

Preliminary Draft

Working with Journalists on Biodiversity and Impact Assessment

Report of the Workshop on
Capacity Building for Biodiversity
(Biodiversity Conservation through Impact Assessment: The Role of Journalists)

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¹ The views and interpretations in this report are those of the paper presenter(s), and participants. They do not necessary reflect the opinions of this report preparer and the Capacity Building on Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Project of the International Association for Impact Assessment.

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Biodiversity conservation has been a part and parcel of human life as biodiversity matters to everybody. Local people use biodiversity and its product since time immemorial. The increased consumption pattern has accelerated tremendous pressure on biological resources due to its inadequate knowledge about the importance and value.

In Nepal, there is an increasing pressure on biodiversity from various sources. One of them is the development projects. As forests neither speak nor retaliate immediately, the developer wants to implement the projects in the forest areas. Furthermore, nothing has to be paid for forests as it a public property. Then the *tragedy of commons* starts. Most of the project are either implemented or pass through the forests and development projects emphasise on clear felling of plants. This has not only dissected the habitat but also has accelerated the loss of species without knowing their present and future values.

Although Nepal has used the environmental assessment tool to assess impacts of the development projects on the physical, biological, socio-economic and cultural aspects, site-specific biodiversity loss has been increasing in the project implemented areas. Realising this problem and with the generous assistance of the Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Project (CBBIA), a three-day workshop was organised in Kathmandu from 8 to 10 April 2005 with the twin objectives of informing the journalists about the current state of biodiversity and impact assessment, and encouraging them to write about the loss of biodiversity due to development projects. The workshop was instrumental in raising awareness amongst the journalists about the importance of, and potential impacts of the development projects on biodiversity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Jo Treweek, Technical Programme Manager and Dr. Nepoleon M. Tiapo, Programme Administrator of the IAIA-CBBIA Project for the generous assistance and technical backstopping in organising the above workshop. Dr Helen Byron, Chair of the Biodiversity and Ecology Section of IAIA and programme awarding committee is also highly acknowledged for her interest in this type of activity.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to a 77-years old very active and senior environmental journalist Mr. Bhairab Risal for his encouragement and memorable contribution as a facilitator in organising this workshop. I do sincerely appreciate the contribution and role of other environmental journalists in particular Messrs Tirtha Koirala, President and Om Khadka, Executive Director of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists for making this workshop a success. Similarly, I would like to sincerely thank all paper presenters for their enlightening presentation, workshop participants for their active participation and enthusiasm to know more about the concerns on biodiversity and impact assessment, and Mr. Dhatri Subedi for his contribution in the capacity of the rapporteur during the workshop. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all friends and staff for their cooperation in making this workshop productive and successful.

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I Introduction

1.1 Background

Biological resources are essential for the well-being of human beings and other life forms. These resources are utilized in different forms. Plants in particular provide goods and services of economic, social and ecological values. However, biological resources are under tremendous pressure due to consumption pattern and inadequate understanding and knowledge about their values. In the recent years, the international community has realized the importance of biological resources and has given additional emphasis for their conservation and management. International community has made significant contribution to encourage national governmental and non-governmental organisation to expand activities in conserving biodiversity. There are also emerging concerns to find ways for the conservation of biodiversity through impact assessment (IA).

Article 14 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has urged its Parties to conserve biodiversity through impact assessment. Upon the call of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is making effort to develop guidelines for the integration of biodiversity in impact assessment. The sixth session of COP to CBD has made decision to further develop guidelines for the incorporation of biodiversity issues in impact assessment. In response to it, the Biodiversity and Ecology Section of IAIA with the assistance of the Dutch Government has launched a Project on Capacity Building in Biodiversity and Impact Assessment. The Project aims to build on works carried out by IA-related global conventions including CBD, Ramsar and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Nepal is not a Party to CMS. The CBBIA/IAIA has taken initiatives to develop guidelines to promote IA-inclusive biodiversity conservation.

The project aims to strengthen the integration of biodiversity (BD) and IA (EIA and SEA) so that IA becomes an effective instrument for addressing biodiversity considerations in decision-making and execution of projects, programs, plans and policies. Its objectives are to: (i) provide practical, demand-driven support for development of capacity for integrating BD and IA in developing countries; (ii) actively support the work of the biodiversity-related Conventions; (iii) share information and experiences by working with practitioners, policy-makers, biodiversity-related conventions and other stakeholders to build expertise and promote good practices; (iv) support capacity-building through knowledge-transfer, institution-building and networking; and (v) promote, and contribute to, the future development of guidelines for biodiversity related issues into IA.

