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Terai Arc Landscape
Annual Report
10/01/2008 - 09/30/2009

for

World Wildlife Fund

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Acronyms

BISEP – ST	Biodiversity Sector Program – Siwalik and Terai
BNP	Bardia National Park
BZCF	Buffer Zone Community Forest
BZCFUG	Buffer Zone Community Forest User Group
BZMC	Buffer Zone Management Committee
BZUC	Buffer Zone User Committee
BZUG	Buffer Zone User Group
CBAPO	Community Based Anti-Poaching Operation
CBO	Community Based Organization
CBRP	Corridor and Bottleneck Restoration Project
CFCC	Community Forest Coordination Committee
CFOP	Community Forest Operational Plan
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
CNP	Chitwan National Park
DFID	Department for International Development
DFO	District Forest Office
DNPWC	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
DoF	Department of Forests
EHEC	Eastern Himalaya Eco-Region Complex
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal
FY	Fiscal Year
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GCP	Global Conservation Program
Ha	Hectare
HH	Household
IGA	Income Generation Activity
INGO	International Non Government Organization
IPGRI	Institute of Plant Genetic Resources
LI-BIRD	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity Research and Development
LFP	Livelihoods and Forestry Program
LRP	Local Resources Persons
MFSC	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
NARC	Nepal Agriculture Research Council
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
NTNC	National Trust for Nature Conservation
PA	Protected Area
PWR	Parsa Wildlife Reserve
RCA	Root Causes Analysis
SNV/N	Netherlands Development Organization - Nepal
SWR	Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve
TAL	Terai Arc Landscape
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WWF NP	World Wildlife Fund Nepal

WTLCP

Western Terai Landscape Complex Project

1. Project Overview

The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) encompasses one of the most biologically diverse habitats on Earth and is part of the Terai-Duar Savannah and Grasslands Ecoregion. The alluvial grasslands and subtropical deciduous forests of TAL support 86 species of mammals, 550 species of birds, 47 species of amphibians and reptiles, 126 species of fish, and over 2,100 species of flowering plants. TAL covers the only natural habitat remaining on the southern slopes of the Himalayas for the Royal Bengal tiger, Asian elephant and one-horned rhinoceros. The vision for long-term conservation of biodiversity in the TAL is a single functioning landscape through the restoration and maintenance of forest corridors connecting 11 protected areas¹ from Parsa Wildlife Reserve and Chitwan National Park of Nepal to India's Rajaji National Park, covering an area of approximately 49,500 km.

The Nepalese portion of the TAL extends from the Bagmati River in the east to the Mahakali River in the west on an area of 23,129 km. TAL – Nepal includes over 75 percent of the remaining forests of the Terai and the foothills of the Churia Range, a network of 4 Protected Areas and 3 Ramsar sites. This alluvial plain of TAL is the rice bowl of the country, and is also home to 6.7 million people from various ethnic and indigenous groups. Conservation of the Churia forests is crucial for preventing soil erosion, flash floods, and for recharging the water table of the Terai, which is the most productive land in the country. Therefore, sustainable management of the TAL will help to maintain biological diversity and also to meet the national demand for forest products and food supplies for its rapidly growing human population.

The Terai Arc Landscape – Nepal Strategic Plan (2004 – 2014) was prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC) and endorsed in 2004 by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. This broad strategic plan is key to developing coordination among the agencies and organizations working in the Terai Arc Landscape for the conservation of biodiversity in this vast and complex geographical area. However, these agencies have differing and sometimes conflicting agendas, objectives and working modalities. In order to coordinate these various interventions, the Terai Arc Landscape – Nepal Implementation Plan was developed in coordination with WWF and endorsed by the Government of Nepal. The Plan provides a more detailed framework for implementation in harmonization with various partners working in the region. Currently, WWF's efforts are focused on establishing a mechanism for efficient implementation of this plan in collaboration with the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and other partners such as USAID, UNDP, DFID and SNV Nepal.

