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In the Know

UNDP Nepal Newsletter

All-Female Nepali Expedition completes historic Mount Everest summit bid

News of the Month

On 25 May, the tenth and final Nepali member of the First Inclusive Women's Sagarmatha Expedition (FIWSE) completed her summit bid, making FIWSE the most successful female expedition to conquer Sagarmatha (Mount Everest). This group unfurled the MDG 3 banner offered by the Danish Embassy at the summit in support of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

The team includes ten Nepali women, from 17-27 years-old, representing a range of the country's castes and ethnicities. This is the first time that women from the Brahmin, Chettri, Danuwar, and Gurung communities have summited Mount Everest. Out of the ten women, only two had prior mountaineering experience. Before this expedition, seven Nepali women had scaled the world's highest peak.



The FIWSE team heading towards Khumbu Icefall !

Photo-WFP/James Giambro

The expedition was supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) along with the Government and non-government organisations including the private

sector. As climbers and mountaineers, the FIWSE 2008 team is also very concerned about the affects of global warming on Nepalese people and their livelihoods, and its impacts on one of Nepal's greatest resources — the Himalayas. They hope to play a significant role in promoting girls' education, empowering women and educating people about the affects of climate change in Nepal after completing the expedition.

"This is extraordinarily impressive. These ten young women have proven that a same common will, the commitment to a higher common goal and unfailing team work can bridge over any original differences in skills, experience, education and ethnicity. We look forward to their observation on climate change upon their return," said Anne-Isabelle Degryse-Blateau, UNDP Country Director in Nepal.



Photo-WFP/James Giambro

Deputy Speaker a new star in BBC World Service Trust radio drama

Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chitralkha Yadav embarked on a new career as a radio actor this month when she played herself in the radio drama *Katha Mitho Sarangiko*. The drama is produced by the BBC World Service Trust as part of the UNDP **Participation in Peace and Constitution Building** project.

Her role in the drama was to rescue the character of 17 year old girl named Manju who runs away from her home in Janakpur to avoid an arranged marriage and ends up in Kathmandu where she dreams of furthering her studies. But reality is tough, Manju struggles to make ends meet in Kathmandu. She encounters Chitralkha Yadav, who offers her a place in her own home and a chance to start a new life.

Chitralkha Yadav was invited to take part in the drama because she comes from a traditional Tarai background and herself went through an arranged marriage when she was in class 9. But as



an educated woman, with a supportive husband, she rose in society academically and politically to become an icon for young women not just in the Tarai but all over Nepal. Talking of her involvement in the drama, Chitralkha Yadav said, "I'm willing to take on anything that makes

a contribution to society and this drama is helping the peace process. I was lucky to have a husband who helped me to develop a career, but not everyone is so lucky. Just like Manju, many women are struggling to realize their ambitions. By appearing in the drama I hope I can be an inspiration to them."

Mission on Climate Change

Mr. Gernot Laganda, Technical Advisor of UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) was on a mission from UNDP Regional Centre Bangkok, to explore the possibility of expanding the climate change portfolio of UNDP Nepal.

The mission undertook consultations with the concerned government agencies, non-government organisations and donor community. During the mission period, the expansion of the scope of the pipeline project, **National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (NAPP)** was discussed to strengthen the government capacity on developing and maintaining a climate change information system for Nepal and to develop a follow-up proposal for a multi-sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Nepal.

Latest News Update

UNDP-AusAID joint field visit

A joint field visit of AUSAID and UNDP to Kavre was organised to review the progress of the MEDEP-AusAID programme. The team from AusAID included Lorelle Bakker, Country Programme Coordinator and Tara Gurung, Manager.

The purpose of the visit was to observe some micro-enterprises and interact with the micro-entrepreneurs on some of their burning issues. The visit team also observed the pine logging activities and interacted with Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). The visit has been considered useful by both the organisations in terms of getting further support from AusAID.

