

Project Update: December 2022

I have finished fieldwork and data collection for this project. Due to COVID-19, I could not start the project as planned and had to postpone until the travel ban and approval for field work was open. Similarly, I also changed some of the research objectives to adapt to the changing conditions of the pandemic situation. This project was a part of PhD research therefore, academic requirements of the university were also taken into account while adapting to new research objectives as well as to comply with field work safety and research timeline. I, with support of field team, surveyed 845 households in total: Bardiya National Park (476 households) and Langtang National Park (369 households) in three different clusters of each national park (table 1). Research permission and human ethics approval was obtained from the Nepal's Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, respective national park offices and university. Verbal consent was obtained from the survey participants before start of the survey and clear information was provided about the research objectives.

Progress:

I have completed all the data entry and data cleaning work, and most of the data analysis is also completed. Basic socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is given in the table below (table 2). Although there are more datasets than what is required to complete the PhD work; at this stage, data analysis is limited only to those datasets that form part of the PhD thesis chapters. One paper has been already published in the International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology (full article attached with this report) (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13504509.2022.2073616>) whereas another paper has been submitted to the Journal of Environmental Management and is currently under peer review. Similarly, a third paper is under final stage of revision and will be submitted for publication by February 2023 (or March at the latest). Currently, I am writing the fourth paper and almost completed analysing final results which will form the thesis data chapter. I am preparing this paper with publication target.

Table 1: Sampling characteristics of study national park and sample size

Bardiya National Park and Buffer Zone				
Proximity to NP HQ	Adjacent (Cluster 1)	Mid-distance (Cluster 2)	Far (Cluster 3)	Total
District	Banke	Banke	Surkhet	
Municipality	Thakurbaba municipality	Bansgadhi municipality	Barahatal rural municipality	
Ward number	9	2	1	
Geographical location	Terai	Terai	Siwalik hills	
Tourism activities	Present	Absent	Absent	

Total households in the buffer zone users committee	1338	665	295	2348
Household sample	167	150	159	476
Langtang National Park and Buffer Zone				
Proximity to NP HQ	Adjacent (Cluster 1)	Mid-distance (Cluster 2)	Far (Cluster 3)	Total
District	Rasuwa	Sindhupalchowk	Sindhupalchowk	
Municipality	Gosainkunda rural municipality	Helambu rural municipality	Jugal rural municipality	
Ward number	5 and 4	1	2	
Geographical location	Mountains	Mountains	Mountains	
Tourism activities	Present	Present (but low)	Absent	
Total households in the buffer zone users committee	665	764	410	1839
Household sample	147	112	110	369

Source: Fieldwork, BNP (2016), LNP (2019)

I have also presented two papers conferences (student for student summer school and international mountain conference) held in Obergurgl and Salzburg, Austria in September 2022. The participants in the student for student summer school were PhD students researching and studying diverse subject of mountains, especially tourism. This was also shared with the academics of tourism faculty of the University of Innsbruck. Further, participants of International Mountain Conference were researchers, academics and practitioners of mountain development from all over the world.

Table 2: Socio-demographics of respondents

Sex

	Frequency	Percent
Male	455	53.8
Female	390	46.2

Age category

	Frequency	Percent
Older (>-41)	432	51.1
Younger (<-40 yrs)	413	48.9

Caste/ ethnicity

	Percent
High caste (Brahmin-Chhetri-Thakuri)	29.3
Indigenous group	59.8
Occupational caste	10.9

Education level

	Percent
Illiterate	26.0
Literate	26.5
Primary	12.5
Lower Secondary	10.1
Secondary	11.8
Higher Secondary	7.8
Bachelor's degree	4.5
Master's degree and above	0.8

Household income (NPR)

	Percent
<20000	49.8
20001 - 30000	27.1
30001 - 40000	11.1
40001 - 50000	4.9
50001 - 75000	3.0
75001 - 100000	2.3
>100000	1.8

Proximity from PA headquarter.

	Frequency	Percent
Near	314	37.2
Mid-distance	262	31.0
Far	269	31.8

Challenges:

I changed some of the objectives and scope of the project due to pandemic. For example, my original proposal to carry out study on environmental impacts of tourism/ visitors could not be fulfilled as there was no tourism activity during the study time. I also required to carry out the research work in compliance with the university requirements therefore, there is slight deviance from the original objectives.

Next Steps:

Next step is to complete and submission of formal report of the project activities to The Rufford Foundation. Similarly, I will submit completed research work in a thesis form for PhD degree. At the same time, I will focus to write manuscript based on this research for journal publications. I will present the findings in relevant platform as it is available.

References:

BNP (2016) Bardia National Park and its buffer zone management plan (2016-2020). Bardia National Park, Thakurduwara, Bardia.

LNP (2019) *Annual progress report: Fiscal year 2018/2019 (2075/2076 B.S.)*. Lamtang National Park Office, Dhunche, Rasuwa.