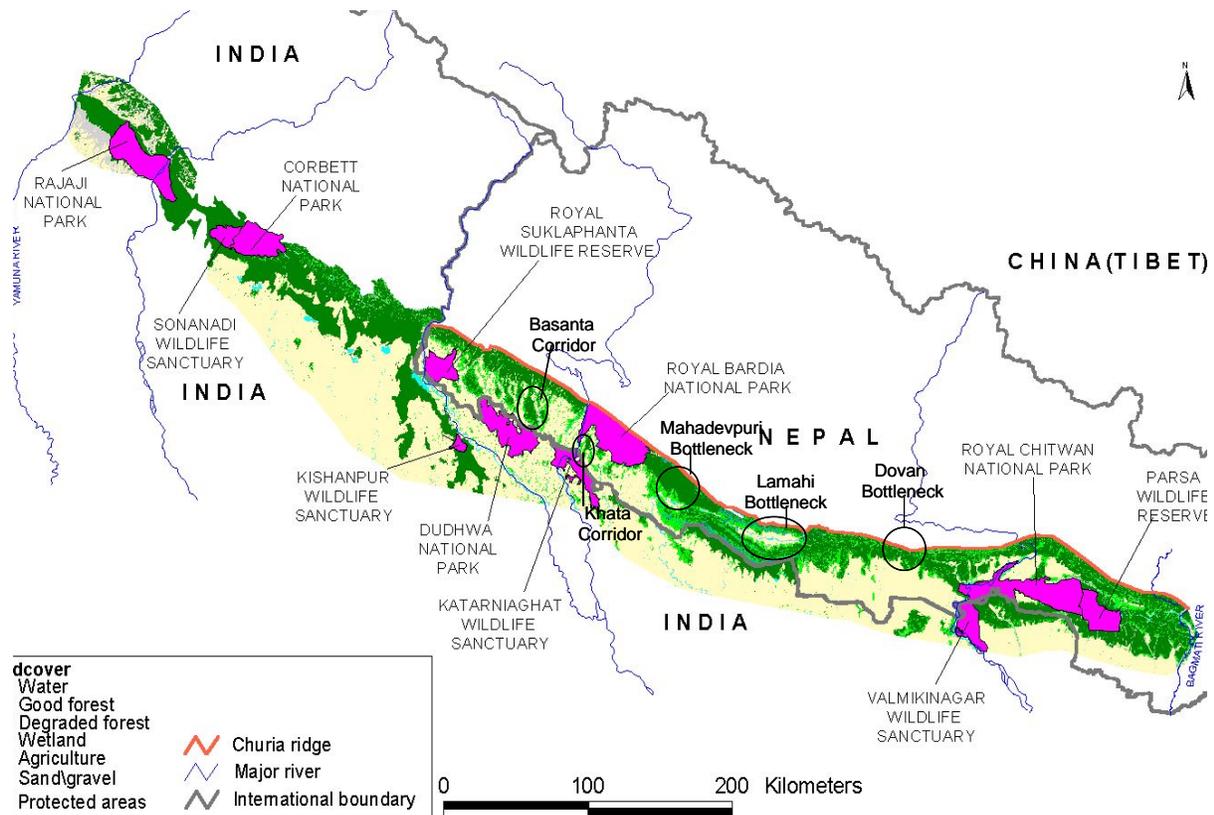
1.1 Description of Sites

The activities for this project are focused on five critical areas:

- **Basanta Corridor:** National Forest land in Nepal. Corridors serve as important links between currently distinct populations of tigers and other species.
- **Khata Corridor:** This corridor connects Bardia National Park (BNP) in Nepal with Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in India. Rhinos and elephants are known to move between the two protected areas through this corridor. The area of Khata corridor is approximately 160.58 sq km with the width of the corridor varying from 0.5 to 4 km. The corridor has five Village Development Committees (VDCs).

¹ Chitwan National Park, Parsa Wildlife Reserve, Bardia National Park, and Suklaphanta National Park in Nepal and Corbett National Park, Rajaji National Park, Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Dudwa National Park, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and Valmikinagar Wildlife Sanctuary in India.

- **Lamahi Bottleneck:** This area consists of a narrow and degraded piece of forest that connects a larger continuous stretch of forest.
- **Chitwan National Park (CNP) and Buffer Zone:** Chitwan National Park is the first National Park of Nepal. The Chitwan National Park Buffer Zone initiated the practice of Buffer Zone management in Nepal. Mobilization of community participation in conservation is still an important challenge in this area. Management of buffer zone forests is very important since the buffer zone forests play a crucial role as extended habitat of wildlife such as rhinos and tigers. It also plays a crucial role in enhancing natural capital of the residents of buffer zones. Therefore, promotion of community forestry and capacity building of community forests and buffer zone institutions are key interventions of GCP funded project in TAL.
- **Parsa Wildlife Reserve (PWR) and Buffer Zone:** Parsa Wildlife Reserve forms a contiguous protected landscape with the eastern boundary of the Chitwan National Park. The Reserve is dominated by Chure Hills (sal with chir pine) and Bhavar (sal forest and mixed sal forest) where soil is erodable and water is scarce, resulting in poor habitat conditions for wildlife. The recently declared Parsa Wildlife Reserve Buffer Zone urgently needs to form and mobilize the participation of local buffer zone institutions. Promotion of community forestry and capacity building will be key interventions of GCP in the buffer zone of PWR>



Map 1: Project Areas in TAL – Corridors, Bottlenecks, and Protected Area Buffer Zones

1.2 Threats

The ecological landscape of the Terai is faced with an array of immediate threats endangering the very existence of its wildlife species and habitat. Not only is the long-term viability of wildlife species and

their habitat at stake, but also the sustainable future livelihoods of local communities. A Root Causes Analysis (RCA)² conducted in 2002 – 2003 identified seven direct causes and seven indirect causes of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in TAL. These causes were then analyzed and used to form the TAL-Nepal Strategic Plan. Taking into account the strengths of WWF, along with available funding and long-term goals, we identified the direct and indirect threats that we can most effectively tackle in this GCP project. The direct causes we are addressing include:

- Forest conversion due to agricultural expansion and encroachment
- Unsustainable harvesting of timber
- Unsustainable extraction of fuel wood and other forest products
- Overgrazing in public and private forests
- Wildlife poaching

The indirect causes we are addressing include:

- Lack of off-farm livelihood opportunities
- Inadequate access to and management of forest resources
- Cross border issues

The trans-boundary issues involved in TAL are of special concern in this project. Since Nepal and India have an open border, cross border issues such as timber smuggling, wildlife trade, poaching and cross border grazing are rampant. However, there is currently no effective mechanism to regulate and monitor illegal cross border activities in Basanta and Suklaphanta.

1.3 Strategic Goals and Objectives

The goal for the entire Eastern Himalayan Eco-region Complex (EHEC) is to maintain ecological integrity in the larger geographical area that encompasses various micro and macro ecosystems in harmony with the local human environment. Ecological integrity in the eco-region is maintained through conserving representative facets of biodiversity within habitat areas that are large enough to support the natural, ecological and evolutionary processes.

The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) Program is a pioneering initiative in eco-region conservation in Nepal. Since 2001, the Government of Nepal and WWF have jointly taken initiatives for conservation and sustainable livelihoods in the Terai Arc Landscape – Nepal. The Terai Arc Landscape that links 11 protected areas between Nepal’s Parsa Wildlife Reserve and India’s Rajaji National Park has a goal “*to conserve the biodiversity, soils and watersheds of the Terai and Churia hills in order to ensure the ecological, economic and socio-cultural integrity of the region.*” Forests connecting these protected areas are in various stages of degradation and fragmentation due to human population and poverty pressures. Restoring these wildlife corridors will facilitate the dispersal and genetic exchange of wildlife populations, ensure the long-term survival of key endangered species, and provide ecological and socio-economic services integral for the well being of local communities.

The major thematic areas of WWF’s work in the Terai Arc Landscape are as follows:

1. Forests
2. Species

² RCA is an analytical and logical tool that enabled TAL to identify a set of factors that are the main drivers or causes behind environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in the landscape.

3. Sustainable Livelihoods
4. Conservation Education and Awareness
5. Coordination and Partnerships
6. Research, Monitoring & Learning

GCP2 funds for FY 09 were mainly focused on the forests, anti-poaching and learning components.

