

COMDEKS

Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative

United Nations Development Programme

Environment and Energy



Issue No. 7

March 2014

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

This newsletter is produced by the Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative Project, implemented by UNDP and funded by the Japan Biodiversity Fund. It provides updates on a range of topics including the status of ongoing country programmes, landscape performance indicators, project impacts and results, and noteworthy announcements.

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

Welcome to the sixth issue of our Newsletter!

In this edition, we highlight:

- (1) Seminar on indicators research in Rome, a forthcoming toolkit
- (2) Indicators, first steps to building a resilient system
- (3) New COMDEKS projects launched in Bhutan
- (4) Village Mapping in India: A strategy for collaboration and community empowerment
- (5) Portfolio Update: stories from Indonesia, Mongolia and Niger
- (6) A COMDEKS Photostory from Nepal

COMDEKS Country Programmes: March 2013



Seminars on Indicators Research in Rome: A forthcoming toolkit for Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes



Indicators Toolkit Workshop in Rome

Photo: Bioversity International

Since 2013, Bioversity International, the Institute for Global Environmental Studies (IGES), the United Nations University Institute for Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been working on a collaborative effort, under the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), to develop a toolkit for the application of the Indicators of Resilience in Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS). The kit is to be used as a tool to mobilize communities to assess the status of socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes, and to develop community-based strategies for sustainable productivity in biodiversity rich landscapes.

From 28-30 January 2014, a public seminar and a technical workshop were held in Rome at Bioversity headquarters to review the first draft set of indicators based on field testing carried out by UNDP and Bioversity International. The workshop was also an opportunity to advance in the development of the toolkit to be used for the application of the indicators in the field. The Workshop provided an opportunity to analyze and compare results across a range of field experiences, including experiences from the COMDEKS projects implemented across multiple countries, as well as Bioversity's independent field tests in Kenya, Bolivia, Cuba, and Nepal. The event created a forum for a productive discussion and cooperation, and created the groundwork for further developing a toolkit based on these indicators. Additional information on the Workshop can be found in the [IPSI February newsletter](#).

Contributed by William Dunbar, Communications Expert for the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative

Indicators – first steps to building a resilient system

Shocks and disturbances are inevitable in any system. Communities can be vulnerable to extreme weather events, market fluctuations, migration, and other forces. While we cannot prevent these things from happening, we can build more resilient systems that withstand pressure, and avoid the type of critical damage from which communities cannot recover.

But what does a resilient system look like and how do we build one? Several years ago, Bioversity International partnered with the United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies of Sust-



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ainability (UNU-IAS) under the Satoyama Initiative, and developed a set of indicators – 20 questions to help communities analyze the resilience of socio-ecological production landscapes (SEPLs). These indicators are spread over four broad categories: ecosystems and biodiversity protection; agricultural biodiversity; knowledge, learning and innovation; and social equity and infrastructure. Results from the indicators can be used to develop strategies to enhance resilience in a community and their landscape.

“One unusual thing about our indicators is that rather than focusing on eco-biological traits – species, habitats etc., they are more holistic, and emphasize the need for strong institutions to support communities and enhance resilience,” says Pablo Eyzaguirre, lead scientist of the Bioversity research team. This inclusion of social and economic aspects also works well with communities: “They find the link between conservation and socio-economic issues more relevant for them,” says Diana Salvemini, coordinator of UNDP’s Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS) project, which has been piloting the indicators in 20 countries since 2011.

Field testing through COMDEKS and results from Bioversity’s own field tests in Kenya, Bolivia, Cuba and Nepal, have already revealed many new insights on making communities and landscapes more resilient. “In Bolivia, for example, we found that while using agricultural biodiversity helps improve resilience, the extent to which it helps is limited if ecosystem protection is not part of the picture,” says Bioversity scientist Nadia Bergamini. The field tests are also helping researchers improve the indicators for future use. Focus groups need to be done in a language that is tailored to the community’s context, and a good facilitator is needed to catch the smaller nuances involved. The indicators are successful in that communities are directly involved in both evaluating their resilience and developing strategies to enhance that resilience. In the case of COMDEKS, small grants are provided to community organizations to finance the action plans they have developed.

Please visit the [Bioversity International website](#) to read the full article, and access the presentations from the seminar.