Nepal has given utmost importance to biodiversity conservation since the last three decades. So far, about 18.6% percent of the country's total area has been conserved through protected area network (9 national parks, 3 wildlife reserves, 3 conservation areas and 1 hunting reserve). Development activities are relatively well regulated within protected area. The forest resources are considered as the "free gift" of Nature, and there are increasing pressures on forests and protected areas from hydroelectricity generation, transmission lines, irrigation, and road projects in the recent years. Provisions for biodiversity conservation outside protected areas have also been made through policies, laws and extensive institutional network but development projects have exerted pressures on these valuable resources. This is partly due to unregulated development activities and partly due to failure to consider biodiversity concerns during the project implementation. Impact assessment is an important tool for regulating effects on biodiversity outside protected areas. As a Party to several conventions and agreements that focus on species conservation including Ramsar and CBD, Nepal has to ensure that strong provisions are in place for both biodiversity (BD) conservation and IA.

Nepal has also implemented policies on EA (project-level IEE and/or EIA) since the last two decades. The Environment Protection Act and Environment Protection Regulation are under enforcement since 1997. The policies and laws have opened avenues to promote biodiversity inclusion in EIA reports of development projects. However, many of the approved EIA reports lack include necessary baseline information, impacts, mitigation measures, and monitoring parameters on biodiversity. "No net loss" or the "precautionary" principle, have not found the place in Nepalese EIA reports. Neither the EIA practitioners nor the EIA approving agency take issues of integrating biodiversity aspects in EIA reports seriously. The small voices of technical groups and specialists are not heard. Hence, there is a need to raise the profile of biodiversity with people whose voices are more commonly heard.

In Nepal, journalists have played and will continue to play a remarkable voice on creating public awareness and develop opinion on various issues and concerns on biodiversity and IA as well. The

journalists – the fourth organ of the nation – could contribute for biodiversity inclusive IAs. For this, it is necessary to further expose the environmental journalists to the need for integrating biodiversity into IA process. Hence, a workshop was organized to share information and experiences with the journalists, and also to provide a forum where journalists and technical IA professionals could work together about the major international initiatives, and approaches on contributing to manage both wild and domesticated biodiversity through IA, and to encourage the journalists in writing more focused news and articles in this area of topical interest. The workshop was organised from 8 to 10 April 2005 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

1.2 Objectives and Outputs

The workshop had the twin objectives of informing participants about the current state of biodiversity and impact assessment, and encouraging them to write about and publicize the loss of biodiversity due to development projects (through case studies).

The workshop was attended by journalists and government officers and they knew about the international and national initiatives on the state of biodiversity and EIA and possible ways of biodiversity conservation through the IA process. It is expected that the journalists will start publishing stories about biodiversity aspects covered in IA reports in national and local newspapers, and they will also start conducting investigative reporting with special focus on biodiversity where its conservation has been neglected during project implementation.

1.3 Highlights of the Workshop

A three-day workshop on *Capacity Building on Biodiversity* (Biodiversity Conservation through Impact Assessment: the Role of Journalists) was organized to meet the above objectives. The workshop programme was designed for both field study and technical sessions ([Annex 1](#)). A total of 19 participants representing print and electronic media and government organizations and 7 experts attended the workshop ([Annex 2](#)). Besides, six additional journalists actively participated in the workshop. As this workshop was new of its kind in Nepal, over 50 percent of the resource persons spare their valuable time and attended all technical sessions and discussions so as to promote effective interaction between the journalists and the subject specialists. The participants were selected taking into consideration their involvements in writing, preparing news and broadcasting information on biodiversity and environmental aspects. In order to promote effective interaction, the concerned officers of the three key government institutions (Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative, and newly established Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology) dealing with biodiversity and EIA also attended the workshop on personal capacity.

Seven resource persons presented eight technical papers and participated in the discussion. The resource persons were encouraged to prepare and present working paper, to the extent possible, taking examples of projects with focus on biodiversity conservation in development projects. They were also encouraged to select case studies from projects which have conducted EIA and environmental monitoring in order to share impacts on biodiversity during construction and operational stages of the project. Emphasis was also given to link information on baseline condition, impacts, mitigation measures and monitoring parameters and indicators of EIA reports with particular focus on biodiversity conservation. The workshop followed the lecture and discussion methods. About half-an-hour was allocated for questions, answers and clarifications in each technical session.

In order to encourage for lively discussion during the workshop, about four-hours of field visit was organized prior to the technical session. Before leaving to field visit, participants were briefed about the field situation, environmental issues and impacts, and information note was provided to the participants. At the end of each presentation, about two hours was allocated for intensive discussion and clarify the issues and concerns of the participants.