1.4 Collaborators/Partners

In order to meet this goal, WWF Nepal is working with a number of partners from the government, donors, donor-supported projects and civil society organizations. Some of these partners are:

- Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MFSC), Government of Nepal
- Department of Forest (DoF), MFSC
- Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), MFSC
- District Forest Offices and Protected Area Offices
- USAID Nepal
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- BISEP - ST (SNV)
- Livelihood for Forestry Program (DFiD)
- Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (UNDP/Global Environment Facility - GEF, SNV Nepal, WWF Nepal, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity Research and Development – LIBRD, International Plant Genetic Resource Institute - IPGRI and Nepal Agriculture Research Council – NARC)

National and community level organizations that WWF partners with include:

- National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)
- Nepal Red Cross Society
- Buffer Zone Management Committees (BZMCs)
- Community Forest Coordination Committees (CFCCs)
- Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs)
- Eco clubs and eco club networks

2. Summary – Period 10/01/08 – 09/30/09

WWF TAL Program implemented activities to address threats to forests, focusing on protection, management and restoration. In FY09, WWF TAL Program focused its efforts on building the capacity of existing Community-Based Anti-Poaching Operations (CBAPOs) and forming new CBAPOs in corridors and bottlenecks outside the protected area. Mobilizing CBAPOs requires the organized involvement of local community members in anti-poaching activities. CBAPOs were provided with financial support to meet their expenses incurred in day to day operations such as patrolling, meetings, and transportation. Likewise, technical support was provided to mobilize new CBAPOs and to orient them to the modus operandi of CBAPOs and conservation issues. WWF TAL Program is working to institutionalize and build the capacity of one CBAPO for every CFUG. Currently, a CBAPO campaign has geared up with slogan “One CFUG One CBAPO”.

During this reporting period, WWF TAL Program supported the preparation of Community Forest Operational Plans (CFOPs) of 47 new CFUGs and Buffer Zone CFUGs. The CFOPs are currently being

reviewed by District Forest Offices and Protected Area offices. After CFOPs are approved by District Forest Offices and Protected Area Offices, 8,244 ha of forest will be handed over to 47 CFUGs and Buffer Zone CFUGs (likely by December 2009). Likewise, the WWF Nepal field team supported 41 pre-existing CFUGs in their revision of the CFOPs, which allows them to continue to manage 11,317 ha. of community forests.

WWF TAL Program supported the institutional development of 16 CBAPOs and 36 newly formed CFUGs and Buffer Zone CFUGs. Approximately 1,125 community members benefitted from the capacity building efforts. CBAPOs received financial assistance to purchase needed field gear and were taught the laws and regulations regarding biodiversity conservation in Nepal. In addition, CBAPO members were taught how to conduct safe patrolling and community based biodiversity monitoring, how to apprehend an offender, and record keeping skills. This support will help them be more effective in their efforts to patrol their forests and control illegal activities. Similarly, newly formed CFUGs and Buffer Zone CFUGs received financial assistance to purchase basic office furniture and print documents on official letterhead. More than 350 executive members of CFUGs, Buffer Zone CFUGs, CFCCs and Buffer Zone institutions received training in sustainable forest management, account keeping, good governance, and leadership development. Local Resource Persons (LRPs) were instructed how to train and support the local CBOs in institutional development and management, as well as participatory biodiversity monitoring. These training activities were solely funded by GCP2.

Currently, there are 34 functional CBAPOs in corridors, bottlenecks and buffer zones under which there are hundreds of CBAPOs functioning as sub-units. Although there is no quantitative baseline to measure a reduction in illegal activities, the local communities have perceived significant reduction in illegal activities. For example, in the past two fiscal years there have been zero cases of rhino poaching in western TAL and no poaching of Tiger at all along the whole landscape. This can be attributed mainly to the active involvement of the local communities in patrolling and being vigilant of poachers under the leadership of the CBAPOs. Furthermore, illegal logging, the smuggling of timber, and the illegal harvest of forest products have been significantly controlled in the project sites where CBAPOs are mobilized. During this reporting period, WWF TAL Program provided CFCCs with support to update the database of Community Based Anti-Poaching Operations. CFCCs will maintain the database on wildlife poaching, illegal cases, wildlife sightings, and other associated information, which will help local communities and law enforcement agencies to strategize patrolling and assess the trend of poaching.

WWF Nepal conducted an assessment of CBAPOs in corridors and bottlenecks that evaluated the institutional, legal, financial and operational aspects of CBAPOs. The assessment also analyzed successes and effectiveness in reducing illegal activities and showed that establishing a measurable baseline is difficult because occurrences of illegal activities were not well documented and reported. However, the assessment has analyzed the trend of illegal activities based on local people's perceptions.

The TAL Phase II document has been finalized during this reporting period. The team conducted field verification in the Terai Arc, and a series of discussions were held in Kathmandu. In-house workshops of WWF staff members were held to identify biological targets and analyze threats to targets in the changed political situation and socio-economic context. Since the restoration of peace in Nepal in the past couple of years, the restructuring of the government; federalism; and the rights of local and indigenous people to natural and biological resources have become prominent issues. Therefore, the TAL program has focused on addressing these issues and crafting strategies in tune with changed context and issues. Likewise, program development for TAL Phase II has also considered the WWF Network priorities and programs such as Network Initiatives and new issues like REDD. A final document drafted by Dr. Eric W, WWF US with substantial inputs from the group, includes targets and related strategies that address the current threats and opportunities in the landscape. This document was also presented to the government partners.

WWF TAL Program shared and disseminated case studies, concepts, and best practices of CBAPOs to conservation partners through media coverage, newsletter publications, and presentations in various workshops and meetings. For the first time, a learning and sharing workshop was held with a wide range of stakeholders and partners from across the TAL. The workshop provided a common forum for all the concerned government representatives (DoF and DNPWC - DFOs and Chief Wardens) and community representatives (CFCCs, BZMCs, FECOFUN, NGOs) as well as other central level partners. The attendees held intensive discussions on the project's major achievements, weaknesses, areas of improvement and implementation modalities. The workshop utilized case studies developed by the WWF TAL Program, that focused on: results, lessons learned and best practices in corridor restoration; sustainable livelihoods development and its linkages with conservation outcomes; conservation education activities and their effectiveness in achieving positive attitudinal and behavioral changes among the target communities; and community stewardship of biodiversity and natural resources. The workshop was successful at identifying major issues and opening up new dialogue on ways to move forward. The case studies will be published in the near future in compliance with USAID's branding policy.

