

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	Sagar Dahal
Project Title	CITES Implementation in Nepal: Special focus on the illegal Felidae trade from Eastern Nepal
Application ID	42499-2
Date of this Report	

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
1. Review of National Conservation Policies of Nepal			✓	<p>A paper titled "A History of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Implementation in Nepal" discusses the policies and challenges of implementing CITES Nepal. The link to the paper is: doi.org/10.3390/d17050312</p>
2. Key Informant Survey			✓	<p>Completed the interview with 35 key informants and have already transcribed all the interviews. Interviews were conducted with government officials, heads of INGOs and NGOs working on conservation, local government officials, village heads, traders, and school principals. I am writing about the key findings from these interviews in several papers.</p> <p>The significant findings were gaps in CITES implementation across policies governed by the implementing authorities (as reported by government bodies). Similarly, key informants residing along the Nepal-China-India border reported violations of CITES (the passage of wildlife contraband in the past, but the situation is much tighter now). Additionally, key informants from NGOs and the University provided</p>

				insights into policy gaps, hurdles, and insufficient resources in CITES implementation at various levels in Nepal.
3. Investigating the status of legal and illegal trade of felids			✓	Data on legal trade are ongoing for the second chapter of the publication. I also collected court cases from the Division Forest Offices and the protected areas of Koshi Province. We have collected court cases of past 10 years (where possible) from all the protected areas of the lowland, and from districts of Koshi province. Altogether, we have collected 615 court cases related to wildlife and forest related crimes. However, the data is highly irregular and inconsistent due to unreliable data management practices in the respective offices. The court case records need careful fine processing in temporal and spatial scale before it becomes useful information for the scientific papers.
4. Markets Survey			✓	We conducted a 1-day national capacity-building training for representatives of local communities and students in Kathmandu, and prepared and submitted a detailed report to Rufford. These trainees were then asked to monitor market surveys, but no illegal wildlife trade was detected in the open markets, except at one location at the Koshi Barrage in Sunsari District. Twenty-two people participated

			<p>in the training. We hired 6 people for 3 months across 3 different locations at Taplejung, Koshi, and Jhapa districts.</p> <p>The workshop included several talks from experienced academics, practitioners and experts about the illegal wildlife trade in Nepal. I also presented about the importance of CITES and how illegal wildlife trade is the major hurdle in implementing CITES in Nepal.</p> <p>Field assistants were asked to monitor the weekly vegetable market that occurs in three different areas. Once each week, the assistants would observe the market for 3-4 hours and monitor if any wildlife related products has been brought in the market for sale. These small bazars or haats are the weekly open markets particularly in a fixed areas where people bring various items to sale particularly, vegetables, poultry products, fruits, and even products harvested from forests. Every week the assistants would report their observations. However, we did not find anything illegal within the allocated time frame except in the Koshi barrage where some turtles were on sale.</p> <p>As the market survey was unsuccessful, I travelled to the Nepal-China (Olangchung gola) and Nepal-India border (Kali Khola) to meet the locals residing</p>
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			<p>in those areas and interview key people of the area, such as traders who sell goods across the country, older people who have resided in the areas for more than 60 years, school headmasters and residents. These interviews helped me understand how natural products were used to cross borders earlier. I have processed all the interviews conducted either in Kathmandu with Key Informants or in remote areas to understand cases of illegal wildlife trade and CITES implementation hurdles in Nepal. This will be the fourth chapter of my PhD dissertation which is in line to be completed by April 2026.</p>
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2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) The CITES implementation is still in a challenging phase in Nepal. Nepal has not been able to fully utilize the potential of the CITES convention for economic development and achieving its sustainable development goals.
- b) The status of open trade of wildlife products is not normal and is done in disguise. The open market surveys were not effective in recognizing the illegal trade; however, the number of wildlife-related crimes remains persistent, based on court cases and news published in national dailies regarding wildlife-related crimes.
- c) The illegal hunting of wildlife is prevalent in the Eastern mountains of Nepal for recreation, bush meat consumption, and domestic trade.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Various difficulties were observed during the project period:

- 1. The time management for the key informant interview with the senior officials was not easy. As several top-level officials were responsible for implementing CITES,

securing time for the interviews proved to be challenging. However, persuasiveness and patience helped in achieving interviews with the key informants, which took longer than expected to transcribe and analyse the data.