On 8 April 2005, the participants assembled at 12:00 pm in the conference hall of the Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) for pre-field visit session. Mr. Bhairab Risal, Senior Environmental Journalist and ex-president of NEFEJ briefed about the workshop and field visit. Mr. Batu Uprety presented highlights about the case studies to let the participants know about the environmental impacts of the industries namely marble industry, brick factory, and stone quarry. The information note provided to the participant is given in [Annex 3](#). Then the participants visited the Godavari Marble Factory and observed marble quarry and its processing and production units. The environmental impacts of this quarry were the major issues of public discussion in 1990 and 1991. The officials of the industry briefed the participants about the complete process of marble quarrying

and processing. On the same day, participants also observed the brick factory and potential environmental impacts. The factory owner hesitated to brief about the brick making and production process. The participants also observed the stone quarry operated in the forest area, and discussed about the environmental impacts in general, and biodiversity in particular. After the field visit, the participants arrived at the Godavari Village Resort and stayed for two nights. In the evening, preliminary discussion was held with the participants about the impression of the field visit.

On 9 April 2005, the participants assembled at 9 am and Mr. Bhairab Risal and Batu Uprety briefed about the workshop objectives, expected outputs and workshop programme. Dr. Uday Raj Sharma, Vice-Chair of the World Commission on Protected Areas (South Asia) and Director General of the Department of Plant Resources presented the technical paper on *Biodiversity: State, Challenges and Opportunities*. Dr. Sharma focussed on biodiversity richness, diversity at ecosystem, species and genetic levels, major challenges the Nepal's biodiversity is facing, and opportunities to conserve biodiversity at various habitats (Annex 4.1). He urged the need for reorienting the biodiversity conservation efforts, promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits, and emphasise more seriously the biodiversity monitoring during IEE and EIA process. During the discussion, participants stressed the need for promoting sustainable use of non-timber forest products and contribution of the government organisations in conserving biodiversity. Dr. Sharma shared his experiences while conceptualising the buffer zone management programme in the protected areas to reduce park and people conflict, and his contribution to introduce buffer zone management prescriptions.

After the first presentation, Mr. Batu Uprety, Environment Officer and Chief of the Environmental Assessment Section and Biodiversity Section of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation presented a paper on *Impact Assessment: Principle, Process and Practice*. The paper discussed on development of EA at the global and national level, institutional effort, legal provisions, major principles of IA, steps for the preparation of IEE and EIA report based on Nepalese legal regime, and contribution of IA in the conservation of biodiversity (Annex 4.2). During the discussion, the participants raised issues about the possible ways of integrating biodiversity aspects in different steps of EA, and showed their concern about the difficulty faced for the collection of IA reports. The participants also opined that EIA reports of the major projects are not easily accessible for reporting. Mr. Uprety clarified that EIA reports are and should be in the public domain, and they could be accessed in the major libraries, concerned ministries and departments related to the project and also in the environmental ministry. The Nepalese environmental law provides provision to disclose the final EIA report for one month before its approval.

Dr. Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, Biodiversity Expert, Life Member of the Royal Nepal Academy and former Deputy Director General of the Department of Medicinal Plants presented a paper on *International Initiatives on Biodiversity and Impact Assessment*. Dr. Shrestha outlined the major works related to biodiversity and EIA carried out during the implementation of the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) in Nepal, and informed that its first phase focussed on environmental planning and assessment, environmental education, and public information. During its second phase (1994-'96), NCS expanded biodiversity and EIA as a separate programme in Nepal. Dr. Shrestha noted that biodiversity is merely treated as a list of species from project site by the consultants based on limited field surveys without adequate support from accredited institutions. He also noted that lack of sufficient information is a hindrance in biodiversity assessment, and there is need for developing methods (Annex 4.3). The participants raised issues on population growth and impacts on biodiversity, quality of EA reports and problems to get useful information. Dr. Shrestha emphasised on the need for: (i) accredited laboratory; (ii) biodiversity partnership; (iii) mapping of endangered wildlife and plants; (iv) finding local names of species to promote their conservation with people's participation.

