

Project Update: July 2017

Introduction

Giddhabase, Dhorfirdi is located in Suklagandaki municipality, ward number 9 (previously ward 13) in Tanahun district of Nepal. It is situated between 28°03'53.6''N latitude and 84°01'29.5''E longitude at an elevation of 1128 m. It is approximately 8 km away from the Prithvi Highway and the project site lies around the Millennium Trekking Route. The road is not easily accessible to transport.

Kafaldanda-Bhardanda and Mayalbote were the community forest present around the Giddhabase. Around 20 mud houses were present around the project site.

Project site has no veterinary clinics and pharmaceuticals. For the treatment of sick animals, local people have to move to Dulegaunda, the nearest Prithvi highway. Only the young animals are treated when they are sick and old animals are not treated. Animals, when die, they are buried nearby their houses.

Most of the people are farmers and dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. People rear the animals including cow, buffalo, ox, goat, pig, etc. The main off-farm economic activities include services.

Shiva temple in Gurdum, Dhorbarahi temple and Chandimai are the major religious sites in Dhorfirdi.

The major crops grown are millet, rice and maize in the project site. Most of the people are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

Chilaune (*Schima wallichii*) was the dominant tree species in the project site. Other tree species were Simal (*Bombax ceiba*), Kut Simal (*Morus australis*), Sissoo (*Dalbergia Sissoo*), Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*), Khirro (*Spium insigne*), Katus (*Castanopsis indica*), Kafal (*Myrica esculenta*), Sal (*Shorea robusta*), etc. The medicinal plants found in the project site were Harro (*Terminalia chebula*), Barro (*Terminalia bellirica*), Harchul, Aakashbeli (*Cuscuta reflexa*), Kurilo (*Asparagus racemosus*), Titepati (*Artemisia vulgaris*), Timur (*Zanthoxylum armatum*), Dhobini (*Mussaenda roxburghii*), Sajiwon (*Jatropha curcas*), Simal (*Dalbergia Sissoo*), Amala (*Phyllanthus emblica*), etc.

Deer, leopard, wild cat, squirrel, monkey, porcupine are the commonly observed mammals around the project site. Vultures, kite, owl, bulbul, black drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), kalij (*Lophura leucomelanos*), dove are the birds found around the project site.

Pre-field activities

Adequate literature review was conducted on vultures. Orientation was conducted to the team members about the project including field activities, report writing. Obtained permission for study from concerned authority. Preparation for field study was conducted and trained team on potential risks, threats, socio-cultural issues and ethics. Tools and equipment were arranged for the field i.e. camera, binocular, GPS, checklist, questionnaires to record details on the project site and vulture sighted areas.

Field work activities

i. Consultation meeting

Consultation meeting was conducted with the local at Gurdum, Dhorfirdi, i.e. adjoining area of Giddhabase, ward number 9. 23 people participated in the meeting including five females in which the importance of vulture and their conservation, possibility of developing and promoting the site to raise ecotourism by homestay facilities and improving the local people livelihood by selling their agricultural products creating employment opportunities to the local were delivered.

Local people were informed about the upcoming training, exposure visit to the Vulture Safe Feeding Site (VSFS) and awareness programmes to the community including schools. They were consulted about the schools in Giddhbase, Dhorfirdi.

As per the information obtained, tourist are not found during rainy season but are found in winter. Although, the trekking route has high potential of ecotourism due to presence of Kot Durbar, Dhorfirdi temple, Millennium cave, wildlife and bird watching sites, scenic beauty, there is no facility of homestay. As per the local, homestay is present only in Rastal, near Gurdum. Local people were interested in developing and promoting the ecotourism in the area by conserving vultures.

From the consultation meeting, it was known that, white-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), red-headed vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*), Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) were observed in the area. Large number of vultures were found previously but nowadays very few are found. They are found in large number when they get the carcasses around. Vultures make large nest in Simal trees.

ii. Field survey

To observe the vultures in the project area, vulture survey were conducted along the Millennium Trekking Route and in the forest at Kharbari Arkhudi, Gurdum and Dhorbarahi. Field survey was conducted using binoculars, camera, GPS, checklist, questionnaire forms. The researchers were guided by the local. During the field visit, local people were consulted about the vulture sighted areas. Few vultures were found to be flying in the sky. Due to the rainy season, the habitat of vultures could not be reached.



Consultation meeting at Gurdum, Dhorfirdi