Rice Terraces in Nepal

Photo: IRRI/B.Bouman

Contributed by Camilla Zanzanaini, Communication and Research Assistant, Bioversity International

New COMDEKS Projects launched in Bhutan

We are excited to announce the initiation of COMDEKS on-the-ground-activities in Bhutan with the completion of the landscape-wide baseline assessment and community consultation process, the development of the COMDEKS Bhutan Country Programme Landscape Strategy “Restoring and Managing Landscapes in the Gamri Watershed, Tashigang”, and the approval by the SGP National Steering Committee of three projects funded by COMDEKS, and an additional five projects funded by GEF-SGP resources as cofinancing to implementation of the Landscape Strategy.

Please click [here](#) to read more about our activities in Bhutan.



Workshop participants engaged in mapping exercise

Photo: Bhutan

Contributed by Singay Dorji, Bhutan National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

Village Mapping in India: A Strategy for Collaboration and Community Empowerment

As part of the process of empowering and consulting with local communities, the COMDEKS project in India has engaged community members to participate in a consultation and village mapping exercise of the socio-ecological production landscape. The COMDEKS project in India targets a landscape within the Uttarakhand region, an area in which the interdependence between humans and nature is particularly pronounced. Currently, the region faces increasing pressure from land fragmentation, weather changes, and desertification affecting both the natural environment and the communities that depend on it for survival. The Village Mapping exercise, combined with the use of the Resilience Indicators, creates an avenue to address these issues through knowledge sharing and relationship building on a community level. The exercise was developed under the COMDEKS-supported *Sustainable Landscape Development through Eco-tourism based Livelihood Promotion in the Himalaya Project*, awarded to the Alaknanda Ghaati Shilpi Federation.

Through the mapping activities, participants are able to share valuable information on relevant features of the area, highlighting assets, problems, threats, and opportunities. Harnessing this information directly from the community in question signals to both community members and stakeholders that the community affected has expansive knowledge of local resources and issues, and is ultimately the agent behind COMDEKS activities in the region.

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The Village Mapping exercise provides an opportunity for involvement of a greater number of both men and women from the community including those traditionally marginalized, building trust and strengthening relationships between facilitators and community members, and establishing a structure in which decision making and responsibilities are shared. This mapping activity initiates a community involvement forum which continues to be developed through regular village meetings. Finally, the maps created serve as reference material for future planning, providing important insight into the specific socio-ecological characteristics of the area.

The community consultation and village mapping exercise, together with the Resilience Indicators piloting exercise, successfully engaged stakeholders to determine the resilience of the landscape and inform the design of the COMDEKS Country Programme Landscape Strategy in India. Village Mapping is a crucial building block of the social capital required to sustain participatory landscape management



Village map produced during the community consultation Photo: India

To read more about the COMDEKS target landscape in India, please click [here](#).

Contributed by Prabhjot Sodhi, India National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

Portfolio Update

Indonesia



Seaweed Harvesting on Semau Island Photo: Indonesia

Semau Island, a small island located in the Sawu Sea, has been chosen as the target area for COMDEKS activities in Indonesia.

The island, a rich ecological habitat, hosts monsoon forest, and the surrounding sea is home to one of the worlds' richest coral reef covers, as well as dolphins, sea turtles, manta rays, and the endangered blue and sperm whales. In addition, there are fourteen villages on Semau Island. The communities living there depend mostly on agriculture and fishing for survival. Unfortunately, the island faces a disproportionate risk to the agriculture practices on which local communities depend, and to its rich biodiversity due to climate change and extreme weather variability. The island faces growing threats given a diminishing fresh water supply, as well as threats from excessive use of chemicals in farming which decreases soil fertility and pollutes the surrounding oceans.



Community participation in baseline assessment

Photo: Indonesia

In 2013, baseline survey assessments were conducted on Semau island, mobilizing community members and village leaders to discuss and highlight key issues of concern on the island. Through the baseline assessment, a strategy was developed to focus on the most pressing needs of this habitat: a lack of freshwater access, the overuse of chemicals, the need for greater ecosystem protection, and a desire from the community for greater agricultural and aquaculture innovation. The COMDEKS project in Indonesia will focus on these issues through a wide range of activities, including community trainings on planting coral reef habitats in coastal waters and maintenance of protected state forest, coastal and marine ecosystems, community education on medicinal plant species, training for seedling preparation, facilitation of water resource management and construction of new water canals and wells. Following the approval of the COMDEKS Seascape Strategy for Indonesia, a call for proposals has been launched and proposals are currently under development.