Presenting a working paper on *Possible Mechanisms to conserve Biodiversity through Impact Assessment*, Dr. Mukesh Chalise, Associate Professor of the Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University highlighted the stepwise approach on the need for avoiding project implementation in biodiversity rich area such as protected or pristine habitat and agricultural area, and also avoiding high potential natural resource area, high productive cultivated land, and dense human populated area. Dr. Chalise urged to verify past data, collect latest data, use indigenous knowledge and technology, and also think for peoples' aspiration/dependency on biodiversity. He opined that mitigation measures should be focused separately on direct impact zone, and indirect impact zone (Annex 4.4). During the discussion, the participants raised issue on promoting the involvement of local people in resource management and environmental monitoring, the steps where journalists could participate in impact assessment process, and contribute for public awareness. Dr. Chalise underscored the need for environmental monitoring, and urged the

journalists for field visit to dig out and verify information. He also noted that information published in the newspaper should influence large sector of the society.

The next working paper was presented on the *Inclusion of Biodiversity Aspects in the Approved EIA Reports of the Hydroelectric and Road Projects* by Dr. Madan Koirala, Associate Professor of the Central Department of Environmental Science, Tribhuvan University taking the example of EIA reports three projects namely the Basantapur-Chainpur-Khandbari Road Project, Thankot-Chapagaon-Bhaktapur 132 kV Transmission Line Project and Langtang Khola Hydroelectric Project, with focus on biodiversity aspect (Annex 4.5). The EIA report of former projects has been approved and later is waiting for decision. The participants asked questions about the quality of the report and accommodation of the biodiversity aspects. Also the participants asked which of the report is poor from biodiversity conservation perspective. Dr. Koirala opined that the Langtang Khola HEP is comparative weak in addressing biodiversity impacts although this project has been proposed for implementation in the Himalayan protected area – the Langtang National Park.

Mr. Bhaira Risal summarised the days' programme and invited the participants to raise issues and concerns, and ask for clarification in this new subject more effectively in the next days' programme. That was the end of the day's programme.

On 10 April 2005, Dr. Toran Sharma, Executive Director of the Nepal Environmental and Scientific Services presented a paper on *Findings and Recommendations of Environmental Monitoring on Biodiversity Aspects – A Case Study of Middle Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project*. Dr. Sharma outlined the baseline information on biodiversity, diversity of both wild and agricultural species, impacts predicted, and proposed mitigation measures as contained in the EIA report. He opined that EIA report has not covered all aspects and it would be costly for elaborated studies. There is also a lack of experts in various specific fields that EIA report should address in principle. Dr. Sharma informed that nearly 35% of the mitigation provisions are complied fully, 39% are complied partially remaining 26% are not complied with during the project construction stage. The vegetation clearance in the construction sites has only been limited to the area specified for this purpose. Special care has been given to protect vegetation and trees, which do not affect the structures, even in the permitted sites for clearance. In addition to other activities, killing and illegal marketing of wild animals has been restricted (Annex 4.6). The participants raised about the non-compliance and quality of compliance about the biodiversity aspects. Dr. Sharma opined the need for surveillance monitoring from the competent governmental authority to alert the monitoring consultant and contractors as well. He also opined that such monitoring will provide inputs for the consultant as well.

The next paper was presented by Tirtha Koirala, President of NEFEJ on the *Role of Environmental Journalists in Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Development Projects through IA Process*. Mr. Koirala alerted the journalists about the 'extreme positive' and 'extreme negative' reporting practices and urged to make reporting user-friendly based on the ground truth. Presenting various small cases, and proverbs, Mr. Koirala opined that the journalists should dig out information, be clear on the issues, and made cautious that approval of EIA may lead to 'white crime' on the environment in general and biodiversity in particular (Annex 4.7). The participants opined that the environmental monitoring should be entrusted to the local people, environmental law requires amendment, and capacity of the journalists should be built upon for environmental/biodiversity reporting. They also raised the issue that the journalists should find out the "strategic loopholes" and intention, and approach of the implementation modality of the development programs. They also opined that replacement of habitat does not solve the problem of biodiversity loss. Mr. Koirala urged the participants to be clear about their demand and expectation from the experts, and find out ways to motivate and involve the journalists in EIA process.

The last working paper on *Development Projects in the Protected Areas and Forests, and Impacts on Biodiversity including Recent Initiatives* was presented by Mr. Batu Uprety. The paper outlined the interests of the proponents to implement projects in the protected areas and forests, as it is free of cost, existing pressures and consequences on biodiversity. Mr. Uprety also shared the information on values of biodiversity, priority given to biodiversity conservation in IA reports, guiding and operating principles as prepared by a team of the Biodiversity and Ecology Section of IAIA, results of the environmental monitoring on biodiversity, and recent initiatives on biodiversity inclusive impact assessments. He also outlined the key issues (Annex 4.8). The participants raised concerns on the recent initiatives of the government for biodiversity-inclusive IA, and urged for transparent discussion on issues before taking major decisions on biodiversity and impact assessment.

