

Project Update: December 2013

1. Post cloud burst glacial lake outburst coupled with flood incidents on 16th and 17th of June 2013 that majorly damaged most of the connecting roads, bridges and connectivity to the valley hence, our project activities were hampered for last 5 months. This extreme climate event has also led to loss of thousands of lives of locals and tourists in this area.
2. In December 2013 we have initiated our project activities by doing situation analysis and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to understand the major concerns of the local communities related to forest conservation, management, and socio-economic development, to build rapport of with local communities.
3. Upper Kedar Valley is one of the biodiverse areas of Uttarakhand situated in Rudraprayag district. Valley is famous for its agricultural diversity specifically legume crops and changes in agricultural patterns and practices are very prominent in last two decade so it was chosen for the present study. The major vegetation or forest type of Kedarnath Wildlife Division is categorised into nineteen broad forest types.
4. The main pressure on the forests of the area is during summers that involve local grazers, herders and local transhumants, heavy influx of national, international tourists to Kedarnath Shrine and local collection of fuelwood, fodder and leaf litter. The majority of households of the region are engaged in traditional farming. Agriculture along with livestock rearing is the main occupation of the population and is practised based on their indigenous practices developed by their traditional knowledge. Animal husbandry is practiced by the residents of studied villages as agriculture at this altitude is very much forest and livestock dependent. All cattle are mainly stall fed but also let for free sometimes for grazing in nearby forests and *Kharaks*. Keeping livestock is an important source of income (by milk and milk based products) as well as important in the agriculture-based economy that persists in these villages. Nearly as many as 15-20 crops that comprise cereals, millets, vegetables, pulses, oil yielding, condiments, spices and medicinal plants are raised by the farmers however, only a few are grown on large scale. Traditionally farmyard manure prepared from cattle dung is used for crops.
5. We also held public consultations with local Garhwali community in Maikhanda village cluster of Upper Kedarnath Valley. The villages fall on the main route to Kedarnath Shrine and rich mixed broad-leaved forest area with a variety of plants and animals. These meetings were organised through which strategies to integrate conservation with livelihood were discussed. The villagers have shown the willingness to participate in this project to better understand and help find solutions to reduce pressure from nearby forests and improve their livelihood by sustainable extraction of bio-resources.

