

COMDEKS

Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative

United Nations Development Programme
Environment and Energy



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Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

This newsletter is produced by the Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative Project, implemented by UNDP and funded by the Japan Biodiversity Fund. It provides updates on a range of topics including the status of ongoing country programmes, landscape performance indicators, project impacts and results, and noteworthy announcements.

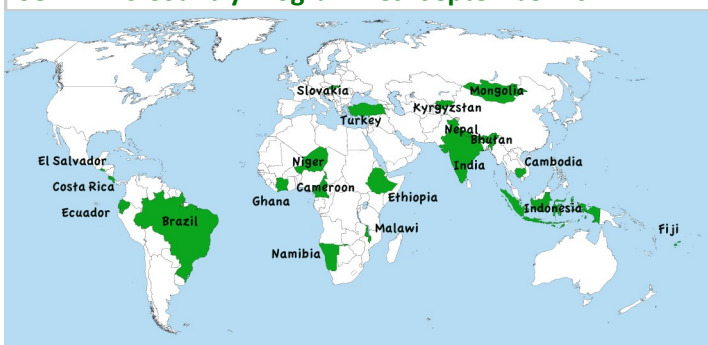
For more information about the COMDEKS project and latest news, please visit our blog at www.comdeksproject.com

Welcome to the ninth issue of our Newsletter!

In this edition, we highlight:

- 1) Launch of COMDEKS Publication during CBD-COP12
- 2) Krishak Mitra Award to COMDEKS grantee in India
- 3) COMDEKS support to sustainable livelihoods of Malawi youth
- 4) COMDEKS and the Agroecology approach
- 5) Portfolio Update: Stories from Kyrgyzstan, El Salvador, and Nepal
- 6) A COMDEKS Photostory from Ethiopia

COMDEKS Country Programmes: September 2014



Launch of COMDEKS Publication during CBD COP-12



The fifth International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative Global Conference (IPSI-5) will be held this year from October 4-5 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, back to back with the Twelfth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP12).

During the IPSI Side-Event "Contributing to the Aichi Targets from the Ground-up",

COMDEKS will be launching a new case studies publication, "COMDEKS: Communities in Action for Landscape Resilience and Sustainability". The new publication collates and analyzes results and lessons learned from the ten phase one COMDEKS countries through case studies of program implementation in

target landscapes and seascapes, detailing activities at the local level. More information can be found on the COMDEKS Web-site.

Krishak Mitra Award to COMDEKS grantee Mahila Heat



Himalayan State of Uttarakhand

Photo: India

We are proud to announce the success of Mahila Heat, a COMDEKS grantee and partner in India, in winning the Krishak Mitra Award by the G.B. Pant Himalayan Environment & Development Institute, Kosi at the Environment Day Celebration, held June 5th, 2014. This year's Environment Day centered on the theme "Climate Change" and "Diluting Ice of Himalaya." With COMDEKS support, Mahila Heat implements the "Conserving Biodiversity for Positive Human-Nature Relationship through Nature and Tourism in Kausani District of Almora District" project.

The project seeks to promote biodiversity while encouraging income generating activities, such as supporting the ecotourism efforts of local providers in the Kausani valley region through training and organizing guides, creating local craft and service enterprises to cater to tourists, improving trek routes, and building other tourism infrastructure. The project also organizes the community through public meetings and the creation of self-help groups and aims to promote home kitchen gardens and value-added crops such as spices and fruits to increase farmers' incomes.

Godhan Singh Negi, a resident of Sagbara Village and a member of a self-help group under the COMDEKS project, was honored



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for his contribution in vegetable cultivation, honey bee cultivation, and other agricultural activities.

Contributed by Prabhjot Sodhi, India National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

COMDEKS Support to Sustainable Livelihoods Brightens Future of Malawi Youth

COMDEKS projects in Malawi have supported a number of income diversifying and sustainable livelihood activities in the Tukomobo-Kande. Comprising more than half of the country's population, Malawi's youth have notably benefited from COMDEKS' presence in the target landscape as hundreds of young men and women are now engaged in eco-tourism and agriculture activities. Emily Phiri-Chinthu, Coordinator of Project Activities for the Kyunanja Development Organization (KUDO), says after expanding income generating activities for youth, many "have stopped engaging themselves in bad behaviours such as excessive beer drinking and smoking because they are now busy."

Menion Kinna, 29, who went to Tanzania for business opportunities, says he decided to return home because a COMDEKS project was supporting expansion of ecotourism, a strong interest of his, in the region. Since implementation, the "Community Based Eco-tourism, Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Preservation Project" has helped develop community based approaches for sustainable management of local landscapes, ecosystems and biological diversity while contributing to local livelihoods and well-being. Nkhata Bay as part of the Tukomono-Kande landscape is an important tourism destination for its scenic beaches. As part of the project, Kinna and others received trainings on how to accommodate tourists and support them during their stay. Kinna explains, "our job is to guide them and they in turn give us something in form of cash." In addition, there are plans to build an eco-tourism lodge on Kande beach, which would offer further employment opportunities to youth in the area.