At the end of the workshop, Mr. Bhairab Risal provoked the participants to raise issues and concerns within the broader framework of the workshop objectives. The discussion lasted for about 2 hours and each participant raised issues and recommended for urgent actions to improve the condition of biodiversity particularly in the major development projects which are planned for and/or implemented in the forests.

At the end of the workshop, Mr. Tirtha Koirala, President of NEFEJ made a closing remark and encouraged the participants to publish news and feature articles to raise public awareness in this important area. Mr. Batu Uprety urged the journalists for investigative reporting to influence the project developers and decision-makers that will greatly contribute for biodiversity conservation through the existing system of environmental assessment. Mr. Uprety also appreciated the active participation of the journalists and the resource persons during the workshop. Mr. Bhairab Risal thanked the participants, resource persons and support staff to make the workshop successful. He opined that this workshop would be instrumental in making issues public in due course of time through the media.

The participants believed that the workshop was timely, effective and successful to generate awareness and enhance understanding and knowledge, and bridge information gap on the workshop theme areas.

On 28 April 2005, Radio Sagarmatha organized a 38 minute program on biodiversity conservation and EIA. The program was coordinated by Mr. Kiran Pokhrel of the Radio Sagarmatha and Batu Uprety, Chief of the Environmental Assessment Section and Biodiversity Section of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation participated in the discussion. This program focused, *inter alia*, on the current state of using EIA for biodiversity conservation. In addition, workshop participants have started publications on biodiversity conservation and impact assessment in the national language, i.e., Nepali.

II Major Issues Raised

In order to generate awareness and clarify issues, and also enhance interest of the journalists on biodiversity conservation and environmental assessment, a total of eight working papers were presented and discussed extensively during the two full working days. The working papers covered the current state of biodiversity and impact assessment, biodiversity aspects included in the EIA reports, results of the environmental monitoring, and the role of journalists in enhancing the level of understanding on the theme areas. A number of issues were raised by the paper presenters and the participants, and they have been summarized below. Details of the papers are annexed (Annex 4.1 to 4.8).

2.1 Issues and Information in the Working Papers

Major issues raised in the working papers and also raised by the presenters are summarised as follows:

1. Nepal has outstanding assemblages of plants, animals and ecosystems and Kaligandaki gorge is the distinct ecological breaking point for diversity at ecosystem, species and genetic levels.
2. Conversion of forests to other land uses, over-exploitation, over-grazing and poaching are the major issues for the loss of wild biodiversity while extension of high-yielding crops, indiscriminate use of agro-chemicals, and decline in traditional farming practices are the major concerns in agricultural biodiversity.
3. Several biodiversity rich areas including Ramsar sites are inadequately managed, and rangeland is treated as open access resources thereby resulting to the loss of biodiversity.
4. Biodiversity conservation can not be considered in isolation. People do not see conservation as their objective and hence, a strategy is required to linking conservation and livelihoods of the rural people and promoting fair and equitable sharing of benefits by re-orienting the conservation efforts.
5. The IEE/EIA must receive more seriousness, particularly in monitoring, and biodiversity conservation should be mainstreamed in all government programmes, and government

should proactively solicit support and involvement of local communities, NGOs and international community.

