i. **Supporting the development of key plans:** KLCDI supported the preparation of a corridor management plan and operational plans for key value chain commodities such as ginger, cane, and yak ecotourism. In addition, KLCDI helped Bhutan develop the Snow Leopard Management Plan as part of the Global Snow Leopard Ecosystem Programme (GSLEP).
- ii. **Capacity development:** To enhance homestay and ecotourism services, KLCDI assisted capacity development through: i) a cook training for homestay operators in Haa, ii) an exposure visit for Haa homestay operators to Nepal, iii) an orientation visit for 50 tour operators from Thimphu to Haa, and iv) a three day training on ecotourism for park officials. KLCDI also supported three exposure visits for 30 participants from three pilot areas to develop a yak value chain as well as an orientation training on long-term socio-ecological and environmental monitoring.

- iii. **Action research:** KLCDI helped Bhutan source a high-quality productive variety of oat grass from Lanzhou University in China. Bhutan tested the oats and is now about to release these varieties for adoption across Bhutan. Since animal husbandry is an integral part of farming in Bhutan but grazing areas are limited and high-altitude plants grow slowly, fodder and nutrition is scarce in high rangeland areas.
- iv. **Policy interface:** KLCDI conducted policy interface initiatives, including a “Regional Policy Dialogue on Tourism,” where high-level delegates from Bhutan, India, and Nepal gathered in Bhutan to discuss tourism challenges and opportunities. Destination Haa: Tourism Action Plan: 2018–2023 and the Bhutan Tourism Product Development Guideline were key policy documents. The KLCDI–Bhutan team is helping design the Highland Development Programme, which has been identified as a priority flagship programme in Bhutan's twelfth Five Year Plan.

Regional platform and outreach

KLCDI has finalized a knowledge management and communication strategy for 2018 and 2019, which included development of a web portal with over 8,000 biodiversity species checklists. KLCDI also helped the Government of Bhutan organize the third Asia Protected Area Partnership (APAP) meeting. Additionally, the initiative is working closely with the Haa district, the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), and the Nature Conservation Division (NCD) to support the Community Based Tourism Information Centre to prepare tourism promotion and other related products to market Haa as a unique tourism destination, such as a 3-D model and a Haa Tourism interactive map.

Knowledge products

KLCDI has released four ICIMOD publications, four peer review papers, many news articles, and a number of consultative process proceedings, all focusing on transboundary planning.

Gender mainstreaming

KLCDI engages an equal number of male and female staff, and all team members were assigned leading roles and encouraged to lead in the programme. Women were the primary authors of 70% of publications and proceedings. On International Women's Day 2018, the team was second runner-up for ICIMOD's Gender Innovation Award.