

COMDEKS

Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative

United Nations Development Programme



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

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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.

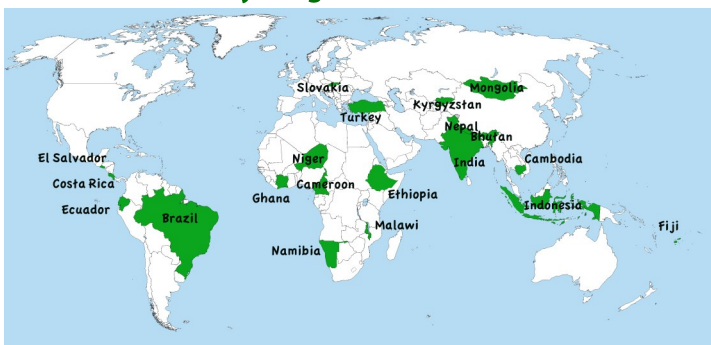
For more information about the COMDEKS project and latest news, please visit our blog at www.comdeksproject.com

Welcome to the eleventh issue of our Newsletter!

In this edition, we highlight:

- 1) Resilience Indicators Toolkit hosted on the NBSAP Forum
- 2) Jankidevi Bajaj Award to COMDEKS Partner in India
- 3) Ex-post baseline assessment as a bridge to adaptive management – Ghana
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COMDEKS Country Programmes: March 2015



Resilience Indicators Toolkit hosted on the NBSAP Forum at www.nbsapforum.net



The Toolkit for the Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS), a tool for engaging local communities in the adaptive management of their landscapes and

seascapes, has been recently hosted on the NBSAP Forum.

The Forum, a global partnership which supports the development and implementation of effective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), is hosted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The toolkit is used by the COMDEKS Programme to guide the assessment of socio-

ecological production landscapes and seascapes. It has been developed by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), Bioversity International, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of a Collaborative Activity under the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI).

Click [here](#) for additional information.

Jankidevi Bajaj Award to COMDEKS Partner in India



Ms. Krishna Bisht receiving the Jankidevi Bajaj Award 2014

Photo: India

We are pleased to announce that Ms. Krishna Bisht, General Secretary of Mahila Haat, has won the 22nd Indian Merchants' Chamber Ladies' Wing, Jankidevi Bajaj Award 2014, for her outstanding contribution towards rural business entrepreneurship and empowerment. Ms. Bisht, General Secretary of Mahila Haat, a COMDEKS Project partner, received the award from the Chief Guest, Mrs. Priya Datt, a known Indian politician. The award, given every year to recognize women entrepreneurs for their work in rural India, was conferred on Ms. Bisht in the presence of IMC (The Indian Merchant Chambers) President, Mrs. Arti Sanghi and Justice Dr. C.S. Dharmadhikari, the former chief justice of the Bombay High Court.

Ms. Bisht started the NGO 'Mahila Haat' which focuses on the empowerment of women, particularly the underprivileged, through their economic upliftment and social emancipation, helping inter alia, poor women producers widen the scope of agriculture through various support services. As a COMDEKS grantee, Mahila Haat implements the project "Conserving Biodiversity for Positive Human-Nature Relationships through Nature and Tourism" in the Almora District, India, which seeks to



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promote biodiversity by encouraging income generating activities, such as ecotourism.

Ex-post baseline assessment as a bridge to adaptive management – Ghana

Between June and August 2014, Ghana carried out an ex-post baseline assessment aimed at analyzing successful innovations that resulted from the first cycle of COMDEKS supported local projects in the target socio-ecological production landscape – the WETO Range. The assessment was carried out with support from PAB Consult, GEONETCast Centre of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, members of the WETO Platform, the National Steering Committee and the GEF-SGP Ghana Secretariat. During the ex-post assessment, representatives evaluated project results against the landscape outcomes put forward in the Landscape Strategy and a total of 2,694 households (within 36 communities) were found to have directly benefited from COMDEKS activities in the Weto landscape. Progress was documented by a team of media experts who created a video documentary on various achievements made and a final validation workshop was held at the Kpeve District Assembly Hall in October 2014. The validation workshop included 15 focus group discussions within the landscape, involving key opinion leaders, project beneficiaries, chiefs, youth, women, land owners and members of the WETO platform.



The final validation workshop.