6. Nepal has recognised dwindling biodiversity as one of the major environmental problems, and has adopted IEE/EIA as one of the tools for its management. However, biodiversity has not received proper attention while conducting IEE/EIA and approving such reports. There are ample opportunities to integrate biodiversity in different steps (from screening to environmental monitoring) of impact assessment. There are no guiding principles on who should prepare such report, and how IEE/EIA reports should be evaluated during approval process.
7. Nepal needs to pursue development in a manner that is consistent with biodiversity endowments by adopting EIA as a tool not only to safeguard human health and wellbeing of the community but also to safeguard biodiversity from development impacts.
8. Biodiversity assessments have recognised “east Himalaya” as one of the global “hotspots” while the Terai Arc of the western Himalaya is known as a last refuge for a number of Asian mammals like the Tigers, the Elephants, the Rhinoceros and the Dolphins.
9. The proponents for EIA have neither resources nor time to conduct detailed study and analysis, and hence, lack of information is a hindrance in biodiversity assessment. It requires to developing a rapid method for biodiversity impact assessment for differing ecosystems such as Terai, Churiya, Middle Hills, Himal and Bhot (trans-Himalayan) region. Furthermore, “as and when required” approach of biodiversity assessment would not lead into desired consequences.
10. Development projects outside protected areas exert pressure on biodiversity with varying magnitude, and EA should be viewed as a tool to safeguard national wealth of biodiversity.
11. The project areas should be selected to avoid high biodiversity rich area (wild and agriculture), potential natural resource, cultivated and dense population areas. The project that minimises the biodiversity loss should be selected, and contractors and labourers should be made aware about the implication of biodiversity loss. Similarly, strong monitoring team should be mobilised to address biodiversity aspects.
12. In most of the EIA reports, qualitative information on wild biodiversity has been included. The linkage amongst the baseline data, impacts, mitigation measures and monitoring parameters/indicators is yet to be established. Some of the EIA reports have generated baseline information of the project's direct impact area while in others, generic information prevails.
13. In Middle Marsyangdi HEP, the *Schima-Castanopsis* association is most diverse and *Shorea robusta* forest is least diversified in terms of species diversity. A total of 76 and 86 species (trees, shrubs and herbs) were found in project affected sites in the left and right bank of the Marsyangdi River. None of the faunal species are listed as endangered.
14. The project would result to direct loss of vegetation in 5.2 ha of forest, 30.4 ha of riverine habitat and 40.8 ha of agricultural land. About 3475 trees of 57 species would be lost as a part of site clearance. Other impacts are related to changes in aquatic ecology due to water quality and hydrological changes, alteration and/or fragmentation of aquatic habitats, obstruction to migratory fish due to dam, and loss of aquatic population and diversity due to several project activities. In order to mitigate these impacts, the EIA report proposed, *inter alia*, to rehabilitate and afforest the areas, substitute firewood use, prohibit wildlife hunting, reduce construction noise, restrict spoil disposal and fishing activities, discharge a minimum of 5% of the 10 years minimum discharge, implement fishery habitat management programme including fish trapping and hauling, open water stocking, and also afforest 1.6 million saplings to cover about 1000 ha in the adjoining areas. A total of NRs. 7 million (US\$ 1 = Rs. 70.00 on an average) was estimated for environmental enhancement measures particularly for: (i) training on fruit farming, vegetable farming and animal husbandry and poultry; (ii) community forestry support programme including nursery development and training, (iii) and afforestation in degraded areas. About Rs. 5.1 million was estimated for the implementation of the mitigation measures.
15. Results of the environmental monitoring of the Middle Marsyangdi HEP indicated that nearly 35 and 39 percent of the mitigation measures have been fully and partially complied with respectively. The remaining 26 percent have not been complied with. Vegetation clearance was limited to the area specified for clearance. Special care was given to protect vegetation and trees, which do not affect project structures, even in the permitted clearance site, and

construction workers were given regular training to minimise the loss of vegetation. The construction noise and activities obviously have degraded the habitats of wild animals including monkey in the headwork site. Furthermore, killing and illegal marketing of wild animals has been restricted. As compensation, the contractor planted 2023 seedlings at headwork area. The survival rate is nearly 52 percent. In addition, Nepal Electricity Authority has distributed nearly 6,900 seedlings to 19 community forestry user groups and 3 local clubs for plantation. The monitoring of the 8 baseline sample plots showed no difference before and during the construction of project. However, regular monitoring for the impact of the Project on aquatic life as has not been carried out.

16. The environmental monitoring study showed that the impact on vegetation and wildlife habitat at the construction specific sites could not be mitigated through compensation. Even within the construction sites, all vegetation need not be clear felled for smooth operation of construction works. Community participation in afforesting degraded areas is highly desirable. Vast knowledge on the plant biodiversity is still lacking. The faunal species diversity is limited to only large sized animals particularly vertebrates. Information with regard to small animals like insects and others are not available on the local and regional levels. This limits the impact assessment and evaluation process to the extent it is desired. Here again Department of Forest, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Reserves have greater role to play in a proactive manner.
17. Environmental reporting requires updated information. Journalists should be clear what they need from experts and vice versa. The current state of extremism (too positive and too negative) on environmental reporting should be avoided.
18. The proponents often prefer to implement the project in the forests and protected areas because of less social problems.
19. There are several guiding and operating principles in order to ensure the conserve biodiversity through impact assessment.
20. Recent studies have shown that strict monitoring could reduce the loss of vegetation during wire stringing in transmission projects; habitat loss in the core project area is inevitable; fish migration and degradation of downstream aquatic ecosystem is a permanent effect during the dry season (low water flow period); and biodiversity aspects are yet to be more precisely addressed in the hydropower and infrastructure projects.
21. The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation – the focal point for Biodiversity Convention and a ministry having Environment Division (with two sections namely Environmental Assessment Section and Biodiversity Section) – has initiated to integrate biodiversity concerns, and implementation of the Article 14 of the Convention. Compensatory measures have been introduced to improve the habitat as well.
22. Almost of the EIA reports lack information proper baseline information, impacts, mitigation measures and environmental monitoring parameters and cost.