As a result of the sharing and dissemination of the case studies and successes of CBAPOs, DFOs / PAs have started recognizing the contribution of CBAPOs in controlling illegal activities, both inside and outside the protected areas. Local communities are more aware of the sensitive areas where poaching occurs and also of the persons involved. The communities know how and when poaching occurs, but are sometimes reluctant to take action themselves. CBAPOs and DFOs/PAs have started to conduct joint patrols which proved to be more effective in apprehending poachers than independent patrols, and DFO/PAs have increased their cooperation and support.

3. Progress by Target and Activity

By the end of June 2009, almost 100% of the activity targets had been accomplished. Details of progress by target and activities are as follows:

Objective I: Protect, manage and restore forests through community participation

WWF's strategy to address forest threats consists of three activities - protect, manage and restore. In FY09, GCP2 funds were used to improve the management of forests through active community participation and management of forests to reduce pressure on the resource. CBAPO is one of the major interventions to control illegal activities such as encroachment, illegal logging and illegal harvest of forest products. Our efforts to protect forest (focused on the establishment and enforcement of protected area management systems) and restore forest (focus on replanting and natural regeneration) will be implemented through WWF's other funding sources. At the heart of each activity is the mobilization of communities through community forestry initiatives that actively involve them in the restoration of degraded wildlife corridors and in helping to reduce and monitor illegal activities. This process results in a win-win scenario for communities who are empowered and for the natural resources and habitat that are protected. Community involvement in the restoration and management of forests allows the communities to profit from the resources (e.g. NTFPs) and builds their sense of ownership and commitment to conserving and protecting the forests rather than destroying them. Furthermore, active community participation in these activities is more cost effective given the labor and monetary contributions the communities make to the effort. Activities to protect, sustainably manage and restore forests were implemented through partnership with CFCCs, CFUGs and Buffer Zone institutions in close coordination with DFOs.

Objective I.1: Protect Forests - By October 2009, reduction in trend of illegal activities (e.g. felling trees, encroachment, poaching, over grazing) in the national forests through mobilization of Community Based Anti-Poaching Operations.

Forests and wildlife in the national forests are highly vulnerable to illegal logging, encroachment and poaching, due to lack of effective enforcement and control mechanisms. In the current state of political transition, there is a risk that these illegal activities may increase due to weak enforcement by the government agencies. Therefore, CBAPO has been a helpful arrangement for protecting forests and biodiversity from illegal activities. CBAPOs are currently operational in 34 sites in corridors, bottlenecks and buffer zones. As a result of their participation in CBAPOs, communities are becoming stewards of their natural resources and wildlife. CBAPOs keep vigil on illegal activities in their areas, reporting what they see to District Forest Offices (DFOs) and protected area authorities, and occasionally take action in close coordination with these institutions. CBAPOs are actively involved in confiscating illegally logged timber, evacuating encroached sites, dismantling traps, confiscating weapons such as guns used in poaching, and collecting fines from illegal loggers. CBAPO members patrol the sensitive areas to safeguard forest and wildlife from illegal loggers and poachers. The CBAPOs also provide information and support DFOs or protected area offices to arrest poachers and timber smugglers. DFOs and protected area offices provide legal support for CBAPOs to take actions against encroachers, poachers and timber smugglers.



Photo1: Confiscated leopard skin from the poachers at Kailali district

Along with anti-poaching activities, the CBAPOs document incidents of human-wildlife conflict such as crop depredation, livestock depredation and property damage by wildlife. These records of human-wildlife conflict incidents can be used in a systematic analysis of trends of human-wildlife conflict across the project sites. The CBAPOs are also keeping records of sightings of wildlife in their areas. This data can be very useful in initiating community-based biodiversity monitoring in the future.

Although there is still no concrete baseline to measure a reduction in illegal activities, the local communities have perceived significant reduction in illegal activities. For example, there were zero cases of rhino poaching outside the protected area in Chitwan and Khata corridor over the past two years, and no tiger poaching was reported this year. This can be attributed to the active involvement of the local communities in patrolling and vigilance against poaching under leadership of the CBAPOs. Illegal logging and smuggling of timber and illegal harvest of forest products have been effectively controlled in the project sites where CBAPOs are mobilized. In order to fill the gap in measurable baseline information, the TAL Program has conducted an assessment of CBAPOs, analyzing trends of illegal activities in corridors and bottlenecks. The trends of illegal activities will also be analyzed through a participatory exercise at the community level. Since there is difficulty in establishing a measurable baseline of illegal activities, case studies will be conducted to analyze the trend of illegal activities in the coming year as a process of monitoring the results of CBAPOs in reducing illegal activities.

Activities:

Support CFUGs to incorporate community based anti-poaching operations (CBAPO) in their community forest operational plans (CFOPs).

During this reporting period, WWF field projects assisted 88 CFUGs to incorporate the CBAPO provision and action plan as a major component of forest protection and management in their CFOPs. Incorporating CBAPOs in CFOPs will ensure better institutional linkages with CFUGs, legality, and

sustainability. In FY08, CFUGs began to provide financial support to CBAPOs in Khata corridor and CNP Buffer Zone, thereby initiating the process of institutionalizing and sustaining CBAPOs. Now in FY09, the majority of these CFUGs have begun investing in anti-poaching activities, with slight match support from WWF TAL Program. Since then, the formation of CBAPO sub-units³ in each CFUG has increased dramatically. Altogether 65 new CBAPO sub-units were formed and over 108 sub-units were renewed during the reporting period. As a result of formation and mobilization of CBAPOs, poaching and illegal activities have been reduced by over 50% as compared to the FY 08 baseline which is based on evidence recorded by the project, and on the perception of local communities. For instance, there were zero cases of tiger poaching reported across the TAL in FY 09 while rhino poaching was also reduced by 63% as compared to the FY 06 baseline.