Peace and Development

Entrepreneurs hope for peace to expand business

Byangdhunga village, ward no. 2 of Kavre district is now a center of attraction where groups of young Magaratis (Dalits) are engaged in manufacturing leather shoes. Men are busy designing and cutting the raw materials while the women are engaged in giving finishing touches and packaging the final product. These young men and women are now employed in their own village and are able to earn Rs 5000- 6000 per month. If peace allows the country to operate smoothly, they hope to become the number-one shoe manufacturers in the country.

There are 35 poor Magaratis (Dalit) households in the village that rely on farming and occasional labour works for their livelihood. Upto recently, very few men and women were working in shoe factories in Pokhara and Kathmandu.

Despite of being so near to the capital Kathmandu and just half an hour drive from Banepa, the majority of the young generation was unemployed, until recently when the scenario changed after the UNDP Micro-enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) intervened. Analysing the skill of these people in shoe making, the level of interest to do something productive and the market demand, MEDEP motivated them to form a micro-enterprise group to start a leather shoe enterprise in the village.

In December 2007, 24 young Dalits (16 male and 8 female) organised themselves into a group while MEDEP provided an entrepreneurship training and also an additional support of Rs.



78,000 required to establish a leather shoe enterprise. It was interesting to see that the entrepreneurs had collected Rs. 120,000.00 (rupees five thousand per person) amongst themselves with the support of their families, as investment to meet the operational cost and buy the machines.

Madan Magrati, the Marketing Manager says, "We are producing school shoes, formal shoes, canvas shoes, sports shoes and other shoes as per the demand of the customers. We have the capacity to manufacture 30-35 pairs on a daily basis." He further added that they had reached a sales volume of Rs 350,000.00 in the span of the first 5 months. "I am proud to say that our products have proven to be of high quality and attractive that

can easily compete in the local market. We are also providing full time employment to 7 people in addition to the 24 founder members."

They purchase the raw materials from Kathmandu and sell the shoes in adjoining cities such as Banepa, Dhulikhel and Kathmandu. They see the need to invest more as the demand for their products is on the rise.

As part of transparent management scale, categorisation of various types of works with appropriate payment scales was established bringing clarity to the remuneration of their employees for the time and labour. Their hardwork, skill and investment has eventually paid off. It is estimated that the average per capita income of these micro-entrepreneurs has increased by 90% over these last five months.