2.2 Issues Raised by the Participants

During the presentation of eight working papers, participants raised several issues and concerns, asked questions and/or demanded clarifications. After the presentation of each paper, about 30 minutes were allocated for discussion and question/answer on the paper. The pertinent issues raised by the participants are briefly summarised below:

- a. Clear data and information is lacking in the EIA reports, qualification of the EIA preparers should be standardised, and a mechanism should be developed to ensure clear and truthful data and information in the EIA reports. Furthermore, a mechanism should be developed for the free flow of EIA related information, and for this each EIA report should be sent to the NEFEJ library for easy access to journalists. The journalists should be involved in finding clues rather than believing on data and information provided by the proponent and approving agencies on EIA and biodiversity matters.
- b. There is a lack of access to the media and persons involved in communication about the findings of the EIA reports and environmental monitoring. It may be due to existing legal provisions for conducting EIA and monitoring by the same organisation. The journalists should be involved in disclosing issues of national priority and should also be clear what information they require and what assistance they need from EIA professionals for the communication of 'right' information.

- c. The journalists/media should also be involved in review process before the approval of the EIA reports, and separate organisations should be involved in approval of EIA reports, and monitoring and evaluation of EIA recommendations.
- d. Regular interaction programme should be organised about the EIA reports in order to impart information to the public on pertinent issues in particular the EIA recommendations and biodiversity conservation.
- e. In order to implement measures as included in the EIA report, and also in order to ensure compliance of the environmental law, environmental inspector should be mobilised to the earliest possible.
- f. The relevant EIA guidelines should be implemented to improve the quality of EIA reports.
- g. The threshold limit/criteria on IEE and EIA should be revised, human resources should be developed, and relevant institutions should be strengthened for the preparation of quality reports and their approval.
- h. The journalists should be engaged in producing specific features on EIA in general and biodiversity in particular.
- i. Local people should also be mobilised during the environmental monitoring activities, and a mechanism should be developed to plant the same species which is cut down during the project implementation.

III Workshop Recommendations

The participants enthusiastically attended the workshop. The workshop highlighted the current state of biodiversity integration in impact assessment process. The participants also actively discussed on the role of journalists in communicating facts to the public and stakeholders about the environmental implications of project in question.

Realising the need for integrating biodiversity in IA reports and ensure biodiversity conservation more effectively, the participants recommended for:

1. Regular interaction meetings to update about the implications of development projects on biodiversity, and impart information to the journalists to aware the public on biodiversity and EIA recommendations in advance;
2. Enhanced joint effort of the journalists and EIA professionals in creating public awareness;
3. Encouraging the proponents and the approving authority to put the EIA documents in the public domain preferably in the website; and
4. Sending formally all EIA reports in the library of the Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists, and other important libraries.

The participants believed that this workshop has opened avenues in getting involved in biodiversity and EIA matters more vigorously and raise public awareness. The participants also believed that these recommendations as a first step to working journalists and impact assessment professionals would provide a basis to furthering the initiative in this direction.

**Workshop on
Capacity Building for Biodiversity**
(Biodiversity Conservation through Impact Assessment: The Role of Journalists)

Venue: Godavari Village Resort, Godavari

Date: 8 to 10 April 2005, Kathmandu

Workshop Programme**Facilitator:** Bhairab Risal, Senior Journalist and Ex-President, Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists

