

Project Update: January 2016

Progress from October 2015 - December 2015

Overview of Project progress

This project report presents the progress update since initiation of project in October 2015 to till end of December 2015. During the first quarter of project duration following activities were done.

1. Estimation of availability of phyto-resources in the study villages

Local community depends primarily on two types of systems for their fodder and fuelwood requirement viz., natural forests (sanctuary and reserve forests under forest department and community forests under *Van Panhayat*) and agro-forestry systems (AFS). For assessing the phyto-resource availability, region is divided into three elevation categories viz., high elevation forests (villagers visit forests up to or above 2200 m above sea level), middle elevation forests (>1600 m asl but <2200 m asl) and low elevation forests (<1600 m asl). As mentioned in the proposal, the current project is to support my PhD work which was partially funded through another research project during which sampling was done in 10 villages in the region. In first quarter of work for current project, sampling for estimating tree fodder availability was conducted in remaining AFS of six village's viz., Chaumansi, Jaal Malla, Kaviltha, Kotma, Raulek and Buruwa. Of these, Chaumansi is located inside the sanctuary while rest are fringe villages. For this, 30 m wide belt transects were laid along the trails and agricultural areas from highest elevation point in village to least, to enumerate fodder species and biomass availability. Multi-purpose tree species were noted down and individuals of each were counted. Available fodder biomass on each tree was estimated ocularly. The saplings and seedlings of each species were also counted.

2. Assessing community participation in conservation of forests and natural resources

Open-ended discussion with community members and purposive questionnaire survey with representatives of local institutions involved in environmental governance viz., *Gram panchayat* and *Mahila mangal dal* or women welfare groups were done in the study villages. Emphasis was given on identifying the role of *gram panchayat* or forest councils, as these have highest representation of village households. Only those groups and institutions were identified which had reached a mature stage in terms of work done and benefits to the community and member households. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured questionnaire to identify various natural resource (forest) management practices and government bodies and local institutions involved in such activities.

Data analysis is underway for the above activities and results will be presented in next project progress update.

3. Sensitization workshop with local women in Ransi village in the study area

A sensitization workshop was organised in Ransi village in Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand which was attended by 10 women (Plate 1). Since this was the first official meeting of this

group, the ladies were given the liberty to bring up topics that they wanted to discuss relating to natural resource conservation and livelihood improvement. The aim of this meeting was to primarily introduce the group to the scope of the project and explain to them the role they would play if they chose to get involved. The concept of natural resource management was explained to them in a simple manner which they understood, and gave some examples in their own as well such as rotational lopping within a forest patch or closing an area for lopping for two to five years. The spirited discussion ended with us asking for their suggestions on what they could produce locally, given that an external agency would handle the marketing and sales of their produce. They suggested they could make chili paste, badhee (a local dumpling made with locally grown lentils, vegetables and spices and dried in sun for later consumption), pickle, or woollen items.

An experimental workshop was conducted in September for *badhee* making which was attended by five women. It was successful and thus, more women turned up this time for first official meeting of the project. Talks are going on with some food joints to market these products in Dehradun city.



Women participants during first sensitisation workshop organized at Ransi Village, Madmaheshwar valley.

Future goals: Data analysis will be completed, and results will be presented in next progress report. Additionally, more meetings and training workshops will be conducted with interested members of community and steps will be taken to produce and market chosen goods. A workshop on business model and marketing of local goods is planned at the end of January 2016 for which community members from study area will join the team leader and IRRRRFM representatives in Dehradun. Villages and households will be chosen for plantation of multi-purpose tree species in agro-forestry systems which we are planning to do during the monsoon season (July-September 2016).