Youth engaged in fish farming practices

UNDP Malawi

COMDEKS supported projects have also helped Malawi youth to build farming and fishing ventures. Mr. Nkhata, 30, notes that the COMDEKS project "Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods for Nature Conservation," allowed him to become a rice farmer and

others have received support for various activities which enable the sustainable use of natural resources such as forests. Tomas Kamanga, a beekeeper and owner of Kanyunya Village Forest notes that financial support for his enterprise has allowed him to promote protection of forests in the region, essential for continued ecotourism efforts as well. "In some places the forests are gone. The beaches are not taken care of and there is nothing left for tourists to see and admire. We want to change that," he says.

Contributed by Alex Damaliphetsa, Malawi National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

COMDEKS and the Agroecology Approach



Carp-SIS polyculture, an agro-ecological method in Nepal

Photo: Nepal

Agroecology - as a multi-functional approach to farming that focuses on optimal resource usage within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem - has emerged as a powerful tool for sustainable development. Since agroecology emphasizes the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment within agricultural systems, the study and practice of agroecology is inherently multidisciplinary, including factors from agronomy, ecology, sociology, economics, and related disciplines. Examples of agro-ecological practices include diversification of production systems (such as mixed cropping, which improves nutrient and input efficiency), crop rotation and fallowing, overall diversification of the agricultural landscape (such as agroforestry), conservation agriculture, the use of local resources and renewable energy sources, conservation of water/improved water efficiency, and strengthening of community seed banks and seed systems.

Within the context of COMDEKS, agroecology can potentially address the environmental, economic, and social needs of a community by focusing on methods which simultaneously enhance the ecosystem's sustainability and resilience to environmental stressors while also strengthening traditional knowledge management and increasing local productivity for improved livelihoods and food security. The COMDEKS Programme takes an integrated landscape approach to development which is aimed at increasing the ecological resilience of local ecosystems as well as enhancing the social and economic resilience of the communities living and working within them; as such, it often employs agroecological practices in implementing the landscape strategy.

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Although traditional farming communities have developed agricultural systems which are both productive and environmentally sustainable, in many communities pressures to increase agricultural output have led to deforestation, poor soil management, overgrazing, and the increased use of mono-cropping, pesticides, and other practices that reduce biodiversity and disrupt ecosystem functioning. In the long-term, the abandonment of traditional knowledge and techniques makes communities more vulnerable to external shocks such as climate change as well as more dependent on costly external-inputs and top-down technology transfers.

To combat these vulnerabilities and empower communities towards self-sufficiency and improved landscape resilience to various external stressors, COMDEKS projects commonly incorporate agro-ecological techniques in strategies to enhance agricultural production and biodiversity. For example, in Ethiopia, COMDEKS grantee Urgaha Animal Fattening Cooperative aims to raise 100,000 seedlings of native multipurpose species and plant them on degraded areas of the ecosystem such as gullies, landslides and degraded riverbanks, along physical soil and water conservation structures, and as components of agro-forestry systems to restore ecosystem services in the region and become a source of income for farmers in the region.



Crop diversification is practiced in Ethiopia

Photo: Ethiopia

Another COMDEKS project in Brazil - titled "Conservation and Management of Natural Resources: Opportunity for Sustainable Production" - targets improved water availability through fencing and monitoring of water sources, and construction of water harvesting systems, underground dams, and terraces. In Nepal, efforts to promote community agency and reduce dependency on external inputs have led COMDEKS grantee Multi-Dimensional Resource Center Nepal (MRC Nepal) to develop a project to identify and document important traditional knowledge and skills which can enhance economic livelihoods and biodiversity in the target region. Other supported activities include the establishment of a seed bank to conserve local varieties as well as efforts to diversify crop production and introduce seasonal/off-seasonal vegetables.

While implementation efforts are still underway, and these

agroecological approaches will be continually adapted to the needs of the community over time, agro-ecological consideration has already expanded the toolkit of sustainable land-use activities that communities can use to maintain, rebuild, and revitalize their socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes.