Date	Time	Topics	Resource Person
8 April 2005, Friday	11:30 – 12:00	Arrival of the participants and Registration	
	12:00 – 12:45	Briefing about the field visit	Handouts provided
	12:45 – 13:00	Tea/Coffee	
	13:00	Departure for field visit	
	13:00 – 17:30	Field visit to marble factory and brick factory	Bhairab Risal and Batu Uprety
	17:30	Arrival at the Godavari Village Resort	
	17:30 – 18:00	Tea/Coffee	
	17:00 – 18:30	Opening of the workshop and briefing about the programme	Bhairab Risal and Batu Uprety
	18:30 – 20:00	Dinner	
<i>End of the Day</i>			
9 April 2005, Saturday	07:30 – 08:30	Breakfast	
	09:00 – 10:30	Biodiversity: State, Challenges and Opportunities	Dr. Uday Raj Sharma, Vice-Chair, WCPA, South Asia and Director General, DPR
	10:30 – 11:00	Tea/Coffee	
	11:00 – 12:30	Impact Assessment: Principles, Process and practice	Batu Krishna Uprety Environment Officer, MFSC-ED
	12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
	13:30 – 15:00	International initiatives on biodiversity and impact assessment	Dr. Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha Biodiversity Expert, and Life Member, Royal Nepal Academy
	15:00 – 15:30	Tea/Coffee	
	15:30 – 17:00	Possible mechanisms to conserve biodiversity through impact assessment	Dr. Mukesh Chalise, Associate Professor, CDZ-TU
	17:00 – 17:15	Tea/Coffee	
	17:00 – 18:30	Inclusion of biodiversity aspects in the approved EIA reports of Hydroelectric and Road Projects	Dr. Madan Koirala Associate Professor, CDES-TU
	19:00 – 20:00	Dinner	
<i>End of the Day</i>			
10 April 2005, Sunday	07:30 – 08:30	Breakfast	
	09:00 – 10:30	Findings and recommendations of environmental monitoring on biodiversity aspects - A Case Study of Middle Marsyangdi Hydroelectric Project	Dr. Toran Sharma Managing Director, NESS
	10:30 – 11:00	Tea/Coffee	
	11:00 – 12:30	Role of environmental journalists in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into development projects through IA process	Tirtha Koirala President, NEFEJ
	12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
	13:30 – 15:00	Development projects in the protected areas and national forests and impact on biodiversity	Batu Krishna Uprety Environment Officer, MFSC-ED
	15:00 – 15:15	Tea/Coffee	
	15:15 – 16:30	Group discussion and recommendations for biodiversity inclusive Environmental Assessment	Bhairab Risal
	16:30 – 17:00	Closing of the Workshop, and Vote of Thanks	
	17:15 -	Departure from Hotel	
<i>End of the Workshop Programme</i>			

Note: DPR = Department of Plant Resources, MFSC-ED = Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation - Environment Division, NESS = Nepal Environmental and Scientific Services; CDZ-TU = Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University, CDES = Central Department of Environmental Science; WCPA = World Commission on Protected Areas (South Asia Chapter)

Annex 2

List of Participants, Resource Persons and Support Staff

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Dr. Tirtha B. Shrestha
Dr. Mukesh Chalise
Dr. Madan Koirala
Dr. Toran Sharma
Mr. Tirtha Koirala
Mr. Batu Uprety

Support Staff

Om Khadka
Arjun Dhakal
Bhoj Raj Bhat
Bikuram Tajale
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Damodar Satyal
Indra P. Dhakal
Ram Chandra Adhikari

Facilitator and Rapporteur

Bhairab Risal - Facilitator
Batu Uprety - Facilitator
Dhatri Subedi - Rapporteur

List of Participants Receiving a Copy of the CD-ROM of Nepal Biodiversity Strategy and Book on EIA: Process and Practice

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Ananda Shrestha, Aankhijhyal (Nepal TV program) | 13 Madan Koirala, CDES |
| 2 Arjun Dhakal, NEFEJ | 14 Naresh Sharma, Monitoring Division, MOAC |
| 3 Basu Dev Baskota, NEFEJ | 15 Nimesh Regmi, Samachar Patra Daily |
| 4 Bhoj Raj Bhat, Nepal Weekly (Nepali) | 16 Nimish Jha, Himalaya Times |
| 5 Bikuram Tajale, Ankhijhyal Nepal TV Program | 17 Om Khadka, Executive Director, NEFEJ |
| 6 Birendra Karna, National News Agency (RSS) | 18 Omkar Joshi, MFSC-ED |
| 7 Bhuban Acharya, Reporter, Radio Nepal | 19 Puskar Mathema, Gorkhapatra Daily (Nepali) |
| 8 Dhatri Subedi, Gorkhapatra | 20 Ramji Dahal, Channel Nepal Television |
| 9 Hasta Gurung, Nepal Press Institute | 21 Saroj Raj Goshain, Majdoor Daily (Nepali) |
| 10 Hem Dulal, The Himalaya Daily (English) | 22 Sherjung Karki, MEST |
| 11 Kiran Pokharel, Sagarmatha Radio | 23 Subodh Gautam, Kantipur Daily (Nepali) |
| 12 Krishna Murari Bhandari, Kantipur Daily (Nepali) | 24 Tirtha Koirala, NEFEJ |
| | 25 Toran Sharma, NESS |

Other Annexes

Annexes include all papers, presentations, visual of the field work, and workshop.

2 May 2005