



COUNTRIES, **COMMUNITIES &** **CONSERVATION**

Building Cooperation in Kanchenjunga



“PROTECTING MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENTS AND MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITIES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD”



CONSERVATION • COMMUNITY • CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

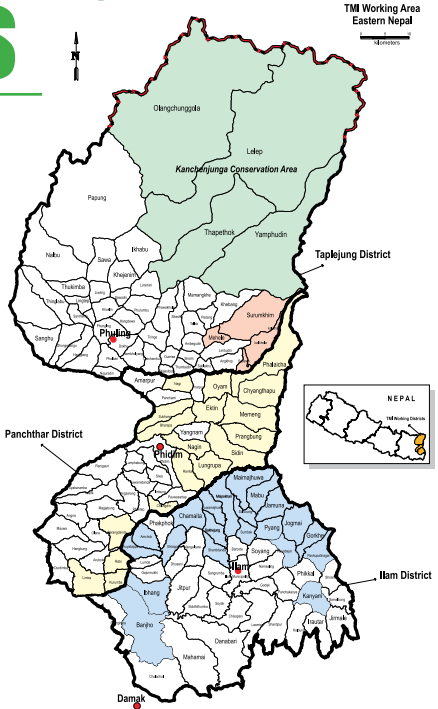
The Himalaya presents a physical and political boundary between neighboring countries. For centuries, the deep gorges, high passes and open skies have provided corridors where rivers flow, people trade, cultures mingle and wildlife migrate. Until recently, with the emerging concept of regional based conservation, these international borders have served as a significant barrier to cooperative actions that allow these inter-dependant ecosystems to be managed in coordination with each other. Bridging these gaps is the work of The Mountain Institute.

OBJECTIVES

To conserve the biodiversity of the Kanchenjunga landscape and improve local livelihoods in the Kanchenjunga Region, by promoting community-based conservation in areas outside of protected area boundaries in the Eastern Himalayan Landscape.

WORKING AREAS

In Nepal, TMI works in 45 village development committees (VDCs) adjacent to Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve (KBR), but falling outside the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area boundaries. In Sikkim, the project is focused on the remote buffer villages of the Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve.



KEY THREATS



The primary threats to the area's unique biodiversity are land conversion and degradation, and landscape fragmentation. Direct threats include grazing (local as well as trans-boundary), poaching, unsustainable harvesting of medicinal plants, fuel wood removal, unmanaged tourism and climate change.

THE PROJECT

The TMI project has three major components that promote regular information exchange at a government – to– government level and among specific technical professionals while implementing complementary community-based conservation programs at the grass root levels on each side of the shared boundaries.







BIODIVERSITY, MARKETS, AND ENTERPRISE IN THE KANCHENJUNGA LANDSCAPE

TMI's work has two major goals: to strengthen Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) marketing groups and to expand the number of farmers involved in cultivation of MAPs throughout the eastern hills. Progress has been made on both fronts, with networking sessions, a radio-based MAPs price information system being put into place, cultivation training for additional farmers. In another major innovation, 380 farmers were issued identity cards permitting them to sell their MAPs products without paying government royalties.

PROMOTING COORDINATED COMMUNITY-BASED LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION IN THE TRANS-BOUNDARY REGION OF SINGALILA COMPLEX

The Mountain Institute received a grant from Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) to build trans-boundary cooperation at both the community and government levels for the biodiversity of key threatened ecosystems, habitats and hotspots of the trans-boundary region. Working with communities in Taplejung, Ilam and Panchthar, the project focused on activities within Nepal, including training and coordination meetings with participants from adjacent communities of Sikkim and West Bengal. The outcome was the creation of a trans-boundary conservation working group, functioning at local, regional and national levels.

THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTES APPROACH

All TMI programs are designed on the premise that full involvement of local people is essential for the long-term success of conservation programs. TMI has developed several innovative techniques, which have been field tested using a technique called Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA). TMI helps local people and other stakeholders understand their assets, define threats and issues, use their assets to address threats, prioritize activities for follow up and monitor ongoing progress.

TMI works extensively through local partner organizations, reducing costs, expanding impacts, enhancing program sustainability and creating local capacities to conduct conservation programs after TMI's direct involvement in projects is complete.





PROGRAM ACCO

1. Over 6,000 households were trained in Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) cultivation and harvesting, nursery management, relevant legal provisions, Allo (*Girardinia diversifolia*) processing, and more. These farmers independently trained their neighbours in these skills, resulting in a total of 13,230 households cultivating MAPs.

2. MAPs cultivation on private land has expanded to over 2,000 ha., with 13 different species. Participants trained at the initial stage of the project generated Rs. 70,239,859 (\$ 989,293.79) so far.

3. The 21 community MAPs nurseries and 2 timber and fodder nurseries established by the project continue to produce seeds and seedlings for the local communities and neighboring districts, moving towards self sufficiency in raw materials.

