

Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Himalayas

MacArthur
Foundation

Communication Strategy

Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Himalayas: Communication Strategy

Introduction

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and its partners, with support from the MacArthur Foundation, have been implementing landscape biodiversity management in the Eastern Himalayas for more than a decade. Realising the effect of climate change on biodiversity and the consequences for people's wellbeing, a preliminary assessment on climate change vulnerability of the mountain ecosystems in the eastern Himalayas was carried out in 2007/08. The assessment helped identify the links between climate variability and change, vulnerability, and adaptation in important impact areas in the eastern Himalayas. It also identified research gaps in relation to biodiversity, the resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services, and local adaptation by communities. As a follow up to this assessment, ICIMOD received additional support from the Foundation to implement the 'Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation' project in the Eastern Himalayas until the end of 2012.

The overall aim of the project is to improve understanding of climate change impacts on biodiversity and related ecosystem services and identify adaptation options for sustainable development in the eastern Himalayas. The four outcomes envisaged for the project include:

- i) Enhanced understanding of climate change impacts on biodiversity and its ecosystem services;
- ii) Adaptive capacity of mountain communities based on local practices relating to the use and maintenance of biodiversity related ecosystem services assessed and improved;
- iii) Evidence based adaptation strategies, capacity development and policy inputs for biodiversity related ecosystem services identified and promoted; and
- iv) Communication strategy for improved exchange of information and knowledge towards climate change adaptation and sustaining mountain biodiversity developed and implemented.

The fourth outcome on the development and implementation of a 'communication strategy' will be vital in facilitating the exchange of information and knowledge on essential project outputs such as climate change perspectives, a set of climate change scenarios at the ecosystem level, impact assessment methodologies, appraisal of existing and potential biodiversity services, impact of different climate change scenarios on ecosystem services, quantified assessment of livelihood options, and validation of adaptation practices. In the long run, an effective communication strategy will enable the key stakeholders to be part of the knowledge generation process and therefore influence overall actions towards implementing effective biodiversity management, and on-the-ground climate change adaptation measures in the eastern Himalayas.

This communication strategy, while it reflects the blend of different information products and the communication channels to reach out to a multitude of stakeholders, also elaborates on how a better network can be established among the project partners and how partners' contributions to the project can be brought to light. The communication strategy will revolve around the planned project activities, which essentially focus on understanding the climate change scenario at two project sites; the impacts upon biodiversity, ecosystem services, and livelihoods; and adaptation measures chosen by the communities therein. The two project sites are the Phobjikha wetland in Bhutan and the Koshi Tappu wetland in Nepal.

Current communications practices

ICIMOD as a regional knowledge, learning, and enabling centre in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region has been facilitating information and knowledge exchange using a diverse range of communication pathways and products. This communication strategy builds into the overall framework of ICIMOD's institutional communication strategy to address the specific project based information needs. Knowledge developed in the earlier climate change assessment was communicated and exchanged through research activities, thematic workshops, interaction with stakeholders at national and regional levels, synthesising and disseminating the findings into a series of technical publications.

The MacArthur follow-up project on 'Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Himalayas' stresses developing a communication strategy to further refine communication activities with and among the project partners, and especially to make relevant project information easily available, and to build a knowledge base that can facilitate the development of adaptation policies and actions in the eastern Himalayas.