Prepare and disseminate case studies, concepts and best practices of CBAPOs to conservation partners, such as District Forest Offices and other NGOs.

During FY09, WWF TAL program prepared, disseminated, and discussed case studies, concepts and best practices of CBAPOs with conservation partners. The concept of CBAPO and the achievements made were well recognized and appreciated by the partners. These case studies received local media coverage (newsletter and radio coverage), were printed in a WWF/TAL newsletter, and were presented to conservation partners, government bodies and international donor agencies in various workshops and meetings. As a result of the sharing and dissemination of the case studies and successes of CBAPOs, DFOs / PAs have started recognizing the role of CBAPOs in



Photo 2: Orientation to CBAPO members

controlling illegal activities both inside and outside the protected areas. In FY09, there were a number of cases in which joint patrolling and operation were undertaken that resulted in improved performance as compared to previous years. For example, Sunakhari CBAPO at Parsa Wildlife Reserve Buffer Zone (PWRBZ) participated in four events of joint patrolling with Parsa Wildlife Reserve (PWR), Nepal Army's park protection unit, protection unit and Buffer Zone Users Committees. The joint operation destroyed two huts constructed by poachers at Shittalpur in PWR for shelter and for drying wildlife meat, and confiscated 500m of electric wire used for fishing, 45 axes used for timber smuggling, 478m³. timber, a trapping net for Spotted Deer, as well as knives and pointed rods (Bhala). Another joint operation by CBAPO - Khata and the Bardia National Park Protection Unit successfully chased poachers from the Khata area and rescued a rhino that had been injured by gun shot at Khaireni in the Khata Corridor.

With this success of CBAPO, CBAPO units were replicated in many other sites in TAL and SHL (Sacred Himalayan Landscape) by several partners and projects, such as Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP), FECOFUN Kailali, FECOFUN Bardia, Langtang National Park, Kangchenjunga Conservation Area. CBAPO has now become a new brand in the conservation sector, especially in the control of poaching and illegal activities of forest resources and wildlife. In total, 16 events of joint patrolling in close co-ordination with the DFO and the protected area office were accomplished with remarkable achievements.

³ The CBAPO is the apex unit of many CBAPO subunits. CBAPOs are at the Community Forest Coordination Committee/Buffer Zone User Committee level, while CBAPO sub-units are at the Community Forest User Group level.



Photo 3: Joint patrolling and anti-poaching operation of CBAPO, protection unit, park staff and army.

Objective I.2 Manage Forests - 6,000 ha of new forest under community forestry management in TAL by September 2009

Community Forestry has been instrumental to the sustainable management of forests in Nepal. Therefore, WWF's major strategy for sustainable management of forests in corridors, bottlenecks and buffer zones is the promotion of community forestry. Since Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) have broad based membership and ownership of forest resources, partnership with them provides a greater opportunity to implement community-based conservation and development activities. Therefore, GCP2 funding was focused mainly on promotion of community forestry. Major activities to promote community forestry included the formation of CFUGs, preparation of CFOPs, revision of CFOPs and institutional capacity building of CFUGs, CFCCs, and buffer zone institutions. Altogether, 19,561 ha of forested area have been brought under community management through this support in this fiscal year (more than triple what was expected). Progress of forest management activities in this reporting period is as follows:

Activities:

Provide technical and financial support to 70 CFUGs to prepare CFOPs and group charters

During this reporting period, WWF's projects facilitated the formation of 47 CFUGs and buffer zone CFUGs. These CFUGs and buffer zone CFUGs received financial and technical support from WWF for preparation of CFOPs. With additional technical support from DFOs and protected area offices, numerous activities were completed, including: forest area surveys, mapping, detailed forest inventory, analysis of inventory data, preparation of operational plans in consultation with CFUG members, and drafting group charters. Altogether 8,244 ha forest area is brought under community management from this initiative (more than twice the target of 3,500ha). Because of the Government of Nepal's (GoN) policy to limit the handover of community forests, the original GCP target to prepare CFOPs for 70 CFUGs and buffer zone CFUGs was not met during this reporting period. The government of Nepal had stopped the handing over of community forests for the last two years in Terai, but allowed it in the reporting period with some conditions. A mandatory provision of Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) prior to handing over has been placed for an area of more than 200 ha. This provision has significantly affected



Photo 4: Natural regeneration at Kalika CFUG of Narti

and delayed the achievement of the program's target related to sustainable management of forests in corridors and bottlenecks.

Provide basic operational support for office management to newly formed CFUGs.

WWF Nepal team provided initial institutional development support to 38 newly formed CFUGs and buffer zone CFUGs. This included basic operational support for improved office management - stationery, chairs, tables and cupboards. In addition, 16 CBAPOs were supported with office management and field gear to effectively operate the anti-poaching operation and mobilize CBAPO members. The CFUGs will be able to meet the continuing costs of office management from the revenue generated from mobilization of local resources.

Provide technical and financial support to 50 existing CFUGs for revision of their CFOPs and group charters.

In FY09, 41 existing CFUGs were supported in the revision of their CFOPs. CFOPs are prepared for 5-year terms. After 5 years, CFOPs must be revised or renewed. Both financial and technical resources are required for renewal of CFOPs. The process of revising CFOPs and group charters is expected to strengthen group management, forest management practices, and revenue generation. This activity was implemented in close coordination with DFOs and PAs. The TAL Program provided the financial support, and DFO/PAs provided the technical support for renewal of the CFOPs of 41 CFUGs. While the original target was to facilitate the renewal of 50 CFOPs, only 41 CFOPs could be revised during this reporting period because of frequent changes in the government technical staff required to lead the process, frequent strikes and blockades in Terai. However, the renewal of the 41 CFOPs for CFUGs has been instrumental in promoting community management of 11,317 ha of forest (greatly exceeding the target of 2,500ha in our proposal to GCP).



Photo 5: Enrichment plantation at Khata corridor

Assess the institutional capacity of 10 Community Forest Coordination Committees to identify the current status, gaps and capacity development needs.