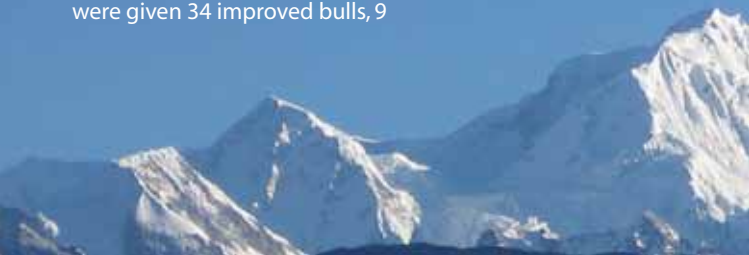
4. Eleven Pasture User Groups (PUGs) were formed to reduce herd size and pressure on pastureland. The groups were trained in veterinary skills and were given 34 improved bulls, 9

goats, 1 improved sheep and one improved buffalo. In return, they planted a total of 770,981 seedlings in 496.65 ha. of barren lands, and completed fenced pastures. Livestock herds were reduced by approximately 25%.

5. After the introduction of improved bulls in early 2004, 2,372 calves have been born, and the communities practice stall feeding.

6. 13 new Community Forest Users Group (CFUGs) were formed and 18 CFUGs operational plans were renewed and handed over. In total 4347.46 hectares of forest area are included under these operational plans.

7. Using a conservation contract mechanism, various community projects were completed; including: constructed 36 cement dustbins, in 36 schools. Renovated 12 School buildings, 10





MPLEISHMENTS

Gombas (Monasteries), 9 Temples, 2 wooden bridges, renovated 40.3 km of Motorable road and provided 46 sets of iron poles (replacing wooden poles and saving trees used to hang prayers flags in project areas). In return the community planted 86,633 seedlings of different native tree and fodder species, which have been transplanted in the vicinity of Schools, Gombas, Temples and to stabilize the sides of the motorable road.

8. In 2005, the Chief District Officer (CDO) & the district Forest Officer (DFO) & District Plant Resource Office (DPRO) provided an award of appreciation to The Mountain Institute (TMI) & its NGO partners Shree High Altitude Herbal Production & Conservation Institute (SHAHPCI), Ilam & Deep Jyoti Youth Club (DJYC), Panchthar for the excellent work completed.

9. In December 2008, TMI and its NGO partner SHAHPCI received the "Mountain Development Award-2008" with cash amount Nrs. 50,000/- as the best NGO working in the field of biodiversity conservation, livelihood and food security in mountain region. This award was provided by government of Nepal, Ministry of Forest on the occasion of 'International Mountain Day 2008'.

10. Certificate and ID Card Distribution to MAPs Farmers: During the project period, 380 MAPs certificates and ID cards have been distributed as per the Non-timber Forest Product Development Policy, 2061.

11. Trans-boundary cross-sectoral working groups were formed to facilitate networking and knowledge sharing among stakeholders on conservation issues, trouble-shooting, policy, and implementation. Most recently, the Kanchenjunga Singhalila Transboundary Bio-diversity Conservation Working Group (KSTBWG) was formed and registered with 17 members from India and Nepal.



PROJECT IMPACTS



Our work in the Kanchenjunga area benefits over 13,230 poor farmers. Half of them have already generated a total of US \$ 989,293.79 from MAPs cultivation and dairy products. Over 770,981 seedlings of native tree and fodder species were grown in locally managed nurseries, reforesting 496.65 ha of previously degraded land, with another over 2,000 ha of land under MAPs cultivation. Since 2004, livestock herd sizes have reduced by 24%, from a previous total of 6,383 head, and TMI estimates that consumption of palatable grasses has been reduced by 365,000 kg per year. Trans-boundary biodiversity working groups have also been formed, to continue the work.

REPLICATION OF THE MAPs PROGRAM

TMI has been conducting a community based MAPs cultivation program in the Upper Arun Valley of Sankhuwasava district since November 2008. The Upper Arun lies on the eastern edge of Makalu-Barun National Park and Buffer Zone in Sankhuwasava District. Locally known as Bhotkholra, it is a home to between 10-14,000 indigenous people, occupying dozens of permanent village settlements where they practice subsistence farming and animal husbandry as they have for centuries.

The project is entering the final stages for completion of the three year project period. So far, over 450 household farmers from upper Arun villages have been trained in MAPs cultivation, from the 3 Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Chepuwa, Kimathaka and Haitya. An additional



14 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) such as women groups, youth groups and Monastery (gomba) management groups were also trained. A total of 109,480 grams of chiraito (*Swertiyachiraita*) seeds, 500 grams of Atis seeds (*Aconitum heterophyllum*) and 500 grams of Lagupatra (*Podophyllumhexandrum*) seeds were distributed to trained farmers and trained CBO staff.

TMI's MAPs program in central Nepal is in it's middle phase in 12 marginalized VDCs of northern Rasuwa and Dhading districts. In Dhading, participants from 207 households and in Rasuwa, 118 participants received cultivation and conservation training and seed inputs and are growing MAPs on their private lands.



