

Project Update: September 2014

Introduction:

Rajouri tehsil, about 180 km from winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state in India, is a historic place and was used as a route for the movement of Mughal Emperors from Lahore to Kashmir and vice versa. The human settlements in the area are therefore very ancient. Beside this the nearby mountain range called as Pir Panjal range of NW Himalaya is a prominent chain of hills (average elevation 4000 m), flanked between rivers Chenab and Jhelum. The community in this district is predominantly nomadic tribal people like gujjers and shepherds. Most of the settled people are either mercantile or farmers. The nomadic as well as the settled people collect the medicinal plant species from the hills of Pir-Panjal Range either for daily use or for commerce. Therefore, the native plant species of the area are under the enormous pressure of unscientific exploitation. Hence the district Rajouri is also included in the study.

Activities during August 2014:

During August 2014, a detailed exploration of the medicinal plants of Rajouri district has been carried out, where 98 plant species are recorded under heavy pressure of exploitation for medicinal purposes. These species includes pteridophytes like *Adiantum* spp., *Diplazium* sp., *Equisetum* sp.; angiosperms like *Berberis lycium*, *Podophyllum hexandrum*, *Sassurea costus*, *Dioscorea deltoidea*, *Elaeagnus umbellata* and *Aconites*. Therefore the community people were made aware about the depleting phyto-diversity in general and medicinal plants in particular because of the anthropogenic activities like ruthless collection of the herbs. The awareness among the community was created in following phases:

1. **Competitions and discussions:** Students were taken as the target group, where students from seven different schools were involved in quiz competitions on usage, importance and conservation of native medicinal plants. The gathering of the students was also made aware about the ecological importance of medicinal plants of the region and conservation thereof through discussions and field visits. The outstanding participants were awarded with certificates and souvenir inscribing The Rufford Foundation logo. Books on native medicinal plants have also been distributed among the students.
2. **Village level awareness:** The villagers of the hills of Rajouri district were made aware about the conservation of medicinal plant through cultivation in their margin lands. The awareness campaign was organised for the villagers in their respective villages, where all the villagers' particularly male senior citizens participated. They assured



conservation and propagation of those plants including trees which are ruthlessly damaged by the villagers. Resource material like posters of the medicinal plants has also been distributed among the villagers.

3. **Awareness among local administration** (Panchyats): Serpanch and Panch members of 20 panchyats were invited in Government Girls Higher Secondary School Dharal, Rajouri for their involvement in the conservation of native medicinal plants. The motto of involvement of these people was to mobilise the conservation process in the region through law enforcement. These local administrators (Serpanch and Panch), took pledge for the propagation of the species like *Elaeagnus umbellata* and *Dioscorea deltoidea* in the region which are under heavy threat of extinction. They were also made aware through discussions about the cultivation of native aromatic plants and managed grazing practices in the area. Because the grazing has also delimited the plant diversity in Rajouri district.
4. **Traditional knowledge** regarding native medicinal plants has been collected through interviews and questionnaires, where 90 informants were interviewed through devised questionnaires.



A. *Elaeagnus umbellata* B. Souvenir C. Participants of quiz D. back drop of project



**Community Involvement in Conservation of Medicinal Plants in four Hilly Districts
of Jammu and Kashmir, India**

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&

Attitude Change International

Certificate of Appreciation

Awarded to of upon
his/her participation/winning prize in quiz/ discussion/ seminar/ organised
during awareness campaign on conservation of medicinal plants on August 23, 2014 at
Govt., Girls Hr. Sec. School, Dharal Malkan, Rajouri, J&K.

Dr. Harish Chander Dutt
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Dr. Ashaq Malik
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Certificate distributed among participants of the competition