Photo: Ghana

Through the use of the Resilience Indicators, landscape stakeholders and grantee representatives compared WETO Landscape Resilient Indicators used in the original participatory baseline assessment, with the same indicators in the ex-post assessment, to identify landscape changes, looking specifically at evaluating the results of project interventions related to improved food production, the rehabilitation of seven watersheds, increased land under natural regeneration, improved methods of farming and significant changes in the vegetative cover due to the planting of over one and a half million different tree species. A spatial analysis to study changes in the vegetative cover was conducted using LANDSAT imagery for the years 2011, 2013 and 2014, the result of which showed a

marked improvement in vegetative cover, revealing that a total of 57,297 ha was covered by the Weto COMDEKS interventions.



A number of nurseries have been set up promoting local employment.

Photo: Ghana

In assessing the relevance of the supported activities in the target landscape, the assessment reviewed projects' design, sustainability and effectiveness with respect to the existing problems in the landscape and found that the activities implemented were satisfactorily addressing the needs of the population. A total of 463 beneficiaries were involved in the assessment and on the basis of these results, appropriate lessons were extracted and considerations made for future interventions in the landscape.

The ex-post baseline assessment in Ghana resulted in an updated Landscape Strategy that recognizes and builds upon progress that has been made, identifying new opportunities for local work—an example of adaptive management and planning in practice. As such, the ex-post assessment conducted, represents the first opportunity to test the principles of adaptive management within the context of the landscape approach. Capitalizing on the potential of public analysis, consultations, and 're-visioning' will be crucial in demonstrating the long-term viability and sustainability of the landscape approach.

Please click [here](#) to view the ex-post baseline assessment video from Ghana.

Contributed by Mr. George Ortsin, Ghana National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

The use of gender-sensitive approaches and tools in COMDEKS projects

The "Toolkit for Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS)" recently released in November 2014 during the World Parks Congress, was developed under the premise that gender inequality, social exclusion and marginalization can hinder the ability of women and other groups to strengthen resilience. The indicators measure elements of SEPLS resilience along a number of interrelated dimensions, with social equity (including gender equity) and women's knowledge playing an important role. The SEPLS indicators piloting exercise among COMDEKS participating countries, and its gender analysis, has enabled the development of participatory strategies that include gender sensitive criteria, creating equal

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opportunities for both genders to participate in implementation and monitoring. Recognizing gender barriers as a challenge, the toolkit recommends the inclusion of specific projects managed by women's groups and activities that ensure their participation in community-based institutions and engagement with external partners and networks. To enable effective participation of women in the planning process and strategy development, community consultations and assessments are conducted in the context of social conventions - organizing separate meetings for men and women, if appropriate. This approach has been employed at several COMDEKS sites including the Gilgel Gibe I dam catchment area in Ethiopia.



Women and men are separated to ensure both perspectives are heard. Photo: Ethiopia

As a result, all COMDEKS projects have incorporated a gender perspective when designing and implementing community based projects. For example, in Turkey, COMDEKS has increased the visibility of local fisherwomen, improving their livelihoods and connections. Fisherwomen have been officially added to the list of eligible groups who can seek microfinance through the Turkey Grameen Micro Credit Program and have shown increased participation in meetings with marine experts, local cooperatives and governing bodies. In Malawi, at least 56 village saving and loan groups have been formed, with a combined membership of 690 people, of which 75 percent are women. As a result a number of women have reported increased trust and respect from their husbands. Local projects in Nepal have been designed to favor women's participation with specific promotional and awareness raising campaigns targeted at them. In addition to this, special efforts have been made to identify and link women's groups to credit sources in order to overcome the financial constraints that many female-headed households are confronted with.

Contributed by Shaheen Contractor, COMDEKS Intern

Strengthening resilience and participatory management – Stories from Ecuador

The target landscape selected as the focus for COMDEKS projects in Ecuador is the Napo River watershed, located in the ecologically rich Amazon region. Due to large scale extraction projects that have significantly reduced biodiversity,

COMDEKS projects aim to consolidate, replicate, and scale up work initiated by indigenous and rural community organizations in order to develop sound biodiversity management strategies and sustainable livelihood activities within the region. In the target area, deforestation, improper agricultural practices and limited knowledge are some of the challenges being addressed through COMDEKS projects in order to maintain, rebuild, and revitalize the socio ecological production landscape.