Conservation and Development

Communities conserve wetlands in Rupa lake

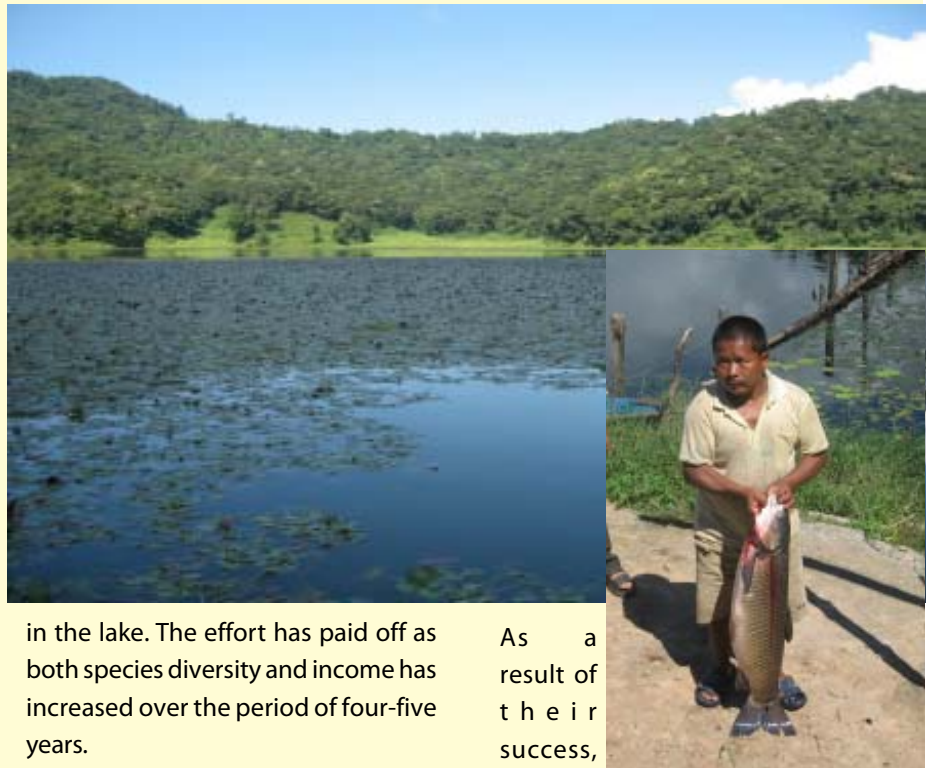
Feature of the Month

The *Rupa* (beautiful) lake in Kaski district which looked like a swamp, a few years ago looks different now. Finally the lake has been able to generate resources to improve the lives of the local people. Presently, the lake is even more beautiful and pristine than the name suggests!

Until now the lake was only used for fishing by a handful of traditional fishermen. Due to encroachment, the size of the lake has been squeezed down to 100ha from the original 135 ha. The UNDP- GEF Small Grants Programme in 2002 provided funding through the Local Initiative for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LIBIRD), a national NGO, to initiate a Community Biodiversity Register (CBR) Project. The project chose *Rupa Lake Conservation and Fisheries Co-operative* for the purpose.

“When the co-operative was established, I could only gather 36 members, each contributing Rs 5,000 to form the co-operative”, said Mr Lekhnath Dhakal, Chairperson of the co-operative. “At that time, Lekhnath Municipality also took a very bold decision by handing over the management responsibility to us but we have not disappointed them,” he further added.

The co-operative has simultaneously initiated the conservation work and fish farming in the lake. By now the cooperative has divided the wetland in a local fish zone, a bird conservation area, a wild rice zone, a white lotus zone and a fish breeding zone. It has maintained a register of 54 wetland species including 34 fish species found



in the lake. The effort has paid off as both species diversity and income has increased over the period of four-five years.

In first year, the co-operative had earned Rs. 900,000 and last year the figure rose to Rs. 4 million. This success has encouraged more members to join the cooperative. Today, 360 member households have joined in the co-operative and the share value has increased to Rs. 12,000.

The co-operative employs the traditional fishermen (Jalari) for fishing and there are 13 regular employees and 20 other seasonal employees. The co-operative supports 5 local primary schools and has provided scholarships for 40 poor students including the Jalari children. “This is a huge shift for the Jalari children, who used to spend their childhood fishing”, said Ganga Maya Gurung, one of the members of the cooperative.

As a result of their success, the co-

operative has also been able to attract other donors, such as the IUCN Netherlands and the World Vision.

The majority of the income from the lake is used to meet administrative costs. Annually, the co-operative provides Rs. 4000 each to 13 community forestry users groups for the management of the watershed. Likewise, funds are also used to construct small check-dams and to plant more seedlings. The income is further invested in income generation activities such as goat farming, bee keeping, mushroom farming and organic farming. Since there is no law regarding the management of wetland in Nepal, this initiative could be a model for managing other wetlands in the country.

UNDP Retreat

UNDP Retreat in Borderlands

UNDP had a retreat in Borderlands for all staff on 22-24 May. The retreat began with project site visits on the first day to listen to communities: how the projects may have helped and what the concerns, hopes and issues of the communities were. It was an occasion for many staff who had not gone to the field to understand what their work contributed to.

A paperless and powerpoint less retreat with lots of activities for team building, coordination, time management, motivation, problem solving, effective communication and trust building—it was an exciting experience for all staff.

The activities included rafting, canyoning and lots of other exercises that required team spirit and respect for each other's work and pushed people beyond their belief of their personal boundaries. There were banners prepared by each team reflecting their commitments.

UNDP thanks the wonderful facilitators of Borderlands for organising such a stimulating and thought provoking retreat!