WWF TAL Program hired an external expert to train 15 local resource persons⁴ (LRPs) how to assess the capacity of CBOs. The fifteen local resource persons then conducted 12 3-day events to assess the capacity of 11 CFCCs and one NGO partner. Their objective was to identify the current status, gaps and capacity development needs of the CFCCs. The assessments focused on institutional capacity in managing natural resources, development activities, and the linkages of integrated activities with biodiversity conservation. Based on this assessment, the project also developed a plan for capacity building activities, some of which were implemented during this fiscal year with the funds gained from dollar exchange, while most of the recommended activities will be carried out in the coming fiscal year with

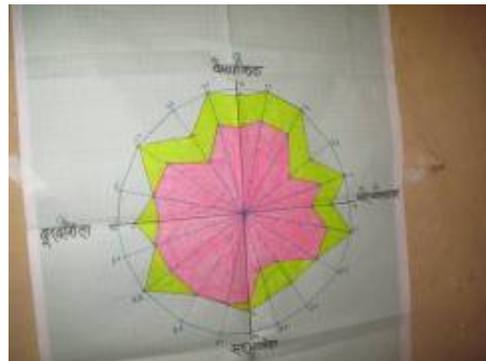


Photo 6: Capacity assessment of CFCC

⁴ Local resource persons are locally based volunteers WWF trains in certain skills so they can provide services to the community-based organizations, thus eliminating the need to bring in experts from Kathmandu in the future.

WWF's own funding sources after close out of GCP2. The training and capacity building support provided will meet the needs of CFUGs and local institutions to enable them to more effectively deliver the CFOP targets, covering the management of over 20,000 ha of forests. During this reporting period, LRPs trained a total of 292 office bearers of CFUGs, Buffer Zone CFUGs, CFCCs, co-operatives and Buffer Zone institutions, in sustainable forest management, group management, account keeping, computer use, good governance, proposal and report writing, planning and leadership development. These training activities were solely funded by GCP.

Build capacity of the local communities in Khata and Basanta corridor in participatory biodiversity monitoring.

With support from the WWF TAL Program, the regional training center in Dhangadi held a three-day event to train local resource persons (LRPs) in participatory bio-diversity monitoring and documentation. The trained LRPs then conducted two two-day training sessions for executive members of Khata and Lamahi CFCCs, with 61 community members (49 male and 12 female) benefitting from the program. The LRPs learned techniques for recording floral and faunal diversity in the sample plots and transects as well as how to use a standardized format for recording the data. The training included both theoretical and practical sessions. As a result, participatory biodiversity monitoring and registration is under operation in 64 CFUGs of Khata and Lamahi CFCCs covering over 12,000 ha. In FY09, a community managed database of the bio-diversity registered in Community Forests was established and maintained. This activity is expected to help local communities realize the impact of restoration activities on vegetation and biodiversity. By monitoring the biodiversity, local communities will be more involved in its conservation. Biodiversity monitoring records maintained by the local communities will provide important information for analyzing (scientific/technical) impacts of restoration activities and to make more informed decisions for future management.

4. Learning Component and Program Development

GCP funding has been highly instrumental in developing WWF's capacity to analyze lessons learned from implementation of programs and use this learning in the planning and development of other programs. GCP's support for learning in this FY was focused mainly on strengthening program monitoring, documentation of best practices and developing project documents for TAL Phase II. The major achievements under this learning and program development component are as follows:

Document best practices and lessons learned from the TAL Program through case studies, published in both English and Nepali, which will be disseminated to stakeholders and partners through publications and workshops

During this fiscal year, WWF TAL Program documented best practices and lessons learned during its eight years of tenure. Several big achievements were documented, as well as areas for improvements, new areas on which to focus, as well as the challenges associated with working in a time of political instability and insurgency. These lessons were documented in case studies, which provided considerable insight while developing the TAL phase II document, as well as in the design of new project concepts. The case studies mainly focused on: results, lessons learned, and best practices in corridor restoration; sustainable livelihood development and its linkages with conservation outcomes; conservation education activities



Photo 7: TAL staff team in reflection and team building program

and their effectiveness in achieving positive attitudinal and behavioral changes among the target communities; and community stewardship of biodiversity and natural resources.

The best practices and lessons learned were shared with a wide range of audiences through the TAL project's newsletter, national and local level newspapers, as well as radio and television transmissions. In addition, eight CFCCs have published a booklet highlighting the organization's profile and achievements, successes, and lessons learned from the beginning until the present day. This has, in real sense, motivated the partners and stakeholders at the national and local levels (CBOs, NGOs, and government partners) to adopt and replicate the best practices and lessons of TAL.



Photo 8: Glimpse of learning and sharing workshop

To share the lessons of TAL, WWF TAL Program organized and conducted four learning and sharing events at the district level, with over 300 participants from a wide range of organizations, CBOs, political parties, civil society organizations, and district line agencies. Prior to these district workshops, a similar learning and sharing workshop was conducted at the local level by every CFCC/ BZUC and partner NGO. Finally, a national level learning and sharing workshop was conducted among all the implementing and strategic partners, to assess the success of TAL from a stakeholder's perspective, to identify major short comings/pitfalls, and strategize future improvements to incorporate in planning and implementation. The national workshop was attended by over 50 individuals representing over 45 partner organizations. The partner organizations were comprised of government bodies (Ministry of Forests, Protected Areas, District Forest Offices), CFCCs (12), BZMC (4), CBOs/NGOs (3), and representatives from TAL, WWF, WTLCP, UNDP, FECOFUN, LFP, DNPWC, DoF. The workshop was fruitful in identifying issues of common interests, coordinated efforts, activities that need continuity, as well as those needing less focus, and ways forwards based on the lessons learned so far. The detailed report of the national level learning and sharing workshop which was conducted on 29th and 30th June 2009 is provided separately.

In addition, the WWF TAL Program staff held a two-day team building workshop on 27th and 28th June 2009. The workshop provided a forum for TAL staff to reflect upon the eight years of TAL successes and pitfalls, and come out with new innovations and team spirit in the days to come. This reflection was very useful to strengthen program planning and implementation, and provide insights for documenting lessons learned from the program implementation.