2011-2015 PRIORITY ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING NEEDS

LOOKING A HEAD

Much work still needs to be done to continue promoting and expanding the conservation practices introduced by this program, while helping communities improve livelihoods.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1. Conserving alpine and pasture regions of the Khangchendzonga area by promoting sustainable livestock management practices and increasing local livelihood for herders **(US \$ 50,000)**.
2. Conserving wild stock of over-harvested medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) by promoting sustainable cultivation and marketing as alternative source of income **(US \$ 140,000)**.
3. Mitigate negative impacts of tourism through eco-tourism promotion. Strengthening local management capacity and scaling up and expanding the program to more areas in both Sikkim and Nepal **(US \$ 65,000)**.
4. Conduct additional trainings in business development services, business planning, sub-sector market analysis, marketing and distribution, improved storage, technical and market aspects of value added processing **(US \$ 190,000)**.



THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

TMI is the only organization in the world developed exclusively to addressing the unique needs of conservation and equitable development in mountain communities throughout the world.

We measure ourselves by the impact we have in three areas:

1. Conserving high priority mountain eco-systems,
2. Increasing environmentally and culturally sustainable livelihoods for mountain communities,
3. Promoting support for mountain cultures and issues through advocacy, education and outreach.

THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE'S MISSION AND VISION

To ensure the sustainable future of the world's mountains and mountain communities, The Mountain Institute's mission is to "Conserve Mountain Environments," "Improve Mountain Livelihoods," and "Support Mountain Cultures".

The Mountain Institute's vision is to contribute to a world where mountains are valued and understood as integral and important to all the world's ecosystems, and where thriving mountain communities prosper in an ecologically rich mountain environment.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE FIELD

DHINDUP TAMANG, BRABAL, RASUWA DISTRICT

Mr. Dhindup Tamang, 63, received medicinal plants cultivation and nursery management training from TMI in coordination with Langtang National Park in 2003. He has been cultivating medicinal plants ever since. The plants that he sowed in 2003 became mature in 2005, and in that year he earned NRs. 1,800 by selling 26 kg of Chiraito (Swertiachiraita). The next year, prices increased and he earned NRs. 10,000 by selling 52 kg of Chiraito. He sold 57 kg of Chiraito and 60 kg of Sugandhawal (Valeriana jatamansi indian) earning NRs. 23,000 in 2007, and in 2008 he sold 76 kg of the Chiraito plant, 2.5 kg of Chiraito seed, and 50 kg of Sugandhawal, earning a total of NRs. 38,000 in that year. Mr. Tamang continues to plant MAPs descended from the original seeds that TMI introduced in 2003.

From 2003 to 2007, Mr. Tamang faced challenges selling his MAPs due to a lack of clear legal provisions for cultivated MAPs' trade within the national park. To deal with these legal issues and to provide a forum for communicating with park staff, Mr. Tamang and other MAPs farmers in his area organized NorcheyMelkiGyalmo Non-timber Forest Products Users Group of Syafru VDC and registered it with Langtang National Park in 2007. Mr. Tamang is the chairman of the group, which has over thirty active MAPs farmers as members. The group's constitution stipulates legal provisions related to cultivated MAPs within the park and buffer zone, allowing MAPs farmers to trade their product without interference by the park administration. The group has also helped established 13 private MAPs nurseries.



Since TMI stopped working in the area in 2005, the success of Mr. Tamang and his fellow MAPs farmers in Brabal and the surrounding areas has attracted further support from other organizations. In 2009, the NorcheyMelkiGyalmo group received NRs. 260,000 from the World Wildlife Fund to construct a community MAPs nursery, NRs. 15,000 from the National Agro-forestry Foundation for operational costs, and NRs. 100,000 from the Syafru Village Development Committee for expanding MAPs cultivation throughout the VDC area.

During a visit that TMI staff made to the area in 2009, Mr. Tamang and others expressed interest in an exposure visit to Ilam district to learn about MAPs farmers' successes there. They also expressed a desire for TMI to resume work in Rasuwa to help MAPs farmers market their products and to introduce new species of cultivated MAPs. As of 2011, TMI wants to resume work in Rasuwa; this depends on availability of funding.

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HOW CAN YOU HELP!

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Thank you for your interest in the activities of The Mountain Institute’s Countries, Communities & Conservation in the eastern Nepal. If you wish to make a tax deductible contribution, please visit the TMI website: www.mountain.org where you can contribute on-line. Your contribution can really make a difference in the lives of a Himalayan farming family.



TMI's PARTNERS

- Deep Jyoti Youth Club (Panchthar and Taplejung)
- Shree High Altitude Herbal Production and Conservation Institute (Ilam)
- District Development Committees (DDCs)
- Village Development Committees (VDCs)
- District Forest Offices (DFOs) and other government and non-government organization.



text and concept by Ang Rita Sherpa, Karma Bhutia & Molly Clark-Barol (TMI)
photos: Ang Rita Sherpa, Karma Bhutia, DJC and SHAHPI
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TMI, Himal Program
Asian Regional Office
P.O.Box 2785
Baluwatar, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977-1-4419356/4414237
Fax: +977-1-4410073
Email: tmiregional@wlink.com.np

The Mountain Institute
3000 Connecticut Ave, NW Suite
101 Washington, DC 20008
Tel.: 001-202-234-4050
Fax: 001-202-234-4051
Web: www.mountain.org