2. The idea of surveying the open markets for the potential illegal wildlife trade did not come to fruition. Monitoring local markets even after providing training to the trainees did not yield the expected results. This may be because the illegal trade is not operated openly. Hence, we focused more on the information collected during interviews with transboundary traders, local hunters, policymakers, and representatives of local governments.
3. The organization I collaborated with in Kathmandu to conduct the research provided the necessary funds from their internal funds to conduct this research, as the central bank withheld the funds for an extended period of time.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

Local communities, government officials from district-level forest offices, officials from protected areas, school principals, hunters, and transboundary traders were extensively involved in this research. Their extensive knowledge on the local use of biodiversity, traditional relationship between the people of Nepal and China, and Nepal and India was explored. I also conducted conservation awareness programs related to CITES and general biodiversity conservation for the school children. Spending extensive periods in the remote border areas of Nepal, India, and China was supportive in understanding the issues of wildlife crime, potential violations of CITES conventions, and the status of CITES implementation in these remote areas. The local communities and I were both involved in co-learning from each other. I learned about the local issues of Koshi province, and the communities benefited from the technical aspects of CITES.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work, and much remains to be done on supporting the implementation phase. This research helped us understand the status of CITES implementation challenges in the Koshi Province and the key issues on those challenges. All the information gathered after writing will give a clear picture at both the local and national levels, both in terms of policy and in the specific case of Koshi Province.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The results of this research work will be shared through publication in a scientific journal. Part of the research work has already been published, and Rufford was acknowledged for their support. Apart from that, we also provided a detailed report for the capacity-building workshop to Rufford. Additionally, we provided a separate

report detailing the status of all completed work to Rufford. As we produce more publications, the papers will be shared with the Rufford with acknowledgment.

The policy research for my study has already been published, and I have shared the published documents with government CITES authorities, both the scientific and management authorities, as a progress report during the renewal of my permission. I am also planning to present my work at the Society for Conservation Biology conference, which will be held in June 2026. I am progressing towards my PhD and plan to graduate by the Fall of 2026 once all the chapters are completed and published. After that, I will share the complete results with government agencies.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The next step would be to conduct a results-sharing workshop for CITES implementing authorities in government and non-governmental organizations that support the implementation of CITES in Nepal, focusing on the outcomes of this research. Additionally, outreach materials related to CITES should be published and distributed widely based on the findings from this project, along with necessary recommendations. Apart from that, in sensitive areas prone to illegal wildlife trade, outreach programs and dialogues on existing policies at both national and community levels need to be conducted. Apart from that, coordination is required amongst the local community and CITES implementing authorities for the proper implementation of CITES. In addition to that, it's now already too late to start the dialogues for identifying economically valuable wildlife products, primarily in plants, to generate resources for economic development and supporting Sustainable Development Goals.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

I did use the Rufford Small Grants logo on the banner for the capacity-building workshop. We also produced a short [video](#) of the fieldwork, featuring Rufford logo incidents and showcasing the legal transboundary trade between Nepal and China.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

The names of the people involved in this project are:

1. Bashu Dev Baral: Bashu Dev Baral assisted in the field work and data collection. He also supported field case collection. He also helped in market survey in Jhapa.
2. Sikha Thapa: Sikha Thapa assisted in conducting the workshop on illegal wildlife trade and also processed the data.

3. Aakrista Adhikari: Aakrista Adhikari supported us in the market survey in Sunsari district. He also helped in collecting data on court cases from Sunsari district.
4. Chungdak Sherpa: Chungdak Sherpa, a native of Taplejung, helped us in the market survey in the Taplejung district.
5. Prakash Chandra Aryal: Prakash Chandra Aryal was head of ENPROSC and supported us logistically, as well as prepared the methodology for the market survey, and trained the trainee on using Kobo tools.
6. Chandra Mani Aryal: Chandra Mani Aryal supported us logistically and helped conduct a workshop on illegal wildlife trade. He also supported on training on using Kobo tools.
7. Rohan Tuladhar: Roshan Tuladhar supported in field work and collected court cases from all the districts in Koshi province. He also supported the market survey in Jhapa district.
8. Kishore Rai: Kishore Rai, a resident of Taplejung district, coordinated the field work in Taplejung district. He provided logistical support, made connections in the field, and managed the entire fieldwork. He also created an environment for the conservation awareness program in Taplejung.
9. Tashi Sherpa: Tashi Sherpa supported the field work in Olangchungola of Taplejung district.
10. Nanda Baniya: Nanda Baniya supported field work in the Kali Khola area of Taplejung district.

10. Any other comments?

This project was essential for understanding the insights into the workings of CITES in Nepal and its challenges. This project helped to delve into policies and their implementation challenges, collect information on CITES authorized trade and CITES violations based on collected court cases and secondary data, as well as explore the status of trading routes of international illegal trade, implying the status of CITES violations based on past incidents and community knowledge in sensitive transboundary areas.

ANNEX – Financial Report

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