Likewise, WWF TAL Program reached out to international audiences through presentations at meetings and workshops and has planned to publish a book on eight years of the TAL journey in Nepal. This publication will feed into the GCP2 final global learning activities.

Train field staff of TAL Program in Program and Project Management Standards (PPMS) of the WWF Network.

During this reporting period, WWF TAL Program staff were oriented to biodiversity monitoring concepts, methods, and techniques. A systematic monitoring mechanism and practice was established at the project level to document the progress of activities. As a result of the new monitoring practice, the frequency of WWF TAL Program staff monitoring visits has increased; field offices have developed checklists and formats to document information during monitoring visits; and local communities have largely been involved in participatory monitoring. Results and outcomes level monitoring is being done

regularly by the monitoring unit of WWF in Kathmandu, while a joint monitoring team comprising the representatives of DNPWC, DoF and WWF is done at least once a year at impact level. At the same time, periodic reviews and lessons learned/reflection workshops were instrumental in providing feedback to program management, identifying programmatic and operational issues and assessing the status of activities and directing our future planning and implementation process. These workshops contributed to an in-depth discussion among project staff about implementation, planning and management. Participants were able to identify the issues, find solutions, and take actions. Several actions were taken to improve planning and implementation during the reporting period. The adaptive management practices adopted by TAL Program have resulted in changes, adjustment and adaptations in program planning and implementation based on the feedback, and lessons learned in the monitoring. For example, flooding in TAL during this reporting period displaced thousands of people with a huge loss of property and human casualty. WWF Nepal and TAL program became involved in relief and humanitarian activities. This unexpected disaster affected the flow of the project implementation as planned; however, the support and dedication of project staff was highly appreciated by communities and civil society organizations.

In addition, WWF TAL Program staff (Project Managers and Co-managers – 4 staff) received five days of training on people management, which is an essential skill for managing individuals and achieving results with a team. Through this training, the managers developed people management skills and learned how to manage a team more effectively and efficiently, how to manage staff performance, and broadened their knowledge of management theory and its real life applications, while sharing experiences with a network of WWF colleagues.

Collect data and manage database for analysis of GCP results over past 7 years.

WWF TAL Program has created a database documenting socio-economic and biological information, project progress, and achievements of project offices and the Monitoring and Database Unit of WWF Nepal. The database will permit GIS analysis and data management to help analyze TAL's conservation results in the past seven years. The database complements the case studies on results of GCP supported interventions, by helping to build more quantitative analysis of these results. The database management system developed by Monitoring and Database Unit of WWF was replicated in TAL CBRP, one of WWF's other projects in TAL at Dhangadi. For this, two training sessions (two days each) on database management were provided to five TAL staff. The CBRP project has now developed a very good database of their conservation program activities which will now feed into the central database system of WWF Nepal.

Improve monitoring of progress, effectiveness, results and lesson learned.

Monitoring is a continuous process for the TAL Program, which is already instituted through development and use of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. The Monitoring and Evaluation plan has explicitly outlined the period, methods, tools and levels of monitoring, and covers GCP funded activities and its results. GCP support has further strengthened both programmatic and financial monitoring. As such, regular quarterly review and monitoring of programmatic and financial aspect of the project were done at different level i.e. at central, regional and district / local level, followed by a central level joint monitoring (by WWF, DNPC and DoF high officials) of the project annually. In order to strengthen monitoring, monitoring capacity of the staff and CBOs were enhanced through a series of trainings and workshops. Quarterly review of programmatic progress and issues has been helpful to incorporate learning and feedback into future planning and implementation. In addition, effectiveness assessments of some of our key activities including the CBAPO were also accomplished. Likewise, field visits have been used to test the assumptions articulated in the project's results chains about the links between short-term activities and outputs, and the longer term changes in behavior, reduction of threats, and conservation impact.

5. Success Stories

GCP2 funds were instrumental in strengthening the anti-poaching operations, community forests management, and improving the quality of life for the poor in rural areas of the Terai Arc Landscape. One story of success in FY09 stands out:

Natural water sources reappear in the Lamahi bottleneck: A success indicator of community forest management

Just over a three decades ago, forests in Lamahi bottleneck on the foothills of the Churiya range in Dang district had disappeared due to a growing population, who migrated from the hills. Heavy deforestation caused the area to become arid, threatening the fragile ecosystem in the Lamahi bottleneck - an important biological corridor that connects Bardia National Park in the west and Chitwan National Park in the east. "Increase in population and ever growing human settlements had put the forests under immense pressure which led to disappearance of animal species and water sources," said Jokhuram Chaudhary, Chairperson of Narti Rangepost Community Forest User Group Coordination Committee. In 2001, TAL along with the Nepal's Forest Department came up with a concept to protect the biodiversity of the region at a landscape level. TAL's program became a milestone in conserving the forest resources, and it has brought tremendous change in forest conservation and community development within the span of eight years. As a result of active management of community forests and restoration of barren forests, natural sources of water have started reappearing in the forested area, a major indicator of success.



Photo 9: A natural water source appears at Lamahi as a result of management of forests – water which is feeding both the community and wildlife.

"There was a huge scarcity of water in the forest when we started protecting forests but as the conditions gradually improved, there was also rise in water sources," said Chaudhary. According to the data provided by the Narti Rangepost Community Forest User Group Coordination Committee, the appearance of over 120 such natural water sources has been recorded in 22 different community forests after starting forest conservation. In 2008, 16 new water sources were discovered in six community forests. TAL has also started providing financial support to help the Committees manage the water sources properly. Recently, TAL funded Rs. 20,000 to construct in one of the community forests a water reservoir that would provide wild animals and local communities with easy access to water. The reservoir came into function in April 2009. "Despite an increasing number of water sources, the wild animals did not have proper access to water," said Hari Prasad Shrestha, Chairperson of the Ramjhadhi Community Forest. "We felt the need to give easy access to wild animals who roam around the forest, and TAL helped us. It will prevent animals' possible struggle with humans for available water." Padma Adhikari, a forest guard in Ramjahadi Community Forest said that wild animals such as leopard, bear, wild boar and jackals are frequently seen in the forest. "The place has become a natural habitat for



Photo 10: Jokhu Ram Chaudhary – Chairperson - Narti Rangepost CFCC, Lamahi.

various species of animals and birds after the restoration of forest." Officials at the Narti Range Post Community Forest - the apex body of 30 community forest groups covering over 9,853 hectares of land - said that locals were taking initiatives to manage the water sources properly so that they are preserved for future generations. "People are well aware of the fact that the water sources could dry if they are not taken care of," said Chaudhary, the Chairperson. "In coordination with WWF / TAL, we are planning to preserve more water sources in other community forests as well."