Contributed by Rachel Olanoff, COMDEKS Intern

Portfolio Update



Kyrgyzstan

Lake Issyk-Kul is the biggest lake in Kyrgyzstan

Photo: Kyrgyzstan

The target landscape selected as the focus of COMDEKS activities in Kyrgyzstan is a coastal strip around Lake Issyk-Kul, located in the Issyk-Kul Province. Renowned for its unique beauty and historic relevance, the area surrounding Lake Issyk-Kul is also rich in natural resources and biodiversity. Over the last fifty years, the ecosystem has been deteriorating significantly. Experts estimate that the degradation of some coastal ecosystems has reached critical values, and that without urgent action, the effects of environmental degradation on the landscape will become irreversible. Additionally, although there has been increasing focus on agricultural production, there is heavy dependence on food imports from surrounding countries. Furthermore, the growing agricultural sector relies heavily on the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

To address these and other issues, a baseline assessment funded by COMDEKS was carried out to understand the current state of the landscape and to identify potential interventions towards developing sustainable livelihood activities in the context of sound biodiversity management. Over 280 community members participated in the baseline assessment workshop, which took place in Karakol in October 2013. Based on the results of the workshop, a Landscape Strategy was developed with the long term objectives of restoring and sustainably managing the landscape and coastal ecosystem of Lake Issyk-Kul, introducing the practice of sustainable agriculture in the pilot area, improving livelihood opportunities for the target population, and strengthening institutional capacity of local communities to effectively manage the landscape.

Contributed by Evgeniia Postnova, Kyrgyzstan National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

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El Salvador

The selected area for COMDEKS supported projects in El Salvador, the Jaltapeque-Naja Protected Area, contains a complex and interdependent ecosystem of estuaries and channels, beaches, sandbars, mangroves, and alluvial and deciduous forests. The wetland area is home to a diverse range of marine and coastal life and provides nesting refuge for vulnerable species such as the olive ridley sea turtle as well as crocodiles. It is also critical as a flood control and water purification system, and acts as a natural barrier protecting communities against increasing incidence of hurricanes and tropical storms from the Pacific Ocean. However, the expansion of agricultural and livestock lands has led to deforestation and overfishing. Additionally, pesticides and sewage from nearby communities have polluted the water.

In El Salvador, a landscape-wide baseline assessment was conducted in March 2014 with the objective of assessing current conditions and developing a Landscape Strategy to improve socioecological resilience of the target area. Two members from each of ten target communities in the area participated in workshops along with selected leaders of relevant organizations in the region. In September 2014, the National Steering Committee approved the Landscape Strategy. Potential projects pursuing achievement of landscape outcomes include technical assistance to train leaders for sustainable environmental management, establishing community banks to develop a collection of plant genetic resources for recovering traditional crops, and projects which will promote mixed cropping and agroforestry systems.



Community members score SEPL indicators

Photo: El Salvador

Contributed by Juan René Guzman, El Salvador National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

Nepal

Currently six COMDEKS projects are being implemented in the Makawanpur District of Nepal in the country's central region. The Makawanpur District is comprised of a diverse mosaic of ecosystems, and lies in the Manahari River watershed, which drains into the Rapti River. The landscape is composed of hills and flat plains, with nearly half of the area covered by forests. Climate varies by altitude and the area is prone to extremes of landslides, flooding and wild fires. In addition the topography and geology of the target landscape make it vulnerable to land-

slides and flooding, and land-use practices, such as slash and burn agriculture that increases the threat of forest fires, and causes emissions of greenhouse gases and serious soil erosion, have notably contributed to increasing the ecosystem's risk of further degradation.



Preparing a seed bed for vegetables

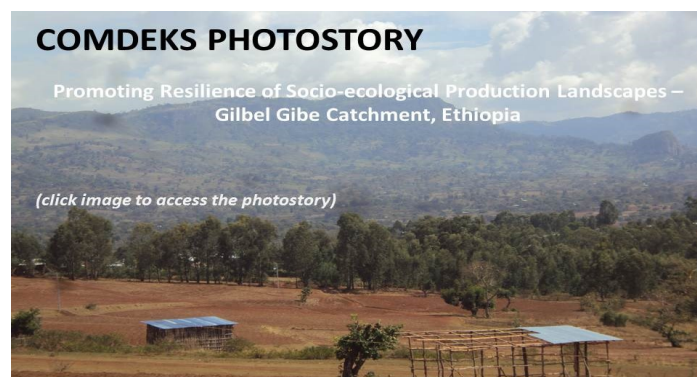
Photo: Nepal

Supported projects in this region aim to address these challenges by enhancing the buffer capacity of key ecosystems against extreme weather events, maintaining and protecting agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources in the target landscape through conservation and diversification in farming practices, enhancing communities' livelihoods through community development activities and land-use diversification, and supporting community-based institutional governance structures for effective participatory decision making and local knowledge exchange at the landscape level.

Contributed by Gopal Sherchan, Nepal National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

A COMDEKS Photostory from Ethiopia

Click the image above to access a photostory from Ethiopia.



Contributed by Zeleke Tesfaye, Ethiopia National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

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