Project interventions support agro-ecological and agro-forestry practices by diversifying household production and conserving important forest ecosystems through reforestation activities, micro watersheds protection, and the promotion of income generation activities such as sustainable tourism and native fish farming. Projects consider ecological alternatives and establish environmental incentives, management practices and legal regulations together with local authorities. The creation of community reserves and the promotion of community products using non-timber forest resources have contributed to job creation and economic development in the area. Projects have also nurtured equality, promoting social cohesion and integration within communities so as to achieve common goals.

Sustainable agricultural practices have been implemented to enhance productivity through crop diversification, value-added production and the promotion of native fish farming. Participatory management has been the focus of various COMDEKS projects by supporting the "Kichwa chacra system". In this traditional agricultural system, people organize their production activities based on a differentiated use of space called the *chakra*, a space which is mainly the domain of indigenous women, where strategies of exchange, sales and subsistence are established. By recognizing and integrating this important support system, projects have resulted in the restoration of local knowledge, income generation and conservation of forests.



A local woman working on water management in the Napo watershed. Photo: Ecuador

In order to strengthen participatory management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of COMDEKS projects in Ecuador will rely on the "SIMONA" system, where NGOs and CSOs, in a strategic alliance with the UNDP and the Ecuador Ministry of Environment, will conduct participatory M&E, capacity building and provide technical assistance to participating communities.

Contributed by Ms. Ana Varea, Ecuador National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

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Portfolio updates: Mongolia

The target landscape selected as the focus for COMDEKS projects in Mongolia is the Central Selenge area that stretches from the southeast towards the north, covering 628,856 hectares of largely forest and mountain ecosystem territories. Since the baseline assessment that took place in January 2014 to assess the resilience of the target socio-ecological production landscape, various projects have been undertaken by local stakeholders and funded by COMDEKS, as part of a coordinated strategy to increase resilience in the socio-ecological production landscape.

Supported projects focus on developing production landscapes, green zones and community gardens in order to increase community resilience, reduce overgrazing and combat land degradation. Activities include growing fodder and vegetables, setting up green houses and soil enrichment to improve livelihoods and sustainability. An example of this is a project that develops adaptive community management within the riparian area through combined protective and livelihood enhancing activities. This includes adaptive pasture management through initiatives like community gardens, grazing management, raising seedlings and planting willow trees along the river banks; activities that will ultimately contribute to the rehabilitation of land and pastures, thus increasing resilience and the income generated by communities.



Community fruit gardens have increased income and resilience.

Photo: Mongolia

Along with projects that strengthen ecosystem services, supported activities including bee keeping and handicraft making are strengthening sustainable livelihoods and increasing skills in new income generating activities. To promote ecotourism, a 'soil bag building construction technology', which saves on wood, has been used to build four small 'soil bag' houses to accommodate local tourists who visit and stay with communities. COMDEKS activities are involving and mobilizing communities at the landscape level, removing financial and technical barriers faced by community members.

Contributed by Mr. Ganbaatar Bandi, Mongolia National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

El Salvador:

Following the baseline assessment of the target landscape in March 2014, nine projects are being supported in the

Jaltepeque-Naja Lempe Protected Area, El Salvador, to tackle deforestation, overfishing, illegal hunting and increasing water pollution in the region.



Jaltepeque-Naja Lempe Protected Area, home to over 90 fish species. Photo: El Salvador

COMDEKS funded projects will address these challenges through the conservation and sustainable use of coastal marine and terrestrial ecosystems, while improving the livelihoods of people dependent on such ecosystems. Local activities such as the sustainable use of fish species, reforestation, improved agricultural practices, handicraft making, and the establishment of firewood forests are being undertaken to conserve ecosystems, while increasing resilience and strengthening livelihoods in the area. As a result, supporting activities aim to recover 40 hectares of mangroves, establish local palm nurseries, set up blue crab nurseries and promote eco-tourism in the area. Projects also focus on enhancing capacities for the establishment and management of forest nurseries along with the development of community management plans and survey records within the landscape.

Contributed by Mr. Juan Guzman Arbaiza, El Salvador National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

A Photo-story from Mongolia

COMDEKS Photo Story: Mongolia

Promoting Resilience of Socio-ecological Production Landscapes
– Central Selenge, Mongolia



Click on the image above to access a photostory from Mongolia

Contributed by Mr. Ganbaatar Bandi, Mongolia National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

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