

PROJECT UPDATE

ID: 42933-2

Applicant: Abhijit Dey

Grant type: 2nd RSG

Project title: [Empowering indigenous communities to conserve Mahua trees, the 'Kalpavriksh' of Indian deciduous forests, by rejuvenating mahua-based sustainable livelihoods](#)

Introduction & Objectives:

A rapid decrease in the price of mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*) flowers, pivotal for the livelihood of the local people of the study area, is the main driver of this project.

This work has four primary aims –

1. Understanding the socioecological processes that have been shaping the mahua population which changes with the land cover (trees are more outside the forest, than inside).
2. Initiate a community-led small-scale venture to produce value-added mahua flower-based items like sweets, pickles, cookies etc.
3. Launch a website to popularize mahua and mahua-based products, create awareness for the conservation of mahua trees and sustenance of mahua-based livelihood.
4. Understanding the mahua seed harvesting mechanism and estimating the production of seeds of a tree to later estimate its growth rate.

Progress so far:

We started working on this project in May 2024 and till now the progress is satisfactory and as per plan.

1. Key informant interviews and literature review of this region were planned for the first objective. We received valuable insight during key informant interviews. The literature review is under progress. It has also yielded results in understanding the processes that shaped mahua population of this region.
2. To commence the second objective, we arranged a week-long 'Training Program for Value-added Mahua Products' in September. We received an overwhelming response from the community members during the event. With the support of a local NGO [Nature Mates](#), we trained community members, primarily women, coming from different villages. The participants prepared laddu, peda, syrup of mahua flower and also roasted mahua flower. This isn't a one-time event but will be supported in the post-training phase as well to sustain the effort.
3. Work for the third objective i.e. building a website will start soon. However, the accumulation of information and planning of the website are going on.
4. For the fourth objective, we exercised the 'participant observation technique' i.e. accompanying and observing the seed harvesters during the process of harvesting to get a better understanding of the process and installed seed traps in ten select trees of varied size-classes to estimate the seed production.



Interacting with village elders to record oral history of the region



Participants are busy in hands-on training program





Modified 'seed trap' installed for estimation of seed production



Following a harvester during seed harvest