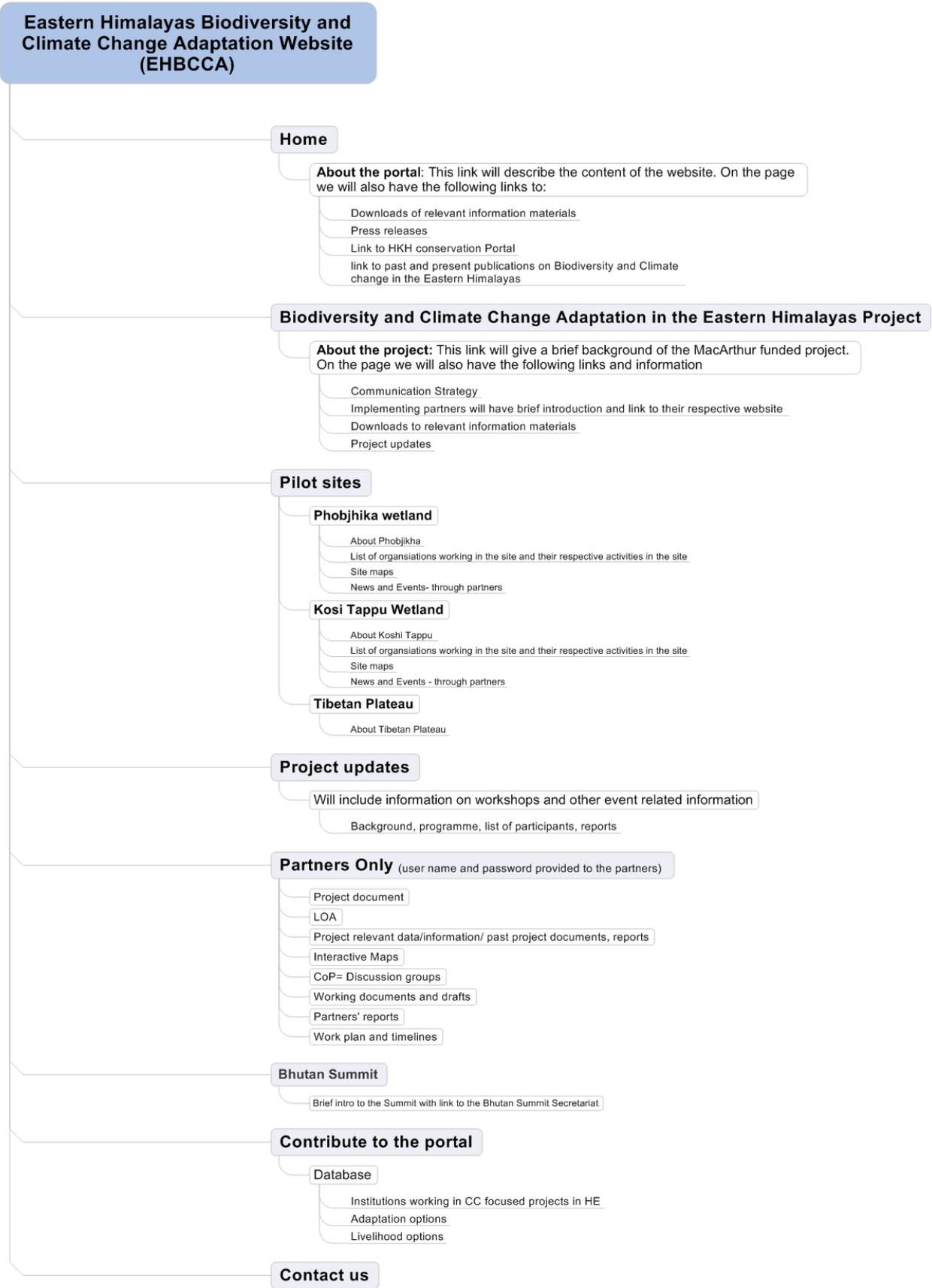
Aims and objectives

A longer term aim for the communication strategy is proposed that reflects ICIMOD's vision of minimising the impacts of climate change on biodiversity through adoption of an integrated approach to biodiversity management at the landscape level, and addressing the livelihoods needs of people through promotion of conservation-linked livelihood options.

The broader aim of the communication strategy is to facilitate the development of a regional platform for information sharing that consolidates information and knowledge generated by local national, regional, and global organisations operating in the eastern Himalayas and to facilitate assimilation and delivery of biodiversity and climate change adaptation information and knowledge for informed decision making.

The immediate objectives are:

- to increase the efficiency of flow of information to, from, and among project partners, in the first instance through the establishment of a dedicated 'Eastern Himalayas Biodiversity and Climate Change Adaptation (EHBCCA)' website;
- to support coordination and reduce duplication among different organisations and groups with activities in and around the project sites by compiling information about these activities, and making this information about the activities and organisations accessible in one place;
- to communicate past and present project outputs and relevant information to the stakeholders and a wider audience through the website and in other formats as appropriate;
- to design, develop and deliver information coming out of the project to different audiences using appropriate knowledge products and communication channels; and
- to identify relevant global climate change adaptation information and make it available in a usable form to stakeholders within the project and make recommendations for necessary interventions at national and regional level.



