

Project: Engaging communities to conserve threatened plants in Gorkha Nepal

Project start date: May 15, 2025

Project host: Greenhood Nepal

Project update (Y1Q2): January 14, 2026

Summary

Illegal trade is threatening the survival of orchid species globally, including in Nepal which hosts over 500 species. Uncontrolled harvest and trade of orchids are growing but largely neglected due to lack of conservation awareness, multipurpose use, and local livelihood reliance on its trade. Moreover, the species, when they are dried and processed for transportation, are difficult to identify – hence easy to evade enforcement. This demands urgent conservation action and targeted training for local stakeholders. In this background, here, we aimed to work with officials and local stakeholders to raise conservation awareness and design conservation measures for medicinal orchids, in particular endangered *Dactylorhiza hatagirea* highlighting the need for its conservation and policy implications. We chose Gorkha district and one of its villages considering the high reliance of local community on medicinal plant harvest.

In this quarter, we have made the following progress:

Workshops with local level stakeholders: We conducted two local level workshops in Gorkha district involving 77 participants (27 male/ 50 female). Of these, one workshop in a village in Gorkha included a mixed group of participants ranging from local level plant harvesters, local level plant collectors/intermediaries, women groups, community forest user group members, local government authorities. Another community workshop fully focused on local level plant harvesters, majority of them were women participants. The workshops focused on identifying and ranking key threats to overall medicinal plants but with a specific detail to *Dactylorhiza hatagirea*, an orchid that is mostly protected in the paper, but faces high illegal trade. We also co-identified and listed top 10 priority conservation measures for the sustainable management of this species, and overall medicinal plants in the region. The workshops also had a specific session on conservation awareness, especially on legal status and conservation importance of *Dactylorhiza hatagirea*.

Species identification training and awareness to the enforcement officials: We organized species identification training to the enforcement officials in Gorkha district, focusing on the on-group frontline officials. There were 18 participants (13 Male, 5 Female). The program focused on the top 14 species identified as difficult to identify in our previous project (RSG-1). Unlike before, we used live samples of tradable parts of these species. The samples were managed by the forest office. While we are still analyzing data for the assessments before/after training and awareness program, the participants noted that the sessions were helpful, especially because of the hands-on practical work.

Literature compilation and review: Following the same procedure mentioned in our first quarterly report, this literature compilation and review activity is ongoing as planned. This activity will continue until the project ends.

Next steps:

We plan to undertake data analysis, results sharing targeted to community stakeholders and enforcement officials from the district. Also, we have received similar training requests from other forest offices; we may expand this work to a selected office.

Project progress vs plan

Activity No.	Year 1 (2025)			Year 2 (2026)	
	May-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
1	Permits and scoping				
2		Co-design workshops			
3			Community awareness		
4			Capacitate enforcement		
5			Data compilation and analysis		
6					Results dissemination
					Final report submission

Note: The colors show progress on the proposed project activities. Green = activity completed, Orange = activity ongoing, Grey = activity not yet started

Some photographs



Photo: Workshop participants in community A in Gorkha



Photo: Workshop participants in community A in Gorkha co-working on sessions



Photo: Workshop participants in community A in Gorkha during discussion and interaction



Photo: Workshop participants in community B in Gorkha.



Photo: Workshop participants in community B in Gorkha during sharing of results obtained from group discussions



Photo: Workshop participants in Division Forest Office, Gorkha



Photo: Workshop participants in Division Forest Office, Gorkha during discussion