6. Lessons Learned

The major lessons learned from GCP2 in this reporting period are as follows:

WWF TAL Program sought to mobilize and build the capacity of local community based organizations, such as the CFCCs, CFUGs and Buffer Zone institutions, to advance its conservation agenda and empower the people who would see it through. WWF Nepal helped these institutions practice and implement good governance and democratic norms / values; developed their institutional capacity; fostered collective leadership; and encouraged them to be politically neutral. This enhanced the community ownership and leadership, which is possible only when community-based institutions and mechanisms are in place that value the community's aspirations, provide equal opportunity and encourage the participation of all. In addition, WWF focused on setting institutional operational standards (rules and regulations) and compliance which ensured good governance practices. The practice of good governance is one of the best tools for nurturing the authenticity and trust that serves as a strong foundation for the overall development of an effective organization. Equity is a big issue in community-based natural resource management that can also be solved through the practice of good governance. Similarly, legality is another prerequisite for sustainability of CBOs. CFCCs are registered in District Administration Offices and affiliated to the Social Welfare Council under the status of NGOs. This has ensured official recognition and sustainability of the CBO partners, opening doors to new opportunities for these CBOs on their own to diversify their partners and financial support. Thus by building the capacity of the CBO partners, the WWF TAL Program was able to make the implementation of conservation programs and activities smooth, effective, efficient, transparent, participatory and sustainable.

The TAL Program is an ambitious landscape level conservation program with clear and established linkages between the protected areas and the people who depend on them for their wellbeing. Thanks to this landscape approach, the TAL corridors and bottlenecks have been restored significantly and wildlife and their habitat have been safeguarded, as envisioned. The approach is based on widely accepted scientific principles where the shift from site based conservation to landscape level conservation allows representation of all facets of bio-diversity in the region. Similarly the landscape approach conserves ecological processes, which are not taken care of at smaller scales. This approach considers conservation of natural resources and bio-diversity beyond the boundaries of national park and wildlife sanctuaries while improving the livelihoods of local communities thereby seeking active involvement of community people in conservation. Evidence such as sightings of tigers and their prey base, rhinos in corridors and bottlenecks, and diversified livelihoods options, suggest that the corridors and bottlenecks have become functional and that people's livelihoods have improved with the increased financial capital and institutional capacity of the implementing CBOs. Active community mobilization, participation and volunteerism to participate in integrated conservation and development programs have brought visible changes in the corridors, bottlenecks and buffer zone areas and communities of the TAL area.

A learning and sharing workshop was conducted for the first time at landscape level in TAL, where a wide range of stakeholders and partners were present. It provided a common forum for all the concerned government representatives (DoF and DNPWC - DFOs and Chief Wardens) and community representatives (CFCCs, BZMCs, FECOFUN, NGOs) as well as partners at higher level. Intensive

discussions were conducted on the project's major achievements, weaknesses, areas of improvement, and implementation modalities. This program identified the major issues and opened up new ideas on ways forward. Such workshops would be fruitful in reviewing/ evaluating ourselves and make future strategies accordingly.

The voluntary active participation of communities in anti-poaching operations has proven to be an effective means of controlling poaching and illegal activities in Nepal. The CBAPO contribution to conservation initiatives has now been realized and recognized by all the concerned authorities, including the national park, where such anti-poaching operations are mostly undertaken by a protection unit and army personnel. Now such operations in the park and buffer zone area are jointly undertaken, resulting in better performance than that of the past. For example, Sunakhari CBAPO at PWRBZ participated in four events of joint patrolling with Parsa Wildlife Reserve (PWR), protection unit and BZUCs. The joint operation was able to achieve expected results. This was one of the important aspects experienced during the CBAPO operation at PWRBZ.

7. Future Challenges

Land restoration is a big challenge for TAL, especially in the western sector, where illegal human settlement has increased massively in the recent past. Wildlife poaching also continues to be a considerable threat, although it has significantly reduced in recent years. Solving these issues requires a strong political commitment, as well as stringent legal action through proper law enforcement. Therefore, there is a strong need for advocacy, lobbying, media campaigns, law enforcement, and anti-poaching operations.

More importantly, state restructuring is the major issue in Nepal. The shape that the future government takes will have great implications on natural resources management and conservation. A debate on this issue has already started at the national level amongst conservation organizations, partners, and stakeholders. We must not delay in bringing the conservation view to multi-sector national dialog on the nation restructuring issue. The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly declared Nepal as a federal democratic republic. Therefore, there is a high possibility of having multiple provinces in Terai Arc Landscape. These provincial governments' priorities and policies for conservation may differ, and the coordination among them to address conservation issues in TAL could be a challenge. Besides, there are several actors and partners involved in conservation in TAL. It is a challenge to streamline their efforts and create synergy for a common goal.

At the moment, policy frameworks, institutional mechanisms and all existing practices of management of natural resources are open for discussion. The constitution is in a formative stage with a timeline for completion by May 2010. Regional political powers, indigenous communities and professional groups are assembled for the debate. The ongoing armed conflict in several places in Terai is still a major challenge for easy mobility. The high level commission for the rehabilitation of bonded laborers, flood victims and landless people will pose a threat to the forests of Terai. The government's provisions for the construction of reservoirs for electricity generation will have an impact in the downstream Terai and the existing PAs. The declaration of an energy crisis in Nepal will have far reaching consequences on the economy and conservation of ecosystems, for which there is no immediate solution but a constant positive engagement in multi-sector dialog by conservation organizations like WWF.

List of Annexes:

GCP deliverables will be submitted to USAID upon completion.