The following table provides more detail on the dissemination plan of the communication strategy:

Target audience	What to share	Tools and products	Appropriate channel	Success criteria
Project focused audience				
All project partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSPN • Watershed Management Division • Wildlife Conservation Division • National Environment Commission • Dept. of Energy • Dept. of Livestock • Dept of Agriculture • National Biodiversity Center • Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve 	All project based information, framework, lessons, ideas, workplans, reports, LoA and all other awareness materials; information on pilot sites, partners information, information from past vulnerability assessment project	Research Framework document, Communication Strategy, project reports, technical publications on research findings, workshop-based documents, LU/LC maps, database on livelihood and other adaptation options, scenarios, presentations, flyers, posters, information sheets, CoP, partners' profiles	EHBCCA website (will also have partners' only page to share official project documents and for closed discussion); database; regional workshop; hard copy report, emails; links to partner web sites (if existent)	Active network of partners and their contributions; a functional EHBCCA website; regular feedback and data input by partners and ICIMOD
Other organisations working at the project pilot sites	Information on different activities at the sites	List of activities (database of organisations and their activities at the sites)	EHBCCA website	Improved awareness and coordination, reduced duplication
Larger audience				
Policy makers	Key messages*	Policy briefs; short video clips; compilation of regionally applicable and nationally compatible adaptation strategies	Bhutan Summit in October 2011, via email circulated to the key focal institutes; other meetings	Contribution to the regional adaptation strategy for the EH
Other interested partners in the HKH and elsewhere (INGOs, NGOs, GOs, CBOs, civil society, academia; research organisations, women and youth groups)	Key messages; information from the project; research findings and syntheses; database	Research reports and other publications, workshop reports; maps, flyers, info sheets	EHBCCA website; emails, print, distribution at meetings, APMN network	Web hits, interactions and contributions to the database; (regular web updates), downloads and comments
Donor agencies	Key messages; research findings and syntheses; recommendations for future interventions	Project reports and all other published documents (hard copy of some reports), flyers	EHBCCA website, emails, and other institutional level communications	
Media partners	Impact statements; fact sheets; project highlights	Press releases, project information sheet, short video clips, stories, flyers	Email, information through PR, media interactions, EHBCCA website	Number of published materials in the dailies (including those from partners).
Local communities	Simplified scientific information on climate change issues and impact and adaptation options; simplified information on livelihoods and adaptive measures (Discuss with partners the type and format of information material they require to communicate with communities and how ICIMOD can support them to strengthen their communications with the local communities)	Short video clips, simplified flyers and information sheet, advertisements (project partners to take the initiative)	Via partners, outreach and community level interactions through local institutions, some materials to be posted on the EHBCCA website for partners access, printed materials in local languages	Feedback, interviews, learning stories posted on the website
*See below				

Key messages

Key messages will come out of the research findings at the two pilot sites. Some may be general and some may indicate specific needs for immediate action. The messages will need to be structured in an appropriate way for the target audiences, for example, messages for policy makers should be in the form of concise policy statements backed with scientific facts and figures, whereas messages for communities should be simple with a clear indication of possible actions. Examples of key messages, not framed for any particular audience, might include:

- Global nature of climate change requires global actions. However, proactive regional action is urgent to enhance the adaptive capacity of the ecosystem and to decrease the socioeconomic vulnerability of the people
- Climate change is an important driver affecting the movements of climate sensitive species and their adaptability, and it also has an impact on biodiversity conservation areas and on people through decreased/increased agricultural activities (will be based on findings in the pilot sites)
- Diversification of livelihood options is a key adaptation strategy to tackle decreased productivity of cropland resulting from drought and aridity
- High priority areas for adaptation are ecosystem resources conservation and management through adopting a landscape approach; poverty alleviation through sustainable utilisation of natural resources; and climate risk reduction

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