Contributed by Catharina Dwihastarini, Indonesia National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

Mongolia



Central Selenge region

Photo: Mongolia

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In Mongolia, a large central part of the country known as the Central Selenge region, stretched across 628,856 ha of forest and mountain ecosystems, has been selected as the target landscape for COMDEKS projects. This area, home to a diverse ecosystem of plants and animals, including bears, lynxes, foxes, and wolves, is currently under pressure from a combination of factors including forest and water source depletion, pollution, and the effects of climate change. As humans continue to rely on unsustainable lumber extraction and the effects of livestock grazing, these regional issues are intensified. Additionally, as a region crippled by widespread poverty, the environmental deterioration of the region has had disproportionately serious consequences for the local population.



Community consultation process

Photo: Mongolia

A baseline assessment was conducted in the region to identify core problems and strategies in the region. Several workshops involving a range of community groups, stakeholders, and local government representatives were held, and assessments were made based on the SEPL indicators through the Satoyama Indicator Scorecard. Based on these community consultations, the overall objective of COMDEKS participation in Mongolia was developed, focusing on the conservation of local biodiversity, enhancing food security, the diversification of agricultural products, and the creation of institutional governance systems. Additionally, community members and stakeholders outlined several types of projects that could facilitate those goals, including activities ranging from diversification of agricultural landscapes and agro-forestry systems to constructing local dams and ponds to the promotion of eco and agro tourism in the region. These activities are aimed at addressing some of the problems endemic to the region.

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

Niger

In Niger, the area surrounding "La Mare de Tabalak" a natural fresh-water lake, in the central South-Western part of the country was selected as the target landscape for COMDEKS activities. Located in the Tahoua region, and spreading across an area of 3,557 hectares, Tabalak is one of 12 local wetland ecosystems. Due to its geoclimatic position, Tabalak lake plays a critical role in maintaining biodiversity, and is a remarkably verdant and beautiful wetland habitat surrounded by an arid landscape. It is home to diverse flora and fauna, most notably as an important habitat for migratory birds of the Western Palearctic.

In addition, the landscape plays a vital role in local socio-economic production which is heavily dependent on the agricultural, livestock, and fishing activities that rely on this key water source. Currently,

Tabalak lake is facing threats of accelerated degradation of natural resources due to pressure from human activities and climate change. Additionally, high incidence of poverty, and poor sanitation services, a poorly developed waste collection system, and lack of latrines all contribute to serious health hazards in the region.



Consultation outside Tabalak municipality

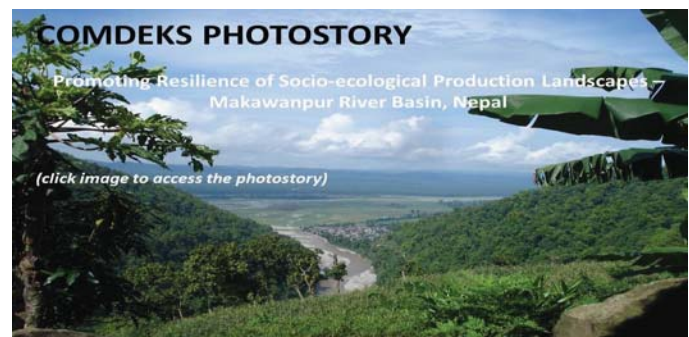
Photo: Niger

Community leaders have been engaged in participatory planning processes to develop a strategy for the target landscape and propose projects that would facilitate sustainable development and management of the production landscape. In this context, proposed activities will focus on land restoration in the landscape, the application of sustainable mining technology and activities aimed at increasing aquatic biodiversity. In particular, given the advanced state of degradation of the ecological landscape which has decreased agricultural productivity, there will be a particular focus on activities aimed at the diversification of farming practices.

Contributed by Nanatao Ismail Boucar, Niger National Coordinator, GEF-SGP, UNDP

Nepal

Click the image above to access a Photostory from Nepal describing the baseline assessment workshop and the community consul-



tation process that led to the development of the COMDEKS Country Programme Landscape Strategy for Nepal, and the support to innovative actions identified by the local communities.

Contributed by Vivek Sharma, Programme Assistant, GEF-SGP, UNDP, and Karina Solomonik, COMDEKS Intern

Previous Issues of COMDEKS Newsletter: [Issue 1](#), [Issue 2](#), [Issue 3](#), [Issue 4](#), [Issue 5](#), and [Issue 6](#).